AREA COORDINATORS MEETING

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The Church of God is at a real crossroads right now. We've been in a "holding pattern"--I think that is proved if you look at our growth rate. And what I want to talk about is growth. The GROWTH of the Worldwide Church of God. The growth of God's Church.

If we are going to stand still, if our net growth is going to be measured in terms of dozens per month throughout the entire Worldwide Church of God around the whole world, then we are stagnating and, in fact, going backwards, because the net growth, if there is any, will be virtually nil. During the last year Feast attendance, new baptisms, disfellowships and dropout statistics have presented rather a sobering picture. There was a little bit of growth, but it wasn't substantial.

I feel that we need now to implement new programs aimed at substantial growth and development throughout the entire church, and what I am doing is calling upon the entirety of the ministry in the Worldwide Church of God to shoulder their responsibiliity in bringing about that growth--to actually recognize that they have to set before themselves definitive goals in each local congregation, in each area, in each nation. (Whether we deal in percentages or figures is perhaps irrelevant; and there are some things we could say about that that are biblical with regard to the past when Paul assayed to go into Bythinia but God said he could not do that, but he had to remain in Ephesus because God said I have much people there. So he stayed there for two whole years.)

We do need to let every individual local pastor recognize he has a responsibility to share in the first commission, because there really is not a second commission. There is only ONE great commission that has two parts; and one is to "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel unto every creature, baptizing them that believe," and then of course Jesus did say to Peter, "Feed my sheep." Now, a lot of times we assume the first commission is the private property of only one or two persons--my father and myself and that's it, and that none of the rest of the ministry even share in that first commission. Well, that was not true when Jesus Christ of Nazareth walked the earth with His own disciples, nor was it true immediately after Pentecost when He sent out twelve apostles. Nor was it true when other apostles were added to those twelve, such as Paul and Barnabas, when there were at least 14 or more apostles all alive at the same time! (Maybe at this time there were only twelve because James, John's brother was killed and so on. Maybe God was just inspiring enough to be added so that there would still be twelve in that first generation, I don't know.)

But first, as background, I think it is important that we realize that many of the deeply entrenched policies which have become extant throughout the last 20 or more years in the ministry have been more or less just assumed.

As an example of how "policies" can become entrenched, it has taken me quite literally 15 years or more to succeed in having our pastors' names, addresses, and WATS line number placed in the yellow pages of telephone directories all across the United States.

A major aspect of our teaching, it seems, has been to emphasize the fact that God "is not setting His hand to save the world NOW!"

Without meaning to overly state the case; and perhaps realizing slight exaggeration can be utilized for effect, suffice it to say that there has been a little bit too much of an approach toward the world in the fulfillment of our commission as we see it which says "Repent! . . . But if you don't--then go to hell!"

We take the Gospel and we fling it down before them and we say, "Well, there it is. If you want it, help yourself, but it's not really important to me if you pick it up and understand it or not."

Believing that the whole world is not to be saved at this time, we can inadvertently absolve ourselves of the responsibility. We have no part, we can therefore think, in saving the world! We say that's God's responsibility and we don't have to do anything. We just preach the Gospel, and then act as caretaker over a church. But we are not crusaders trying to save hundreds of thousands or millions of people from certain destruction. We think that's not our job! Well, yes it is our job if we want to take a look very carefully at many of the Scriptures that I'm going to read.

We have emphasized the first portion of Jesus' statement, "None CAN COME TO THE SON (except the spirit of the Father draw him)."

By loudly shouting the first portion, and deemphasizing, almost whispering the remainder, we tend to concentrate on the fact that the carnal mind CANNOT understand the truth of God; that God is NOT trying to call, convert, or in any way change the world today, and therefore we perceived our responsibility as being almost an impersonal "don't care," uninvolved, perhaps even "unresponsible" activity of making a "news announcement" to the world.

What we don't emphasize is that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The Holy Spirit of God in us is like a light, like leaven--He said it is like a beacon that is set on a hill. "You are the salt of the earth." He called it "living water which flows out from you" in more than just overcoming in your own daily life--in more than just going about your office, administrative or pastoral responsibilities. But there is supposed to be fruit.

Christ said, "I am the vine, you are the branches and you cannot bear fruit except you abide in me. Every branch that beareth not fruit is pruned (is cut) and cast in the fire to be burned. If you do not bear fruit (and that fruit must flow from the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ out through YOU--you are not standing aside as a separate branch not attached to the vine, and over here the vine is doing the Work) then you will be cast off."

We can read in Ezekiel where God said, "I will make their foreheads as adamant as flint. But I'll make your forehead just as adamant or more adamant than their flinty foreheads. Be not afraid of their hard looks. . ." etc., etc. And didn't Ezekiel say, "Turn ye, turn ye, . . . for why will you die O Israel." And wasn't his own motivation a deep yearning for his own people, his own family, perhaps; his own relatives, to turn from their way and to repent and to be healed of whatever breach existed--not converted in the New Testament sense, but certainly to come under God's blessing.

Continually, we speak of "the law of God--the truth of God--the Church of God--the Ten Commandments of God--the Kingdom of God."

Almost as if an unwritten law, our ministry tends to eschew the words, "the Lord Jesus Christ" because the Protestant bodies of this world have "cornered the market" on that phrase. That is their phrase, it belongs to them. That sounds too sentimental, even though the New Testament is liberally sprinkled with such phrases.

We recoil away from vain repetition; the abuse and misuse of the name of Jesus Christ as it is commonly bandied about in the maudlin sentimentality of the pseudo-sanctimonious Protestant bodies in the United States.

If I hadn't come to know the Bible deeply, even wading through it several more times while writing The Real Jesus, and now in this second book where I am drinking in of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, then I wouldn't be quite as ready as I am today to more heavily emphasize the name of Jesus Christ because the last vestige (if there ever was any in there) of the Protestant version of the false Jesus is no longer in my mind.

I tend to see a stocky, freckle-faced, red-headed, fiery bearded young man with brawny arms and callouses on His hands when I think of "the Lord Jesus Christ." That is my idea of Jesus Christ. I feel it's a better idea than the one you see in the backs of Bibles and in the bookstores. It may be a wrong idea and you're not supposed to create images in your mind, but I have perhaps gone to that point because I don't want the false image and the false Jesus to leap into my mind when I pronounce the name of Jesus Christ.

