

What Is The Work?

Faith

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I would like to comment on something in Mr. Reid's split-sermon yesterday. It intrigued me, and at first I agreed wholeheartedly with it. I do not mean to give the impression that I do not agree with it now, but I began to see that something else besides what he said needs to be put in here. He said, "My greatest fear is our impatience." I have been very concerned about that, too. I have never expressed it, I believe, to Mr. Reid. I was very happy to see that he was of the same mind as I was regarding this, because that is my concern—that we would be impatient.

A number of years ago, in the early 1970s, I heard a commentary given on Radio KNX in Los Angeles by Rod McLeish. He was a commentator who gave two- or three-minute comments on something that was going on in the news that day. He said in this commentary that Americans have "a concept of the moment." Unfortunately, what he was commenting on was something that had happened in Los Angeles—a terrible weekend at the time, when ten or twelve people died over the weekend through murder. Now we know that ten or twelve people dying over the weekend in Los Angeles is a minor figure. It is a great deal higher now; but because it alarmed Mr. McLeish, he wrote this comment—it was Mother's Day weekend, by the way—that Americans have a concept of the moment. He said, "Whatever the urging, whatever the impulse, whatever the need, whether real or imagined, whatever the problem, impulse, or need, it has to be satisfied *right now, regardless* of whether anything is learned."

We understand that he was just speaking generally. He was not saying that every single person was like that; he was just saying that Americans generally have the desire to follow through on what they feel they need right at this moment. We have been conditioned to be this way. We tend to think almost in split-seconds. We hear reports of things, like a rocket going up in

the air. It is up there for a while, and the commentator tells us they are going to have a *four second* rocket burn to put this thing in precise orbit. *Four seconds*. Not five. Not three. It has got to be exactly *four seconds*.

Every hour, on the hour, we can set our watch, because there is a nice, pleasant little tone at the top of the hour—bing!—so that everybody knows the *precise second* it is—"It is exactly, precisely, 3 pm"—and on and on, every hour. When we came out here on the airplane, the airplane was supposed to leave its stall at **9:03**. Not "five after nine." Not "nine o'clock." "Nine oh three."

I noticed this the other day when I was looking through the paper. On the front page of the paper, they had this little blurb about the baseball game that was going to be that night. Can you imagine this? The game was going to start at precisely **8:37** because of advertising time on television. At 8:37, the umpire is waiting there for the second hand to come around, and he says, "Play ball!" It is 8:37, and the advertising is over. It did not actually happen that way, but that is the way they schedule things, even in the world of baseball.

Almost the whole American economy is based on this. Maybe one reflects the other, but nonetheless we live in a credit-buying system. It has been made so easy by businessmen to get people to buy simply because they have a piece of plastic in their wallets. It used to be that we waited until we had the money in hand and *then* we went and satisfied our desire. Now, though, we can get it on a moment's notice, because we have this little piece of instant money that is in our back pocket.

Not only that, but when you go into a store, *everything* is programmed—from the music to the way the store is laid out. They try to send you through the store in a certain direction. The colors are made to stimulate visually. Everything is patterned and programmed to get you to buy on impulse. Thus, we have been predisposed to think in these parameters and therefore to act without giving a lot of serious thought about what we are about to do.

Unfortunately, we come into the church with these same kinds of motivations about doing things. It does not work the same way with God.

We cannot apply the impulse concepts of Americanism and our culture to God and His way of doing things. I will tell you why; it tells me in Isaiah 55: 8:

Isaiah 55:8-11 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

We do not think as God does, yet it is His aim that we *do* think as He does. That is His very purpose. We have a collision of thinking processes. When I look at God's purpose and when I look in God's Word, we are talking about huge, immense spans of time, are we not? So much so that the Bible describes our entire life being as nothing more than a moment in time. We are like the grass of the field: it springs up, and the first thing you know it withers and dies. In the same way, a span of 70 years or 120 years passes just like nothing; and we seem to go from the scene.

