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Greetings brethren!

Following conversations with Pastor General Robert Ardis, he has directed that this publication should be distributed amongst CGF members as “the voice of the Church of Jesus Christ”, rather than just a newsletter for the International Region.

Mr. Ardis has even given the green light to a second publication that will be sent monthly to members and ex-members of the Laodicean Church of God (PCG). I believe you will agree that this is indeed exciting news!

Since 1997, Mr. Ardis has been knocking on the door of PCG Pastor General Gerald Flurry, as well as on the door of hundreds of those who have been blindly following him in his futile work. God’s faithful servant has been effectively performing this Work having sent over 20,000 booklets to PCG members over the past eleven years. During these years, a few have allowed Christ to mercifully open their eyes and have fled Laodicea to return to the Church of Jesus Christ, His One Body. Since then too, many have *partly* opened their eyes by fleeing the PCG. Others have asked questions accentuating their disagreement with the leader of Laodicea, leading to their being cast out of the PCG. Mr. Ardis is planning to put into effect a programme that will hopefully reach these ex-PCG members, thus providing another knock on their door.

The second publication that Mr. Ardis has now approved should be yet *another* way to continue knocking on the door of these begotten children of God. It is planned that this magazine will include timely *warning* articles inspired by Jesus Christ that will cause more of our beloved brethren in Laodicea to “hear His voice, and open the door” (Rev. 3:20). Your prayers are requested imploring God to provide us with e-mail addresses of all those who Christ wants us to reach again, as well as of those who perhaps have yet to be reached maybe for the first time.

Meanwhile, as we plan these things... as we make sure that our Head will continue to be well pleased with our unabated commitment to ensure that we finish His Work, the world around us seems to be continuing to

fall apart at an increasingly alarming pace. We now also clearly see the speedy coming together of political alliances in fulfilment of prophecy. The long and short of it is that when we look at what’s going on in the world, it really appears that there may be very little time for us to perform much more. Of course, this is all the more reason why every one of us, as faithful Philadelphians, must roll up our sleeves to ensure that Matt. 24:45-47 may be applied to us:

*Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.*

Let me conclude by quoting from what I believe is a dramatic news item, entitled *German Peacekeepers Suggested for Gaza*, which appeared on yesterday’s Deutsche Welle website, [www.dw-world.de](http://www.dw-world.de), as reproduced in this week’s *World Watch Newsletter*:

*Germany welcomed a proposal by Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and supporters of Chancellor Angela Merkel suggested German peacekeepers be sent to Gaza. “If the parties to the conflict were to desire it, German soldiers could of course play a role,” said Gert Weisskirchen, a Social Democratic spokesman on foreign policy in remarks to the Spiegel Online news website. He called for Germany to voice from the very beginning a “willingness” to send troops under a UN Security Council resolution. His SPD party is part of Merkel’s ruling coalition. Eckart von Klaeden, a foreign policy spokesman in Merkel’s own Christian Democratic Union (CDU), said the use of German troops was feasible but they must have “robust” powers.*

With much love, in Christ’s service

Daniel Frendo

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## Is God Your Only God?

by Frank Borg

Do we worship our Creator with a sense of awe and respect? Or do we sometimes put interests and pursuits of this world ahead of Him? How well do we obey the first commandment? God must be our only God!

The twentieth chapter of the book of Exodus outlines the Ten Commandments that God gave Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. These laws were given so that we can have the protection that we need, to be guaranteed the enjoyment of true freedom, happiness and success. If applied, they give us peace with God and with man. Unfortunately, since God gave Israel these laws, most have severely deviated from them which has resulted in the chaos and unhappiness that we see in the world around us. Few understand that the strict adherence to these commandments, in spirit and in deed, are vital to ensure the worship of the one true God, and to securing the abundant blessings that come as a result of obedience to them.

