

Belonging to the Truth | Building an Enduring Work of Truth in the Lives of Others | True Relationship

THE SOWER

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Building an Enduring Work of Truth

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Building an Enduring Work of Truth

by Dan Gallagher, Gary Theisen, Karen Theisen & John Schoenheit

The start of each New Year gives us pause to reflect on the events of the past year and look forward to the one ahead. Our ministry has faced many challenges, but with help from God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and with undeterred faithfulness to our vision, we have stayed on track. In many ways, the ability of an individual or an organization to endure in both good and bad times comes from commitment to a vision. That is why we felt it important to devote this issue of *The Sower*, and the year of 2009, to elaborate upon our vision of *Building an Enduring Work of Truth*.

We are employing many strategies to accomplish our vision, and are very thankful to each believer who has contributed to the successes we've seen. Your prayers, financial gifts, ideas, suggestions, and other contributions are greatly appreciated. We are thrilled to report the progress made in many areas, and have every reason to believe this will increase in 2009.

Each day our websites are visited by people from all over the globe, including many places where Christianity is outlawed. This means that people all over the world are enjoying more than 1100 articles (and growing) with biblical truth in a variety of languages. Additionally, we have made improvements to our ministry website, bookstore processes, online event registrations, and much more.

The advent of 2009 begins our ninth year of work on our Bible translation and commentary project, the *Revised English Version*. We have invested a great amount of time and effort in this project, the worthiness of which is now being recognized by many. This will be a great blessing to those who desire a Bible translation free of the traditional translators' biases, and a commentary with easy to find answers regarding verses about which many people have questions.

Also significant is the transformation of the Spirit & Truth Fellowship Community into the Fellowship Network, which more clearly reflects our core value of *liberty*, as we recognize every fellowship being self-governing, yet do so in such a way that we will provide whatever support is necessary for their spiritual care. We believe this is a big move toward building a network of fellowships that are standing with us in both doctrine and practice. We make the teaching of the Word freely available via the Internet, but there is no substitute for an exciting fellowship where like-minded believers can touch each other's lives with the love and light of God. If you are not part of such a fellowship, please consider letting us help you find or start one.

This past year we also purchased a property in Martinsville, Indiana, just north of our Camp Vision. We have known for years that the Home Office in Indianapolis didn't meet our needs or allow for expansion, and we've been praying for wisdom as to where to move. We believe the Lord directed us to Martinsville, and shortly we will begin to produce our first videos at this facility. Our desire is to develop this site for the future relocation of our Home Office. This will mean our staff will have a place where there is room for everyone to work together and where we can better support the needs of our various events at Camp Vision.

There is much more we could report, but space doesn't permit us to do so here. We are filled with excitement and anticipation as we enter 2009. In many ways these are challenging times, but we are confident that as we all work together with the Lord, we can continue to make the Word of God available around the globe, teaching and training disciples. Together we are **Building an Enduring Work of Truth**.

Dan Gallagher, Gary Theisen, Karen Theisen, and John Schoenheit

The Spirit & Truth Board of Directors

Belonging to the Truth

by John A. Lynn

That is the question every human being will at one time or another have to face, and answer. Those who choose to face it in this lifetime, and who come to God for the answer, will be set free by the truth, and eventually gain everlasting life. Those who do not choose to come to grips with this question, and those who go to the wrong source for the answer, will remain in bondage. And one day they will stand face to face with The Answer, Jesus Christ, who will righteously judge them. How each of us relates to truth determines not only our everlasting destiny, but also the quality of our life now.

About 2000 years ago, a high-ranking Roman government official had the opportunity to stand face to face with the only man in history who could perfectly answer this critical question. That official was Pilate, and before him stood Jesus of Nazareth.

John 18:37 and 38

(37) “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone **on the side of truth** listens to me.”

(38) “**What is truth?**” Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.

Pilate asked his question rhetorically, perhaps even throwing up his hands. We know that because it says he went out without waiting for Jesus to answer. Too bad, because “The Answer” was looking at him. Millions of people today are asking that same question, and doing so with the same attitude Pilate had. But you can ask it, stay in the presence of Jesus Christ, and allow the risen Lord to answer it for you.

In the last sentence of verse 37, the KJV reads: “...Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice,” but I think the NIV more clearly communicates the gist of what Jesus said. The fact you can be **on the side of truth** means there is also another side, the side of error, or untruth. I want to be **on the side of truth**, don’t you? The question is: How do we get there—and stay there day after day?

The Postmodern Assault on Truth

The theme for our ministry last year was “Truth Matters.” Interestingly, that pithy phrase is true whether “matters” is a verb or a noun. As a verb, to “matter” is “to be of importance,” so truth matters. In fact, it is of the utmost importance. To “matter” means to “make a difference,” as between good and evil, right and wrong, truth and error, light and darkness, health and sickness. As a noun, “matter” is “something of consequence,” and also “the substance or substances of which any physical object consists,” so the components of truth also “matter.”

In the verses we will consider, the Greek word translated “truth” is *aletheia*, which means “reality” or “the revealed essence of a matter.” Notice that the root of “reality” is r-e-a-l. I don’t know about you, but I want to “get real,” because REAL-ity is always my friend. Capital “T” Truth comes only from God, and the goal of each Christian should be to make His Truth our truth, our reality.

Today, the very concept of truth itself is under assault from what is called “postmodernism.” “Pre-modernism” was the worldview held by most thinking people up until about the mid-1800s, and it was an openness to outside reality, such as historical facts, logical ideas, the laws of nature, divine revelation, and moral principles. Then “modernists,” giddy with the promise of science, claimed that the only truth was that which was testable by scientific rationalism.

Now the cultural mainstream embraces “postmodernism,” a worldview that tries to do without truth altogether. Postmodernists hold that there is no such thing as absolute truth, which, ironically, is itself an absolute! They say that truth is relative, and we each construct our own beliefs, so that what is true for you may not be true for me. The rejection of truth means that attempts by one to persuade another are acts of oppression. Evangelism is considered an infringement upon another’s “right” to his own truth. One of the most destructive beliefs of postmodernism is that words do not have fixed meanings, so we can make up our own meanings for them. That idea has even crept into the Church.

The Two Sides of Truth

So what is the answer to Pilate’s question? Let us allow the Word of God to show us that there are two sides to the coin of truth. Then we will see the various ways we can choose to value this coin.

John 17:17

Sanctify them by the truth; **your word is truth.**

God is the only source of absolute truth, and the written Word of God is the only standard by which to discern truth from error. But God also gave us His Word so that we can take it into our hearts and live it in relationship to others.

