

## **The Ministry**

### **Trusting Our Ministers**

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When I was a man of 24 and just getting out of the army, I had one small job and went to work for a small national food company, called Jerky Foods. I started out on the order desk with the idea of me going into outside sales. It was good place to start, I got to understand how the plant worked and how the shipping worked, and how research and development worked, so when it came time to go out, I was well schooled in just what I had to do.

At that time our company sold all vegetable plastic shortening. Plastic shortening does not mean there was plastic in it. It would be like Crisco, your solid shortenings. In 1954 the restaurant industry was very small, not like it is now, and our primary source of customers was the retail bakery-type trade. We made cake shortening, icing shortening, breakfast shortening, biscuit shortenings, and frying shortenings. And it came time when the retail bakery end of the business started to fade and the restaurant business started to become stronger, so the company asked if anyone wanted to change from their sales job of bakery and go to restaurant division, and I said yes, I would like to try it.

To give you an idea of what it was like, I sold to Disneyland. I went to every individual stand and I would go in early every morning through the back door and I would deliver to every individual stand and the truck would deliver it. Of course, after a while Disneyland went to Anaheim Central Purchasing, and then to Orlando Central Purchasing for all the entire American Disneyland operations. In the beginning I sold to individual restaurants just like I sold to bakeries, I would call on them one at a time and I would sell to them. Then as the restaurants became larger and had more than one unit, then they wanted better pricing, what is called volume pricing. Then something else started to take place, some chains started to franchise. Franchising was brand new, and people did not quite understand it.

So here I would like to talk about this one chain that started a franchise and what happened to them, and how to some degree this happened to the churches of God, and I think it happened to a lesser degree to the Church of the Great God.

There was a chain, I will call it, Chicken Just Right, it came out the same time as KFC. This little franchise was an excellent franchise, it put out a good product and it was delivered to your house, or you could pick it up. Now as franchises were new in the restaurant business, everyone was trying to understand how they worked. When one purchased a franchise, he was required to purchase what they called print. Now a print was your takeout boxes with the company logo on them. They had cups, napkins, and things like that. Plus, they had to purchase approved shortening and approved products. Now what the headquarters of the chain would do was to tag on two cents to whatever they bought and then they would sell it to their individual units. These two cents paid for the office, people who run the office, the management, for the advertising, and such. But to those who bought the franchise who were making good money, these two or three cents became a tremendous bone of contention. They would say, "I could buy cheaper."

These two cents put the standardization in advertisements, put on billboards, radio and TV. It became a real bone of contention. They got lawyers and went to court and said, this is unfair, and after the trial the court said, Alright, you do not have to buy what the management said. Everyone was thrilled until reality began to set in, because now there was no money to pay for the office, the advertisement, and billboards, and there was no one in charge to make authoritative decision. And little by little the chain began to fall apart. Today I doubt if there are any units left.

The reason I told you this story was not to say that the Church of the Great God is falling apart because it certainly is not, but because there is frustration with some in the church that is resulting in complaining, murmuring, about what is going on.

**I Corinthians 10:10** Nor murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

**Philippians 2:14** Do all things without murmuring and disputing, that you may be blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

This is how we are to conduct ourselves; the attitude of distrust and complaint cannot help but rub off.

With the society we live in it seems normal to complain. We see authority being abused and so we tend to complain about the leadership, and I cannot say that is entirely wrong in a sense because we see so many mistakes that are being made by those who are over us and so many sins. But the attitude of mistrust and complaining can rub off on each of us to a certain extent, but brethren, that is something that we are going to have to learn to control. We cannot allow it to continue.

Paul knew that contentions, if not checked, would produce results that in our case will affect leadership and the membership. Murmuring and complaining and contentions produce the exact environment that Satan likes to work in, and the exact opposite environment that God wants to have in the church.

Most of the complaints are addressed to the ministry, because most of you seem to get along well with each other. We hardly hear anything about you, but for us we seem to get a whole bunch, so I thought I would just discuss a little of those today.

