

Personal

From the Desk of
Fred R. Coulter

February 25, 2015

Dear Elders and Invitees,

Again, in 2015, we will hold the Elders' Conference at *The Greater Cincinnati Airport Hilton Hotel*, located at 7373 Turfway Road, in Florence, Kentucky. It will be from May 7 to May 8, 2015. **Your reservations have been made. You don't need to call! When you check in, you need to mention the Christian Biblical Church of God.**

The opening meeting for elders only will be at 1:00 PM on May 6th. Then, we will all meet on the 7th and 8th and we will have a morning session at 9:30 AM and after lunch, an afternoon session. For the Sabbath, May 9th we will have morning and afternoon services, with a meal in between.

If there are any questions you would like to be discussed at the conference, please forward them to me ASAP.

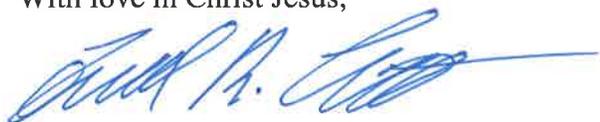
This past year, Roger Kendall and Marlin Fannin have been writing and compiling an Elder's Manual. We are sending you a copy of their final rough draft. Please send any comments and additions you deem necessary to be in the Manual.

For our part, all of us need to continue yield to God the Father and Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit of God, so we can serve the brethren and new people with love and dedication to the truth of God and His coming kingdom. The most important thing we need to do in our lives is to always maintain our own personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ—through faith and love, coupled with study and prayer. As we serve the brethren, we always need to keep in mind that it is not for self, nor power and rulership over them, rather as Paul admonished the elders of Ephesus, "Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to **feed the church of God**, which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

In teaching the brethren, we need to remember that we are stewards of God's Word and stewards of God to teach the brethren the truth of the God. We are to constantly help them to grow in grace and knowledge through the power of the Holy Spirit, with Christ in them and Christ in us. Notice Peter's admonition to elders on how we are to serve the brethren: "*The elders who are among you I exhort, even as a fellow elder, and an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed: **Feed the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight not by compulsion, but willingly; not in fondness of dishonest gain, but with an eager attitude; not as exercising lordship over your possessions; but by being examples to the flock of God.** And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you shall receive an unfading, eternal crown of glory*" (I Pet. 5:1-4).

We greatly love and appreciate the exemplary manner in which all of you have conducted your lives in loving and serving the brethren with dedication. Surely it is pleasing to Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. It is especially needed as we are now facing progressively difficult times with lawlessness all around us, and the certain reality of persecution. May God the Father and Jesus Christ continue to bless you with the extra strength, love, grace, mercy and wisdom in every thing.

With love in Christ Jesus,



The Christian Biblical Church of God

Elder's Manual

Introduction

Being ordained into the office of an Elder is something a person should not take lightly. We are told in the book of James, the Lord's brother, James 3:1-*" My brethren, do not many of you become teachers, knowing that we will receive more severe judgment."* Why is this so? This is because God holds an Elder accountable that they will not abuse the brethren nor lead them astray as to the Truths of the Bible. God will judge the works of Elders at a higher standard and will reward them according to their works. Please see 1 Tim 4:14-15.

An Elder is to be a helper of joy for the brethren as they seek the Kingdom of God. We are told in 2 Corinthians 1:24, *" Not that we exercise lordship over your faith, but because we are working with you to increase your joy. For you stand by faith."* Paul tells us in Hebrews 13:17, *"Follow your leaders, and be submissive, because they are looking out for your spiritual well-being, as those who must be ready to give an account to God in order that they may do this with joy, and not with groaning because that would be unprofitable to you."* These scriptures show that we are to be helpers of joy to the brethren, and to be concerned for their spiritual well being, and that we are NOT to exercise lordship over their faith.

When a person is called of God to hold a position of an Elder in God's Church, it is a calling to help the brethren in the Church to build a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and God the Father and to achieve the Kingdom of God. It is not a calling to dominate or rule over the lives of the Brethren but to be a spiritual guide and to give support to those whom God has called. It is actually a "demotion" when one considers what Christ emphasized in Matt. 20: 25-28. *" But Jesus called them to Him and said, " You know that the rulers of nations exercise lordship over them, and the great ones exercise authority over them. However, it shall not be this way among you; but whoever would become great among you, let them be your servant; And whoever would be first among you, let him be your slave; Just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."* This is the attitude every Elder must have if they are to humbly serve the brethren in love as Christ did the Church.

The apostle Paul tell us that Jesus Christ himself has placed positions of responsibility in His Church to perfect, edify, and to bring into the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God. Ephesians 4:11- 16 records *" And He (Christ) gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; until we all come into the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; So that we no longer be children tossed and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men in cunning craftiness, with the view to the systematizing of the error, But beholding the truth in love, may in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head, even Christ; From whom all the body, fitly framed and compacted together by that which every joint supplies, according to its inner working in the measure of each individual part, is making the increase of the body unto*

the edifying of itself in love.”

It is a great responsibility that Christ gives to each Elder who must be spiritually mature and capable of leading the brethren in the same way that Christ instructed the Apostles. Every Elder needs to know that the brethren belong to Christ and we are there to serve the brethren in the same way that Christ served and loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Elders are to apply the words of Christ in their ministry that Christ spoke to Peter in John 21:15-17. *“ Therefore , when they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me more than these” And he said to Him, “ Yes, Lord , You know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He said to him a second time, Simon son of Jonas , do you love Me?” And he said to Him , “ Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.” He said to him” Shepard My sheep,” He said to him a third time, ”Simon , son of Jonas, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “ Do you love Me?” and he said to Him, “ Lord , you know all things . You know that I love You,” Jesus said to him, “ Feed my sheep.” Elders are to feed and shepard the sheep in love as they love God with all of their heart, and with all of their soul, and with all of their mind and with all of their strength. (Mark 12: 30).In the same way the apostle Paul admonished the Elders in Ephesus “ Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood” An Elder must always teach and treat each of the brethren with respect, love, kindness and in a manner that will not cause a “little one” in Christ to stumble or be offended (Mat.18:5-6). In order to serve the brethren in a Christ like manner, an Elder must continually ask God for guidance and wisdom through daily prayer and in the study of His Word. .*

As Elders we are the keepers of the flock God has placed us over. It is an honorable and respectable position. We are to guard the flock, holding to the doctrines of Christ, watching out for false teachers and doctrines that are not scriptural in order to keep the flock spiritually safe and healthy. We must be the first in line as an example to the flock and to those outside the Church in order that Christ and God the Father are glorified, and NOT us. (Mat. 5:16). We, as did the apostle Paul, have to struggle with our own daily problems and trials of the flesh as we carry out the responsibility of caring for the brethren (2 Corinthians 11:26-28). But those holding the office, or position as an Elder are worthy of double honor. 1 Timothy 5:17-18 says, *“Let the ordained elders who are leading well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who are laboring in the Word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, “ You are not to muzzle an ox treading out the corn,” and “ The workman is worthy of his hire.” “*

Stay close to God in daily prayer and Bible study as we ask for His guidance in being elders (overseers) of His flock. As we grow in grace and knowledge, we can help those whom God has called, is calling, and will call in order that we can help them build an eternal relationship with God our Father and Christ His Son so that they may enter into that glorious family that has no end. May God keep and protect us as we serve and guide His flock, over which He has made us shepherds under the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. In the next section we will cover the qualifications of an Elder.

Qualification for Eldership:

In Exodus 18: 12-26 we first see an example of leaders (mature and older men) being appointed to help Moses as was suggested by his father-in-law Jethro. Moses was burdened down trying to help the multitude of people who came to him for answers to

their problems. Jethro seeing the situation said, this thing is not good. You will surely wear away, both you and the people that are with you. Jethro said hearken now to my voice and I will give you counsel. And you shall choose out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness. And place them over the people to be LEADERS of thousands, and leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens. And Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. And Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people.

In Numbers 11:11-17, due to the burden of dealing with all the people with their complaints and troubles, Moses complained to God. God heard Moses and said He would come down and take some of the spirit which was upon Moses and place it upon 70 elders so that they might bear the burden of the people along with Moses. We can see here that it takes the help of God's Spirit in order to accomplish the duties of an Elder.

Notice the qualifications: They were to be men who feared God, men of truth, hating covetousness. Like wise we see a similar situation in the New Testament Church.

Paul realized that he, along with only a few other appointed leaders, could not handle the work load being placed upon them to serve the needs of all the churches. As a result, in Acts 14:23, Paul instructed them to ordain (appoint) Elders in every church after praying with fasting (which involves seeking God and His guidance in whom to select) and to commit them to the Lord, on Whom they believed. Likewise, Paul gave instructions to Titus to ordain elders in every city where there was a church. Paul wrote in Titus 1: 4-5, *"To Titus a true son according to our common faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. For this cause I left you in Crete, so that you might set in order the things that needed to be done, and might ordain elders in every city, as I commanded you."*

Paul, just as Jethro did, went on to establish the qualifications for eldership. See Titus 1 vs. 6- Must be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful not rebellious children.

vs. 7- To be not self willed or quick tempered, not given to much wine, not a bully, not greedy for material gain.

vs. 8- Be hospitable, a lover of good, sound minded, just, holy, self controlled.

vs. 9- Holding steadfast to the faithful word, according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, so that he may be able to encourage with sound doctrine and to convict those who are gainsayers.