John 14:6

Jesus answered, “**I am** the way and **the truth** and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

In the two verses above, we see that truth is both doctrinal and practical, propositional and relational. The point of The Book is to know and love The Man and become like him. Only then will anyone experience what 1 Timothy 6:19 calls “...the life that is truly life.” As the following verses show, the choice is between freedom and slavery:

John 8:31 and 32

(31) To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

(32) Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

If experientially knowing the truth makes one free, then, conversely, believing error about spiritual matters puts one in bondage (and maybe bandage). That points up the practical relevance of truth itself. When it comes to the quality of our lives, it is vital to believe truth and not error about anything that relates to God, Jesus Christ, or any topic set forth in the Word of God.

“THE” truth means that there is only one, and this phrase appears about 165 times in Scripture. The Word of God is truth and, relative to any particular verse, it means there is only one right meaning—the meaning the Author originally intended. It is God’s burning desire that we know and embrace the truth to the end that the truth holds us.

1 Timothy 2:3 and 4

(3) This is good, and pleases God our Savior,

(4) who wants all men to be saved and to come to [unto] a knowledge [*epignosis* = a thorough knowledge acquired by participation] of the truth.

The will of God is that all men come all the way unto a thorough, practically applied knowledge of the truth, i.e., His Word, so that they are free, whole, and fruitful. If that is God’s will, then the will of His antithesis, the Devil, is that they never hear the truth and are thus enslaved, unhealthy, and fruitless. We must fight him using

the whole armor of God, as set forth in Ephesians 6:10-17. It is significant that in verse 14 the belt of truth is the foundation of the whole armor, and in verse 17 the Word of God is the sword of the spirit we are to wield.

Responses to the Truth

Having established that God wants us to come unto a knowledge of the truth, let us now let the Word show us the different ways people respond to the truth, which, by the way, are just like they responded to Jesus himself: some embrace truth, some are indifferent to it, and some try to destroy it. We will first see “what it is not,” and then what it is—God wants us to belong to the truth.

2 Timothy 3:6 and 7

(6) They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires,

(7) always learning but **never able to acknowledge** [*epiginosko*] **the truth.**

Titus 1:13 and 14

(13) This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith

(14) and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who **reject the truth.**

2 Thessalonians 2:10

and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they **refused to love the truth** and so be saved.

Acts 20:30

Even from your own number men will arise and **distort the truth** in order to draw away disciples after them.

Romans 1:18

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who **suppress the truth** by their wickedness,

Did you note the ascending degree of antipathy to the truth in those five passages? Truth is not acknowledged, then rejected, refused, distorted, and even suppressed. Make no mistake about it, “This is war!” and the enemy is employing many willfully wicked people in his assault on truth. Yes, it is a “World War,” but in terms of the weapons being used, it is also a “Word War.” What can we do to win it day by day?

2 Timothy 2:15-18

(15) Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who **correctly handles the word of truth.**

(16) Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.

(17) Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,

(18a) who have **wandered away from the truth...**

What we see here is that even those who come to the truth can stray off course if they do not walk circumspectly, that is, honestly and accountably before God and their brethren. To me, “wandering away” implies a lack of focus, a carelessness about staying on the path of truth. And deviating off course can happen almost imperceptibly, one degree at a time. That is why we each need mature Christians in our lives, true friends who will tell us if they see us heading off course.

Internalizing the Truth

Okay, how about you? How do you desire to relate to the truth? One thing to understand is that when we come into this world, truth is external to us. God's goal for us is to internalize it, as David said in Psalm 51:6: "Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place." We can do that only by seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching the truth such that it gets down into our hearts and comes out by showing up in our behavior. The reason we want to know The Book is to be like The Man.

1 John 1:5-2:5

(5) This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

(6) If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not **live by the truth**.

(7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

(8) If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

(9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

(10) If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

(1) My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. [cp. Ps. 119:11] But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

(2) He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

(3) We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.

(4) The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and **the truth is not in him**.

(5) But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:

God's goal for us is that the truth lives in us to the degree that we belong to the truth, that is that we have so educated our consciences that we are, in essence, slaves to truth. Knowing whether or not we have come to that place is not subjective—the Word says we are to look at our *actions*. We know we belong to the truth when we OBEY God. In that vein, consider the following verses:

1 John 3:18-22

(18) Dear children, let us not love [only] with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

(19) This then is how we know that we **belong to the truth**, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence

(20) whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

(21) Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God

(22) and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

Truthing It

In closing, let us look at the only two places in Scripture where the noun "truth" is made into a verb, and where I think the translators could have handled it better, and more idiomatically.

Galatians 4:16

Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

In the Greek text, “telling...the truth” is the verb form of the noun “truth.” In Greek culture, this was a way of referring to “speaking the truth,” but by not using the verb “speaking” with the noun “truth” as its object, the emphasis was placed on truth, rather than on speaking. We might think of it as “trudging it,” that is, living the truth, or being true, rather than just speaking the truth. When you are true to truth, you will make enemies, and they will be those who respond adversely to truth, as we saw, especially those who suppress the truth.

The other use of “trudging it” is in the context of those with leadership ministries in the Body of Christ, functioning as they should so as to help each believer exercise his personal ministry. Rather than being deceived by the systematic lies of those who oppose the truth, we are to do what the following verses say:

Ephesians 4:15 and 16

(15) Instead, speaking the truth [trudging it] in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

(16) From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

As members in particular of the Body of Christ, each of us is called to put on the mind of Christ, to internalize the Word of God, to hide the truth in our hearts and live accordingly so that our lives glorify our Lord. Only when we hold fast to the truth can we do so. Go to the Word and get a vision of how important you are to God, and of how important it is for you to be a warrior for truth. In Jeremiah 8:18-9:2, God was lamenting the pitiful state of His people, Israel, who had turned from Him to worthless idols and were being crushed. He then said:

Jeremiah 9:3 (NKJV) ¹

“And *like* their bow they have bent their tongues *for* lies. They are not **valiant for the truth** on the earth. For they proceed from evil to evil, And they do not know Me,” says the Lord.

In the Word War raging on earth today, too many dear Christians have swallowed, and are regurgitating, lies about God and His Word that are hindering them from knowing Him like they could. My dear brother or sister, your heavenly Father has called you to be a Word Warrior. You can be valiant for the truth. You can belong to the truth.