Exodus 20:3-4 outlines the first of God's commandments which states: "I am the LORD thy God...thou shalt have no other gods before me." This is the first and great commandment (Matt. 22:38) in which God directly states that we need to make sure that He, the Creator and ruler of the universe, is the God that we worship. God wants us to keep Him first in our lives, *above all else!* We must not lose sight of the fact that God is behind these commandments. People often allow interests of this world to engulf their time, focus and energy thus allowing other gods to influence their being. In no uncertain terms, this first commandment prohibits us to falsely depend on anyone or anything other than God Himself. It clearly indicates that we must avoid *anything* that can endanger or hinder our worship of the one true God.

God and His Work must be at the forefront of our lives. If *anything* lends itself to directing our heart away from putting God first in our lives, we break this first commandment. We must be cautious not to allow anyone or anything to displace God from being our one and only God! A word of caution: one doesn't usually put God aside deliberately – it begins very subtly – this is the danger we must be extremely careful of. We must prevent the subtlety in which many *unintentionally* push God into second place. This begins the moment we start to compromise in any way with God and His laws.

On a regular basis, we must take a moment to evaluate what is most important in our lives. We need to assess our priorities and make sure that *nothing* in our life is emphasized more than those things that build and strengthen our relationship with God. Here are a few things we should consider: Do we put greater importance in enjoying our preferred pastimes or on studying the Bible? Do we spend more time, for example, watching television than we do praying and studying? Do we take more pride in our physical appearance rather than how we look to God in mind, spirit and truth? Are we enslaved to fitness, entertainment or any other distractions that may take priority in our lives? How effectively are we applying God's commandments and building our spiritual character?

Moderation is the key! Obviously, making sure we groom ourselves, engage ourselves in hobbies and wholesome entertainment are recommended and highly encouraged. However, what we need to be careful of is that we don't expend too much effort and time on these things to the point that they become objects of worship - we must allow these things to serve us and not the other way around! We must evaluate what we give time and attention to throughout the day and be careful not to serve our own lusts! How much time do we spend in study and prayer on a daily basis in contrast to how much time we spend doing some of the other things in our life? We must ask ourselves these questions! God must come *first!* This is essential!

There are a few other areas we should consider. Haggai 1:4, for example, tells us that in the end time some will lavish huge expense and attention on their own homes. While it certainly is not wrong to have a nice and comfortable home, God is here reminding people not to get caught up in materialism and neglect God and His Work. Material possessions, family, friends, studies and even our jobs are all extremely important, but they can come in between us and God if we allow them to. These things could divert our focus and attention away from Him and away from applying God's way of life if we are not careful. To make sure that nothing takes the place of God, we must keep our priorities in their proper order. We must not allow physical things to let us lose sight of the spiritual. Where our treasure is, is where our heart is (Matt. 6:21)! We are ultimately the servants of whom we obey. God must always come first!

Speaking to God in prayer first thing in the morning, before we begin with our daily work or activities, is

something we must be in the habit of doing. We should also end our day in contact with Him. It is recorded that Daniel prayed *three times a day* (Dan 6:10)! Importantly, while we go about our day, we should live our life in an attitude of prayer (1Thess 5:17). By doing this, we show God that He *really* is in the forefront of our minds! Contact with God helps us draw closer to Him ensuring a strong relationship with our Creator. We must see God in *everything* that we do, whether it's in our work, activities, sport, family, the music that we listen to, the films that we watch and in every other pastime we engage in. We are admonished to seek Him in all that we do: "Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matt 6:33). This must be our daily goal! He must rank first in importance and every other demand must come second. If we keep this in mind *and apply it*, we uphold and obey the first commandment. God must be the greatest reality in our lives! Notice that the second part of verse 33 states: "...and all these things shall be added unto you"! If we put God first in our lives, and obey the first commandment, everything else will follow! God will see to it that our prayers, as long as they are according to God's will, are answered! What an inspiring and encouraging promise is made to us!