We see that these were mature, converted men who had some real life experiences and sound knowledge in the Word of God.

- Husband of one wife
- Having children
- Having knowledge of the word of God, not a novice.
- Skillful in speaking (1 Timothy 3:2)

Again, we see instructions Paul gave Timothy in 1 Timothy 3: 1-7, regarding choosing Elders.

vs. 1- if any man aspires to be an overseer, he desires a good work.

vs. 2- it is obligatory that the overseer be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, serious- minded, respectable, hospitable, skillful in speaking.

vs. 3- Not given to much wine, not a bully, not greedy of selfish gain; but kind, not a quarreler, not a lover of money;

vs. 4- One who rules his own house well, having his children in subjection with all respect;

vs. 5- For if a man does not know how to rule his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?

vs. 6- Not a novice, lest he become conceited and fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

vs. 7- It is mandatory that he also have a good report from those who are outside the church, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Paul also stated in 2 Tim 2: 24-25 *“Now it is obligatory that a servant (elder) of the Lord not be argumentative, but gentle toward all, competent to teach, forbearing, In meekness correcting those who set themselves in opposition; if perhaps God may grant them repentance unto acknowledging of the truth, “*

In summary, God inspired the ordaining of Elders to be overseers of His flock. We are to be helpers of their joy, teaching the doctrines of Christ, always pointing and leading them to be followers of Jesus Christ, not followers of men. As Elders we have the greater accountability and it is a helpful reminder to read, 1 Timothy 3, and Titus 1, as to the standard God the Father and Christ Jesus holds us to.

Responsibilities and Duties of an Elder

As was already mentioned in the Introduction, the most fundamental responsibility of an Elder is to serve the Brethren with heart felt devotion and love in the same way that Christ gave himself for the Church. As an overseer of the Brethren and Steward of God’s Word, we are to help the Brethren in their journey to the Kingdom of God and remain faithful in carrying out our God given responsibilities. As Paul said in 1 Cor. 4: 1-2 *“So then, let every man regard us as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Beyond that, it is required of stewards that one be found faithful.”* And as Christ said in Mat. 24:45-46 *“ Who then is a faithful and wise servant whom the Lord has set over His household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. “* Elders are to teach the Word of God faithfully and lead the Brethren to Christ so they can build a close and personal relationship with Him. *“ Diligently study to show yourself approved unto God , a workman who does not need to be ashamed , rightly dividing the Word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)* God’s faithful ministers are to hold fast the true doctrines and protect the Brethren from false teachers. Paul admonished Timothy with these words in 2 Tim. 1:13-14, 4: 2-5 *“ Hold for the standard for doctrine, the sound words you heard from me, in the faith and love that in Christ Jesus. Guard the good thing that was committed to you by the Holy Spirit that is dwelling in us. Preach the Word! Be urgent in season and out of season ; convict, rebuke, encourage and with all patience and doctrine. For there shall come a time when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but according to their lusts shall they accumulate to themselves a great number of teachers, having ears itching to hear what satisfies their cravings; And they shall turn away their own ears from the truth; and they shall be turned aside unto myths . But as for you, be vigilant in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist; fully carry out your ministry. “*

As Elders we are not to exercise spiritual control over the brethren but to nurture and lookout for their spiritual well-being and be helpers of their joy in Christ. *“ Not that we exercise lordship over your faith , but because we are working with you to increase your joy. For you stand by faith.”* 2 Cor. 1: 24. Paul also records in Heb. 13:17 *“ Follow your*

leaders and be submissive , because they are looking out for your spiritual well-being , as those who must be ready to give account to God in order that they may do this with joy, and not with groaning because that would be unprofitable for you”

In our preaching we are to build up the brethren, provide comfort and encouragement to produce greater spiritual growth as Paul says in 1 Cor. 14:3 “ *On the other hand, the one who prophesies (speaking under inspiration from God) is speaking to men for edification and an encouragement and comfort. “*

In Eph. 4:11-16 Paul clarifies that as Elders we are to aid in the perfecting of the saints, to do a faithful work of the ministry as we lead others to Christ and to edify the body of Christ in love. “*And He gave some as apostles, and prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ; Until we all come into the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man unto the measure and fullness of Christ.*

Stewards of God’s Flock

Paul rightly describes the role of a true minister as being a Steward of God handiwork, upholding and prospering the work that God is doing within his Church. “ *So then, let every man regard us as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Beyond that it is required of stewards that one be found faithful “ (1 Cor. 4:1-2)*

What is a Steward? A steward is one who is given responsibility to manage his master’s possessions or household. He has been entrusted with his master’s goods and resources so as to prosper and to increase the value of what ever he has been given charge over. In the same way, God expects each minister or elder to faithfully oversee and care for His flock of believers in such a way to produce an increase in spiritual growth and fruits of the Spirit in those He has called, Luke 12: 42 says “ *Who then is the wise and faithful steward ,whom the lord shall put in charge of his household , to give to each one the portion of food (spiritual instruction in the Word of God in season.”* As a elder in God’s Church we are to feed and nourish the brethren on the true doctrines of the the Word so they can prosper and be in good health spiritually. “*All scripture is God breathed and is profitable for doctrine, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; So that the man of God (the brethren or household of God) may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.” 2 Tim. 3:16-17).*

The Parable of the Pounds in Luke 19: 12-26 expounds and teaches us the principle of stewardship. Here the Nobleman (Christ) bestows his goods (pounds representing wealth) upon his servants (applies to Elders and Brethren alike) and instructs them to trade and bring in a profit for him while he was away. To each one he gives one pound but they all do not return the same increase (profit) because of different talents, natural abilities and degree of effort. Those who produced an increase were faithful in their efforts and were rewarded according to the profit they produced. The one who did not produce any profit lost out even on that which he thought he had. God gives each Elder an extra portion of His Holy Spirit at their ordination so as to allow the elder greater spiritual help to better lead and serve His flock. God then expects a return on His investment in each Elder, in that the person is able through God’s help to be able to produce an increase in the spiritual well- being (fruit) of those they are serving. This demonstrates the serious responsibility each Elder has been given before God as they care for and provide the support needed by the brethren. We need to remember Luke 12:48 as it says “*For to whomever much has been given, from him shall much be required: and to*

whom much has been committed from him they will demand the more.” If we put in the effort to diligently serve the people of God faithfully, then God will give us the help, strength and spiritual guidance we will need to do the job God expects.

As the true ministers of Christ we need to diligently keep our personal spiritual lives sharp and fully focused on Christ as our Savior and God so as not to become prey to our own pride, vanity and carnal nature. We are always to set a Christ-like example of service and in Christian living as well as being a Light of God’s Way to the world. “*In the same way you are to let your light shine before men so that they may see your good works , and may glorify your Father who is in heaven.*” (*Mat. 5:16*) We must remain faithful in daily prayer and bible study always looking to God to guide us and give us the wisdom and knowledge that will enable us to do the work of the ministry. We must be humble in attitude, strong in the spirit and always ready to give God the praise, glory and credit for any and all the good works we do as God’s servants.

Specific Duties of an Elder include:

1. Teach the Word of God faithfully
2. Counsel the Brethren
3. Conduct Baptisms
4. Conduct Funerals
5. Conduct Marriages
6. Anoint and Pray for the sick
7. Support and visit the Brethren as needed

Further sections will cover information on counseling as well as conducting Baptisms, Funerals and Marriages.

Counseling for Baptism

Elders are to counsel newly called people who are seeking God and desire to be baptized into God’s Church. This is an important function because this is truly the most important decision a person can make and it must be made with full knowledge and understanding. A person being baptized must be fully committed in his heart without any doubts or reservation for they are about to enter into a personal, spiritual covenant with the Creator God. It is the responsibility of the Elder to make sure the person is ready to make this important step in their lives. It is God who calls a person into his Church for God is seeking those who desire to have a close and personal relationship with Him. “*No one can come to Me unless the Father , Who sent Me, draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day*”(*John 6:44*) It is the Father who grants a person repentance so that they can come to see their own sins against God. “*Or do you despise the richness of His kindness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the graciousness of God leads you to repentance ?*” (*Rom.2:4*)

Counseling for Baptism is essential because the person seeking baptism must come to fully understand the covenant relationship that they are making with God. It is the responsibility of the one doing the baptism to see that the person is fully committed and understands the full consequences of their decision. The Elder must determine that the person has accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and that they have truly repented of their sins. The Apostle Peter clearly stated what a person must do upon repentance, “*Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you yourselves shall receive the gif of the Holy Spirit*” (*Acts 2:38*). Repentance of one’s sins before God is the key attitude for someone who is seeking to be

baptized. Repentance comes from within as the person can now see their sinful disgusting self and how they have been sinning against God.” There are two, distinct kinds of repentance, a false, “worldly “repentance “ that is shallow, uncommitted and leads to death—or godly repentance that leads to forgiveness and salvation. *Paul wrote “ for sorrow unto repentance before God works out salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world works out death” (2 Cor. 7:10)* As a consequence of true repentance, the person now wants to turn from their sinful way of life and with the loving desire to now obey and live by God’s laws and commandments .