The "Sunday morning comedy hour" on television, with its grunters and wheezers, its gaspers and raspers, its sing-song sobbers and criers, turns me off, leaves me cold, and makes me virtually vow never to "sound like that."

However, because of disliking that type of image, we tend to go to an opposite extreme. We see others take all of the right emotion, all of the real devotion and dedication and love toward Jesus Christ and use it like a marketing gimmick, therefore we shy away and never allow the right kind of emotion into our preaching, media, etc. We're totally different.

Rarely in any of our pulpits can a minister be found to literally "break up" with emotion over a very deeply felt sermon. Rarely does the plight of all humanity, the threat of a vast nuclear bomb World War III, an impending national economic collapse and great depression; pollution, the energy crisis, the population explosion, rampant crime, soaring divorce, drug abuse, alcoholism, or any of the other sordid, wretched, hideous conditions extant in this world call for a sermon that is so dramatic, so moving, so

intense, so powerful, and so filled with earnest zeal and emotion that it MOVES an audience, even to the point of deep emotion themselves!

I am not inferring this never happens, I said rarely do our people hear a sermon that is so dramatic, so moving, so intense, so powerful, so filled with earnest zeal and emotion that it MOVES them to the point of deep emotion themselves.

We have been almost "proud" of the fact that over the many years of our latter day existence we have baptized only 50% of those who have come to us asking us to permit them to become members of the church. In case after case, I have had related to me how some of our men in the church (who may be in the ministry or top leaders in the Work today themselves) had to quite literally "beg" to be baptized!

They were met with suspicion, almost resentment or hostility. The person to whom they first talked, cut them to ribbons--delved into their private life--demanded that they repent and apologize more than any Catholic priest ever thought of doing. And some of you know that. Hopefully, that belongs in the late 50s and early 60s. Hopefully, that doesn't happen any more today. If it is still extant in the minds of some, then it could still be in the church today. It should not be.

There has been an unwritten presupposition that a newcomer must: 1) understand what repentance is--meaning what sin is, meaning he must understand all the finer points of the Ten Commandments as expounded and magnified throughout the New Testament. 2) understand about the annual Holy Days, the weekly Sabbath, clean and unclean meats, water baptism, the laying on of hands, and be perfectly willing to embrace each and every one of these truths, meaning the possible loss of job--the promise to attend annual festivals, etc., etc. 3) thoroughly understand the total paganism of the doctrines of the main-line churches, the fundamentalists, the Catholic Church, the Mormon and Seventh Day Adventist churches, along with every assorted religion. 4) have no present or immediate past history of drug abuse, sex deviation or problem, smoking, drinking or alcoholism, wife or child beating, separation or divorce. 5) be so staunch, so loyal, and so unshaken that when he is assaulted with the avalanche of rotten publicity, scurrilous literature, and printed attacks against the church, he will be able to withstand each and every one as would a tall sequoia, standing unmoved in a hurricane of negativism.

If and when our prospective member meets all these (and perhaps many other) assumed and unwritten qualifications, then and only then will we consent to baptize him.

My father used to run afoul of some of the preachers up in Oregon because they insisted that no one who smoked could be baptized. My father insisted that only after they are baptized could they have the power of the Holy Spirit to help them overcome their smoking habits. That all they had to do was to want to overcome it and then they could be baptized. He was instructed to never baptize people if they didn't yet understand the truth about clean and unclean meats or various things like that. You take a look at the Ethopian eunuch and you take a look even at the Jerusalem conference of how many things they were going to "lay on" the Gentiles--what did they tell them to worry about--two things: things strangled and fornication, and don't lay any other burden on their additional understanding now. There were many things they could learn later, but they needed the power of the Holy Spirit to learn and master those things.

And if they fall by the wayside after you baptize them, when they are professing with the mouth that they have received Jesus Christ, whose fault is it? Whose responsibility is it? How many did Jesus lose? Was it a black mark on Jesus' character that they ALL forsook Him when He was on the stake? With what zeal and diligence did Jesus urge Peter and the others to overcome some Satanic influence and to get them straightened out when they would say the wrong thing? He would say, "Get thee behind me Satan," etc. Is it a black mark on Jesus' record that the disciples said, "I go a fishing. We quit--we're not going to be around any more"? I don't think so.

Perhaps this is overstating the case--but it is important I illustrate the trend; the condition which has become extant, in order to bring about meaningful change.

It is assumed that nowhere in the New Testament does Jesus ever say, "Whomsoever will, may come!" But wait! Jesus DID say many of the following things: He told the disciples to "lift up your eyes and see that the fields are already white with harvest--pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send laborers into his harvest!" Jesus did say, "Come unto me, ye that are weary and heavy laden, for I will give you rest. . . ."

Jesus did say to the woman at Jacob's well in the Samaritan city, "If you knew who it is who speaks to you, you would have asked of me and I would have given you living water so that you would never again thirst!"

Jesus came right out. He didn't pretend to be a publican. He didn't pretend to be a good golfer. He didn't pretend to be a traveling salesman. He didn't pretend to be connected with a liberal arts college. He told people, "I'm Christ." Why shouldn't a minister say, "I'm a minister of Christ"? Did Jesus say, "Whosoever is ashamed of me, of him will I be ashamed at my coming"? Well, yes he did.

Is there a minister who would ever have the courage to tell a person in casual conversation sitting next to him on an airliner, or talking to him over a coffee shop counter, "If you knew the truth I have to give to you, I could give you truth that would give you life everlasting." I doubt it. We would be embarrassed out of our skins to ever say such a thing to someone.

There was a vast difference in the way Jesus spoke to the crowds (upon whom He was "moved with compassion"), and the manner in which He spoke to the Pharisees, Sadducees and Publicans.

Our message must not treat the entire world, including confused, ignorant, searching, seeking, deceived "little ones" as if they were all a pack of snivelling, conniving, murder-plotting Pharisees!

There is a vast difference between telling someone, "My job is to tell you the truth--let the chips fall where they may--and frankly it doesn't matter one whit to me what you do with it!" and telling someone, "My job is to tell you the truth, knowing you might reject it, but it DOES MATTER A GREAT DEAL TO ME!"