God does not view time in the same way that we do. It is one of the ways that He is vastly different from what we are. We also have to understand that we are the way we are in terms of time because we know that our life is going to be over. Of course, His is endless. However, we do need to think more as God does, and I think that will help us to be less impatient to "get on with it," to get done, to see something accomplished.

This is what I began to think when Mr. Reid said that. Later on, though, at the dude ranch, in thinking things through as I was doing some of the activities, other things began to come to mind, and this is what I thought about: Do you know what Israel's major problem was while they were in the wilderness? I would have to agree that they were very impatient. However, this is what I was thinking at the dude ranch yesterday: The impatience was the *effect* of another problem.

This is what I want to get at with us, in terms of the things that Mr. Pope began to express there in his presentation. Where are we going? He expressed it well: We do not know! It might be very comforting to you for us to say, "Well, we have this plan; and we are going to do this; and we are going to do this; and it is going to be accomplished in this amount of time here, and in this amount of time here, and in this amount of time here; and during this period, we will do x number of things." That is the way businesses operate. *Now* I understand what Mr. Armstrong was saying when he said, "This is a work of faith!" Yes, it has business aspects to it, but it is a *work of faith*.

Whenever I heard that the Worldwide Church of God was coming out with a five-year plan, I said to myself, "Uh oh." I wondered about that. I hoped—I really did hope!—that I had the wrong concept of what they were doing, because when we begin to do that, are we not limiting God? We are actually manipulating *Him* by saying this kind of thing. At least, that was the way I judged it; and as I have just expressed to you, I was hoping that I had the wrong impression. I am not sure yet that I have the right impression of what they were doing, because I never felt as though I really got an adequate explanation of what they meant by a "five-year plan."

In Hebrews 4, stated very succinctly, was Israel's major problem:

Hebrews 4:1-2 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, *not being mixed with faith* in those who heard it.

Israel's major problem was that they walked through the wilderness by sight! We understand that God was not trying to convert them at that time, and we can look back and learn from that situation. He did it for *us*. He was not punishing them because they were unconverted; He was leaving this example for you and me so we would understand that we are not to do what they did. He gave us their bad example, and then He gave us *good* examples in others, as well. Probably the primary example among men born by natural processes was the "father of the faithful," Abraham. Mr. Pope told you that

what set Abraham apart from everybody else up to that time was that he walked by faith, *not knowing where he was going*. As such, then, he became "father of the faith-full." He is the progenitor; he is the primary example among men; he is the father of those who are living by faith. He is the father of those who are *full of faith*.

God showed us another example in that trek through the wilderness, in that the spiritual trek that we are taking—our pilgrimage—is going to have certain characteristics. The most obvious is this: they did not go to the Promised Land—representing the Kingdom of God—in a straight line! They wandered all over the place, seemingly. I want you to understand this, though: The wandering was purposeful! It was God who was in the cloud; it was God who was in the pillar of fire; it was God who was purposefully zigzagging them all over the place. He wanted to see whether these people were full enough of faith even to follow by sight where the cloud and the pillar of fire were going. That is an example to you and me. Are we going to be full enough of faith to follow the zigzag course by which He is going to take us into the Kingdom of God?

It would have been so nice to have just signed on, as we might say, way back when we were baptized. We committed our life and—*zoom!*—He took us right under Mr. Armstrong, and everything went very nicely, hunky-dory, smooth; and there was constant growth and constant spreading of the gospel; and there were no problems within the work . . . right on out to the end. He did not do that. Any of you who have been around any length of time know that the work of God under Mr. Armstrong went in many different directions.

We see here that, despite the fact that God was in the cloud and in the pillar of fire, Israel was walking by sight. Thus, they were impacted by virtually everything that they saw. Their spirituality went up and down. It was, we might almost say, awful the way they responded to situations. God gave us a bad example, and He gave us a good example.

Let us look a little bit further at that good example in Hebrews 11. By saying "a good example," I do not mean to imply that Abraham did everything right. He did not. He was a man. God recorded what he did do, though. God also recorded how he rescued Abraham from those situations.