The introduction in the booklet “The Christian Covenant of Water Baptism” summarizes the importance and meaning of Baptism to the new believer in Christ. “ the New Testament teaches that baptism is the believers fundamental covenant pledge necessary for the forgiveness of sin and the granting of the Holy Spirit of God—which enable you to walk in newness of life, keeping the laws and commandments of God through the grace of God , and to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ in preparation for eternal life.” (1st paragraph, page ii)

The person must understand that baptism is an end of one’s ungodly, sinful way of living and the beginning of a new spiritual way of living. The person must come to fully understand several key aspects before they can be baptized. This includes knowing what sin is- the transgression of God’s holy commandments and laws including the keeping of God’s Sabbath and Holy Days , what is true Godly repentance and the nature and workings of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Finally the person needs to be aware of the consequences of ever breaking their baptismal covenant with God and must be willing to “count the cost “ regarding their decision to put God first in their lives as shown in Luke 14:25-33 and in Matt 10:32-38.

The decision to seek baptism should not be a hasty or snap one but should be made only after the person has spent considerable time studing their Bibles, keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days , fellowshiping with converted members if possible and after intense prayer and fasting. A good start would be to have the individual read the Booklet by Fred Coulter entitled “The Christian Covenant of Water Baptism” It is important that the person look up and read in their own Bible the scriptures given . Once this has been completed, personal counseling can begin either by phone if the distance is large or by direct contact if possible. The best approach may be to schedule several sessions in advance to take place on a weekly basis to review and go over the topics of 1) what is sin, 2) understanding Godly repentance,3) What is the Holy Spirit and how it functions in a person’s life, 4) the meaning of water baptism as explained in Rom. 6 and finally 5) counting the cost.

Each session should start with prayer asking God to inspire and guide the counseling session. The Elder should ask the person whether they have any questions or concerns over what they have been studying. The Elder should plan to go over all the key scriptures and determine if the person understands the commitment they will be making. In addition the person should read and study the Beliefs and Doctrines of the New Testament Church (Appendix M in the Faithful Version) to help them understand the true teaching of the Bible as well as help them see what changes they will need to make in their lives..

Baptism is an irrevocable covenant pledge between the person, God the Father and Jesus Christ. It is important that the person understand that just as Christ died for us so our sins

can be forgiven, we likewise symbolically die in the watery grave of baptism, pledging our lives unto death that we will be faithful to the end. If the person is faithful, that person will be raised to eternal life at the return of Jesus Christ in the first resurrection.

Rom. 6:1-18 describes the meaning of water baptism . The Elder should expound these scriptures with the person being baptized.

“What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin , so that grace may abound? MAY IT NEVER BE! We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein? Or are you ignorant that we, as many that were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through the baptism into the death; so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father ,in the same way, we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been conjoined together in the likeness of His death, so shall we be in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man was co-crucified with Him in order that that the body of sin might be destroyed, so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin; Because the one who has died to sin has been justified from sin. Now if we have died together with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has any dominion over Him. For when He died, He died unto sin once for all; but that He lives, He lives unto God. In the same way also , you should indeed reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ our Lord. Therefore, do not let sin rule in your mortal body by obeying it in the lusts thereof. Likewise, do not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin; rather, yield yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not rule over you because you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace? MAY IT NEVER BE! Don't you realize that to whom you yield yourselves as servants to obey, you are servants of the one you obey, whether it is of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you were servants of sin , but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you; And having been delivered from sin, you became the servants of righteousness.

Additional key scripture for the person desiring baptism to read and study:

What is Sin?

I John 3:4, Rom 3:23, Rom 5:12, Mat. 5:19, Heb. 10:16, Rom. 6:23, Deut. 10:12-13, Deut. 30: 15-20,

Understanding Godly Repentance

Mark 1:15, Acts 2:38, Ps. 51 : 1-18, 2 Peter 3:9, 2 Cor. 7: 8-11, Isa. 1: 16-18, Isa. 55: 6-8, Acts 3:19, Rev 3:19,

The Holy Spirit

Acts 2:38, Acts 2: 2-4, John 14:16-17, John 16:13, Rom. 8: 26-27, Mat. 28:19, 2 Tim. 1:6-7, Mat. 3:16, Acts 8:15-18, Acts 10: 43-47

Meaning of Water Baptism

Acts 2:38, Mat. 3:2-5, Rom. 6:1-4, Isa.1:16-18, Mat. 3: 13-16,

Counting the Cost

Luke 14:25-33, Mat. 10:32-39

If after the person has completed reviewing the appropriate scriptures and has completed the counseling sessions, the person may be considered ready to be baptized. Prior to the baptism ceremony, the Elder doing the baptism should go through the ceremony in detail

with the person so they can fully understand the spiritual intent and significance of the baptism ceremony and what it means to be baptized into The Church of God.

The elder should follow the guidelines of the Baptism ceremony as given on pages 59-60 in the Baptism booklet. After doing the baptism, the Elder should lay hands on the person and pray that God would pour out His Holy Spirit and make the believer a begotten son or daughter of His spiritual family. The Elder should also ask for God's special blessings on the person and commend them into the hands of Jesus Christ and God the Father. After saying —Amen at the conclusion of the ceremony, the elder should look into the eyes of the newly baptized person and say ” On the authority of Jesus Christ, your sins have been forgiven you. Welcome into the begotten family of God.”

Please see the complete baptism ceremony in **Appendix A**

Guidelines for Conducting Funerals:

One of the hardest duties of an Elder is performing a funeral service. There will be many different beliefs in the audience about death. Don't let this fact distract you, just read the scriptures from the Word of God and let His Word tell the story about life, death, and the resurrection. Always seek God for His help, strength and guidance so you (we) as Elders can provide this valuable service to the brethren and others who request this of us.

The funeral service is a very important part of the grieving process. It is an opportunity to serve the family in a very intimate way. Our goal should be to comfort the grieving loved ones. This is not a time for preaching or proselytizing. It is not a time to criticize the beliefs of others, though we can simply share the truth about death, reading scriptures which can give the family and those attending hope, which they may never have heard before. You will be delivering a eulogy, which means “to speak well of”. Don't be too preachy (too many scriptures) or too morose. Even a little humor can be okay, depending on the situation, and knowledge of the person.

Preparation:

You may be asked by the family in certain circumstances to help with arrangements. This can be coordinated with the family and funeral parlor. Practical considerations include, choice of casket, death certificate, obtaining a burial plot, floral tributes, (some prefer giving to a charitable cause in lieu of flowers) time and place of burial or cremation. If the deceased is a Veteran, the family may want a military tribute at the graveside. This usually takes place after the committal prayer. Most of these things will be taken care of by the family, it is only in certain circumstance where there is no one to help that you may be asked to participate.

Funeral Home:

Usually the director of the funeral home or the family will go over the plans for the funeral service.. Some funeral directors will say take what time you need for your message. Others may be on a tight schedule and want a time frame as to how long the service will last. Usually a speaking time of not more that 20 minutes is sufficient. Remember there may be family members, or friends who would like to make comments, plus selected pieces of music that the family wants played. Be sure to arrive at the funeral home at least 30 minutes before the service starts. This will allow you enough time to visit with the funeral director, and family for any last minute changes, or requests that may come up.

Protocol:

You can go over the details of the service with the funeral director. But usually the person officiating will at the close of service go and stand at the head of the casket while family and friends pass by the casket of the deceased.

You also will probably be asked to lead the pallbearers to the funeral hearse as well as to lead them from the hearse to the grave site at the cemetery. Also, the minister (officiating person) is usually second in line behind the hearse in procession to the cemetery. The funeral parking attendants will usually place you in that position before, or after the service. Following arrival at the cemetery, you should then stand by the head of the casket and give a few final scriptures and the committal prayer for the deceased. Please consult with the Funeral Director if you have any questions regarding other aspects of what you should do.

You may be asked by the family to come and share a meal with them after the conclusion of the burial service. That is up to you depending on your circumstances and how far you may have to travel to get back home.

Monetary issue:

It is customary that we do not charge to officiate at funerals. However, some funeral homes build into their service fees a charge to be paid to the minister (officiating person). If this is the case, be sure the family knows this and has approved of it before accepting. If the family or member of the family want to give you something as a token of their appreciation, you may mention that you don't charge for this service, but if they insist then feel free to accept and be sure to thank them.

There are many types of funerals you may be asked to officiate. The Manual contains some outlines you may use to organize the service. You can always adjust them to fit your particular situation.

- Church member
- Non church member
- Child or young adult
- Still birth
- Suicide

Funeral Service for Church Member:

On behalf of the family of : _____

I would like to thank you for coming to pay your respect to : Name of deceased _____.

The obituary may be read at this time by yourself or a member of the family..

Family members or friends may have some comments about the deceased at this point. They may inform you about this before the service or you may just ask if the family would like to make any remarks about the deceased loved one. You may want to make some comments yourself about the deceased, if you have personally known them at the beginning of your message.