Note:

1. Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from the *New King James Version*®. © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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TruthOrTradition.com/belonging**

Livelihood Projects

Helping to Build an Enduring Work of Truth

Reaching people around the world with the truth of God's Word has always been one of our ministry's highest priorities. Since our initial overseas journey in 1991, the first of about a dozen, we have shared the Word with several thousand individuals in a number of third-world countries, and many have believed.

In the Christian Church, too often missionary work has failed because it has been conducted like running a machine across the sea by an extension cord plugged into the United States. As soon as the money (electricity) stops flowing, the missionary work ceases. In order for Spirit & Truth Fellowship to achieve its goal of "Building an Enduring Work of Truth," our efforts must result in an indigenous and self-perpetuating work in each country. This means we must be able to plant the work in such a way that it eventually becomes both self-governing and self-supporting. "Livelihood projects" can be a principal way to make this happen.

Livelihood Projects are indigenous third-world business ventures that Spirit & Truth Fellowship International funds through one-time grants, typically in the range of \$3,000 or less. As a leadership team becomes established in a third-world country, Livelihood Projects will be identified and funded to provide an income stream so the saints can support themselves and fund the movement of the Gospel in their country. The business venture is overseen by and accountable to the Spirit & Truth Fellowship governmental body of that country. As the venture makes profits, the grant will be repaid to that country's organization, with those funds used to start new ventures. When this process succeeds, Spirit & Truth Fellowship International can wean the leadership team of that country off of direct financial assistance and make assistance available to leaders in other countries.

Currently, Spirit & Truth Fellowship International supports international ministers and workers with approximately 10-12% of its total annual budget. You can sow directly into the funding of Livelihood Projects by designating such on your gifts, but please only do so by giving above your normal gifts.

For any additional information on Livelihood Projects or specific projects, please contact Dan Gallagher at Dan@STFonline.org

The Vine

The Fellowship Community Becomes The Fellowship Network

by Dan Gallagher

The Fellowship Network is an association of independent fellowships and churches who have come together for the purpose of their mutual benefit and support through connection with others who hold to the same beliefs and practice.

The recent change in our vision statement to “*Building an Enduring Work of Truth*” has resulted in the need to closely examine all of our strategies and programs. In so doing, we saw the need to change the Fellowship Community to the Fellowship Network. This is not merely a cosmetic change, but rather a fundamental paradigm shift.

In September of 2001, in response to people’s desire for greater connection, the Network of Affiliated Fellowships was launched to provide a framework in which the various fellowships in the United States could interact and support one another. Despite holding to the same general doctrine and practice, up until that time there were a number of fellowships¹ without any connection to others.

In 2002, when we began to promote the idea of becoming a *church*² or a *denomination*, the Network of Affiliated Fellowships morphed into the Fellowship Community. No longer was the emphasis being placed on being connected to one another, rather, the focus shifted to having Spirit & Truth Fellowships. Although every fellowship was always understood to be self-governing, this was heavily overshadowed by the promotion that fellowships “fully embrace” our Statement of Beliefs, Code of Conduct, Statement of Values, Communication Agreement, etc. Clearly, this approach did not promote a sense of autonomy and self-governance.

Spirit & Truth has abandoned the notion of becoming a church, and has no desire to build a denomination. We have returned to the original inspiration of the Fellowship Network being a non-governing entity, facilitated and administrated by us. Here is our description of the new Fellowship Network:

The Fellowship Network is an association of independent fellowships and churches who have come together for the purpose of their mutual benefit and support through connection with others who hold to the same beliefs and practice. The Fellowship Network is a non-governing entity, and is facilitated and administrated by Spirit & Truth Fellowship International. All network participants are self-governing, and retain all of the rights and responsibilities of their liberty in Christ.

Liberty is one of the four values you will find at the core of this ministry,³ and therefore we have no desire to control or direct any local fellowships. We strongly believe that by operating in this manner, fellowships will be better able to look directly to the Lord Jesus Christ to discern their unique role and calling to the community they serve.

Our promotion of autonomy and self-government must be balanced with people’s need for support. As a ministry, we want to support people while allowing them to exercise their liberty. I recently saw this principle demonstrated when I was helping my three-year-old grandson put on his socks. I need to help him in a way that encourages him to learn independence (self-governance). As he struggled to pull up his socks I would point out his errors, showing him how to get unstuck and all the while encouraging him saying, “Come on Seth, you can

do it.” At this age he lacks the knowledge and the skills to do it all by himself, yet if I do it all for him he will never mature. On the other hand if I ignore and neglect him, providing no instruction or assistance, he may grow frustrated and give up altogether. My support for him must be balanced with his needs and my desire for him to become independent.

My relationship with Seth is completely different from the one I have with my adult daughter. In my daughter’s case we have a more mature relationship. She has her own children and is fully independent of me. The way I support her is very different from the way I support my grandson. There are still times when she calls to seek some fatherly advice or when she just needs some help. My ability to influence her is completely dependent upon my efforts to nurture a relationship, and she loves very much to have me visit and provide encouragement.

Our ministry focus is not on building an organization, but on working together to make disciples and build the Body of Christ. We have no desire for ownership over fellowships or the need to brand anyone as a Spirit & Truth fellowship. The Fellowship Network should be able to provide us the means and mutual support to be much more effective in our individual efforts as we serve the Lord and his saints.

If you are part of a local fellowship, please consider becoming part of our Fellowship Network.

Notes:

1. We endorse the Simple Church Model and use the term “fellowship” to refer to any gathering of God’s people. Many times this is a Home Church, but also can include large assemblies, traditional church meetings, simple worksite meetings, etc.
2. The concept of us becoming a “church” proved to mean a variety of things to different people. In 2008 the Board of Directors rejected this idea in favor of maintaining our original purpose.
3. Our four core values are Truth, Integrity, Courage, and Liberty.

The Contender

Building an Enduring Work of Truth

by Dan Gallagher & John Schoenheit

This year Spirit & Truth Fellowship International has adopted our new vision statement of *Building an Enduring Work of Truth*. An organization's vision statement is fundamentally important because it provides clarity of purpose from which can flow focused action. Indeed, changing an organization's vision statement is no small thing because that statement describes the very heartbeat and pulse of the organization. In this article we will explore the intent of our vision, some of its ramifications, and the way it can serve to help us both collectively as a ministry, as well as individually.