Do you think that it was wise for Abraham to go down to Egypt? He apparently did that on his own. There is no indication that there was a famine in the land at the time that actually *drove* him down there, as God did with Jacob to get him down there with Joseph. Abraham did that on his own. Because Abraham was faithful in his life, God rescued him from that. He got out of there by the skin of his teeth and God's mercy. Otherwise, he might have lost his wife and also his life. If God had not intervened it is very likely—and Abraham knew this—Sarah would be allowed to remain alive and be part of the harem, but Abraham would have been put to death. That is what he was scared of. However, God intervened, and He got him out of there.

There were other things that Abraham did. I will not say that they were great sins, but he deviated from the way. Again, because of his overall faithfulness and because of the purpose that God was working out in his life, God intervened and rescued him from those things and put him back on the right track once again.

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Hebrews 11:15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

The enticement to go back was always there for those people, but they were not *mindful*—their minds were not full—of "going back to the world." What did they do?

Hebrews 11:16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

They kept their eyes on the true homeland that God had revealed to them. They had faith in that. Even though there were opportunities to deviate from

the path, because of their general, overall faithfulness, God would forgive them. God would rescue them and put them back on the track once again.

What I am saying is this: My major concern is whether we have faith that God is in this little work. If we see God in the picture, then we are *not* going to be impatient and we are not going to make knee-jerk reactions to circumstances and situations within it. However, we are going to continue to do what we should always do. As Mr. Baker said in his sermonette, evaluate: evaluate the fruit; evaluate what we are doing; evaluate our conduct.

My wife said to me this morning that when we came into the work in 1959, we had no trouble trusting Mr. Armstrong. The reason was that we had proved that God exists; we had proved that He has a work going on; and we had proved *where* that work was going on—and the proof that we had was that Mr. Armstrong was preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. Mr. Armstrong was preaching the keeping of God's commandments, and we could see what he was doing. The evidence was everywhere! We did not have a great deal of difficulty with that.

Do you know one of the major reasons why *you* are here today? You are here because you were evaluating from where you have come; and you made the decision that you did not trust those people anymore, because the fruits of what they are doing are no longer evident. They no longer fit with what it was like when *you* came into the church of God. Therefore, you made a decision to leave that for your own spiritual good.

We want to make sure that you continually look for the evidence. We also expect something from you in return: that you pray for us, that God will continually purify us—oh, that hurts. I almost hated to say that. Sometimes that is painful—that He will guide and direct us, and that He will open up the doors before us. When I say "doors," I mean the doors *He* wants open. What I am asking you to pray for is that we will be able to see them.

I do not think that Mr. Armstrong, in 1933, when that person asked him if he would like to appear on his radio station, *knew* that God was opening a door. Nonetheless, he went through it, and it became the means by which God began to spread the gospel around the world. See, it began in a very small way through a door which God opened up before Mr. Armstrong. Please

continually look for evidence and be praying for us. Understand that, as you look for the evidence, that is why you are *here* and not *there*.

We have objectives that we would like to see accomplished. Mr. Pope mentioned that we are moving into an office very soon. That is a trial for me. I have worked out of my home so long that it is not easy for me to think in that kind of parameter. I will tell you why I somewhat fear it: from past experience in the world and knowing what kind of personality I am, I have *never* done well in office work. By that, I mean going to someplace away from home and having to be confined to a space that may be fifteen feet by fifteen feet, as an example. I am a very *activity-oriented* person. I am *antsy* like hardly anybody you have ever seen in your life. If I sit down at a desk and begin to work, I actually start feeling as though I am going to *explode* any minute. I mean it! My chest actually gets filled with a pressure, and I have to get *out of there!*

What I usually do—and I am free to do this at home—is leave that place and go out and cut the grass. Even then, I have not stopped working; I *think* while I am cutting the grass. I am burning up that stress while I am walking around the yard. I have always thought best, it seems, when I am doing something else. That is when I seem to get my best thoughts. To move into an office and be confined there is going to be a very great trial for me.