At the beginning of your message, you may start out by asking the question about what is death? The audience will consist of various beliefs. Explain that the Bible describes death as like a sleep. You can use the example that Christ gave regarding Lazarus (John 11:11-14.). First, Christ said that Lazarus was asleep but later explained that he had died. In Luke 8:52-56, we have the example of the young daughter of Jairus (ruler of the synagogue) who had died. Christ said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleeping, but they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. Again, we see that God's view of death

is like a sleep.

Ecclesiastes 9:1,5, and 10, tells us the dead knows not anything; their thoughts cease, theirs works cease.

Our hope is in a resurrection from the dead.

1 Cor. 15:20, Christ was resurrected from the dead and became the first fruit of them that had fallen a sleep. Verses 21-23, tell us that death came by one man Adam, but in Christ we shall all be made alive. Verses 45-58, can be read, which tells of a change, where we are changed from mortal, to immortal where death will have no more victory over us. Other scriptures that can be read include

1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18, with the sound of the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first;

2 Corinthians 4:14, He that raised up our Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by the Lord Jesus.

John 5:28-29, the hour is coming when all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth: those who have practiced good unto a resurrection of life.

There are many scriptures that the bible gives pertaining to a resurrection back to life, such as: Job 14:14-15, Job 19:25-26, Isaiah 26:19, 2 Corinthians 1:9, John 6:38-40, Psalms 146:2-4, tells us not to put our trust in any man for salvation, for his breath departs and he goes back to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

Verse 5, happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.

Psalms 116:15, God says; precious in His sight is the death of his saints.

You can conclude with a statement regarding the deceased, as stated by the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 4:7, *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all of them that love his appearing."*

Close with a prayer: Thank God for the life of the deceased and pray that God will comfort the family. Also ask for protection as you travel to the place of internment.

At the grave site there are some scriptures you can read or quote before the committal prayer, such as Job 14:14, *"If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service will I wait, until my change come."*

Ecclesiastes 12:7, *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.*

Committal prayer: We now commit Name of deceased _____, into your hands for safe keeping until the resurrection. Pray for the family, and thank all those who came to share in their loss and time of grief. You may ask also for God's protection as you travel back to your homes.

Funeral Service Non-Member

On behalf of the family of _____ I would like to thank you for coming to share in their loss and grief, and to support them in this time of sorrow.

Brief Biography: (which can be read by the person officiating or family member)

Comments: (family or friends may want to say a few words at this time.)

There is nothing more fearful and sorrowful than death. We are often fearful of the unknown, and sorrowful over the death of a loved one. What is this great unknown, this

sorrowful loss called death?

There are many different beliefs and teachings on this subject. What does Jesus Christ teach us in His Word the Bible?

The story of Lazarus tells us a lot about what death is as recorded in the gospel of John chapter 11, verses 11 through 14. Christ referred to Lazarus as being in a sleep. His apostles says, Lord if he sleeps, he shall do well. Thinking he was resting and getting better. Then Christ said to them plainly, Lazarus is dead. In verse 23, Jesus said to Martha, your brother shall rise again, she replied, I know that he will rise in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said to her, I AM the resurrection and the life, he that believes in me, though he may die, yet shall he live. The rest of this chapter tells of Jesus, the sisters of Lazarus and many others accompanied Christ to the tomb where Lazarus had been laid to rest.

There Christ showed that a resurrection back to life not only can occur, but will at the resurrection of the dead. He said Lazarus come forth, and he did after being in the tomb four days.

In Ecclesiastes 9, verses 5, tells us that the living know they shall die, but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for their memory is forgotten. (They are in a sleep like state, just as Christ said about Lazarus.)

In Proverbs 14, verse 32, tells us the righteous has hope or refuge in his death. Because they have the promise of a resurrection back to life.

In the Gospel of John chapter 5, verses 28- 29, here is a promise of Christ “ Marvel not for the hour is coming when all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, they that have done good to a resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto a resurrection of judgment.”

John chapter 6, verse 40, Christ says; “*This is the will of Him that sent me, that everyone which sees the Son and believes on him, may have ever lasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.*” (remember what Martha said to Christ about her brother Lazarus, Lord I know that he will rise in the resurrection at the last day).

So we have seen from these scriptures that death is like a sleep. There is no pain or suffering, our thoughts perish and we are in a sleep like state until a resurrection of the dead. As Christ said; all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and come to a resurrection of life and judgment.

There are many things that we do not know or understand about life and death. But we can be comforted in the scriptures that we do know and have hope in them.

As Psalm chapter 68, verse 20 tells us, “ *Our God is the God of salvation; for unto God the Lord belong the issues of death*”.

Prayer: Pray for the family and friends, for strength, encouragement and comfort at this time of their loss.

Graveside Service:

You may want to read Job 14:14 -15 . Also Ecclesiastes 12:7..

Committal Prayer: The spirit goes back to God for safe keeping until the resurrection of the dead. Pray for the family, friends, relatives, and for a safe journey home.

(If there is a military honor guard present, their service usually takes place after your committal prayer.)

Funeral Service for Child:

On behalf of the family of name: _____.

I would like to thank you for coming to share in their time of loss and grief, and to support them in this time of sorrow.

Brief Obituary: Can be read by the one officiating, or a family member.

Comments: Family member(s) or friends may want to make some comments at this time.

Nothing affects us more about death than the death of a child. Some are taken as a result of some accident, some as a result of a disease, others may die shortly after birth, or are still born. Whatever the case may be, many times we and others ask ourselves, why?

We often question God, why, why did you allow this to happen.

Most of us are familiar or have heard of Job and his trials that he went through. As he was enduring them he asked the question in Job 3:11-13, Why did I not die from the womb, why did not I expire when I came out of the womb? Why did the knees receive me ; or why the breasts, that I should suck? For now I should have lain still and been quiet ; I should have slept. Then I would have been at rest. Why do some live out their 70 years – their threescore and ten, plus many additional years added to that? And others life is cut off at an early age, or as an infant.

Psalms 68:20, says, that our God is the God of salvation; and to God the Lord belong issues of death. We can from the scriptures get some of our answers we seek regarding death.

There are several examples of children being brought back to life and given back to their mothers, as proof that God is our resurrection and our life.

Old Testament:

1 Kings 17:17 through 24 – Tells us of Elijah and the widow's son brought back to life.

2 Kings 4:30 through 37 – Tells the story of Elisha raising the Shunamite's son.

2 King 13:20,21, tells the story of the dead man being revived when he touched the bones of Elisha, while they were burying him in hast due to the enemies approaching.

New Testament:

Luke 7:11-15, tells the story of Christ resurrecting a young man.

Luke 8:41-42, 49-56, tells the story of Christ raising Jarius daughter.

John 11:17-46, tells the story of Christ and the resurrection of his friend Lazarus, which also shows us that death is like a sleep.

Christ himself died, and was resurrected from the dead to life eternal.

These things are written for examples that we can have hope in a resurrection from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15 verses 21 through 23, tells us, " *For since by man came death , by man also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruit; afterword they that are Christs at his coming.*" We see the statement here(but every man in his own order). God is a God of order and planning.

Many have never heard, or read this scripture In Revelation 20 verses 4-6 that tells of a thousand year reign of Christ and the saints, after Satan has been restrained. Verse 6, tells us that, "*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years.*" (As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 23, but each in his own order.) Isaiah 65, verses 17 - 25, tells us about that reign and how an infant will be able to

live out his days with a possible life span of a 100 years.

There are many views, and teachings about death. And the Bible gives us many of the answers to our questions, as to why? However many of our questions may never be answered in our life time. But, we can believe in the words of Christ, in John chapter 5, verses 25- 29, where Christ says;” *truly, truly I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. And do not wonder at this, for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves shall hear His voice. And shall come forth : those who have practiced good unto a resurrection of life, and those who have practiced evil unto a resurrection of judgment.*”

Christ suffered death for all mankind, He died a horrible death for us, and was resurrected the third day in order that all might have an opportunity for eternal life in the family of God. We can all take hope, and comfort in these truths from the word of God, that there will be a resurrection of the dead. As God says; He has a purpose for the work of His hands. So it doesn't matter at what age our life ends; at birth, or shortly after, as a teenager, or an elderly person who has lived out a long life. God has a purpose for each one of us, and will fulfill it through his Son and our Savior Jesus Christ. Until that resurrection occurs we are in a sleep like state as Job and Christ tells us, where there is no pain or sorrow, thoughts or feelings until we hear the voice of Christ. May we take comfort in these words.

Closing prayer:

Graveside committal Prayer:

Funeral Service for of a Young Person:

You can adjust the funeral service for a young child, or infant and use as a guideline for the funeral of a teenager, or young adult. You might start by saying; we are truly affected when we see or hear of the death of a young person whose life was cut short.

Use the scriptures referenced in the New Testament as they appear to have been older children, or young adults.

Graveside Service:

On behalf of the family of _____

I would like to thank you for coming to share in their loss and grief, and to support them in this time of sorrow.

Brief Biography:

If a member you may start with and read the following scriptures.

Psalms 116:15, Isaiah 57:1-2, Proverbs 14:32

Non- Member: Start here.

How can we have hope in death?