As we pray and as we go about our daily routine, we must be consistently grateful for all the blessings that God so abundantly pours over us. We need to think about how God intervenes in our lives on a daily basis – even in little things. God daily blesses us with abundance in so many areas - food, clothing, shelter and numerous other necessities and comforts - but there are also a number of other ways in which God intervenes and has a direct hand in our lives. For example, there is no doubt that very often God also keeps us out of danger and diverts us away from certain harmful situations which we don't even know about! Are we thankful for God's continual protection? Do we show appreciation for His mercy toward us? When we speak to God in prayer, we must be continually thankful to Him for all of our answered prayers and for all the good things that come our way each and every day. Do we consistently thank God for the revelation and spiritual food that He gives us? Are we grateful to God for the ministry and for the Work that we have the privilege to be a part of? The more detailed our prayers, and the more thankful we are to Him, the more central God is in our lives. This is all relevant to worshipping God and making sure that we are wholeheartedly applying the first commandment.

In responding to a question made to him by one of the Pharisees, Christ answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord

thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt 22:37). Christ was here telling the Pharisee that God must constantly be in the forefront of our minds – everything we say and do must be in compliance with His law, for Him to be our true God. To do this we must endeavor to think before we speak and think before we act. This will help ensure that our words and actions are in accordance to His will and pleasing to Him. This is necessary if we are to keep focused, and make sure that we are doing our best to maintain God in the center of our lives and to avoid carnal interests from taking His place. *In everything we say or do, we either serve God or else we serve our own lust and Satan the devil.* Showing that we first and foremost love God with all our heart, soul and mind must be clearly evident by our words and actions.

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear" (Isaiah 45:22-23). God is here again asking us to worship and look to Him. If anyone of His people is guilty of breaking the first commandment, we are being admonished to come to repentance. One day in the near future, the whole world will have their chance and will come to realize that God is THE God! Right now is our chance to prove our loyalty to God!

With authority God tells us, 'I am the Lord your God...you shall have no other gods before me' (Exodus 20:2-3). God wants to be our uncontested God! Not only is God entitled to this, but we have a duty to honor and worship Him as our Creator and Sustainer. Our desire and passion should be one of wanting to serve God and resist any urge that might keep us away from our Bible study and prayer.

Let us do all we can to show God that we depend on Him. God must come first and foremost in our lives and we can prove that to Him by ensuring that we worship Him with a sense of awe and respect. Let us always be in remembrance of the first commandment, obey it in spirit and in deed, and allow God to be our only God!

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## Dealing with Offences

by John Durrad

You may have heard the story of Mr Winston Churchill who at a function became a little worse for drink. A woman approached him and said, "Sir, you are drunk". To which Mr Churchill replied, "Yes madam, and you are ugly! But in the morning I will be sober!"

Not really a good lesson in making friends and influencing people. But sooner or later in our dealings with others, a chance remark, replying without thinking, a certain look, a misunderstanding, and someone is going to be offended.

It is inevitable when people get together, husbands and wives, bosses and employees, men and women, friends and ..friends. Even between Church members and Church members. Yes it is possible for people in God's Church to offend one another. Sometimes the offence is intentional. But more often it is not. It is usually a thoughtless word or action.

We need to look at this problem from both sides. That is to avoid giving offence and avoid taking offence. Offences are going to occur so we need to be in the business of repairing relationships. We are talking about a Spiritual repair! Quite often these gripes and grudges are hidden from the congregation, which in one way is good, but in another way it might be harder to force a resolution if it is kept quiet. However if we do have an unresolved problem with another member, God will usually find a way to bring it out into the open.

But God would much rather we dealt with the problem ourselves. We all like things to work well in our lives, but perhaps we sometimes put up with things, physical things, when a simple repair job would put things right. For example, you have a hole in your sock, the toe is sticking out. No one can see it, no one knows, it doesn't feel right but I'll get around to repairing it – sometime! And then you forget and put that pair on for the Passover service!

You have a torn shirt, right across the seam at the back. But it's your favourite shirt, and the collar is great. No one can see the tear, and you'll get it repaired – sometime! And then a deacon asks you to help him set up the hall. You remove your jacket, and all is revealed. You should have got it repaired, it never felt right anyway.