Jesus was never intent upon "hogging the Gospel" for Himself! Jesus "ordained" His twelve disciples and sent them out on an advance evangelistic mission telling them they would be persecuted in this or that city; telling them they were to go, preaching about the soon-coming Kingdom of God, urging people to receive the message with joy,

gladness, and alacrity; urging them to believe Jesus Christ was in fact the Messiah and the soon-coming King who would relieve every burden, and predicting that in some cities they would be invited in by a house which was "worthy" and that they should stay there preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, but that in other places they would be literally thrown out of the town and so should "shake off the dust of their shoes" knowing they had been rejected.

Remember the place where the disciples came back--actually Jesus sent them out from Galilee (at least two of them must have gone up into the Syro-Phoenician, Sidon-Tyre, area where the battle is going on today in Lebanon). Some went over into the Galillean area, no doubt, and down into Judea, but Jesus, Himself, with maybe one other or maybe by Himself, went to Jerusalem. You can't tell exactly how long they were gone, but at the very least a couple of weeks or so. When they had a reunion in Jerusalem, there is little said except about how with joy and excitement they related to him whatsoever things had been done.

Now I read into that a great deal in this next book, for I am assuming that they were (as He said they would be) kicked out of some towns, thrown in jail in others, warmly received in still others. There might have been one patriarchial old family that let them stay there and begged them for about three or four days and whole big crowds came and so on, to hear them teach.

I am going to assume, since He gave them power to cast out demons, to heal the sick, that demons were cast out and the sick were healed. And as I look at the fact that later on when His brothers were telling Him in Capernaum, "OK big man, you're claiming that you are the Christ--you can do all these things, why don't you go down there in front of the Jews right at the Feast of Tabernacles and perform some of these great miracles in front of them if you are who you say you are. Prove it to the big boys down there. Don't just tell us who you are."

Well, His own brothers, Joses, Simon and Jude didn't believe Him. And so He said, "No, my time is not yet. I go not up yet to this Feast. You go ahead and I'll come up later, maybe." So then He went through Samaria. Well, Samaria was straight south of Capernaum and that whole area. The Jews went clear over to the seacoast and avoided it because going through Samaria was like going through "pariah land" and the way to go secretly was to go through Samaria, where no Jews would basically go. So Jesus went through those towns.

On the way He sent a runner ahead of them to a little village thinking "we'll spend the night." But they find out that His face was as it were "toward Jerusalem" meaning the messenger said, "We're just going to pause for a little while and keep going. Well, Samaritans and Jews didn't get along any better than whites and blacks in inner cities in the middle of August at 101°. The idea was, "Well if He's only going to stay here overnight, forget about it. Maybe if He was going to stay here and be one of us or whatever, but we're just not having any wayfaring Jew when He's on His way to that festival down there in Jerusalem anyway. No, He can't stay!" So the disciples said, "Lord wilt thou that we call down fire from heaven." They thought they could do that. Why did they think that? Well, because of the power they had seen, because of the miracles that had been performed, because of the people who had been healed and so on. All that they had seen, right under their own hands.

Now Jesus did that for them to give them the confidence and the assurance that He was able to bequeath power to them--that that power was contained in His name and when they spoke that name, tremendous things would happen. Jesus was never intent on hogging the gospel. He didn't tell them, "I am the only one sent to preach." He said, "You go and as you go preach, saying, repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

But at all other times, the attitude and the motive of the disciples was to be that attitude of hoping, wishing, praying that ALL who heard them would repent and believe!

Though Jesus told His disciples that in the Pharisees and much of the general public the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled "seeing they see not," He also later commissioned the apostles, "Go ye into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them which believe"!

The advance evangelistic journey of the twelve was in part responsible for the massive numbers who repented and were baptized following the Day of Pentecost.

Likewise, John the Baptist had come to "Prepare the way of the Lord"--meaning to prepare people to receive and accept Jesus Christ!

And what is our job today? To prepare a people for the Lord! To prepare the way by preparing peoples' minds to receive the real Jesus Christ instead of an anti-Christ that is going to masquerade as Jesus Christ. We know some of the prophetic overtones of that and in some of the books and writings that are now extant tend to make people believe that when the real Christ returns to this earth he will actually be the anti-Christ. People will be so deceived they will try to resist Him.

John was said of Jesus to have come in the power and the spirit of Elijah--that "Elijah is here already if he will receive it," showing that the great and widespread ministry of John the Baptist was tremendously important and successful in preparing for the ministry of Christ Himself!

Jesus is called the "Mediator" of the New Testament!

If we were to characterize our calling in the ministry by analogy, we might remember the television program of years ago called, "The Millionaire."

In it, a man was assigned by the living benefactor, to carefully search out individuals to whom the benefactor wished to bequeath one million dollars. However, the million dollars always carried with it certain obligations, qualifications or restrictions.

The man in the television series was kindly, understanding, gentle, and always attempted to win the designees over and get them to receive and accept the terms and conditions imposed on the one million dollar check by their benefactor.

If he had taken the opposite approach (perhaps somewhat illustrated by what I have said earlier) he would walk up to such a potential heir, tell him, "I have something here which I know you will not want--you're so dumb, deaf and blind that you probably will not know its meaning--and frankly it does not matter to me whether you receive it or not, but I will at least have fulfilled my own commission if I warn you about it!"

"I have here a cashier's check for one million dollars. If you accept it, it is going to cause you every kind of heartache, you will probably lose your job, you may have to divorce your wife, give up a large slice of your salary, change your place of residence, change most of your nasty habits, if not all, quit the bowling league, clean up your language, get a hair cut, start going to church regularly every Sabbath, and read the labels on every can and package of bread."

"So, knowing your reaction to all this, I may as well tear up the check right here and now!"

No, the man was assigned to find either a missing heir or else some person upon whom this living benefactor wanted to bestow one million dollars and to WIN them over and to get them to receive the terms and the conditions imposed upon them. Instead, he should have said, "Look, I've got something here that is the greatest possible surprise you could ever imagine--one million bucks, in a certified cashier's check, and you can look--it is good. That's a bank stamp. That's a machine-issued check as good as cash.

AND, if you will receive it, I'm going to tell you that a benefactor wants to give it to you, but in addition, he also wants you to do several things that are so good for you that they will straighten out your life, things that are going to help you live at least another ten years and for all eternity beyond that! They will rescue your family, save you from all sorts of problems and you get the million bucks to boot!" There's a totally different approach here.

If we know all of this, and that Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant, then are not we also, by extension, mediators, because is not Christ to live inside of us and are we not to explain and expound and to extol, in excitement and in zeal, and in total conviction and belief, all that is good about the terms and conditions of the New Covenant, and to try to get people to accept those terms and conditions.