Not only that, I have always—these last 25 or so years—worked with my wife around. She does not always get the feeling that I am there, even though I am. Now I *will not* be there. I have always taken a great deal of comfort in knowing that *she* is there, and that if I begin to feel that I am going to explode, and I have already cut the grass, I have somebody else to talk to. When I was in the Worldwide Church of God, I had the outlet of getting in my car and going to visit somebody. That was not only a necessary duty, but it was something that I enjoyed—again, because of the thinking factor. I prepared most of my sermons while I was driving. Now I do not get that. I do not have that opportunity because a shift has taken place in my life.

At any rate, we are going to open an office soon. It is just needful that we do that. We also are to the place where we need to hire somebody. Right now I feel our greatest need is for a writer/editor. The reason for this is that we want to try to bring out more material at a faster pace. We are beginning to

get the financial resources to be able to do it, but we need somebody who is like-minded to be working there with us.

I feel that, right now anyway, our next booklet ought to be the one on Laodiceanism ["The World, the Church, and Laodiceanism"]. For a good while I thought that, maybe, one on government ought to be next; but the government series was seven sermons long, and that might be too big for us to chew right now, too time consuming. We still need more practice at what we are doing. Because of this, I feel that the booklet on Laodiceanism might be the better one to work on at this point, since it was only three sermons long.

I also feel that it is timelier, because Laodiceanism is the dominant attitude in the United States of America—not in the church, although it is there, too. Since Laodiceanism is the dominant attitude in the entire United States of America, it is coming from the world into the church; and the church members are absorbing it. They are merely reflecting what is out there. Therefore, a booklet on Laodiceanism has a dual application: it is something that can go to the world as well as edify those who are also part of the church. Right now, it is *the* dominating attitude in the church of God, and really it is a *lack of faith* that is exhibited in this attitude. It is an idolatry that is exhibited in *attention to other things* and a lack of commitment. The Laodicean is busy taking care of the cares of the world. His attention has been broken. A Laodicean is a converted person, but somehow or another, the spirit of this world has been allowed to dominate his thinking.

The work of God is not always the same. Mr. Armstrong began on radio, but he finished on television. They are *not* the same medium. The presentation of the gospel takes on a somewhat different cast on the one from the other. Many of you know this is true. Even when we consider Mr. Armstrong's age factor, you will recognize that the radio broadcasts were *full* of dynamic energy. I mean, he was *really* throwing himself into that; and you could feel the enthusiasm and the drive that was emanating from him, out through that microphone, and into the speakers in people's homes. It was not the same way on television. It was a more visually oriented approach, with less attention paid to the dynamics of the delivery. The approach changed, even though the message did not change.

Even in that area, the work of God is not always going to be quite the same. There were times when the *Plain Truth* was exceedingly important to the work. There were areas of the world where the *Plain Truth* was far more important than any broadcast ever was. The approach to the people was a little different. Sometimes the WCG got into trouble in the way they did things. You have probably heard of the time that we advertised in the Indian edition of the *Reader's Digest*, not realizing that there were more English-speaking people in India than there were in England!

The work in Australia, which was expected to pay for that, was broken by the response. It took *years* to recover from that. Probably many of the people who requested subscriptions to the *Plain Truth* did not get it for years, because Australia did not have the money to do it, and for whatever the reason, the money could not be legally or lawfully just transferred to Australia from either the United States or Canada. I do not know what all the considerations were. I know that it broke the bank in Australia. It was a sincere effort that went wrong.

Do you know what the number-one booklet was up until about the mid '50s? Was it *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*? No. Was it *1975 in Prophecy*? No, because that had not even been published yet. How about *The Book of Revelation—Unveiled at Last*? No, it was not that either. It was *The Tongues Question*. Do you know why? The people that booklet concerned were the ones being hit by the broadcast—Pentecostal, Assembly of God types; Evangelical Christian types! That is the booklet they wanted. For many, many years that was our number one booklet, but they do not even publish it anymore. The approach became different.

In Hebrews 11, I want us to see that there are scriptures which show that the zigzagging of the cloud is something that is guided by God, because the work of God is not always the same.