I wish that I could say that I had never complained about a sermon, but I have in the past. I do not know how many people remember David John Hill. He was a marvelous speaker; he could have you in tears in one second and laughing in the following second. He would speak and I would hear and really enjoy it. Then we had an extremely dry minister when he spoke. Being new, I simply walked up to our local elder and I said, "Help me understand this. Why do I really enjoy this man, but I really do not care for this man?" He said, "Mr. Reid, you do not come to church to be entertained. You better get your act together and you better start to listen to what is being said, instead of just coming here to be entertained." I said, "Yes sir." I never have forgotten that admonishment.

Here are some of the complaints that we have been receiving, so that they can be all out in the open where everyone can hear them.

The first is that the ministry is keeping secrets from us. There seem to be two secrets that seem to be of prime concern. One was on sugar. Somebody picked up a slip of paper from a health food store and it said that white sugar is processed from the blood albumin of animals in the slaughterhouse to remove the protein. John Ritenbaugh gave a Bible study on it in the Fort Mill congregation, and it was supposed to stay just there because it was really a stupid subject to get involved in. But then it spread to another church area and then people started to say that it was a secret plot to get us to eat pork. Then people started to go off in all different directions.

The second thing we were keeping secret was that there had been a Bible study on Zion National Park as possibly being the place of safety. It was an interesting study, and John looked at it. Then after so many months he said, no, this is not correct, so we dropped it. But the people who were interested in this could not let it go. John Ritenbaugh gave an excellent Bible study called, “The Spiritual Value of Food” and in that Bible study he covered the Zion National Park, and the sugar controversy. Everywhere I went I played the tape, and everyone heard it, but still it came back at us that we are being secretive about things.

The third thing that was complained about was that John does not announce people when they leave. The reason he does not is because the person may want to come back. He does not have to air everyone’s sins. If somebody must know if this person left, ask him.

There was one more thing: that John Ritenbaugh was trying to develop an elite ministry that is above the people. I do not feel that we have enough time to feel elite.

Then the final thing that has gone around early on, was that John Ritenbaugh had stolen \$17 million from the church and the company car. If I stole \$17 million, I would not care about the company car. I am a little upset because he never gave any of it to me. [laughter]

The ministry received individual complaints: I am too soft spoken; I am too glued to my notes. I do tend to write things down just like I would plan to say them. I do not feel comfortable in just going off and simply wondering, So I am trying to improve on that.

Daryl Henson is too loud. He says it like it is, he does not beat around the bush. That gets people upset. Some people feel he is too tough in his presentations, and yet if you would sit down with him, he is a kind, gentle man, and he gives good advice.

Richard Ritenbaugh, he is just too young, and he should not speak on certain subjects. When I was 18, I thought that any man 31 years old was the epitome of wisdom. I can look back and I can realize that many of us are older than 31, so we might not think that someone 31 can do a pretty good job up here.

I want to say something here that I think is extremely important to realize, and to listen to, because John Ritenbaugh made this comment in a Bible study in San Jose. He said, “The problem that is facing the ministry of this time is that the church has lost faith in God to work through His ministry.” Richard does not need me to speak for him because he has been blessed with a super mind like his dad, and I got to say that Matthew 13 sermon forced me to study, and it is not fair that somebody that young can make me work that hard to understand and to catch up.

John Ritenbaugh has his flaws also. He speaks over everybody’s head, but you see, that is what he is supposed to do so we stretch and can start to grow. He forces me to write papers on the things he says. He forces me to study, and this should be for us as well. We are not here to be entertained.

The biggest offender of all is Harold Way. He gets to live in Hawaii, and we must stay here. He is an extremely kind gentleman. When you counsel with him he will put the spurs to you. He will ask you questions about God. He will say, now what does God think about this? What does God say about this? He will make you think, and you come away far better for the counselling.

Jim Slusher, one of our newest elders. He is perfect because he has not spoken yet. He is a very kind loving man as well.

I would like you to turn to Romans 12. We all know that God gives each of us gifts and He has given different gifts to each of the elders as well.