We as a church can no longer assume that if people do not listen to our message we have been successful anyway. I think we have absolved ourselves of too much responsibility by pretending that we cannot, no matter how forceful, or loving, or tender, or kind, or zealous; no matter how eloquent, or persistent, that we cannot really be held ultimately responsible.

Why did the Apostle Paul talk about extending himself and overextending himself? Why did he say, "Woe to me if I preach not the gospel?" Why did he say, "I must preach the gospel." Why did he feel such a burden being brought "on my way by your prayers," etc., and how he assayed to go here and wanted so badly to get to various places to preach.

And Paul didn't have any media. Timothy didn't have any media. Not a one of those men in the early New Testament had any media. They couldn't be sitting in a local pastorate and think, as Timothy could have, "Well, when's Paul going to come through and conduct a campaign and give me some new PMs around this place? I got to have some growth in my area. When are they going to get a radio program in here? When am I going to get a telecast?" The telecast is not a smorgasbord--it's hors d'oeuvres!

TV is never going to convert anybody any more than the first five articles in the PT are going to convert anyone. The PLAIN TRUTH magazine by my father's own policy and

design is hors d'oeuvres. The telecast is hors d'oeuvres. That's like, "Hey, I've got something I want to tell you!" OK, they're listening that far. Now maybe one of those articles has some substance in it in The PLAIN TRUTH and they'll begin to listen to a religious thought and then they'll ask for a booklet and then maybe the Correspondence Course and so maybe then they are on their way toward involvement and eventual membership in the church.

The disciples went to a place along the river where "prayer was wont to be made." I have wondered why it would be such a sin for our people to go and start chatting with other people on Sunday. We should not deliberately try to woo members away from other churches, but if you want to get into religious conversation, you go where religious people are doing religious things. We would generally never think of that because that's going right into the Synagogue of Satan.

Paul, as his manner was, entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and began to teach them. Now I'm not saying we should begin a campaign to woo away all the Seventh Day Adventists and Seventh Day Baptists or the Orthodox Jews. It's only an observation that we are tending to put our candle under the bed where it isn't able to give much light to the room. Are we collectively shoving the responsibility on to my father's or my shoulders and absolving ourselves of any individual responsibility in sharing in the first commission of preaching the Gospel and therefore causing church growth?

Repeatedly, it was said Jesus "had compassion on them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd--going astray." When Jesus was accused of sitting at meat with "publicans and sinners," He said, "They that are whole have no need of a physician"--and on an occasion when His disciples wanted to "call down fire from heaven" to destroy a town of the Samaritans who refused Him lodging, He rebuked them saying, "The Son of man is not come to destroy life, but to save lives"!

Are we, then, as the servants of that same Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in a life-saving Work?

Who are the life-savers among us?

Do we collectively have tender, loving, deep concern for people's lives?

What is our desire toward our own children? Do we want them safely in God's Church--involved in Y.O.U., attending Sabbath services and the Feast, perhaps coming to Ambassador College, and eventually in the Kingdom of God? But, as ministers, are we not to have the same concern of the "sons and daughters" of the Great God who are wandering like the blind on this earth? Are we not to have the same yearning desire that our own heavenly Father possesses who is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to salvation"? Desiring to see other people's children--even our own indirect relatives, the playmates and friends of our own children in their schools--coming to the truth of God, repenting, and having the greatest gift that could ever be given to any human being, FORGIVENESS, and the opportunity to make a whole new beginning in life?

How far out of your way would you go to save your child in trouble? Perhaps with a drug problem; playing hooky from school? Maybe terribly sick and weeping with a sideache? Your kid who is in jail because he got in trouble with the law? How much of your energy would you even take away from your flock, from your pulpit, from your

ministry if your child were in deep trouble? Why, you would be utterly derelict if you didn't! Because suddenly that's the one, and the 99 are safely in church.

Jesus gave many such examples. "No man, if his son asks for bread will give him a rock," etc., etc. and so He expects us to be equally as concerned for the sons and daughters of the great God who are wandering around blind on this earth. Equally as concerned for the other sons and daughters of your own fellows in the church and the sons and daughters of people who are not in the church--not just relatives, directly or indirectly, or the extended family of uncles, aunts, brothers and cousins, but other peoples' kids, too.

God said, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, but water the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it" (Isa. 55:10-11).

Ezekiel's message was, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die O Israel?" Even though God told Ezekiel their foreheads would be "adamant as flint," and that he, Ezekiel, would in turn be given a forehead even more "adamant" than theirs--Ezekiel's own personal emotion concerning his calling and commission were those of tender, loving concern, a yearning and a zealous desire that the people who heard his message WOULD in fact repent.

As an adjunct to the "warning" part of our message, read Isaiah 58 again!

"Cry aloud, spare not, life up your voice like a trumpet, and spell out the personal sins and transgressions of the house of Jacob"!

The people answer, as if to protest they are already "religious" and have their churches, and religious endeavors. We have our churches, our "fasts," our religious ways that we are involved in. "Why is it we have gone through all of our religious activities and yet you do not see? Why should we live a gray, drab life of affliction of our soul, and yet you take no knowledge?"

The Catholics claim they do penance, the Jews respect the Talmud and dietary restrictions, and the Protestants go to Bible Studies or Easter Sunrise services, and God answers, "And behold in the day of your fast (your religious endeavors and religious way of life) you take your own pleasure, and exact your own labors and daily business.

"Your religious fast is a fast of strife and debate, to beat down the other fellow with a fist of wickedness!

"You are not to fast as you do this day, in pretense, posturing, and pitiful stances, making your voice to be heard on high. Is that the kind of a fast I have chosen? The day for a man to afflict his soul and look pitiful? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, make funny signs with his hands, sprinkle ashes on his forehead, dab holy water, mourn, weep and wail, spread sackcloth and ashes on him and try to impress me with how pitiful he looks--will you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Eternal?

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

"Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? When you see the naked, that you cover them; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh? Then, (if you do these things) shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily; and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Eternal shall be your rereward—THEN shall you call, and the Eternal shall answer; you shall cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity. . . ."

I am saying, if and when the Worldwide Church of God does those things, our light will break forth as the morning and we will have a new dawning, a new time of great growth in the Church.