Using a bus as an analogy is a great way to express many organizational truths, for each is a collection of individuals. As a bus has a variety of places for people to sit, so an organization has a variety of positions and roles people can occupy. People get on and off the bus, and they come and go from an organization. If we are going to get on a bus, we should know its destination. In the same way, an organization's vision determines its destination. Our vision clearly expresses where we want to go, and thus shows us if we are getting off track. Furthermore, and very importantly, just as the destination of the bus helps one decide whether it is the right one for him, the vision of an organization helps people decide whether being associated with it is what they desire.

Rarely is anything of significance accomplished without a clear vision, and we can think of no greater accomplishment than the redemption of mankind. We should take note that Jesus began his journey to achieve this feat with the public declaration of his vision when he stood before the congregation in Nazareth and read from the scroll of Isaiah (Luke 4:16-21). With the public declaration of his vision he began a move so powerful that it is still shaking the world today. Great visions have great potential to inspire and enroll others. We can conclusively say that Jesus knew who he was and what God purposed for him to do, and that all of his decisions, actions, and plans flowed from the clarity of that vision. In a similar way, all our ministry's goals, strategies, and actions can forcefully spring from our vision, and just like Jesus, our ultimate success will be greatly affected by how focused our vision is and how strongly we embrace it.

So how should we go about determining our vision? Perhaps the most vital part of what Christians should do is summed up beautifully in the words Jesus spoke shortly before his ascension, when he told his followers: "go and make disciples" (Matt. 28:19). This statement, often referred to as the "Great Commission," applies to us today just as much as it did to them over two thousand years ago. There are many noble things Christians can and should do, but all our activities should be anchored in obedience to this command. Certainly, then, our personal and collective vision should reflect our desire to follow this charge.

Along with the Great Commission, the vision of a Christian organization must be aligned with the callings of the men and women who represent its core. As for Spirit & Truth Fellowship International, we firmly believe we are called by God to learn, understand, and spread around the world an accurate understanding of the doctrine and practice of the Word of God.

God's original intention was to dwell forever with a perfect race of people on a perfect earth. This has been His enduring vision, which all His actions have been directed toward fulfilling. We live in the Administration of the Grace of God (the Administration of the Sacred Secret), when it is available to have a very unique and unprecedented relationship with God. Space does not permit us to discuss the fullness of this wonderful administration in which we live, but suffice it to say that God relates to us as our Father.¹

At the moment a person makes Jesus his Lord and believes God raised him from the dead, he receives the gift of salvation (Rom. 10: 9 & 10). He has become a new disciple, a wonderfully unique member of the Body of Christ. Once a person is born into God's family, he begins his journey of discipleship. The heart of Spirit & Truth Fellowship, as expressed in our vision statement, Building an Enduring Work of Truth, is the making of true disciples. This means they understand and act upon an accurate knowledge of God's Word.

Words can mean different things to different people, so it is important that we define our terms and look at the nuances of each word in our vision statement.

Building

We use the word "building" to symbolize the service, or works, accomplished throughout our Christian lives. When it comes to building, the first thing a contractor needs to know is what the owner wants him to build. In Psalm 127:1 God tells us, "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain...." No matter how great the construction project looks, you are wasting your time and effort if you are not building what the owner has ordered. A building project usually begins with a set of architectural plans and specifications that the builder must know and understand. In the same way, our building for the Lord must begin with our understanding God's heart and instructions so our building will not be "in vain."

Jesus cautioned his followers to be very careful how they build, even indicating that he is the bedrock upon which one must build if his work is to endure. The Apostle Paul reminded us of this when he said, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Building upon Jesus as The Rock means that we live our lives as he did. Building upon any other foundation is fruitless.

Luke 6:47-49

(47) I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice.

(48) He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.

(49) But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

Building an Enduring Work of Truth is something that requires the talents and efforts of each of us as individuals, and all of us collectively, as a ministry. A critical question to ask ourselves is, "What am I building?" This could perhaps be stated as, "What kind of disciple am I, and how am I discipling others?" In the case of Spirit & Truth Fellowship, we are building an enduring work of truth by instructing and raising up disciples in the faith.

An

Small words can have big meanings, and we are being very deliberate in our use of the word "an." We are not building "the" work of truth, because that is Jesus Christ's responsibility. The overall construction project occurring in the Administration of Grace is the building up of the Body of Christ, of which Jesus is the Head, and for which he oversees and directs all the work. Our individual and collective efforts are still only pieces in the whole project that he is overseeing.

We believe that each person and every ministry in the Body of Christ plays a unique and vital role. The concept that no one person is more important than any other is expressed in a number of sections of Scripture (1 Cor. 12:12-27, for example). In the construction of a building every tradesperson is important to the overall success of the project. Imagine how different a home would be if we forgot to install the plumbing or the electrical wiring. There is no detail in the construction of a dwelling that does not have a serious impact on the overall quality and usefulness of the home. Additionally, how each craftsman performs his job can have a

serious impact on the others who follow him. In the building of the Body of Christ we have the privilege and responsibility to work with God in His project, just as Scripture says, “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:9).

Enduring

One of the most frustrating things in life is doing a job while knowing it is a complete waste of time. The assurance that you are doing something worthwhile is essential for motivation and success. For Christians, receiving a reward for our work depends upon our laboring with the right heart and attitude. Anything less than this simply will not endure. God tells us that the quality of every person’s work will be tested, and only the works that endure will be rewarded.

1 Corinthians 3:11-14

(11) For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

(12) If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw,

(13) his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work.

(14) If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.

We must always make sure we work with the proper motive. Although what we do is important, how we go about doing it is just as important. Seemingly spiritual acts, if done with the wrong motive, mean nothing to God.² Jesus taught this with his example of two men praying. One, by all external appearances, was a very religious man, and the other a sinful tax collector. The religious man prayed, but his heart was filled with pride, while the other, knowing his sinful state, merely called out to God for mercy (Luke 18:9-14). The humble man, praying from the pureness of his heart, was justified while the other was not.

God cares greatly about the heart, that is, the motive and the intent behind the acts we do. He tells us to do His work from our hearts.

Colossians 3:23 and 24

(23) Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,

(24) since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

This not only applies to us as individuals, but also to our collective actions as a ministry. Our efforts cannot be about building an organization. We must be about God’s plans and purposes, which are about building the Body of Christ. The Lord’s command to go make disciples was not limited by geography, national borders, race, gender, or age. Building an enduring work of truth must be multi-cultural and multi-generational. Only by building this way will the work endure, and yield everlasting rewards for those who lay up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust will destroy, and where our treasure cannot be stolen from us (Matt. 6:19).