Psalms 68:20, Job 14:14-15, Job 19:25-26, John 5:28-29, 1 Cor. 15:21-22, 49, 1 Cor. 15:50-51, 1 Thes. 4:13-18, 1 Cor. 15:53-55, Ps. 17:15, Rev. 21:3-4

Ecc. 12:7

Closing:

Committal prayer:

Note: Depending upon the time frame allowed you may want to leave out some of the scriptures. Especially if it is a non-member and the family wants to keep it short.

Please see an example of a Memorial Service in **Appendix B**

INTRODUCTION To The MARRIAGE CEREMONY

In our society today in the United States of America more and more people are choosing not to marry, but to cohabit together. This trend in society has had a great effect on some of the Churches of God, who have taken some of the worldly views as being godly. However, never does the Law of God change to suit man's ideology and belief systems. But God who created the marriage institution tells us plainly in His Word what our beliefs and views of marriage should be.

As seen in Genesis 2:18,23-24,"*And the LORD God said it is not good that man should live alone. I will make a helper (counterpart) compatible for him. Adam then said, This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman because she was taken out of man.*" We see in the next verses that God made this helper for Adam by causing a deep sleep to fall upon him, and from a rib of Adam, God made this helper." *For this reason shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife – and they shall become one flesh.*"

We are told in Proverbs 18:22," *Whosoever finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.*" Proverbs 5:18, "*Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth.*" Ecc. 9:9, Tells us;" *Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of the life of your vanity. For that is your portion in this life, and in your labor which you labor under the sun.*" The Apostle Paul tells us in Hebrews 13:4, "*Let marriage be held honorable by all, and the marital union be undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.*" In Revelation 19:7, tells us that Christ will marry(not cohabit) with His wife. "*Let us be glad and shout with joy; and give glory to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.*" So we see from scripture that the Creator of man, woman and marriage will marry His bride, the Church, when she has made herself ready.

The apostle Paul gives us additional information on how as husbands we are to treat our wives, and also instructions on how wives are to treat their husbands. WE find in Ephesians 5:20-28, "*Wives are to be submissive to their husbands as unto the Lord, and husbands are to love their wives in the same way that Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.*"

Marriage defined by our creator God is a union between a man, and a woman. All other marriages which society is recognizing such as; man and man, or woman and woman is an abomination in the eyes of God and will not be a part of His Kingdom. Revelation 22:14,15- "*Blessed are those who keep His commandments, that they might have the right to eat of the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. But excluded are dogs, (sexually immoral, 1 Cor. 6:9) and sorcerers, and fornicators, and murderers, and idolaters, and everyone that loves and devises a lie.*"

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia has this to say about marriage in the United States.

"Marriage in the United States is the legal recognition of certain relationships -Normally, monogamous pairing committing for life – this is regulated by individual States. It has important legal and economic and social aspects, and is generally seen as a prerequisite for having a family. While the common sense of marriage has been a union between a man and a woman, increasingly same-sex marriages are being recognized (by society but not God). After a period of dating and engagement the marriage technically begins with a wedding, in which two persons become spouses, and the marriage endures until a spouse dies or until a divorce or legal separation. Marriage generally serves as a social marker to

indicate a desire by two people to enjoy sexual exclusivity. It confirms particular rights and privileges, many of which are defined in law, such as receiving benefits and being able to bequeath property to descendants. In marriage, males are referred to as husbands and females as wives.”

In order to legally perform the marriage ceremony, most states require that a minister have the proper documents signed by the state in which the marriage is to be performed. This is acquired by sending in the designated forms that (that) state provides and the fee they require with proof of your ordination by the church you are affiliated with. After receiving the information the state will then send to you a document authorizing you to solemnize the marriage. The couple to be married must also obtain a marriage license which the minister signs after the ceremony to be sent in to the county of record.

Premarital Counseling

As an Elder you may be called upon to provide counsel to the couple contemplating marriage. It is important for the couple to understand that when a marriage takes place it is a sacred covenant (contract) entered into by three parties, the husband, wife and God Almighty. The Elder doing the marriage should properly determine whether the couple in the eyes of God are eligible to be married and any issues of divorce and remarriage must be resolved.

The Elder may want to review from a Biblical perspective the role and responsibilities of husbands and wives in the marriage covenant. *Eph 5:22-25 says “Wives , submit yourselves to your own husbands , as to the Lord; For the husband is the head of the wife , even as Christ is the Head of the church; and He is Savior of the body. For even as the church is subject to Christ, in the same way also let the wives be subject to their own husbands in everything. Husbands love your own wives , in the same way that Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it.”*

There are many issues and areas of future planning that husbands and wives should agree on before marriage such as financial arrangements, future children, living arrangements and household responsibilities. The Elder can assist the couple in discussing these issues and help them resolve any disagreements

An example of the Sacred Wedding Ceremony is given in Appendix D . The ceremony can be amended or modified according to the couple’s personal choices.

The following was taken from a plaque Marlin and Nancy Fannin came across a few years ago. These words of wisdom convey how mates should relate to one another in their marital relationship, and may be printed and given to newly married couples as a memento, if desired.

Beatitudes of a Christian Marriage

Blessed are the husband and wife who continue to be considerate and affectionate long after the wedding bells have ceased ringing.

Blessed are those mates who never criticize or speak loudly to one another and who instead quietly discuss their disagreements and work toward solutions.

Blessed are they who thank God for their food and who set aside some time each day to read the Bible and pray.

Blessed are they who love their mates more than any other person in the world and who joyfully fulfill their marriage vow in a lifetime of fidelity and mutual helpfulness to one another.

Please see an example of the Marriage ceremony in **Appendix C**

Blessing of Little Children:

It has been the practice in the Church of God to follow the example of Christ in pronouncing a blessing upon little children. Years ago this was performed on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, but due to the increasing number of children wanting to be blessed, the service was usually done back in the local congregation on the second Sabbath following the Feast. The “Blessing of Little Children” can still be done at the Feast of Tabernacles, but in practice it can be done anytime, at home, at a church service, whichever is most convenient for the Elder and the family requesting this service.

Where and upon what scriptures is this ceremony based upon? The three examples given in the New Testament are examples of Christ himself allowing little children to come to Him, and He blessed them.

Matthew 19:13-15, *“Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and his disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer (allow) little children, and forbid them not, to come to me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid hands on them, and departed thence.”*

Mark 10:13-16, *“And they brought young children to him, that he should “touch them”: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, Suffer(allow) the little children to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Truly I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them.”*

We see in these scriptures that young children were brought to Him. He (Christ) took them up in his arms and blessed them. The word bless used here means to bless, thank, invoke a benediction upon. (re; Strong's Concordance # 2127 from the Greek)

Luke 18:15-17, *“And they brought unto him also “infants” that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer (allow) little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Truly I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.”*

We see in this scripture that they brought “infants” to Him, that He would touch them. Touch (re; Strong's Concordance #680 from the Greek) means to take them. (marginal re; in KJ Study Bible – says “touch” here means blessing by laying on of hands. Few of history's religious leaders have shown such concern for children as Jesus demonstrated.

What did Christ mean when He said allow the little children to come unto Him, for of such is the kingdom of God? At this age, a young child up to the age of five or so, is still obedient, humble, has an eagerness to learn, and if instructed properly will listen. Young children also realizes they have no status or power and must depend on their parents for everything they need. This is the same attitude that a repentant Christian must have when they come before God at baptism which is in contrast to the pride, arrogance, self-dependence and cynicism shown by many adults in the modern world.

Those who desire to have their children or grandchildren blessed, must come to realize they have a responsibility to teach that child about God and his laws as they have the opportunity. Deut. 6 :7 says *“ And you shall diligently teach them (God's laws and commandments) to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down , and when you rise up.”*

Lets look at some other instructions given in the Psalms and Proverbs .
Psalms 78:1-8, *“Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have TOLD US. We will not hide them from **their children**, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, **that they should make known to their children: That the generations to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. And not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their heart arighDet, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.”***

Prov. 22:6 *“ Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it. “*

The first blessing we see in God's Word (regarding mankind) is in Genesis 1:26- 28, where God himself blessed Adam and Eve, the first children. So is it wrong to come before God and ask Him to bless our small children, Grandchildren, Great Grandchildren, ect.? We only have the example of Christ blessing the little children, and the blessings of the first children (in the flesh) Adam and Eve. I am reminded of a line in a popular song back in the seventies, which says; **God bless the little children while they are still to young to hate.**

Who usually asks for this service to be performed?

- Parent(s) of child. Grandparent of child or close relatives that are members.

Who should perform this service?

- Normally an ordained Elder, or minister of the church.

What are some things to ask God for in the prayer?

Pray for God’s blessing of protection (because young children fall, run where they shouldn't, stick things in wall outlets, or into their mouths)

- Pray for instructions to be given about God in his or her upbringing. God's laws, commandments, Holy Days, Sabbath.
- Pray to keep them from the evil one, and protect them from this evil society in which we live in.
- Pray for good heath and protection from diseases.

These guidelines should be helpful in officiating at this service.

The scriptures referenced here and instructions could be read to the group before the ceremony takes place.