Is it "speaking vanity" to get up in a pulpit when your own personal family is coming apart. Or when you've got your own personal problems, when you're hitting the bottle too heavy or you've got antagonisms or frustrations, doubts, worries, fears or hidden anxieties toward the church. Are you going to be as effective, as powerful, as zealous in that pulpit as I'm describing here that you should be? Within the ministry is there ever the "putting forth of the finger" or "speaking vanity"?

Is not the requirement of years past to come before a human being, a minister, and confess practically every evil deed you ever did, the "putting forth of the finger"? Is not the current situation (which is often extant in the church) of enmity, hostility, vituperative attacks, gossip, lack of loyalty and brotherly affection, labelism, up and down the length and breadth of the church, the "putting forth of the finger"?

Is not the way of life as protested by many who became dissidents, and those who are now even on the fence, more like the "yoke," than the "delight" that it should be?

And are not empty, meaningless, "routine," emotionless sermons "speaking vanity"?

If you were going to speak at a banquet before the governor, mayor, police chief and visiting dignitaries, how would you prepare? I'm really up for a speech before a group if a whole lot of important businessmen are there. I am far more up if I'm speaking before the local Rotarians or Western Association of Schools and Colleges--a group of educators—or if I go to a banquet where a lot of well-known movie stars are. I really prepare for a speech like that! If I'm giving a commencement address I'll work ten times as hard as I do on any sermon, because at church I know I've got a "captive audience." I can talk about practically anything and the members are probably going to stay there. Well, not necessarily. We're getting to the point now where increasingly people are going to get up and they're going to walk right out of a sermon that is not really interesting and inspiring to them. And the day of preaching vanity, of speaking emotionless, routine, meaningless sermons is really over. We just can't do that any more.

Look what God requires in that Scripture.

First, He says it is a part of our great commission to cry aloud, making no exceptions, "sparing not," lifting up our voice like a trumpet, making a clear sound, and pointing out WHY our peoples are suffering the terrible consequences of their own sins and transgressions.

But ALSO He says we need to be engaged in loosing the shackles and bands that enslave men and women to their own lusts and passions; to let the "oppressed go free," and to break every yoke?

Is alcoholism a yoke? Is smoking or drug abuse a yoke? Is a selfish, mindless, screaming, wretched mess between family members not a yoke? Are there those in this world at the poverty level--even in our own midst--those on food stamps and going without to whom we should deal our bread? And are there not tens of thousands of "poor" who, though they could never help the church at all through tithing, would be fabulous additions to the true Church of God through their prayers, humility, and quietly enduring examples? God says IF we do things, "if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall your light rise in obscurity and your darkness be as the noon day: and the Eternal shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. "

Years and years ago, I urged that this church build a rest home for the elderly black people of Pasadena. I still insist that had we done that we would have made more headway in community relations. We have had people pitch in when floods hit and we have passed out blankets and clothing. We've taken in refugee families and are doing a little bit, but not enough. We're not known for that. Our image is of affluence. Our image is of incredible wealth. Our image is a totally different one than the concerned people at the gut level-- the human level--in society doing what it says here in the book of Isaiah.

"And they that shall be of you shall build the old waste places: You shall raise up the foundations of many generations, and you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of right paths to dwell in."

There is a great breach between God and the world. There is a great breach between God and the United States.

If those of us in the ministry of the Church of God will utterly and totally rededicate ourselves with fiery zeal to do an intercessary Work, fulfilling all that God requires of us in sincerity and genuine concern toward the little ones in this world, then we will be walking along right paths, and the church will experience great growth.

We have been using too much hindsight, second guesses and various improvisations. We are like Peter at the dike with two thumbs and twenty holes and we can't quite keep all the water from coming in, so we're scurrying around ineffectively, rather than creating, innovating, building, beginning: We're striving to use chewing gum and baling wire to keep the Work together! Now that paints a rather gloomy picture. It isn't all that bad, but nevertheless, it is a mood, a kind of a trend that we can observe. Yet the Work is stronger, more vital, more vigorous than it has ever been. We have a clearer vision of what we must do and how we must do it. We have a more professional, more dedicated people than ever before.

God predicted the time would come when, in the world, "judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter" (Isa. 59:14).

In this context, God says, "Yea, truth faileth; and he that departs from evil makes himself a prey. And the Eternal saw this and it displeased him that there was no judgment--and he saw that there was no man, and WONDERED that there was no INTERCESSOR"!

Are we in an intercessary Work? Jesus Christ of Nazareth came as an intercessor, as the "mediator of the New Testament," as a tender, loving minister, having compassion on those who were "like sheep having gone astray," explaining and expounding to them the glories and the VALUE of the Kingdom of God!

He likened the Kingdom unto a pearl of great price, a vast treasure in a field, living water, the bread from heaven that fully satisfies, the promise of the resurrection, and life everlasting!

It is true that Jesus said the vast majority could not understand then--but it is equally true that Jesus commissioned His apostles to go out "teaching them all things whatsoever I have commanded you"!

That is a very broad statement, including the fact that unless we become like "little children" we cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; and including the fact that "whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his father with the holy angels"! (Mark 8:38)

When Peter gave his powerful sermon on the Day of Pentecost, he did not stop with the word "repent"! If you wish to paraphrase it, Peter said, "Repent and become a baptized member, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit! For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all THAT ARE AFAR OFF, even as many as the Lord our God shall call!"

He didn't just say repent and be baptized, meaning he was going to leave those people and go somewhere else and they would go their way as individualists. They became a member. They became a part of something that was happening.

How does the Lord call? Does He call only through one person and one voice, or does He call through every individual in whom is the spirit of God? I say it is every individual. Every individual Christian is to be a light. Every individual is to be the salt of the earth. Every private person in whom is the spirit of God is like a well-spring of living water. Every individual is a branch that must bud and grow and must produce fruit.

Now there are other analogies which we will see in just a moment.

Study again the deeply desirous attitude of the Apostle Paul toward his own people when he said, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Paul went on, in this same context, to say, "The word is near you, even in your own mouth, and in your heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if ye shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.

We know that's not all there is to it, but by emphasizing the nuts and bolts details of the fact that that's not all there is to it we tend to OBLITERATE that simple formula for drawing people to Jesus Christ and bringing them to the place where they want to repent and be baptized.

"For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. . . . For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on them in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of GOOD THINGS"!