**Romans 12:1-9** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ [something to really keep in mind], and individually members of one another.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

In other words, think positively, do positive things, speak positively about what you hear and the way you conduct yourselves.

**I Corinthians 12:4-11** There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all; for to one is given the word of wisdom through the

Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of Spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

**I Corinthians 12:18** But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

This is something that God has done, and I think it is important that we realize that. None of us planned to be here in the Church of the Great God, we all had our own plans. I was going to get a cabin in the mountains, John Ritenbaugh was going to make furniture on his table saw. He always wanted to do that but never could find the time. But God had different ideas so here we are. God placed us here to serve Him, by serving you. That is why we are here today.

Who are these elders that God has placed here? John Ritenbaugh was a welder for a steel mill. He had to keep the Sabbath and pay tithes just like you and I do. He had seven children on a minister's salary, he managed to put six children into college and two graduated. He still managed to save enough money to buy a home. As head of the Church of the Great God, he drew just about the same salary he did being in Worldwide Church of God. He drives an automobile that has close to 100,000 miles on it and they have sixteen grandchildren.

Daryl Henson went to Ambassador College and graduated in 1966, the same year John was ordained as a minister. They both have 33 years in the ministry. After a period of time of counselling with Mr. Armstrong, Daryl took some time off. He had been a full-time pastor and rather than just sit he started to remodel homes. He began to sell and trade land and ended up building with his own hands a 6,000 square foot log cabin which he made into a bread and breakfast on a beautiful lake up in Alaska. He has learned to work with his hands. While attending church in Alaska some decided to have sunset at 6:00 pm to start Sabbath. The only thing wrong was that the sun was still in the sky. So, Daryl said he could not do that. God said that sunset

is when the sun sets. Because he was a minister, he was let go because he was causing problems. Daryl has been with us almost since the beginning of the church.

Harold Way spent 20 years in the Airforce as a flight controller. Upon discharge he moved toward F Koa [?] parking, which is the largest parking company in the world. He was a marketing manager. He is a faithful husband and has 4 wonderful loving children.

Richard Ritenbaugh graduated from Ambassador College 1988, where he worked for two years in church administration. Then went to work for TransAmerica workman's compensation. He worked there for 4 years, in the payroll department before coming to work for the church. He is married and has 2 children.

Jim Slusher is about to retire after 35 years as a design engineer. He has been happily married for 42 years.

I want you to understand, brethren, that the ministry you have here has always had to work, they have had to tithe, they have had to stand up for the Sabbath, they have been threatened with losing their jobs, for keeping the holy days. They have gone through everything you have and a lot more, probably, with the things they had to face. The biggest thing they had to face is that they had to deal with their own flaws in their character. They must preach to you and then look at themselves. It is a scary thing.

**Hebrews 5:1-3** For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also beset by weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

*Barnes' Notes* has a touching comment on this:

He, the High Priest Himself, is also compassed with infirmities. He is libel to error, subject to temptation. He must die and appear before God. He is encompassed with His infirmities; He is better



qualified to ministry on behalf of the guilty and the dying man. For the same reason therefore the ministries of the gospel are among men. They are sinners, they are dying men, and they can enter the feelings of those who are conscience of guilt, they can sympathize with those who tremble in the dread of death. and they can partake of the emotions of those who expect soon to appear before their maker.

In other words, the ministers have been down the road. Just as the High Priest had to offer for sins, so we must pray for forgiveness when we make mistakes, and all of us do, we make mistakes with our actions, our mouth, and every aspect that you do. We go through the same things you do.

Ministry is to be helpers of joy. Sometimes we must correct and that does not sit too well, people get offended. People are being offended much more easily than in the past. Some people have left the church because of being corrected and offended.

**II Corinthians 1:21-24** Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God [referring to the ministry], who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.

He is saying that you are all so faithful we do not have to be tough on you because you are all trying. *Barnes' Notes* had this to say about this verse:

The sense of this passage I take to be this: The course that we have pursued has been chosen, not because we wish to lord over you to control your feelings, but because we desire to promote your happiness. Had the former had been our object we could have set up lordship or dominion over you. We could have come to you with our apostolic authority and severity and apostolic discipline. We had the power to command obedience and control your faith, but we chose not to. Our object was to promote your highest happiness. We chose the mildest and gentlest manner as

possible. We did not exercise authority and discipline. We sent a tender and affectionate letter [which you can read about in chapter 2].”