Matt. 19:13-5, Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-17, Ps. 78:1-8, Deut. 6:7 Prov. 22:6

Ministerial Counseling

It has already been mentioned that an important role of Elders is to provide counseling and support to individuals seeking baptism, arranging funerals or contemplating marriage. There are other areas in a person’s life that could be mentioned where ministerial counseling may be needed or appropriate. As one reviews the qualifications of an Elder, it is important to note that the person called to be an Elder must be mature, sound minded and not a novice but one who has experience and wisdom when it comes to

questions on Christian living and understanding on the Word of God. An Elder should be able to rightly divide the Word of Truth and give scriptural understanding to the Beliefs and Doctrines of the New Testament Church to those who may ask. He can not only teach others from the Bible but is equipped to give counsel to members who may have questions regarding the interpretation or application of the Bible to a person's life.

Areas where an Elder may be asked for counsel may include:

1. Clarifying the meaning of scripture
2. How to apply a Biblical teaching to the person's life or decision making process
3. Responsibilities and roles of the wife and husband in marriage
4. Health problems
5. Child rearing
6. Conflict resolution
7. Overcoming personal problems (sins) or difficulties that are impending the person's spiritual life

It is important to note that the Elder should not counsel another person in areas that he is not qualified to do so or for which he lacks knowledge and experience. For instance most elders have not been trained in financial management, real estate purchases, business decisions or in marriage counseling. Also Elders may not be trained nor licenced to give advice in psychological, mental, or medical problems. When an Elder can see that the topic of discussion is beyond his abilities or experience, he should always direct the person to seek professional help. As ministers and Elders we can listen, give encouragement and spiritual support and pray for to God to help guide the them but should never offer advice or counsel in areas we are not qualified to give. Perhaps a better word for being a counselor might be better expresses as being a " Biblical Coach". This helps one to understand that the focus of counseling will be spiritual and Biblically oriented not dealing with worldly issues or problems.

Counseling sessions should be in private and all things discussed must be held in strict confidence. If a woman is the one seeking help, the Elder should always be accompanied by his wife or another man of the fellowship group who would be respected by the person. Always begin a counseling session with prayer asking God to inspire and guide the session. This also will focus on the fact that we are seeking God's will and purpose when it comes to a solution or answer to the situation. The Elder must approach such sessions in a humble and non-judgmental attitude and allow God to lead you to understand clearly the issue at hand.

One important key is for the Elder to listen carefully and not interrupt the person trying to explain the problem. Don't be quick to give a response as the person may have to take several approaches to clearly spell out the situation. As you listen, it is appropriate to ask pertinent leading questions to help them clarify where they are going like.... " Am I hearing you say thus and such or is it this that you mean to say? Once the question or problem is clearly understood, the elder should then seek "rightous judgment " by getting all the facts and not jumping to any conclusions. The Elder should then proceed and give an appropriate response form a biblical perspective. People who come for counseling generally want to do the right thing based on what the Bible says about a subject. The Bible of course speaks in general principles rather than giving specific cases and it may be needed to interpret how the person's question or problem is related to the principle given in the scriptures. The Elder should turn if possible to relevant scriptures and

explain in a loving and caring way how the scripture applies to the person's situation. Do not be quick to tell the person what they should do but let them see from the Word of God the appropriate attitude and action they should take. The person must come to their own decision on the best course of action. If sin is involved, the Elder should not condone or appear to be over sympathetic but in a kind way, should lead the person to understand the need of repentance. If the problem involves offenses with other individuals, it may be important to bring the two parties together to discuss if they have not been able to resolve the issue according to Mat., 18:15-17. The goal is to reach resolution and reconciliation if at all possible.

Any counseling advice given should be specific and doable. When helping a person overcome a specific problem, say involving alcohol or a negative attitude, be specific on how they are to proceed. Remember the final solution lies in the hands of the one seeking help not with the Elder. Therefore the key is to clearly lead the person in the right direction realizing it may take many steps over time to finally resolve the problem. Always focus the person to Jesus Christ and God the Father, and not yourself. Let them know that God loves them and will help them resolve the problem. Ask the person to stay close to God through prayer, study and fasting so that Satan will not be able to take advantage of the situation (James 4 :6-8). Ask the person if they would like a follow up session and if they would like to give you feedback on their progress. Sometimes contact with a support person over time is very important to keep the person on track. The important thing for an elder is to inspire and encourage the person to achieve God's will in the matter. Let them know you will be praying for them and that God would bless them and guide them to a successful conclusion. Always try to end the session on a positive note and with a final prayer asking God to bless and help the person in need.

Satan and the Casting out of Demons By Elders in God's Church

As God's people, we realize that part of our spiritual warfare deals with overcoming the influence of Satan and his demonic hosts that war against God's church through deception, lies and temptations of the flesh. Satan has deceived the whole world (Rev. 12:9), even about his own existence but the Bible reveals that Satan is not only real but also he is doing all he can to thwart God and His plan of salvation for mankind. Paul warns us that “ *Because we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual power of wickedness in high places, therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day ...* ” (Eph. 6:12-13) Satan is identified as the Prince of the power of the air (Eph 2: 2) and the god of this world “ *In whom the god of this world has blinded the eyes of those who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* ” (2 Cor. 4: 4) The demons are the fallen angels that joined Satan in his rebellion against God. (Rev. 9:12)

As Elders, we will on occasion may be confronted with a situation(s) dealing with demons, who can either possess or influence human behavior. There are many situations in the N.T. which demonstrates this power of demons where people were affected by evil spirits and or demons. Many, who were possessed or influenced by demons, came to Christ, the Apostles, as well as to the Apostle Paul, and the demons were consequently

cast out.

Some of the most notable cases involve Mary Magdalene, and the man in the country of the Gadarenes.

“And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses, Mary Magdalene, of whom went out seven demons “ (Mark 16:9) -”And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had demons long time, and wore not clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with you Jesus, thou Son of God most High. I beg you, torment me not. For Jesus had commanded the the unclean spirit to come out of the man.” (Luke 8:27- 28)Then Christ asked the demon what his name was, and the reply was Legion; because many demons entered into him. (verse 30)

Other cases are seen in Mark 1:32, 34,39- where many were brought to Christ that were diseased, and possessed with demons. *“And He healed the sick and cast out the demons and didn't allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him. Also He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out demons. Luke 4:41- And demons also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the son of God. And He rebuked them and did not allow them to speak; for they knew that he was Christ.”*

We must realize from the onset that we of ourselves do not have the power to cast them out or to deal with them. It is only by the power of Jesus Christ and by His name that they can be cast out. (Mark 16:17).

“And these signs shall follow those who believe : in My name they shall cast out demons ;
“

The demons stand in fear before Christ. James 2:19 says “ Do you believe that God is one? You do well to believe.- *Even the demons believe-- and tremble in fear“*

We see by these scriptures that demons can only be cast out by the name and authority of Jesus Christ.

Acts 19:14 gives an example of the seven sons of Sceva and what happened to them when they tried to cast out demons, when not backed by Christ.

The apostles were able to cast out demons by the authority given to them by Christ.

Mark 3:14-15, Mark 6:7,12-13, Luke 9:1-2, Acts 5:12-16, Matthew 10:5-8,

Luke 10:17-20- Speaking of the seventy sent out and authority given to them by Christ.

Acts 19:11-12 – Paul was able to do special miracles and cast out demons by the power and authority given to him by Christ.

Casting Out of Demons

As elders we may be approached by a person to cast out a demon out of the individual. This could be a serious and potentially difficult task to perform. It must be done boldly with strong faith of the power that is in us through the indwelling of Jesus Christ.

How do we recognize that a person is influenced, or possessed by demons?

- Attitude, demeanor, violence, look in their eyes, what the person may say or by some other signs.

How do you cast them out?

- By the power, authority and in the name of Jesus Christ
- Person or persons involved must want to be free of demonic influence or possession and have them cast out in the name of Jesus. (1 Cor. 10:20-21) (1 Tim.

4:1) And change from their old ways to live anew in Christ.
- Prayer and fasting should be done before hand by the Elder(s) and parties involved.
(Matt. 17:19,21). (because some demons are more powerful than others).

General instructions and guidelines to follow.

Fred, please add a section on specific guidelines on how to cast out demons

Serving the Brethren

There are many ways that an Elder may be able to provide for and serve the Brethren.
To summarize the various areas in which an Elder may serve includes:

- 1. Being a faithful teacher and example of the Word of God**
- 2. Counseling**
- 3. Protecting the Flock from deception and false doctrines**
- 4. Watching out for Seniors and others with special needs**
- 5. Visiting Brethren in the hospital or nursing homes**
6. Praying for God's intervention in times of sickness or trials
7. Conducting baptisms, marriages , funerals and the blessing on little children

Conclusion

The purpose of this manual is to help new and existing Elders to better understand the great responsibility and honor it is to serve the brethren of God's Church. The manual provides helpful guidelines in carrying out the duties and functions that Elders may be called upon to perform. The principle thing for Elders to always remember is that we are here to serve the brethren in love and to point them to Jesus Christ and God the Father as they seek to build a closer personal relationship with Them. As God's shepards of His flock, we are to support and help the brethren as they journey through this life seeking the way for entrance into the Kingdom of God at the first resurrection. May God bless and guide you as you faithfully serve Him and the brethren, in whom God has placed in your care.