And you drivers, you know what your car sounds like. But when it starts to make an unusual different noise, you know something is wrong. You know it needs a repair, but it's bound to be expensive, and anyway it seems to be running alright otherwise. So you put up with it. But finally, as it gets worse, and it always does, you have it repaired. And you can't believe the difference; it's like a new car.

What about that loose plug on the kettle? Every time you switch on you see sparks. So you use it very carefully, hoping you don't get a shock. It needs repairing. You'll get around to it – sometime! And when you do it's so much better.

Brethren, unrepaired relationships can create long lasting hostility and hard feeling. Even seemingly small misunderstandings can, unless handled properly, fester into deep wounds. This could permanently divide us. Offences that go unresolved between two members can adversely effect the Spiritual development of both.

Notice the importance God places on resolving personal differences.

"But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift". Matt 5:22-24.

We cannot truly obey God if we carry resentment for somebody. Many offences, or perceived offences can be very trivial in nature. But if not resolved or repaired, can so easily grow, and even cause God's Holy Spirit to be stifled.

It is almost certain that at some time or other someone will be offended. Our feelings get hurt by what someone says or does. Often we misunderstand or misinterpret situations.

Personal offences damage loving relationships. We, of God's C.G.F must learn how to deal with offences biblically. It is each member's responsibility to keep God's love alive and flowing towards each other. We must be aware of causing personal offence. And if it happens, as best we can, we must strive to clear up

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hurt feelings or misunderstandings as soon as possible. Look what happens when things get out of control.

“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: And ye shall be hated of all nations for my names sake.

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another”. Matt 24:9-10

Things will get so bad that God’s Church would become known for its iniquity, not its love!

“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold”. Matt 24:12

God’s Church actually cuts itself off from God because of their failure to love their brethren. These end-time prophecies show us how important it is to resolve any differences we have with other members right now!

“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also”. 1 John 4:20-21  
If we say we love God, then we must love each other. That means we should work harder to get along with each other.

When misunderstandings or hurt feelings happen between ourselves and another person, how do we handle the situation? Do we face the problem or avoid it? Do we place all blame on the other person and excuse ourselves? We need to ask ourselves, are we handling offences properly?

You know, we say that we sort of forgive them, but just can’t bring ourselves to talk to them yet. Well not talking to them is the very opposite to what we should be doing.

It is very important in the first instance, if you feel you are the injured party, to find out the true intent of the remark or action. The best way to do this is to talk to the perpetrator.

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” Matt 18:15

Notice this is an instruction from Jesus Christ, a command really! Keeping unity in the Church is very

important to Jesus Christ. The principal is clear: God wants people to do something about offences, and certainly not ignore them.

This instruction very much applies to a brother committing a very serious sin, such as stealing or breaking the Sabbath. But it also applies to an offence against you personally. In fact anything you feel is wrong about a brother’s words or actions you should be concerned about.

This is not about poking your nose in someone else’s business. It is not about self gratification, or getting your own back. It’s about Church unity. Unity between you and your brother. It’s about helping your brother!

So, how do you “go to your brother” when an offence has occurred? Make sure your attitude is right beforehand. Pray about the situation. Evaluate how you feel, (If it is personal, you may feel very hurt) so calm down if necessary.

Truly think about it. Has the person really wronged you or are you over-reacting? Don’t let your pride get in the way. Again, if you are not sure what to do, or if the problem is a serious one, you may need to seek counsel.

“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. Prov 11:14

Approaching a person in a Matthew 18 situation is a serious matter. Talking to a minister may be advisable and names need not, should not, be mentioned at this point.

“A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter”. Prov 11:13

When you are ready to approach the person, no matter what the offense, show respect for their feelings. Remember the cardinal point is that you are trying to help them.

“Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.

Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another:

Lest he hear it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

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As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear” Prov 25:8-12

We have to realise that admitting error will most certainly be difficult for them – after all, it is for us! We need to listen to their side of the story.

“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” Prov 18:13

By listening, we may discover that we have been wrong in feeling offended. If we use the approach of a harsh and demanding attitude, we can prevent him from truly seeing himself. He will become defensive and start accusing you rather than examining himself. The problem will be intensified. At this stage God puts a great deal of responsibility on the injured party.