Work

The actual work each of us performs in the Body of Christ is different, both because of our uniquely individual gifts and callings, and because of the circumstances of our lives. Too often we worry about “what” we are doing instead of just concentrating on doing the best for God in the situation we are in. Sometimes we can find ourselves in situations in which our options are very limited. God understands that. At those times we must remember that “how” we are serving God, giving Him all our heart, soul, mind and strength, is what is important.

We are each called to serve in our individual ways, and we each have a role to play in the enduring work of truth. If we begin to compare ourselves with others, looking at the flesh, we can become discouraged or lose our vision for our own ministry. For example, it is easy to compare a less visible ministry, say in some kind of

service, with a very visible ministry such as a pastor or teacher, and feel that ministry is less important. Although we are aware that the Body is made up of many parts of equal value, we often forget this from a practical perspective.

Meetings cannot function without servers setting up and thinking through all the details of the event. Where would we be without encouragers who lift our spirits in time of trouble? Is the mother who is instructing her children to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength of any less importance than the teacher up front? Certainly not in the eyes of God. Every tradesman is vital to the overall success of the construction project. So too, each of us has a place and a role to play. After all, you are the only “you” God has.³

Not only do we have different functions, but we must be sensitive to the fact that these can change through time. In the case of the mother, her role at one time demands great attention to her family and children, but as her children mature, she will most likely experience her role widening in many directions outside her home. So too, as men and women mature in the faith, they need to begin to shift from being “doers” of the work to mentoring the younger believers in the work so that godly doctrine and practice continues generation after generation.

Each of the words in the vision statement can be applied to us as individuals and to us collectively, as an organization. Frustration occurs when we are not clear on our roles and responsibilities. There is some “work” that Spirit & Truth Fellowship should do as a ministry, and some that is our personal responsibility. One of Spirit & Truth Fellowship’s roles is to provide believers with tools such as publications, seminars, websites, and conferences for spiritual nurture and growth. On the other hand, Spirit & Truth Fellowship does not run local fellowships or localized outreach, which is an individual responsibility. Spirit & Truth does not conduct any regular fellowships, but it does provide a network through which independently governed fellowships can connect on the basis of common doctrine and practice. Going back to the analogy of the ministry being like a bus, it is a vehicle whose purpose is to help people get where they need to go. And what is important is not the bus, but the riders it is designed to serve.

Of Truth

The phrase, “of Truth,” describes the essence of the work we are building. Jesus declared that he is the way and the truth and the life (John 14:6). Any work “of truth” must be doing *his* work, which is why we often say, “If the Lord is not behind it, we want no part in it.” People sometimes make the mistake of deciding what they want to do, and then seeking the Lord to bless their efforts, but we don’t want to do things that way.

That we are building a work “of truth” is important because it describes and encapsulates what is important to us. The pyramids are works, certainly, but they are works “of stone.” They have been around a long time and they point to the grandeur of a Pharaoh and civilization that once was, but they will not endure, nor are they essential in the lives of people today. In contrast, truth is essential. God is called the “God of truth” (Ps. 31:5; Isa. 65:16), and having a genuine relationship with Him occurs only as we know and live the truth. Truth is essential to personal freedom (John 8:32), and on the Day of Judgment the books will be opened and people will be judged by the truth (truly according to what they have done).

We desire to honor and respect every ministry in the Body of Christ. Just as every person is uniquely called and serves a special role and purpose, so too, each ministry provides a unique function. While our doctrine may flow contrary to what some others teach, we do so in the spirit of the Reformation started many hundreds of years ago. While we recognize the value of the work other ministries perform, we must be true to God’s calling for Spirit & Truth Fellowship, which is powerfully expressed in our motto, “Truth Matters: Spread the Word.”

Much of the work our ministry is doing involves understanding, promoting, and spreading the truth of God’s Word. We understand the principle that sound doctrine is the basis upon which sound practice always rests. This is why much of what God has called us to do is centered around our work of explaining and expounding

the accuracy of the Bible. We also ardently strive to do our best to be both hearers and doers of the Word. Our emphasis is not on merely knowing the truth but living it as well.⁴ This is why our strategies range from research projects such as our Bible translation, the Revised English Version,⁵ to avenues for us to express our beliefs through practice, such as the Fellowship Network.⁶

Countless generations of men and women have preceded us who endeavored to obey Jesus' commands to build an enduring work of truth. In many ways, we stand upon their shoulders, and much of what we are able to do is because of their dedication to this same vision. We too have a responsibility, both as individuals and collectively as a ministry, to do the same in our time, knowing that others who seek truth will follow us.

We are clear on our vision. The "bus" of Spirit & Truth Fellowship International knows where we are headed and it has room for everyone who wants to be aboard. There are many seats to occupy, roles to fill, needs to meet, and jobs to do. The only question that remains for you is, "Do you want to be a part of Spirit & Truth Fellowship in *Building an Enduring Work of Truth?*"

Notes:

1. For more about the Administration of the Sacred Secret and what pertains to it (such as the permanence of our salvation, our relationship to God as our Father, the power of holy spirit each Christian has that enables him to utilize the manifestations of holy spirit such as speaking in tongues, and much more), see Appendix A of our book *The Gift of Holy Spirit: The Power to be Like Christ* or visit TruthOrTradition.com/administration and TruthOrTradition.com/permanent
2. There are many verses of Scripture telling us that religious acts done with the wrong motive mean nothing to God (Cp. Isa. 1:10-15, 66:1-4; Jer. 7:16-19; Hosea 6:6, 8:11-14; Amos 5:21-24).
3. For further study visit TruthOrTradition.com/you
4. For further study read *The Balance of Truth and Love: Valuing Right Doctrine and Right Relationships* at TruthOrTradition.com/balance
5. The *Revised English Version*, REV (trademark applied for) is the Spirit & Truth Fellowship Bible translation project that is in its ninth year of research and is headed by John Schoenheit.
6. The Fellowship Network is a non-governing network of independent fellowships connected on the basis of common doctrine and practice. See the Vine section of this magazine for a full explanation.

Available online at TruthOrTradition.com/building

Partner Profile

John Lydon

Blessings from California. My name is John Lydon, and I attend a fellowship in Pleasanton at the home of Dave and Carol DeMars. It is an honor to share with you why I am a Partner with Spirit & Truth Fellowship.

I was saved back in the late 80's, but the seed sown in me was amongst weeds and in rocky soil and was quickly choked out. Later a bird ate that seed and took a long flight during which it flew over some good soil and planted it elsewhere. A little more than two years ago I was broken and ready for Jesus to be Lord of my life for more than just a moment. I got down on my knees and begged for forgiveness. Then I prayed for fellowship, and returned to the ministry I had left almost two decades earlier.