He tried to teach with gentleness, kindness, and with understanding. This is the job that ministers should be doing.

Now why is it so important that we understand all of this? Because Satan is trying to destroy the ministry. Satan has already destroyed the credibility of the WWCG by putting Mr. Tkach there, and now he would shatter the confidence in the ministry that God has placed here at this time. If he can do this, he can separate you from the shepherd that God has placed here, and it can cause the flock to be scattered even further.

How does Satan move to cause these problems? Lately, from the problems that we have been getting out from the West, it seems to come from people listening to those who have left us. I think we have had about 14 people leave us this year. Somehow, they are convinced that the ministry is telling lies, and keeping deep, dark secrets. Then from here we hear rumors of skullduggery in high places. Some are unsettled in little groups and people start to sit and become quiet, and then when you walk by everybody turns quiet suddenly.

As this occurs God begins to draw back His Spirit. These people are determined that things never seem quite right, there is always something wrong with this or that, they seem to have their minds on the underground gossip which seems to be flying around the church rather than on the spiritual things that are being taught, and then spiritual blindness starts to set in. I have seen this repeatedly and it is always a tremendous sadness because there is not much you can do about that.

What is the best way to handle rumors or sermon complaints? I have four points here. What is the best way to save your spiritual life when some of these rumors start to make you question?

1. If you have heard there has been a secret decision about something that is being kept from the brethren, or the someone in the church has been grossly mistreated by the ministry, or some study has been completed that everyone

should be allowed to vote on (because we have had those too), then pick up the phone and call John and ask him. It amazes me that some would rather listen to the rumors than to call and find out the truth of the matter.

So, the point here is that when you hear something about the church and/or you have questions, rather than allowing it to vegetate, simply pick up the phone and ask for an explanation to help clarify things.

We had one person who has left, she had a question about something that there had been eighty pages written on. We gave them all for her to read, but she said, this is terrible, and then she left. She could prove that the rumors were all wrong, but she left anyway.

Now some say, I heard such and such, and I said, who gave you the information? They said, I cannot tell you because he asked me to keep it confidential. There is not much more I can say after that. This person would rather listen to somebody who has already left, and I try to help but sometimes there is not much I can do.

2. If you do hear something, please keep the rumor to yourself, so you do not have to repent of what you said later. Some people like to tell people what they heard, and have put damage on the church and on themselves, and God does not take this lightly. And when they would like to repent, by this time they have dug such a large hole that they cannot back out because their pride is involved.

3. Ask God every day to keep you and all of us from the evil one—Satan. We know Satan is trying to separate us from God. If he can cause any distraction or any aversion, and we take our eye off where it should be, then he will get you.

On the old horses they always put on blinders. Now, I am going to ask you to put your hands around your eyes where you can only see in front of you and not the sides. Study everything that you see. Now turn your head to the left or right keeping your blinders on, and study what you see. Can you see what you saw before? No, you cannot. That is what distraction does to you. If we take our minds off God and off the right way then we will not see what we saw before. Keep on praying to God that He will protect you from Satan.

4. John would not tell us who we can or cannot talk to. These decisions are up to each individual but having been at this for a long time, be careful who you listen to. If somebody wants to call me and wants to talk about the church, to see how things are going, I will say fine, let's talk. But if they want to complain about you or the ministry, I do not have time for it. I will not put that in my mind. My mind just cannot absorb wrong things. I do not want to have anything to take my mind off the calling that I have been given. So, I say be careful who you talk to and be careful what we allow into our minds. We are to govern ourselves; no one can do it for us.