“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger” Prov 15:1.

One important key here is that we don’t tackle the problem in the heat of the moment. Wait until you have calm emotions. You then will be able to choose your words with care. Now it is also very important at this stage that the dispute is kept between the two of you. If you have counselled with a minister you should not name the other person. If all goes well the minister need never know their identity. It is so easy to discuss someone’s real or imagined faults with others. But what good does it do? None! It can ruin his reputation, and gain us the reputation of being a gossip or talebearer. And, if the person finds out that you have discussed the problem with others, he may become even more bitter towards you.

God wants us to try to limit the problem in the hope that it can be resolved without affecting others, and especially the whole congregation. To talk about a problem with others not directly involved in the situation may mean that we do not really want to solve the problem. It could mean that we want to justify ourselves!

Proverbs is a mine of information to teach us how to live and act out in life’s situations.

“Pride goeth before destruction and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, that to divide the spoil with the proud. Prov 16:18-19

When dealing with others, we must be careful of pride and self-righteousness. Looking to our own life first shows true humility. Realise, it could be that we

caused the problem in the first place. Understand that there are usually faults on both sides. This is humility.

It is not easy to win back a relationship that has been damaged by offence.

“A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.” Prov 18-19

So how do we approach this delicate situation? With the mind of God.

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering:

Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness... And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” Col 3:12-17

Using these biblical tactics should solve most problems. And when you have resolved a problem with someone, completely forgive and forget it. Don’t harbour resentment about it or bring it up later. Avoid developing bitterness over a situation. To sum up:

Take the matter to your bother in all humility  
Resolve the problem  
Forgive and forget

Alright, so that’s fine. But what if it doesn’t work? What, if after all you’re careful planning and approach your brother won’t hear you? You have to take it to the next stage:

“But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” Matt 18:16

This is an important principle. We want to establish what is really being said. With just two people, each with different sides, stories, to the argument, it comes down to a “your word against mine” situation.

“At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death” Deut 17:6

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We now need to involve another person, or persons who can confirm what is being said. When confronted again by you with a witness, your brother will realise how serious you are. This may have the desired effect, and hopefully, at this point you may gain your brother.

Of course you have now involved another person. The matter is now not so private. This means you must choose your witness carefully. They need to be mature spiritually, with a good attitude. You both need to pray and perhaps fast about the situation to receive God's guidance and strength. Now your brother may not want your prayers, or even thinks he needs them, nevertheless, it is important on your next meeting that God is involved.

Now, go to the person with the same humility, love and truthfulness as you did the first time. Again try to reason with him about the difficulty. He may see you and your witness as "two against one" Try not to intimidate him.

Your witness should say very little, if anything at all. He is there simply to witness what is being said. Now, if all has gone well, an agreement or understanding can be made. The problem has been resolved – God's Way! You have gained your brother.

If all these efforts fail to bring a solution, then we need bring the third stage into play, we need to involve God's ministry.

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, (God's ministry) let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican". Matt 18:17

"Tell it unto the Church" does not mean we announce the problem to the congregation. The minister will work with the offending person in the hope of converting his fault. However, if the fruit of repentance is not borne, stronger action must be taken. Let him be as an "heathen man and a publican". Or in other words he must be disfellowshipped. This can only be done by Jesus Christ through the ordained authority of his ministry. Please remember that someone who has been upsetting the brethren, or sinning in some way, without repentance has probably been put out of the Church by Jesus Christ before the ministry physically do it!

Really, if we are all striving to obey God, any offences should be nipped in the bud at the first stage. But James tells us that offenses will occur.

"For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." James 3:2

James gives us a realistic picture of human relationships. As humans we find it very easy to offend or take offence. Instead of jumping to conclusions we need to ask ourselves some questions first. Are we too sensitive? Could we be over reacting? Are we at fault or an actual cause of the offence? We must learn to look at the faults of others with a humble attitude. Remember – we have our own faults!