Appendix A

Baptismal Counseling and Ceremony

Each person who desires to be baptized should be counseled to determine whether the individual has truly repented of his or her sins to God the Father and has accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior. Here are some of the things that you need cover in counseling for baptism.

The person must understand what sin is—the transgression of God's commandments and laws. Each one must realize that the sacrifice and the blood of Jesus Christ is the only payment for his or her sins.

Another purpose of baptismal counseling is to determine whether the individual has the fruits of repentance and the desire to live God's Way and to keep His commandments as magnified by Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

After these two things have been determined, the one doing the counseling needs go through the Scriptures of “Counting the Cost” with the person desiring to be baptized. The Scriptures which best cover “Counting The Cost” are Luke 14:25-33 and Matthew 10:32-38. As you go over these Scriptures with the person, you need to determine whether or not that each one has made this covenant commitment in his or her life before God the Father and Jesus Christ. This covenant of eternal life with Jesus Christ and God the Father. It is an irrevocable total dedication of his or her life to Jesus Christ until the death of his or her physical life.

Then you have to explain the complete meaning of baptism to each one by going through Romans 6:1-13. The person desiring baptism should know that baptism is by full immersion in water, symbolizing the death and burial of the old self. And that the rising out of the water is symbolizing a new beginning to walk in newness of life. Here is the translation which shows that each one who is baptized is jointly baptized into death of Jesus Christ. This is how the death of Jesus Christ is imputed to each repentant sinner.

Romans 6:1-13

1. What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin, so that grace may abound?
2. MAY IT NEVER BE! We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?

3. Or are you ignorant that as many of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death?
4. Therefore, we were co-buried with Him by the baptism into the death, so that, just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, in exactly the same way also, we should walk in newness of life.
5. For if we have become conjoined together in the likeness of His death, so also shall we be *in the likeness* of His resurrection.
6. Knowing this that our old man was co-crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be destroyed, that we should no longer to be enslaved to sin.
7. Because the one who has died to sin has been justified from sin.
8. Now if we died together with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,
9. Knowing that Christ, after having been raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has any dominion over Him.
10. Because when He died to sin, He died once for all; but in that He lives, He lives to God.
11. In exactly the same way also, you reckon yourselves to be dead to sin indeed, but alive to God through Christ Jesus Our Lord.
12. Therefore, do not let sin rule in your mortal body, that you submissively obey it in the lusts thereof.
13. *Likewise*, do not be yielding your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, rather be yielding yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

If the person meets those basic requirements and fully understands the purpose of baptism, then it would be proper to baptize him or her.

Baptismal Ceremony

Here are the words of the baptismal ceremony. Prior to baptism would be best to go through these words of the baptismal ceremony so each one can fully understand the significance of baptism. Also these words are to be recited by the one who is doing the baptizing while he is in the water with the one who being baptized:

Have you repented of your sins? Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior for the forgiveness of your sins? Are you ready to bury your old sinful self and life into the baptismal covenant death of Christ Jesus in this watery grave? Are you going to walk in the way of Jesus Christ, keeping His commandments and to love Him with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul and all your being and with all your strength?

After receiving an affirmative answer to each of these questions, you should continue by asking:

What is your full name? :.....

Repeat the person's full name..... and say, Because you have repented of your sins, which are the transgressions of God's holy, righteous and perfect commandments and laws; and because you have accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior for the forgiveness of your sins, and Who is your Lord and Master in heaven above, sitting on the right hand of God the Father as your Intercessor and Mediator and your King in the coming kingdom of God; and because you are burying your old sinful self and life into the covenant death of Christ Jesus in this watery grave for the remission of your sins; and because you are determined to walk in newness of life, in the way of Jesus Christ, keeping His commandments and to love Him and God the Father with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul and all your being and with all your strength, I baptize you, not into any sect, denomination or organization of the world, but into the name of the Father—because you will bear His Family name for all eternity as His son/daughter; and of the Son—because His life, sacrifice, death and resurrection brings the forgiveness of your sins; and of the Holy Spirit—because the Holy Spirit comes from God the Father and into your mind as a begettal to be a son/daughter of God, and will lead you into loving obedience to God the Father and Jesus Christ now, and when Jesus Christ returns you will in the first resurrection and God will grant you eternal life as a son/daughter of God in glory! I do this in the name of Jesus Christ, that is by the authority of the name of Jesus Christ—AMEN!

After baptizing the person, the one doing the baptizing should lay hands on the head of the individual and pray for the begettal of the Holy Spirit and commend them into the hands of Jesus Christ and God the Father—AMEN! To finalize the baptism, the one doing the baptism should look newly baptized person in the eyes and say, “On the authority of Jesus Christ, your sins have been forgiven!”

At this point the person who was baptized may offer a short prayer if he or she desires.

Appendix B

*A Memorial Ceremony
of the
Christian Biblical Church of God*

For

*Officiated
By*

Fred R. Coulter

In Remembrance

Of

Born:

Died:

Survivors:

Funeral Presentation:

This is a celebration of life in remembrance of _____. During his lifetime was a sterling Christian, devoted to his family and church and he was faithful to his last breath. His spiritual passion was in anticipation of eternal life in glory at the resurrection when Jesus Christ returns.

However, for all human life the Scriptures tell us that there is “A time to be born, and a time to die” (Ecc. 3:2). And at death “the spirit [of man] shall return to God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7).

The Holy Bible reveals that God’s perspective of death is far different than man’s fearful view of death. The Lord declares that, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints The righteous has hope in his death” And again, “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.” And again “The righteous perishes, and no man lays it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest...” (Psa. 116:15, Pro. 14:32, Rev. 2:10 and Isa. 57:1-2).

This service and memorial is a unique occasion. Of all the creatures that God has created, only human beings assemble together to honor their dead and to give a remembrance of a loved one who has died. We all know that just as there is life, death is a reality of life.

Because death is so final, grief fills our hearts over the loss of a loved one, regardless of the circumstances of its occurrence. Death brings us face to face with the reality that human life is temporary. With death we are conformed with the ultimate weakness of human beings, the helplessness that a life has come to an end and that no human being of him or herself has the power to escape death or overcome death, except through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Our Creator, the Lord God has revealed in His Scriptures that this physical life which we now possess in the flesh is temporary. As Moses wrote: “The days of our years are threescore and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore (Psa. 90:10). However, it has been given to all human beings to die once. “It is appointed unto men once to die....For as in Adam we all die” (Heb. 9:27 and I Cor. 15:22).

After Adam and Eve had sinned, thereby bringing death to all their progeny—to all mankind in all ages, God said to Adam, “For dust you are, and unto dust shall you return” (Gen. 3:19). We are all physical—we are all made of the dust of the earth. Moreover, at the time of death, one’s “...breath goes forth, he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psa. 146:4).

In the face of death and in the fear of death, all mankind has wondered and asked the question, “Is there life after death?” In the Scriptures we find that Job asked this same question: “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). That is why death is such a mystery! No one except Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead to eternal life. Jesus spoke in vision of the Apostle John, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last, even the one Who is living; for I was dead, and behold, I am alive into the ages of eternity. Amen. And I have the keys of *the* grave and of death.”

Furthermore, the Scriptures teach us that death is an enemy—yes, the last enemy that is to be destroyed through the power of the resurrection as revealed in God’s great plan. So then the Scriptures reveal that there is life after death through the resurrection. And this life is in Jesus Christ—in Him and Him alone! Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life....I am the resurrection and the life” (John 14:6, 11:25).

Job understood this profound truth of God because he answered his own question, “All the days of my appointed time [in the grave] will I wait, till my change come. You shall call and I will answer You: You will have the desire of the work of your hand” (Job 14:14-15). All rest in the grave until the time of their resurrection.

Just as we all die in Adam, “...so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ *the* firstfruit; then, those who are Christ’s at His coming.

God the Father has given the power and the authority of the resurrection to Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “Truly, truly I say to you, *the* hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. For even as the Father has life in Himself, so also has He given to the Son to have life in Himself; And has also given Him authority to execute judgment because He is *the* Son of man. Do not wonder at this, for *the* hour is coming in which all who are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth: those who have practiced good unto a resurrection of life, and those who have practiced evil unto a resurrection of judgment” (John 5:25-29).

At this time only a few have been called of God to receive the gift of the eternal life at the first resurrection. But in God’s great plan for all mankind, as revealed in

Scripture, all who are not called now will be resurrected at the end of the thousand-year reign of the Kingdom of God to be granted a calling to eternal life. All who have died untimely deaths—in infancy, in accidents, in disasters or in disease and war—shall be resurrected to a new life in the flesh as revealed in the books of Ezekiel and Revelation.

Because God is love, He "...is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). And again, "Who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim 2:4). Therefore, God the Father in His great wisdom and profound love has provided that even if one dies without the knowledge of salvation, He will resurrect each person to a new life in the flesh. This is for all those who are not called at this time before the return of Jesus Christ. So there is hope—GREAT HOPE for all mankind! God Himself will undo every evil, every sorrow, and conquer every death through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Therefore, we can have great comfort in the Lord Jesus Christ and His love and in His plan for all those who have died and have not been called to salvation in their lifetimes.