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

The work of God done in the days of Noah by a preacher of righteousness was not just to preach but also to build a boat. That was *the* work of God then. I do not know exactly what he preached, other than to say he preached about sin and about what these people were doing with their lives. Whether he actually preached what we might call a semblance of the gospel, I do not know.

In Nehemiah 2:17-18, the work of God in Nehemiah's day was rebuilding the wall around the city. That was *the work* and it is called *the work* there. What was the work of God in Ezra's day? The work of God in Ezra's day was to rebuild the temple—at least, to get it functioning once again. Once that was done, then God used Ezra to pull the books of the Old Testament together and to edit them, update them. That was the work of God that took place then.

In the time of Jesus, the work of God was to begin the spiritual preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God and to begin the church. Then, in the days of the Apostles, the work of God became a preaching of the gospel around the world to begin to fill in the membership of the Body of Christ—the Church of God—and to witness to those that were unaware of it.

The reason I am going into this is that we have had people leave us already, claiming we are not doing a work! You see, to them *the work* is to be preaching to the public. I think that it is so interesting that the organizations they chose to go with are not really preaching to the public. They are preaching to the Worldwide Church of God. I cannot find anywhere in the scriptures where it says, like in Matthew 28:18-19, "Go you therefore into all of the *church of God*, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." The overall commission is to *preach to the world*. If God so leads us, that is what we will do: we will preach *to the public* the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

We will *not ever* aim our message at the Worldwide Church of God, although it is necessary *at this time* to make publications that those in the Worldwide Church of God can relate to. Yet we are trying to write in such a way that, by and large, what is in those things like in *Guard the Truth* is something that will be able to be sent to the public. We may have to make

revisions down the road to make it more "public-oriented"; but since we are building on what God produced through Mr. Armstrong, it is necessary at this time to do what we are doing.

The focus of the work of God has got to be God's Word and God Himself—not any specific religious organization, be it the true church or be it the false church.

Notice Philippians 1. I just want to extract something from this.

Philippians 1:12 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.

Then he tells how he was able to preach in some way to the palace guard, and the brethren (verse 14) became confident and were actually encouraged by the things through which the apostle Paul was going.

Philippians 1:15-18 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

I want you to see that verse because of what Paul, an apostle of God, was toward those "out there." First of all, I want you to notice that there were others who were apparently not part of, we will say, "Paul's group," or "Paul's converts," those whom Paul was serving as an apostle of God. However, they were "out there" preaching the gospel. They had the truth. I want you to notice that Paul acknowledged that they were there, and he did *not* say they were false apostles. He did not say they were false ministers. He *did* disagree with the way that they were doing what they were doing.

When we update that to the present time, we get an indication that there are "out there" the Garner Teds, the Gerald Flurrays, the Fred Coulters. There are the David Frasiere, and the Raymond Coles. According to the listing of the

Churches of God, there are at least 24 that have spun off from the Worldwide Church of God. In addition to that, because Ritenbaugh is not in there and Flurry is not in there, I have heard that it is somewhere near 40 or 41, actually, that have spun off from the Worldwide Church of God.

With the information in this verse, I am *not* going to condemn those people. God did not do it through the apostle Paul, and I do not feel we have the right to do it. However, I do want to make sure that, as I am running, that it is God who has sent me, and Ritenbaugh is not running on his own. I do not want to be guilty of preaching out of selfish ambition, insincerity, or from envy or strife. God's Word—His truth—has to be the focal point of the message, with the acknowledgement that those people out there who formerly were part of the converts that God made through Mr. Armstrong are there for whatever the forces were at work in their life and that God is continuing to work in them, and He *will* work in them. Just allow God to be the One Who brings people to us. If we can serve them, if we can help them toward the Kingdom of God, that is what we want to do, seeing that God has entrusted them to us. Paul found fault with the way they were approaching things, but he did not find fault with the fact that they existed. He did not call them false ministers.