Which brings me to my next point. We have been looking at how to handle offences against us. But we all should be working to avoid giving offence.

"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:" 1 Cor 10:32

Paul worked hard to not offend anyone, inside or outside of God's Church. Why? Was he a men-pleaser? No, he was expounding God's Word in a way that all could understand if they had a mind to.

"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;...And this I do for the gospels sake, that I might be partakers thereof with you." 1 Cor 9:19-23

Paul took pains not to offend anyone, so that he could serve more people. He was not compromising God's Law; just using tact and understanding. If we strive to be like Paul, problems could be quickly resolved, and even avoided in the first place.

The best way to handle an offence is NOT TO CAUSE ONE!

But if a brother has a problem with us and comes to us with it, we should be willing to listen to him.

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." James 1:19

It is very hard to take correction and to admit that we are at fault. If we really were not at fault, then a misunderstanding has occurred. Talking it over in the right Christian way should clear it up. Try to see their

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point of view. It usually takes a lot of courage to approach someone about an offence. Be willing to listen and don't take it too casually. The person coming to you obviously takes it so seriously to have taken the steps to approach you.

If you realise you have been wrong, swallow your pride **AND APOLOGISE!** To apologise is to admit error, but if we have been in error we should be willing to change. We accept correction from God; in fact we should be asking God to correct us when we are wrong. God may even choose to correct us through another individual, so we should actually appreciate those people willing to come to us with help for a problem.

People who come to us in the right attitude and spirit are actually showing us love.

“Open rebuke is better than secret love  
Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” Prov 27: 5-6

Resolving our difficulties is all about growing in the unity of Christ. Paul was very clear on this.

“Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we all speak the same thing, and that there is no division among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement. 1 Cor 1:10.

There will be no strangers ruling in the God Family. We cannot disagree on major issues and still expect to rule with that Government in the Kingdom of God. We are family, and we must be unified. We must be able to give correction, and take correction from anyone! Mrs Armstrong's favourite scripture was Psalm 133:1

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

So in summary:

- 1) Don't cause offence yourself
- 2) If you think someone has offended you –think about it. Don't be offended by the person's weakness or your own hurt feelings. You can of course be offended by any sin involved.
- 3) Pray about the situation
- 4) Bring about Matthew 18 with a right attitude
- 5) Follow through until resolved
- 6) Forgive and forget

Going to your brother is a biblical, God-ordained requirement to ensure that right character and relationships will be built. If we practice this Matthew 18 principle, not only will our own character be built, but we will enjoy much more peace, unity and harmony in all our relationships with each other.

So let's go to our brother when necessary, and deal with true or imagined offences.

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## ***Q&A – Answers to Questions You've Asked***

### ***Question:***

What does God think of tattoos? Are they allowed in the Church of God?

### ***Answer:***

Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16) and, as such, God desires that we look after our bodies in the best way possible. He wants that we eat no unclean foods and do what we can to keep our bodies healthy from the inside. Similarly, God also wants us to keep our bodies on the outside, including avoiding unnecessary body piercings and tattoos. Leviticus 19:28 specifically tackles this question on tattoos: “You shall not make any cuttings (piercings) in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks (tattoos) upon you: I am the Lord”. This is clear instruction against marking the body with tattoos.

Some in the Church had tattoos done prior to conversion. Once conversion, repentance and baptism take place, our past sins are forgiven (1 Cor. 15:3).

**Question:**

What is fasting all about and are there specific days of the year that fasting is required by the Church of God's Faithful?

**Answer:**

We must understand this vital subject! Fasting is not a form of penance or punishment, but it is to be used as a tool to help us get closer to God. Fasting helps us to focus away from the physical and onto the spiritual.