Before going back, I steeled myself to the reality that things might not be as I had once known, but that no matter what the situation was I would do my best to love and serve. This is exactly what I did, as things were a mess. The hypocrisy drove me to find out why a ministry that claimed to have "the copyright on truth" did not behave accordingly, and where I might find one where people both taught and lived the truth. It was during my search for these answers that I found this ministry. Praise God!

I think it took me about two or three months of due diligence before I became a Partner. During those months of research, the fruit of what Spirit & Truth stands for became self-evident. The totality of the work generated by such a small group of individuals gave evidence that holy spirit power was at work. Everywhere I looked I found doctrine, reproof, and correction from the websites, the books, the tapes, the pamphlets, the seminars, and the events. It blessed me to the max! I HAD TO BECOME A PARTNER!

My biggest obstacle was pride, as my finances were, and still are, almost nonexistent. This was compounded by the erroneous and hard-to-shake teaching I'd received from a previous ministry that your "believing power" was measured by how much money you tithed. I do not give a lot, and some months are easier than others, but every month God and the Lord Jesus Christ provide a way. I know that as my income increases, so will the amount that I sow into Spirit & Truth.

I am a Partner because "Truth Matters," and it is my responsibility to help spread the Word.

God bless you,

John Lydon
Alameda, CA

**To become a partner, go to
STFonline.org/partnership**

Figures of Speech

Zeugma

by John W. Schoenheit

The ability to communicate by using words is one thing that sets mankind apart from all other creatures. God is the Author of language, and no one has ever used language as precisely as God does in the Bible, including His use of figures of speech. When most people say, “a figure of speech,” they are speaking in general terms of something that is not true to fact. However, genuine “figures of speech” are legitimate grammatical and lexical forms that add emphasis and feeling to what we say and write.

God never uses figures of speech haphazardly in the Bible, but He uses them to place emphasis on what He wants emphasized in the text. Recognizing and properly interpreting the figures of speech in the Bible has many advantages. It helps us to understand the true meaning of Scripture, to see what God wants emphasized, and it enables us to more fully enjoy the richness of the Word of God. It is important that we become at least somewhat familiar with the figures of speech in Scripture, of which there are more than 200 varieties.¹

The figure we are going to cover in this issue of *The Sower* is **Zeugma**, which means “yoke,” and refers to the fact that two things are yoked together. The English dictionary correctly defines Zeugma as occurring when two words, or two subjects, are controlled (yoked together) by one verb, when lexically and logically the verb fits with only one of the subjects. Zeugma can also occur with parts of speech other than verbs, such as when one noun controls two adjectives, only one of which is logically appropriate. An example of Zeugma from Genesis will show us how this figure works:

Genesis 4:20 (KJV)

And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and *of such as have* cattle.

Thankfully, the KJV is one of the versions of the Bible that uses *italic* type to let us know what the translators added to the original text. If we take out the *italicized* words and some punctuation (all punctuation was added by translators), we can see the Zeugma perfectly: “And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents and cattle.” People can live in tents, but not in cattle, so the verb “dwell” is not appropriate for “cattle.” The figure of speech Zeugma, however, puts people living in tents and cattle, which is not literal and places emphasis in the verse. The Greeks, like modern grammarians, recognized different types of Zeugma, depending on where the yoking word is in the sentence, but as Zeugma is subdivided into categories, the grammarians begin to differ somewhat about those categories. Nevertheless, those commonly recognized include Protozeugma (the controlling word is first), Mesozeugma (the controlling word is in the middle), Hypozeugma (the controlling word is at the end).

Zeugma often is a kind of Ellipsis, and it is sometimes hard to tell if we should categorize the figure as a Zeugma or an Ellipsis. Furthermore, the point of Zeugma is similar to the point of Ellipsis in that the words that are actually in the text are emphasized, while the words that are omitted are deemphasized. In the case of Zeugma, the controlling word (yoking word), gets the most emphasis. As with Ellipsis, when the translators make the decision not to use *italic* type to show the words they add to the original text, most of the time the English reader cannot see the figure Zeugma or the emphasis that God has put in the text. Thus, the use of *italicized* words is a great argument for reading versions such as the KJV, ASV, Darby, HCSB² or the NASB,³ which *italicize* many words that are added to the original text.

In the case of Genesis 4:20, the emphasis is on the verb “dwell.” From the time of Adam and Eve, people had domestic animals, but Jabal was the first to “dwell,” live, in a tent and herd them. Thus Jabal became the

first of the nomadic herdsmen, among whom are the Bedouins that still exist in the Middle East today.

Another example is in Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 4:12 (KJV)

And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye *heard* a voice.

When we take the *italicized* words out of this verse, which is translated quite literally in the KJV, the Zeugma is clear: when God came to the Israelites, they “saw no similitude [form], only a voice.” Of course, we cannot “see” a voice, but we get the point. The Zeugma is a beautiful way in which God emphasizes that the Israelites did not see Him, while still making the point that they heard Him.

Exodus 20:18 (KJV)

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, they removed, and stood afar off.

Bullinger considers this complex figure one of the subcategories of Zeugma, but we can clearly see the Zeugma. Note that the people “saw” the “thunderings” and the “noise of the trumpet,” which of course they could not see but only hear. This is a wonderful example of how knowing the Zeugma shows the Bible student what is important to God. From God’s perspective, if the hearing and seeing were equally important, then He would have placed the appropriate verbs with their associated nouns, so that the people would hear the thunder and trumpet, and see the lightning and smoke (some versions do add those words for clarity for the reader, but lose the Zeugma in the process). By leaving out any reference to hearing, God emphasizes that the people “saw” what God was doing with their own eyes.

1 Corinthians 3:2 (NASB)

I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,

The NASB correctly translates this verse with the verb “to drink,” controlling both “milk” and “solid food.” This emphasizes the word “drink,” and points to the milk, thus emphasizing the care Paul had for the people he was raising up. He was careful to give them milk to drink, and not put too much upon them without properly building a foundation. Many versions, being uncomfortable with the Zeugma, get rid of it by changing the verb “drink” to the more general “fed,” but the verse is easy enough to understand without that modification, and modifying the verb from “drink” to “fed” loses the Zeugma and thus God’s emphasis.