There is a great deal of disagreement out there regarding Mr. Herbert Armstrong. It is becoming incumbent upon us that we are going to have to make a statement with regard to our relationship with Mr. Herbert Armstrong. There are some out there who virtually idolize the man—even though they may deny it, all of the fruit of what they are doing indicates that he is actually the focus of what they are preaching and proclaiming. They will put up billboards that they are coming in the spirit of Herbert W. Armstrong. ***Why can we not come in the spirit of God?*** They are using Mr. Armstrong to their own ends! It is *God* we are supposed to be representing, *not* Herbert W. Armstrong.

When I say there are those out there who are taking advantage of his name—and for all intents and purposes, they are worshipping him—there are others who hate that man's guts and the fact that he even existed. There are others who agree with him doctrinally, but will run him down personally; they have attitudes of bitterness toward him. The truth is somewhere in the mix of all of those things.

When we look in the scriptures, I think we can come at least to these conclusions. You can write down Revelation 21:12-14, where the apostle John is describing New Jerusalem, and there are 12 whose position is unique. There are only twelve as part of the foundation of that city, which means that even the apostle Paul, who wrote more books of the Bible than anybody else, was *not* of that status. As great as he was—he said he worked harder than anybody else—he was not part of the twelve. They stand unique. Mr. Armstrong was not an apostle of that rank. He is more closely associated with the apostle Paul. Paul himself, in I Corinthians 15:7-9, described himself as being one born out of due season.

In II Corinthians 12:12, he said that those people in Corinth had witnessed the signs of an apostle, even though he was not one of the original 12. Even though he was one born out of due season, he very definitely was an apostle, and he witnessed the signs of an apostle. I feel that Mr. Armstrong fits in that category. He was an apostle, because the *signs* of an apostle were there. Do you know anybody else who did what he did in the twentieth century? I do not. He is also, therefore, as the apostle Paul said, "our father in the faith." He was the one who was used by God to *beget* us with the spirit of God. We admire him. We respect him as a result of those things. He holds a position of honor, and we look to him with that kind of regard. But we are not going to make him the centerpiece of what we are doing. I do not think that would be fair to God.

There is probably no area in our spiritual lives where we have received more damage and perhaps more misinformation than in the area of *government*. I Corinthians 11:2-3 makes it clear that in the smallest institution, which is the family, God makes it very clear what His form of government is. It is hierarchical; it is "from the top down." We are *not* going to abandon a hierarchical form of government. That would be to turn our back on the truth of God. God shows things in very simple terms. The concepts are there.

On the other hand, we have been *damaged* by a hierarchical form of government. Why? It was not the form—it was not the structure—it was the administration of it that was the problem.

I daresay that most of you are here because of a *misadministration* of government. If you ever received any damage, it was because of that. I also want to make very clear that from what I know of Mr. Armstrong, hearing him speaking and being with him at least a little bit personally, I know that what I have seen with my eyes in church congregations and what a lot of you and others have told us have occurred in church congregations were *not* problems that had their source in him.

Family government is hierarchical, but it is not intended to be *autocratic*. Sadly, many people have the idea that all a person in authority has to do is somehow speak the word and the problem will go away! Such a person must not understand human nature. There is no higher authority than God. He speaks the Word all the time in His book. Do the problems go away? If God cannot do it, how in the world can a man do it? We have got to show a great deal more patience and restraint and a great deal more concern for the well-being of people's psyche in this group if we are really going to love one another.

In Ephesians 5:21 and I Peter 3:7, we have instructions given to families. Peter said that a husband was to dwell with the wife with *understanding*. That is not autocratic! The husband is to give *honor* to the weaker vessel. Do you know what *to give honor to* means? It means we give honor to those that we respect, either to the person or to the office. What enables you to give honor to somebody? I will tell you what it is. It is because we have placed a value on the person—either the person, the office, or what they have done. That is what that word *honor* means. "Dwell with them, placing a *value* upon them."

Husbands, how valuable is your wife? You are going to treat her in direct proportion to the value you place on her. If you think that she is nothing, you are going to treat her like an old crock-pot that you kick around, and you are going to be autocratic, not considering at all that wonderful life that is there, that is every bit as valuable as yours. If you place a high value on her, though, you are going to listen to her. You are going to listen to the words she says. You are going to hear her heart speaking. That is the way it has to be with the officers of this church. Elders and deacons have to look beyond, and look into the heart of that person and not immediately take offense

because somebody does not immediately respond the way that they think they should. Maybe they *did not* respond in the right way, but *why*?