As for me, I am going to strive much more fervently to insure that the broadcast includes glad tidings of good things, and the message which includes the good news of the great JOY that can be experienced when a person's whole life is completely changed, and when they settle and put to rest once and for all their entire eternal future!

Now there exists the evil of this world that must be preached or you're not "crying aloud and sparing not and showing my people their transgressions." But if you show them that their transgressions are the cause of the suffering, you also show them what can be the joy when you alleviate the suffering by removing the cause.

The Apostle Paul called himself a "wise master builder," who went about laying foundations.

He said, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase"!

I will try to do much more planting than in the past, nevertheless it is the responsibility of all of the ministry--to "water" what is as yet only seed, and not wait for it to be a mature plant to be harvested and be gathered into the barn!

There must be room in the Worldwide Church of God for a Stephen, a Philip, an Apollos. Many years ago, notwithstanding all that was bad, we had something that was very good in the church. Some had a type of multiplicity of leadership. We had Mr. Herbert Armstrong standing in the pulpit extolling the virtues of the intelligence, of the research ability, of the powerful preaching, of the sincerity or the dedication of different ones at evangelist level. Consequently, the whole church looked toward these men. And the church had multiplicity of leadership. It was a broader-based church of many different men in many different capacities, of many different abilities, each of whom was very greatly loved and respected for that capacity, that ability that he had.

Now we're making some very important changes. We no longer talk of rank. The apostles had equal status and the Apostle Paul must have stood the churches at Iconium, Lystra and Derby on their ear when he wrote right in print (you have in the Bible today). "I withstood him to the face for he was to be blamed," showing that Peter, though Peter was a leading apostle, had allowed some racism to creep in. For the sake of the whole church Paul had to withstand him. They had their troubles in that first era. But they had a whole group of apostles who were on an equal level, and each of whom had different gifts. Peter was, because of his bombast, because of his closeness to Christ, because of the kind of a man he was--a powerful physical man--he was a powerful preacher. They

claimed Paul's bodily presence was weak. I don't think Paul was a powerful preacher. I think he was a weak preacher. I think he spoke with a certain impediment. Perhaps his appearance, maybe his eyes were weak--we've speculated on that. He was not a powerful person in presence. They talk about his letters being strong, but his bodily presence weak. But Apollos--now, he was a preacher. He could inspire people.

Mr. Dart, for example, is going to be working on a doctorate in which he will be going into rhetoric, elocution, some of the finer points of speaking. I feel that Mr. Dart is already one of the most powerful preachers we have in the church today. That is a gift God has given him. Yet he was able to tell me in my office the other day that he knows that he needs to improve his speaking ability. He knows that he has a goal to shoot for, but he can also use what he is learning in going out and preaching before various churches, teaching the ministry, giving seminars, passing on what he is learning so he can help other ministers develop and improve their own preaching ability.

Mr. Wayne Cole happens to be one of the powerful preachers in the church today. I'm going to ask him to go out from time to time and preach before combined groups as I have been doing. I want those sermons to be powerful and unifying sermons; inspiring sermons that are really prayed about and carefully prepared and maybe even fasted over so that the church has not just one person and a radio program but several leading, powerful evangelists who can just stand a congregation on their ear, raise their hair, bring tears to their eyes--move an audience. And the way is wide open for the littlest, most unknown guy that we have ever heard in the church, to do the same thing.

I've gone so far so that I even asked for an anonymous survey so that people would come out of the woodwork and tell me exactly who does do a good job at the Feast of Tabernacles and who does not. I am just going to paint a great big huge target in the middle of my back with a red bullseye right in the spine and go ahead and stand there and take every dart and every arrow from the old timers who have been around the Work for years and who bore audiences to death at the Feast of Tabernacles. I do not care who they are.

I'm not talking about any one individual. I'm just saying that unless the sermons at the Feast of Tabernacles are just one giant thrill after another, we're not doing our job. But the same thing should be true in the weekly pulpit. Not just the Feast--we get up for the Feast because it is a bigger crowd. It should be that way all the time. There is and there has got to be room in the church for ministers to emerge from our midst who are some of the most inspiring, electrifying, interesting, exciting and powerful preachers in the world today. I am on no ego trip intending to "hog" the pulpit for myself. In past years, notwithstanding all that was wrong with many situations involving personality--there was multiplicity, people who would be extolled for ability, dedication and knowledge and the like by Mr. Armstrong, and that resulted in the Church of God looking toward these leaders at various levels and that was good for the church.

We have in the church today potentially quite a few powerful preachers who should be able to move audiences and become ministers in demand, as engaging, warm, humorous, inspiring, appealing, convicting, preachers who could weld together, solidify and rededicate the church, who could be exciting and inspiring to outsiders, friends, relatives, neighbors of the members so that the church could grow.

When a Dr. Schuler or Dr. Billy Graham visits a pulpit you have a huge turnout. Well why, through word of mouth, could not a minister encourage his members to go out

and tell people--the haberdasher, the cook, the baker, the filling station operator, the stock broker, whoever--the person in the supermarket at the checkstand--people they know, and to invite them by saying, "Just two hours of your life one day, just once. I've got to have you hear the most incredible speaker that you've ever heard in your life. But it's never going to happen if our ministers are giving dull "routine" sermons all the time.

Now, to the heart and core of what we must begin to accomplish. Jesus gave the parable of the pounds and the talents to illustrate that every servant of His is handed a responsibility and He likened it unto money. What is the pound. What is the talent that Jesus Christ hands every local pastor, if it is not that pulpit and that church! What will be his judgment if at Christ's return he says, "Here it is, Lord. I managed to keep most of these people from falling by the wayside, but it's about the same size as when you gave it to me. And is that his responsibility or is it mine? Is it the problem of time-buying agencies and the media, or is it that man's talent--that man's pound, is it his branch that must bear fruit?

Jesus Christ of Nazareth trained disciples, fully expecting that they should go out--all twelve of them (Matthias replacing Judas), and even that other apostles of equal rank, and equal stature in the church, each according to his own gift, should go out and continue to preach the gospel!

I am going to call upon every individual pastor of every church, no matter how large or how small, to make it his goal and his aim as a vital part of his own personal responsibility, to increase his church through his own "watering"; through his own diligent efforts in his local communities, notwithstanding absence of media, or any other real (or imagined) excuse.