Luke 24:27 (KJV)

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

This is the sermon that every Christian wishes he could have heard, which Jesus gave to two disciples walking to Emmaus after his crucifixion (and resurrection, which they did not yet know about). They were upset and confused by Jesus’ death, and had concluded that he must not have been the Messiah after all. Jesus taught them about himself, “...beginning at Moses and all the prophets....” He could begin with Moses, because Moses wrote Genesis, but he could not literally begin with both Moses and the prophets. The word “beginning” fits only with “Moses.” The natural meaning of the verse is “beginning with Moses and going through all the prophets,” but the Zeugma lets us know that God especially emphasizes the systematic presentation of the Scripture as well as the Scripture itself, “...Moses and all the prophets....”

Notes:

1. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, reprinted 1968).

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**For further study on figures of speech used in the Bible, visit
TruthOrTradition.com/figures**

True Relationship

by Lesa Collum

“Guess what! Georgiana said ‘Mama,’ ‘Mama!’ She said it this morning, and she’s been saying it all day, and she even said it when I left for work. She knows my name. Isn’t she incredible?” The voice bounding from the other end of the phone is that of my grown daughter, Rachel. Her delight is infectious, and it fills me. My mind flashes to my own babies. So many precious moments, from all-consuming infancy, with its constant care and lack of sleep, to the teen years with the preaching and teaching and letting go. All are as real to me as is the present reality of who they are.

Before we ever knew His name, God was with us in all of our moments. 1 John 3:1a says, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!...” Imagine the joy in the heart of the Father when you first called his name, when you sought out the Lord Jesus and took God at His Word. Did they call out their joy to the angels of heaven? Scripture paints just such a picture. In Luke 15:8 Jesus tells the parable of a woman who, after much searching and despair, finds her priceless lost silver coin. She calls together all of her friends and neighbors to share in her joy. Luke 15:10 says, “In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Can’t you almost hear the Father’s joyous exclamation when you turned to him? “Did you hear? She called out my name, and she’s turned her face to me and she is listening for my voice!”

God calls us his children. Think about what that means, and what God would have us learn from it. Everything we have, we have from Him. What can we possibly offer in return? Hebrews 13:15 and 16 (KJV) provides an answer. “By him (Jesus) therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

God calls praise an act of sacrifice. When I think of sacrifice, my mind immediately turns to Jesus. Hebrews 12:2 and 3 says, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” Jesus Christ had true relationship with his Father. In that relationship, he followed God’s will, even enduring the cross. Because of his sacrifice, we are simply asked to offer “...the sacrifice of praise to God...,” which we are to offer “continually.”

How can we possibly accomplish this? How do we praise God continually? Once again I am reminded that God calls us His children. That alone is an invitation to, and an instruction about, the kind of relationship that He wants with us.

My husband and I have two grown children. They have jobs, and commitments, and schedules to keep. Whereas we certainly do not seek to control them, we are always honored to be included in their lives. Each time they call, our hearts are lifted. Sometimes they call with happy news, sometimes ordinary, and sometimes with a need, but it makes no difference. To be invited into their lives is the warmest blessing.

As His children, God wants that invitation from us as well. He seeks relationship. Not just a fleeting connection that surfaces only when we have need, but real, enduring, relationship. He wants our hearts. Mark 12:30 says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” How do we have this relationship with God? We do it in the same way that we have relationship with those we care about. We invite Him into our lives.

How does your day begin? Sometimes my alarm rings and I bound out of bed with only thought for myself and the list of things that I want to accomplish. After getting showered and dressed, it's off to work in a rush. I jump in the car, and when I start the engine, the radio news is already blaring. How much relationship with my Father have I already missed? At least my husband got a, "Good morning dear," and a kiss goodbye. If I had hit the snooze button one less time, I would have thought to say, "Good Morning, Lord. Thank you for this beautiful day." In my car, what a perfect opportunity to spend some time alone with my Father. Without the distraction of the news, maybe I would have noticed the beauty of His creation all around me. How different is my outlook when I recognize God's blessings and allow gratitude to permeate my soul. How much better I treat others when I take stock of the blessings in my own life. Does this involve sacrifice? Five minutes less sleep, missing a section of the radio news, and focusing less on myself? Such small things for a Father to ask.

Relationship also requires communication, and part of communication is listening. If we listen for our Father's voice, especially taking the time to read the words that are written to us in the Scriptures, then we will begin to recognize His voice and to follow His will in our lives.

For example, when I get to work, do I remember who I work for? "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col. 3:23 and 24). Work becomes a much more pleasant environment if I don't lose sight of the One for whom I work and if I do what He would have me do. Martyred attitudes and petty comparisons drop away when I focus on serving God through service to others. Remember Hebrews 13:16 (KJV): "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Is this sacrifice, to give up a little of myself in the service of others? Perhaps, but even so, God promises that I will "...receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward..."

As a loving parent, God is right there with us through the milestones and the mundane. You will see Him if you look, His arms outstretched and His face looking into yours. Let us take every opportunity to look to Him and to fall into those arms. Let us praise Him when we wake up and when we lie down, in our work and in our play, in our songs and in our hearts. He is our Father. Let us invite Him into every part of our lives and let us develop a relationship that endures.

Available online at TruthOrTradition.com/true

Fuel for the Fire

Building an Enduring Work of Truth in the Lives of Others

by Joshua Anderson

My hometown, Fayetteville, Arkansas, doesn't pride itself with many tall buildings. Our city sports more of a college town feeling. So when a local businessman started construction on a huge building downtown, it got everyone's attention. Unfortunately for the businessman, he ran out of money and the work stopped. Now Fayetteville is crowned with a half-built high-rise.

Jesus once spoke of exactly this sort of situation in a parable about considering the costs of discipleship (Luke 14:28-30). From this teaching we learn that discipleship requires thoughtful planning and consideration. When building others up with the truth, we don't want to make the mistake of the Fayetteville businessman. We don't want to make half-equipped disciples. We don't want to get halfway through our work and realize we're using the wrong blueprint or tools. We're setting out to build an *enduring* work of truth in people's lives, so wisdom demands we apply Jesus' parable to ourselves. I'd like to share with you some of my own thoughts and experiences about discipleship.

First, we must use the right blueprint. The blueprint guides the builder in producing what the architect has drawn up. Since we want to build a work of truth, we need to use the Bible as our blueprint for making disciples. The Scriptures keep our eyes on the big picture of our work, the end goal of discipleship, which is to live a life dedicated to Jesus Christ and his teachings and practices. The process starts with bringing people to Jesus, not just to propositional truths about him (which are important), but to the personal Truth himself (John 14:6).