This is what I am trying to get at here. Somehow or another, the hierarchy has to let everybody know that they are *valuable* and that we give honor to you. Is not that what Paul said in I Corinthians 12? We give honor to what, to whom? Our weaker parts, those that are less honorable. In an autocratic system, eventually the government becomes condescending and paternalistic.

I really appreciated a comment that Mr. Henson made when we were up there in Park City, because it just clarified something; it made it so crystal-clear to me. He said that the church is becoming *Protestant* in doctrine, but *Catholic* in government. The Catholic church's hierarchical government has gotten to the place where they say, "Do not worry about doctrine; do not read the Bible; do not really think; we will take care of you—you just trust us. We will do the studying for you. We will write these things out. You just keep on going here, and everything will be all right. Christ will take care of it," and so forth. All the while, our character is being warped out of position because we are not making the decisions ourselves. We are not thinking; we are not really a free moral agent. We have given our soul and spirit over to somebody else. God does not want us to go in that direction. We would really not be thinking individuals.

I have said to groups that this is scary, and it is, because all the controls are internal—inside of you. That is the only way you will ever be free. I submit to you that that is what God wants. Please remember, I did not say we were getting rid of the hierarchy at all. The hierarchy is to guide. It is there to set direction and to carry out the functions of the work. Governmentally, though, your responsibility is to God.

I want to show you a verse that will just about make your eyes bug out. Who wrote I Corinthians? The apostle Paul! He was an apostle, right? Great authority! What would you do if Mr. Armstrong said to you, "I want you to be at such-and-such a place at such-and-such a time"? What would you do? Let me add another thing into the mix: What would you do if he told you to do that, but you felt that you had something else to do that was more important? We are not talking about sin here; we are talking about following orders.

I Corinthians 16:12 Now concerning our brother Apollos, I *strongly* urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time; however, he will come when he has a convenient time.

Apollos told the apostle, "I am sorry; I have something more important to do." Does Paul give any indication of being offended? Does he give any indication that Apollos did something wrong?

We have been taught that "you obey without thinking." That is *wrong*. In every situation, *God wants you to think!* It is not wrong even to tell an apostle, "I am sorry; I feel I have something else that is more important at this time." That is not heresy! That is the truth of God. It is right there. God put that in there to show you that you are a free moral agent. Sin is not involved in this. We are not talking about the law of God. We are talking about a circumstance that arose, and I do not think there is any indication that there was disrespect. Apollos simply felt that he had to do something more important at that time—even though an apostle was strongly urging him to fill this need for the sake of the church.

Now, do not go running off, rebelling. This is why I said it is scary stuff. All the controls have to be internal. I will tell you, if one of us asks you to do something that is reasonable and right, and you really do not have a good reason for not doing it, then you are in trouble—not with us, with God. We are not really the authority; God is. Think. You are responsible first to God, then to the body.

One of the things that led me to think this way is that people were explaining to me that they were hurt. Gradually, I began to see that in large measure the problem was that the lay-members have been left out of the loop. Nobody ever asks them what they think, how they feel about something. Nobody ever says to them, "Well, we have this kind of doctrinal problem, or that kind of doctrinal problem. We are looking into this question, or that question. What do you think about this? Do you have any ideas? What has been your understanding? What have you studied?" This has to do with procedures within the church—in each congregation—and policies.

What happens, even though it may not be intended, is that a small group within the church—a local congregation—will do the planning for almost every event, and the member just shows up. I am not saying that this is entirely wrong; please do not get me wrong here. I am describing something really in an extreme so that we can see it clearly; but, again, what that tends to do is produce what I have been calling the "welfare mentality." The government does everything, and we just show up for the event. Individual creativity and initiative become stifled. Look at the talent that is here, in 200 people—I guess there are about 130 adults out of that. It is mind-boggling what can be done, if it just has expression within the framework of the right way.