I am of the impression many of our ministers are hard-working, but I would be a fool not to assume there are those who are not. I intend putting our ministry to work harder than they have ever worked before--and with the specific GOAL of whatever level or measure of increase God will provide as the pastor does his part in sowing the seed abroad, and watering seed which is planted through the media.

I do not wish to pick arbitrary numbers out of a hat, and measure every man's separate gift by the amount of increase realized--nor do I wish to enter into any "membership drive" or start putting stars after people's names or charts or red lines or graphs on the wall which show that one minister was able to increase his church by 15% while another lagged behind at only 5%, thus inviting dangerous comparisons and inspiring some to be so lax that they invite practically anyone to church. I DO, nevertheless, want every pastor, associate and/or assistant to recognize as the talent in his hand— the pound in his possession--that his calling, that of being a pastor of a church, is a responsibility given directly to him by Jesus Christ of Nazareth--and that Jesus Christ of Nazareth expects that talent or pound to be increased!

This is not to cause the ministry to compete with each other. This is not to cause us to falsely measure a man's success by the amount of growth he achieves in a local congregation, but this is to say if we do not collectively get out and drive toward increasing that pound or that talent, that we are dying on the vine and Christ will raise up someone else to do His Work and we will be down and out!

Jesus likened us to branches attached to Him as the Vine. He said that it was His will (the way that He was glorified) that His disciples should "bear much fruit!"

A caretaker is not bearing fruit. He is merely insuring that the flock does not escape, keeping the wolves away, and, perhaps, once in a while going after the one in favor of the ninety and nine.

I could easily imagine a minister being so sincere, so dedicated, so on fire with zeal and exuberance in the conduct of his duties that he would urge his congregation to invite friends, relatives, the butcher, hairdresser, barber, baker, shop keeper, filling station operator from the local community to "come and hear one of the finest speakers you have ever heard in your life"—making it his aim to be the best speaker in the world!

Every minister in the church ought to have a goal of becoming the greatest preacher in the church. He ought to want to become a fantastic public speaker. That means practicing—that means working—that means reading the right kind of books, maybe taking some classes. It means really working on sermons ahead of time and it does mean a great deal of prayer and a great deal of inspiration and a great deal of God's Holy Spirit.

What have we got to speak about? Only the TRUTH! We have the truth about the whole overall plan and purpose of God! We know who and what man is, why he is on this earth, where he is going! We know the very purpose of life; how to live healthily, happily, abundantly and well!

We know the true causes for crime, violence, wars, juvenile delinquency, sex perversion, divorce, drug addiction, alcoholism and every evil that blights society. It is the most challenging, interesting, inspiring message that could ever be given to humankind. A message that really makes sense and really explains every major question anyone has ever had. Only we can answer, "Why did God let little Tommy die!" Only we can answer why the poverty and the ignorance in the third world. Only we can answer, "Will there be a nuclear bomb World War III?" and "Will mankind survive it?" We have the answer to all the questions that plague all mankind and only we have those answers! No one else has them. No one else explains them. No one else understands them.

We know how to treat those causes, and to lift the yokes and burdens on suffering little ones, assisting and aiding them in cleaning up the mess in their lives, putting them on the right track, giving them a whole new lease on life, a fresh chapter, a new destiny, hope for all eternity!

We have the most exciting, inspiring, challenging, interesting, message that could ever be given to humankind—a message which makes sense and really explains all the major questions that perplex all mankind!

All we have is the TRUTH!

Are we ashamed of that truth? Is there some part of it we dare not preach? Are we ashamed of our calling, of who and what we are, with whom we are associated?

Did not Jesus say He came to call the offcasts, the offscouring, the castaways, the debris and the derelicts of all society? And didn't the Apostle Paul say, "Of such were some of you"?

Wasn't Jesus accused of being the friend of publicans, harlots and sinners and didn't He say to religious people, "Those will go into the Kingdom of God before you"?

Did not Jesus say, "Of whom much has been forgiven, the same loves much--and of whom little has been forgiven, the same loves little"? The "caretaker" in Jesus' analogy is the man who wrapped up his pound in a napkin, and gave back to Jesus exactly that amount, with not even a simple passbook interest!

For too long, we have been unconsciously following the syndrome that in the latter days "some will depart from the faith," almost dabbling in Laodecianism--wondering if the decline of the Work and its eventual going "down and out" is not in the offing.

But God's Word says that Jesus Christ expects to come to find a "people prepared for the Lord; that unless we are fulfulling our responsibilies of "turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers," and "preparing the way" for the second coming of Christ, we are unprofitable servants!

Prophecy speaks of a time when the church will enter a new era of signs, wonders and miracles just prior to the second coming of Christ, just as it began its first century immediately following the resurrection of Christ! Paul said to Timothy, "Wherefore I put you in remembrance that you stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the putting on of my hands. For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of POWER, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God"! (II Tim. 1:6-8).

And I say to the ministry today, be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of Jesus Christ, nor of me, Garner Ted Armstrong, His prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God. Because I am willing to go to any city of the United States and to put on a billboard, "Garner Ted, sinner, has come to town." If I wear the label on my back, does that include the belief in people's minds that if Garner Ted ever made a mistake he was exempt from the penalty? That if Garner Ted ever made a mistake he was exempt not only from the immediate penalty in his own heart, mind and life but for the eternal penalty as well? Or do I not and have I not and shall I not suffer whatever penalty in exact measure for my own personal faults, problems or sins as any other human being? And does not the Passover mean every bit as much to me as the littlest person in the church?

Is there anyone in the Church of God who is dragging his feet in God's Church today because of his association with me? I hope and pray not, because if he makes that mistake, it is his own salvation he is losing. He is coming to some deadly false conclusions.

Paul later said, "Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound, therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"!

Paul urged Timothy to use the great gift of powerful evangelism God had given him, and urged him again and again not to be "ashamed" of the great message he had been given.

It is true the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is to be preached as a "witness." But all too often we tend to think it is a witness for the "prosecution" instead of a witness for

the defense! Satan is the accuser of the brethren. Satan is a witness for the prosecution. Jesus Christ is the Counsel for the defense and His ministers are witnesses for the defense.

The witnessing Peter, James, Paul, and so many others did; the "whereof we are witnesses" Paul so often mentioned was being "witnesses of his resurrection"; the fact that they were eyewitnesses to a resurrected Christ, a living Christ, a living Savior!