The Bible, our blueprint, tells us that Jesus Christ is the foundation of Christian work (1 Cor. 3:11). He is the starting point; he is what holds up our work. If we want to build anything for God, then Jesus Christ must be the foundation. Too often "veteran" Christians forget this. Our set of doctrines is not the foundation, nor is our way of doing church. Jesus Christ alone is the foundation.

I've been guilty of forgetting this in the past when speaking to unbelievers about the faith—I have often fervently tried to convert them to my set of beliefs rather than to a committed relationship to Jesus Christ as Lord. Though I told them a lot of truth, I may have never gotten around to actually speaking the Gospel message. Many people I have spoken to came to fellowship for a while, but coming to fellowship and believing the right things about the Bible doesn't give anyone everlasting life. That comes when they confess Jesus as Lord and believe in his resurrection (Rom. 10:9). We must remember that God's call to make doctrinally astute Christians is just that—a calling to make doctrinally astute *Christians*. God first wants all people *to be saved* and then come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). Both are important, but don't make the mistake of putting the cart before the horse, or worse yet, neglecting to mention the horse at all.

Second, we must use the right tools. Paul thought of other people as his workmanship: "Are you not my workmanship in the Lord?" (1 Cor. 9:1; cp. 1 Cor. 3:9). We too must lovingly "work on people." But what tools must we use to build this work of truth in their lives? All too often, the first tool I've reached for is the "Sledgehammer of Truth." This is the tool used to bash people with one's knowledge and ridicule the beliefs of others. Despite its nifty name, this is not one of God's tools, and I've abandoned it altogether. Rather than being puffed up with knowledge, Scripture says we must "gently instruct" those who oppose, "in the hope that God

will grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:25).

If you take a sledgehammer and tear down your neighbor’s house, it doesn’t make your house look any better. Likewise, if we want to build an enduring work of truth in others’ lives, if we want them to see the beauty of Christianity unfettered by harmful traditions, then we must do more than simply tear down everyone else’s position. We have to model a positive, constructive work. Rather than starting a reactionary movement, which focuses on error, we must unveil the truth in all its beauty. We must build lovers of the Truth, that is, lovers of Jesus, and once they submit to him they’ll be willing to submit to his truth as revealed in the Word.

The proper tools for accomplishing this in someone’s life are described in the Scriptures. By a combination of speaking the truth and living it, we invite unbelievers to partake in the outrageously Good News of Jesus Christ. We set forth the truth plainly for people (2 Cor. 4:2), imploring them to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20), preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2), meet together (Heb. 10:25), eat together (Acts 2:46), publicly read the Scriptures (1 Tim. 4:13), “teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Col. 3:16), and stirring up each other to love and good works (Heb. 10:24).

When it comes to building an enduring work of truth in someone’s life, we must consider how God wants to save the entire person, not just their mind and beliefs. He wants all of them. We need the Scriptures as our blueprint for what a spiritual person looks like, so we can be effective coworkers with God in discipleship, and using the tools described in the Bible will help us get the job done.

Note: For further study check out *Reaching out with the Love of God or Christianity: The Come as you are Party* by John Schoenheit at TruthOrTradition.com/reaching

Teens and 20s needed!
If you would like to write a short article for Fuel for the Fire,
please contact us at STF@STFonline.org

Dear Sower

The Birth of Christ

May God Bless you richly in all you do! After hearing your November teaching of the month on “The Birth Of Christ,” I felt compelled to write to you! I don’t know if there is anyone who enjoyed this teaching more than I did (my husband, Lou also enjoyed it very much)!

Thank you, thank you, thank you for teaching the true biblical Christmas story!

I grew up in South Korea 58 years ago and the culture in our community was very similar to what you described in this teaching. Whenever I read the Bible, I always get a better picture than the traditional movies or stories. This teaching is unbelievably better, accurate, and the warmest Christmas story I could have ever imagined, heard, or seen!

Again, thank you for this great teaching. With all our love,

Lou and Mina Hacker
Valatie, NY

Editor’s Note:

To listen to this teaching via our free Podcast, visit STFonline.org/podcast. To read an article on this subject, visit TruthOrTradition.com/retelling

Audio & Video Teachings

I have been very blessed with all your free audio and video teachings and use them frequently in my witnessing. I want to thank you for all you’re contributing to my maturing in Christ.

I am a partner with your ministry and am looking forward to further communications with you.

In His Majestic Name,

Alan S. Cohen
North Adams, MA

Editor’s Note:

Learn more online for free at TruthOrTradition.com/audio and TruthOrTradition.com/video.

The Last Issue of The Sower

The Nov/Dec 2008 Sower was excellent. I was elated by the articles on Joy. I know people are going to be so blessed by it. It is such a pivotal time as well to have a magazine devoted to Joy and God’s Word - especially around the Holiday Season.

Thank you for all you do.
Love in Christ,
Janis Erickson
Wayzata, Minnesota

Editor’s Note:

To read The Sower magazine and share it with a friend, please visit STFonline.org/backissues

Blessed by our Website

I recently visited your website TruthOrTradition.com and think it's great! With the info you post hopefully a lot of non-Christians will become believers. Stay blessed and continue to be a blessing to others.

Wanvelyn
MySpace friend

What is the Church?

Having just finished listening to the Teaching of the Month titled "What is the Church?" (Dec. 2007), I felt compelled to write and express my heart-felt thoughts.

On a scale of 1 to 10, the teaching by Dan Gallagher and John Schoenheit rated a solid 11. It was absolutely outstanding! I plan on listening to it several more times within the next week.

This specific teaching is so rich in loving doctrine as to what God's intent for the Body of Christ truly is. Rather than finger pointing faults of other churches or stating a 'my church is better than yours' mentality, it simply elevates the beauty of our heavenly Father's heart and desire for all of us. One can't help but feel inspired to act in becoming more involved in the 'doing' of God's Word and will after having listened to the entire teaching.

I would HIGHLY recommend this teaching to each and every believer who seeks to know and understand from the heart, 'What is the Church?' I believe you will feel strongly compelled to ACT as I now do.

God bless each and every one of you at Spirit & Truth. Keep up the GREAT work!

Raymond F. McKee
Roanoke, VA

Editor's Note:

To listen to this teaching free of charge via our Podcast, visit STFonline.org/podcast or see page 2 of the enclosed price list

**We would love to
hear from you!**

**Email us at
STF@STFonline.org**