However, those who have been called during their lifetimes and who have died in the faith—in Jesus Christ, as did Bob, will be raised to eternal life with all the saints in eternal glory at His Second Coming!

This is why Jesus Christ said, "I am the way, the truth and the life ... and the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he die, shall live *again*; and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall not die forever" (John 14:6 and 11:25-26).

While we have our sins forgiven through the death and the blood of Jesus Christ, the faithful in Christ who die "...shall be saved by His life"—because He Himself was raised from the dead by the power of God the Father.

"But now Christ has been raised from *the* dead; He has become the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep [in Christ Jesus]. For since by man *came* death, by man also *came the* resurrection of *the* dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

"But each in his own order: Christ *the* first fruit; then, those who are Christ's at His coming. Afterwards the end *comes*, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to Him Who *is* God and Father, when He shall have put an end to all rule and all authority and power. For it is ordained that He reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. ***The last enemy to be destroyed is death***" (I Cor. 15:20-26).

The very reason for the resurrection of the dead is to destroy death—the last enemy. As Paul wrote, "So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body;

"Accordingly, it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living soul; the last

Adam *became* an ever-living Spirit.’ However, the spiritual *was* not first, but the natural—then the spiritual. The first man *is* of the earth—made of dust. The second man *is* the Lord from heaven. As *is* the one made of dust, so also *are all* those who are made of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *one*, so also *are all* those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the *one* made of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *one*.

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit *the* kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in *the* twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for *the* trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (I Cor. 15:42-52).

The apostle John wrote that because of the love of God the Father, all those who are Christ’s and die in the faith will be raised with a glorious spirit body! “Behold! What *glorious* love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God! For this very reason, the world does not know us because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is” (I John 3:1-2).

The apostle Paul also wrote that when Jesus returns, He will “...transform our vile bodies, that they may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the inner working of His own power, *whereby He is able* to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil. 3:21).

Thereby, God will fulfill His purpose for His saints as He promised to Abraham: “And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven” (Gen. 26:4). Again as Daniel wrote: “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life ... And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:2-3)

Jesus Himself confirmed these promises of God given through His prophets when He spoke of the glory that those in the resurrection to eternal life will have. They will shine as the stars of heaven: “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43).

Therefore, God wants us to rejoice in His revealed hope for the dead. We are not to be sorrowful and grieve, as Paul wrote: “But I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, that you be not grieved, even as others, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in exactly the same way also, those who have fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say to you by *the* Word of *the* Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall in no wise precede those who have fallen asleep because the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with *a* shout of command, with *the* voice of an archangel and with *the* trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in *the* clouds for *the* meeting with the Lord

in *the* air; and so shall we always be with *the* Lord. Therefore, encourage one another with these words” (I Thes. 4:13-18).

As the Scriptures reveal to us, death and the corruption of the flesh will be overcome! “For this corruptible must put on incorruptibility, and this mortal must put on immortality. Now when this corruptible shall have put on incorruptibility, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?” (I Cor. 15:53-55).

Death will be destroyed! Death is the last enemy and it will be conquered. The ultimate love of God will be clearly manifested. God the Father will give eternal life to all those who are in Jesus Christ His Son. He will accomplish it through the power of the resurrection by His profound love and grace for each one He calls. As the apostle Paul wrote: “For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; *and* that being rooted and grounded in love, you may be fully able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which surpasses *human* knowledge; so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that is working in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all generations, *even* into the ages of eternity. Amen” (Eph. 3:14-21).

The apostle John was given the vision of this coming new heaven and earth where the children of God will live forever with the Lord: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, *the* New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from heaven say, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men; and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people; and God Himself shall be with them *and be* their God. And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and *there* shall be no more death, or sorrow, or crying; neither shall *there* be any more pain, because the former things have passed away.’ And He Who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ Then He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’ And He said to me, ‘It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the one who thirsts, I will give freely of the fountain of the water of life. The one who overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son’ ” (Rev. 21:1-7).

Thus, the plan of God will be fulfilled as expressed in the Gospel of John: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world that He might judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him” (John 3:16-17).

_____ has fought the good fight; he has finished the course; he has kept the faith—his mission has been accomplished. He has passed his final examine—being faithful unto death. From this time forward, a crown of righteousness is laid up for him, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give him in the day of his resurrection—and not to him only, but also to all who love His appearing.

AMEN

Let us pray.

Appendix C

The Sacred Wedding Ceremony

For

Full names of man and woman

Date

A Paraphrased Translation of Scriptures

by

Fred R. Coulter

This is a happy and joyous occasion. Marriage is a natural union, but a divine institution, ordained at creation by Almighty God. This intimate love relationship was created by God Himself, because GOD IS LOVE. Physically and spiritually the marriage estate portrays mankind's supreme destiny of ONENESS with God in His family, in His eternal Kingdom forever.

Since Almighty God is the Supreme Sovereign Ruler, and He is our Creator, therefore, it is only fitting and right that we use the laws and principles of God's Word as the fundamental authority which govern this sacred marriage covenant into which you are both now entering.

In the Beginning, after the Lord God had created Adam, He said, "It is not good for man to be alone, I will make a helper, suitable and compatible for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then God took one of the man's ribs...and from it God fashioned a woman, and God brought her to the man.

"And the man said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.

"For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:18, 21-24).

Then the Lord God blessed them saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth."

Today, in the presence of these witnesses, we are asking the Lord God Almighty, in the name and authority of Jesus Christ, to bless this marriage, with love, understanding, faithfulness and dedication to each other, knowing that marriage is honorable in every thing.

Jesus upheld this honor by teaching, "He who created them in the beginning, made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. Consequently, they are no more two, but one flesh.' Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man separate" (Mk. 10:6-9).

Also, He said, "Whosoever divorces his wife, except for the cause of sexual infidelity and marries another, commits adultery. And if a woman divorces her husband, and is married to another, she commits adultery" (Mat. 5:32).

So we see that it is God who joins a husband and wife together as one flesh. What God has bound, man is commanded by that authority not to separate. What God has bound, only God can loose as revealed in His Holy Word.

A marriage so bound and blessed by God is binding for life, for better or for worse, in sickness or in health, in want or in wealth unto death do they part.

Now, let us understand the New Testament instructions concerning the marriage estate:

"Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord: because the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church, which is His body: and He is the Saviour, Deliverer, and Provider of the body. In exactly the same manner as the Church is subject to Christ, even so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing in the marriage estate.

"Husbands, LOVE your wives, in exactly the same manner as Christ also loved the Church, and gave up Himself for her; in order that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water through the Word of God;

"That He might place her beside Himself as the glorious, untarnished Church, not having a single spot or stain, wrinkle or blemish, or any such thing; but that she might be consecrated, holy and completely blameless.

"In exactly the same manner, the husbands are duty-bound and under obligation to God, to love their wives as their own bodies. The man who is loving his wife in this manner loves himself, because no one truly hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, exactly as the Lord does the Church:

"For we are members of His very own Body, of His very own flesh, (through His crucifixion--and all that it means), and of his bones (that is, the Church is a special spiritual creation. For in the same manner as Adam's wife was created from his own rib; so also, as a counterpart for Christ, the Church is created from His innermost being).

"This mystery is great, immense and supreme: For I am speaking concerning the relationship between Christ and the Church (the bride of Jesus Christ and their eternal destiny).

"However, let everyone of you, also, be loving his own wife as himself, and the wife should see that she reverence her husband" (Eph. 5:22-33).

The apostle Peter continues God's instructions, "In the same way, you wives be submissive to your own husbands...from your heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

"Thus, did Sarah obey Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her daughters if you do what is right..."

"Likewise, you husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, and grant her honor as a fellow-heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered" (I Pet. 3:1-7).

Your Sacred Marriage Covenant

We are here today in the presence of God, coming before His very throne in heaven above and we asking God to join you as husband and wife. Therefore, in accordance with God's Word, each of you should solemnly promise before God and in the presence of these witnesses to accept the sacred marriage covenant according to the conditions set forth and imposed by Almighty God as revealed in His Holy Word.

Do you, **his first name** enter into covenant with God, in the presence of these witnesses to take **Her full name** to be your lawful wedded wife until death and as the Scriptures command, for better or for worse, in sickness or in health, in want or in wealth, to cleave unto her, to love her as Christ loves the Church, to honor her, cherish her and provide for her? **I Do!**

Now then do you, **Her first name**, enter into covenant with God, in the presence of these witnesses to take **His full name** to be your lawful wedded husband, until death as the Scriptures command, for better or for worse, in sickness or in health, in want or in wealth; and to submit yourself to him as unto the Lord, in every thing in the marriage estate, as the Church does to Christ; and to honor and reverence him? **I Do!**

Since we are asking God to join you as husband and wife, and praying for His binding and blessing of this covenant marriage, it is appropriate to follow the Biblical

example of laying on of hands to set you apart for this sacred covenant. So then, you will now join your right hands together and with the laying on of my hands, we will ask God to join you as husband and wife.

Let us pray!

*Special Prayer Blessing the Marriage
Presentation of the Rings*

You may kiss the bride!

By the authority vested in me as a minister of Jesus Christ—in the Name of Jesus Christ, I now pronounce you husband and wife.

Officiating Minister: Fred R. Coulter