When we fast, we abstain from physical food and our weakened state draws us closer to God. Christ showed us the importance of fasting: "Moreover WHEN you fast..." (Matt. 6:16). This scripture doesn't say "if" you fast, but "when" you fast, indicating that God *expects* us to fast. This same passage of scripture goes on to tell us *how* to fast: "...be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. But you, WHEN you fast anoint your head, and wash your face that you *appear not unto men to fast*, but unto your Father which is in secret: and your Father, which sees in secret *shall reward you openly*" (Matt 6:16-18). We are cautioned against fasting to obtain pity from others or to look righteous, but are encouraged to fast to reap the many spiritual benefits of this most important duty. Therefore, when we fast our demeanor should not show it.

We all face trials and difficulties in our lives. Christ certainly faced them when He walked the earth – only much greater ones than we will ever face! Christ had to overcome the temptation from Satan the Devil to be able to prove that He was the Messiah and Savior! Let us take a look at how Christ prepared for this titanic battle of the ages. Matthew 4:1 states: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted (or scrutinized, enticed, proved) of the devil. AND WHEN HE HAD FASTED FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS, he was afterward an hungered." The *first thing* Christ did to strengthen and prepare Himself for this battle was to FAST! Christ went to a quiet place (the wilderness) and used the time to get as close to God as possible. After Christ had fasted for this duration of time, Satan tempted Christ by saying: "And when the tempter came to him, he said, If you be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread". Evidently, Satan tempted Christ by asking Him to consume physical food and to demonstrate that He had Godly power to turn the stones into bread. Satan was only provoking Christ because he knew full well that Christ had the power to perform such a miracle! Satan thought that Christ would be at His weakest

point after a fast of forty days and forty nights and expected Him to give in to Satan's temptation. He didn't realize that *because of the fact that Christ fasted, He was spiritually at His strongest and able to endure temptation!* Christ afflicted His soul by abstaining (fasting) from physical food, but spent forty days and nights consuming *spiritual* food – living by the Word of God! Christ's response to Satan's temptation was: "Man shall not live by bread alone, *but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God*". On this occasion, Satan tried tempting Christ in different ways but fasting helped Christ and made Him spiritually stronger. He was able to resist any and all of Satan's temptations (Matt 4:5-11).

When we fast we should spend more time than usual in Study and prayer in order to get closer to God. During a fast, we could use the time we would normally use to prepare and eat our meals to further study our Bibles and pray to God - in addition to our usual daily allotted time to study and prayer. We fast to get closer to God which helps us take on His mind. This better equips us to face trials and tests that might come our way (Matt. 4). Fasting also helps us seek God's direction before taking any major decision (see Acts 13:1-3)

To gain the maximum benefit from a fast, it is best to fast on days when we don't have to go to work. This is not always possible, but helps get the most out of a fast. The end-time Elijah, Mr. Herbert Armstrong, set an example for fasting. He would typically start off in the morning with one hour of prayer, followed by an hour of Bible Study, and then devote another hour to meditating on the subject that he studied. He would do this over and over – as often as time and circumstances allowed when he fasted. (If we are fasting before taking certain decisions, our study should revolve around similar biblical examples to help us in our decision making.) Fasting helps us get closer to God, and in doing so we take on the mind of God.

There is only one biblically commanded fast day in the year which the New Testament Church is to observe – the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29, Acts 27:9). The Old Testament Israelites fasted on days during the year which commemorated national tragedies. While the New Testament Church is not commanded to observe these fasts, the Church of God's Faithful *encourages* its members to remember these days by fasting showing thanksgiving to God for the understanding and blessings that He has given His Faithful Church.

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Fasting is a vital and powerful tool to help us overcome and develop spiritual strength. Elijah understood the importance of fasting (1 Kings 19:8), and so did Daniel (Dan 10:2-3). Paul fasted often (2 Cor. 11:27). These men, and others, fasted because they recognized it was profitable to their spiritual wellbeing and closeness to God. Under the administration of the end-time Elijah, brethren were encouraged to fast once a month or at least ten times a year (including the Day of Atonement). The point is, the more we fast in the right attitude, the closer and deeper we develop our relationship with our Creator. We should fast as often as we feel we need to, in order to maintain a tight relationship with God our Father. This is what we need to help us fight Satan and strive to enter the Kingdom of God.