Our problem is this: How can we implement it? What is the vehicle by which the hierarchy can access all of that ability, all of that wisdom that is out there, that God has given to us? How can we do it without confusion? How can we do it without a sense of feeling attacked, set upon, put on, or as though there is a rebellion going on? How can we do those things? That is what has to be determined: a vehicle or a means by which this can be put into practice.

I can see from my own experience that it will tend to work better in smaller groups. The larger the group begins to become, the more structure seems to be called for. However, even if we begin to become large, we do not want to lose that feedback and wisdom that is out there. We are going to be better for it if we can find the means to be able to do it. I will not say to you that I know what the means is. The actual, practical aspects of it have, at least in part, escaped me.

Many of you became excited because you heard that there was a rebellion taking place within the congregation. Ritenbaugh had a meeting with 14 people—it turned out to be 19 people. No, there was no rebellion taking place. It may not have been done entirely right—I do not mean that everything was done right—but there was no rebellion taking place. There was nothing going on in there. We are trying to find out how we can make things work. We are not going to be doing things right altogether in this at first. We are going to be making mistakes. However, I am trusting that

because you are converted that the controls are going to be internal, and you are going to restrain yourself as we work around this and come to understand what needs to be done and tap that wisdom and experience that is out there.

I want you to understand that you are looking at an individual that is less interested in power than anybody else you have ever seen. I am just not interested in it. If anything, it frightens me. Do you know why? Because I have faith. I know that no power on earth can move me out of this position. I believe that. If He put me in it, He only can take me out of it. Because I have it, I do not look upon people who disagree with me as though they are trying to take away my job or take away the work, or think that they are somehow rebelling. Sometimes they might be, but I want you to understand that is not the way I am going to be looking at you, so that you know the doors are always open. You have access to me. I may not always understand even from where you are coming. I may not be able to see it from your perspective, but I am not afraid that somehow or another you are rebelling. We may not do it right, but nonetheless I am not afraid of that.

One final thing that Mr. Armstrong used to say often: God prepares those whom He uses. He used to talk about how he felt that he was prepared of God in the advertising world. I have tried to think of this in relation to myself, and I think, "What kind of preparation did I get by striking an arc in welding?" I do not know. One thing I know for sure is that when I pulled that hood down over my head, I was in my own little world. I was working away on my welding, but I was thinking about something else. That was good. It enabled me to do a great deal of thinking. I could be alone with my thoughts in the dark, looking out the visor of that hood. In the last twenty-five years that I have been an elder, or the last thirty-three years that we have been a part of the Church of God, He has prepared me to be a pastor. I do not know that He has prepared me for anything else; we will just have to see.

That is the way we began. I told those people at that meeting there in Southern California, in Orange County, that that is what I could see that God had done. He had prepared me to be a pastor and to pastor those people that He had converted under Mr. Armstrong and perhaps also converted under Mr. Tkach. That is where my vision is right at this moment—that of a pastor.

Is the work of God on hold for a while? In a way it is, because the first thing we are going to have to do is get stabilized and reoriented—reoriented back to living by faith. That is what I see as my immediate goal: to get to where we are living by the Word of God and not by the sight that we see an institution going in; where we are following the *right* cloud and the *right* pillar of fire; following the light rather than some kind of corporate organization.

I feel that is my first responsibility, and as we are able we *will* continue to work toward preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the public. That is where the booklets come in. I feel that before we can go to the public, we first have to have a reservoir of information that we can offer to them. The spoken word is fine for understanding a certain amount of motivation. It is the *written word*, though, that really counts in conversion, because people really need to be alone with their thoughts and alone with a resource to which they can turn time and time again to see whether or not what they are reading is true and to really think and meditate on those things.

We will continue to lay a foundation and get us reoriented that way, and then, along the way, we will continue to produce booklets, and we will work toward preaching the gospel—perhaps on radio. I do not know.

We could go into that, but we have run out of time. I have spoken way over time. Thank you for your patience.