A paraphrase of the gospel is found in I Corinthians 15. It says (paraphrased): "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand; through which also you are being saved, if you keep in memory what I have preached unto you, unless you believed it all for nothing. For I delivered unto you the following: One, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and, two, that Jesus Christ was buried, being dead, and three, that he rose again the third day, exactly as the Bible said, and also that he was seen of Peter, then of the twelve; and after that he was seen of about 500 brethren at the same time of whom the greater part remain unto this moment (though some are dead) and after that he was seen of James and then of all the other apostles and that finally he was seen of me, also, with my own eyes, as one begotten out of due season, because I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the Church of God!"

Now that is taking the Gospel one, two, three, four, five, exactly as it is in the Word of God. That is what the Bible says what the Gospel is. We must include that in the Gospel. Yes it is surely about the Kingdom of God, but it is also about Christ who was the King and who can't set it up unless He is alive and is going to return again. You can't leave any of it out.

". . . Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (I Cor. 15:1-12).

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God then, is that sum total of the message, life works, example, and promise embodied in Jesus Christ of Nazareth; that He is 1) the very Son of God, 2) the Head of His Church, 3) the risen Jesus Christ who was resurrected after three days according to the Scriptures, 4) the soon-coming King, 5) the One who has disqualified the present evil ruler, Satan, 6) our High Priest who sits at the right hand of the Father making daily intercession for us, 7) the First Born among many brethren, our Elder Brother, the Captain and the Author of our personal salvation, who loves us with an intensity impossible for us to understand, even in the deepest emotions of love toward one's own spouse, children, parent, or close personal friend.

We cannot make this powerful personality, this Christ, this Savior, this tender, loving, elder brother, this coming King, appear only in one guise--that of an angry, conquering warrior with the intention of taking human life. We must also preach Him, who and what He was, what He accomplished, and what He is now and what He will accomplish--ALL as a part of the Gospel!

We are entrusted with preaching the combined messages of Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ Himself, the Apostle Paul, and the Book of Revelation written by John!

A Gospel without Christ as personal Savior is like a witness for the prosecution. A Gospel including Christ as Savior, Elder Brother and "ye are my friends" is a witness for the defense! Satan is the prosecutor; Christ is the public defender! Satan is the accuser of the brethren, but Christ turns to His Father and says, "Father I understand, forgive them!"

If the entire ministry will join with me in dedicating ourselves to the collective task of preaching "Jesus who has risen from the dead" and recognize our collective responsibility to "water" and then expect God to give the increase, then this whole church will begin a new era of growth, development, maturity, and the outpouring of unimaginable spiritual blessings.

The unprofitable ministers, the priests who said, "The table of the Lord is contemptable" were used in Malachi's first chapter as "offering the blind for sacrifice, the lame and the sick, as polluted bread."

God said, "You said also, what a weariness is it! and you brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; . . ."

Consequently, in the chapter directed toward the priests, Malachi said, "And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you! If you will not hear, and if you will not lay it to heart to GIVE GLORY UNTO MY NAME saith the Eternal of Hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings, yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it. And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Eternal of Hosts. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: and he walked with me in peace and equity, and did TURN MANY AWAY FROM INIQUITY! For the priest's lips should seek knowledge, and he should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Eternal of Hosts"! (Mal. 2:1-7).

I am calling upon the entirety of the worldwide ministry of the Church of God to recognize their collective responsibility in casting abroad the seed, watering that seed where it falls, and counting upon God to "give the increase."

It is God who has established the principle of "10%" in His principle of tithing--and without being arbitrary, I feel it would be wise to have a minimal goal toward which we can strive. They once wrote an article against my father in England calling him "Mister Ten Percent." They may as well have written an article, "God--the Ten Percent God," because it is God who established ten percent. Knowing all of the biblical examples of Paul's frustrated determination to go into Bithynia, and his requirement to remain in Ephesus because God told him, "I have much people there," it is of course fully understood that no matter the sincerest and most perseverent efforts on the part of one of our most powerful and successful preachers, growth may prove to be difficult or even impossible in some areas, given certain circumstances, and very easy under others.

I am utterly and totally convicted and convinced it IS not only possible, but waiting there and beckoning toward us like the fields which were "already white with harvest" during Jesus' day if we will only enter into those fields as Jesus commanded.

So I believe that every pastor of every church should make it his personal goal with himself, with his assistants, his trainees, deacons, his wife, his family, his leading members, to make that church grow by a minimum of ten percent per year.

Let's break that down. What does that mean in a congregation of 100? That means ten human beings, not quite one per 30 days. Adding one member to that church every four sermons, every four Bible Studies, every month. Is that too difficult? In a church of 250, that means 25. And I'm talking about mature, baptized adults.

No man is going to be judged. He's not going to have his salary docked, certainly not going to be fired if he falls short of that, but I feel that we ought to set a minimal goal; there ought to be some way by which we measure our own labors and we can look back and we can say, "I have really been used of God. I have allowed myself as an instrument to be used of God and I have had a successful year. We experienced a good deal of increase this year and we don't even have good media coverage." That has already happened in some areas, in some churches in the United States. And you can go in and examine how hard those in the ministry work.

I am totally convicted and convinced that not only is this possible, but that if we don't do it, Jesus Christ is going to reject us and we will be sliding backwards, going down hill, going the wrong way.

Collectively, God's Church must be a growing church, or we will surely wither away and fail in the fulfillment of the great commission, and God will raise up others in our place.

I feel God's Church is at a crossroads. We are making vast strides in media. In a matter of days, live half-hour radio programs taken directly from the Gospels will be once again available to the millions. We are on the move with that same "winning game" which helped build this church in the late 50s and early 60s--the big city 50,000 watt radio stations, a strong PLAIN TRUTH magazine.

We have a great deal added to that original "winning game." First, the difference today is that we have an educated, dedicated and converted ministry numbering up into the hundreds who are out there to assist in carrying that load which we didn't have in the 50s and early 60s. Secondly, we have a vast array of beautifully done booklets. Thirdly, we have cleaned up, cleared up and straightened up an enormous amount of doctrinal confusion and we have an STP project so that every pastor now speaks the same thing.

We have a lot more going for us today than we did during those years when we were bursting with growth, and growing so fast that we were almost unable to contain it. So I believe if every church pastor will recognize his responsibility in helping my father and me to fulfill the major phase of the great commission that God has entrusted to us, then this church is going to experience its greatest growth!