What should we do if we hear something in a sermon that we do not understand? It is perfectly okay to ask a friend, to say you do not understand it. It is my personal belief that we are hearing new truth. We hear new truth about how God is going to work in us to bring us through this and make us complete. We must do our part, but He will finish what He starts, as He said in Philippians 1:6. So when we hear new truth or when we hear things we do not understand, rather than jumping to conclusions, it is always good to stop and consider what is being said in a positive way. With Richard's sermon on Matthew 13, I had to listen to it five times before I could understand.

**Acts 17:10-11** Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

*Barnes' Notes* brought out that these were "more noble," and that literally means they were of noble birth. That is not what it means here, that is just what the word noble means—noble birth. Here the word is used to denote the quality of mind, they were more generous, liberal, noble in their feelings, more disposed to inquire candidly into the truth of the doctrines advanced by Paul and Silas. It is always proof of a noble and liberal and straightforward open disposition to be willing to examine into truth and doctrine, and this is how God expects us to be.

After consideration and after a right discussion without tearing down, if there is still confusion, get your facts together and call the speaker and present your study and ask the question you had concerning the sermon. Matthew 13 produced a couple of comments. There was a man that was emotional about it. But he did not call the office with emotion, he waited four days till the emotion was calmed down. He got his scriptures together and he called the office, and by this time he was under control, and he got himself together.

Another lady came from a very strict church in the past. She wrote a letter and she received a three-page answer on her question. This stunned her. She said she would not have received that in the church she left. In fact, she would have been condemned as a troublemaker because she asked a question. It is not that way here.

Anything that causes us to stumble or get a bad attitude is where Satan will take the prybar and pry at us until we break. So, when you have these questions in the church, be mature like the Bereans and study to see if it is so, and if you do not know, simply write in or call and ask the minister. This will also help the minister to examine how to present things in his study. That is the positive thing we can do. If you find that you still cannot come to the right answer, then simply get on your knees and ask God to help the minister and/or yourself to understand and wait for God's answer rather than causing trouble by starting to murmur. When we humbly do this, we are expressing the mind of God.

**I Peter 5:6-7** Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

So he says be sober, stop and consider that you have been called by God, therefore all of us need to take care of our calling. We cannot let anything put a kink in it to tear it down. We need to be diligent in behaving ourselves wisely and we are to be watchful of events that take place around us to make

proper judgments, so we are not taken in by Satan. We are to be vigilant, to be on guard for the Adversary, the Devil as he opposes us in every way and will take every opportunity he can to destroy us.

Satan does not always come at you as a roaring lion. Many times in Africa you will find the lions will line up behind a herd of animals and one lion will start walking forward and he will back up the antelopes into the lions that are waiting for him. Satan can be very sneaky, but be aware that he is after us, be aware that you are not fooled by these things that you hear.

At the end of the age Satan's time is becoming shorter and he knows that his hatred for us is going to grow and become greater and greater.

**I Peter 5:9** Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

We represent the Kingdom of God on earth at this time and we are all to reflect the love of God, that is all of us here, we are to live in harmony as a family. It is a family that God has brought together because He certainly has.

**Ephesians 4:1-2** [Paul speaking here] I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called [we should conduct ourselves as we are children of God], with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, . . .

Do we conduct our life with humility, esteeming others better than ourselves? In meekness and bearing patiently, not trying to retaliate or seek revenge. With patience we put up with each other's faults knowing that others put up with our faults. Satan is a fault finder, he is the instigator of hatred. We are to resist him by drawing close to God and pursuing peace.

**Ephesians 4:3** endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [We are all the same Spirit, and therefore we should all strive for peace.

We are to be united in our affection for one another. We should have the bond of peace and friendship between us, not just on the surface, with deep love and appreciation for each other.

**Ephesians 4:4** There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; . . .

There is one body and one Spirit that we all share and there is one hope, and that is that we will all be together as a Family in the Kingdom of God. And this hope should produce peace.

**Ephesians 4:5-6** one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

We have the same Lord, the same faith, same baptism, same Father. We are all the temple of God and this should produce peace.

**Ephesians 4:7** But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

We have been given the ability with God's help to attain the promise of the calling we have been given.

This should lead us to the actions in Colossians 3.

**Colossians 3:11-14** Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.