

LETTERS FROM LIKE MINDS

I COPIED THIS FROM MY OLD LIST OF STUDIES

I thought some old timers might like to read it. I enjoyed it.

Greetings like minds FAQ inquirers:

I was just starting to settle down after surviving several months (1995) of an intense revalidation of my fundamental beliefs. Then, in the summer '95, I faced serious personal circumstances that caused me to reconsider the meaning of Christian leadership in the home. God opened my eyes to understand and correct my erroneous assumptions and behavior at home. During this process, I began to deeply realize that the same authoritarian structures in the world, and even in the churches, were also not always according to Christ's teachings and examples of compassion and humble service -- AGAPE.

I had been participating on various internet forums for several months, but was having difficulty connecting with people who shared my developing thoughts on God's government. By Fall '95, I had dropped away from participating on the general forums, but continued corresponding semi-regularly by email with an ideologically sympathetic core group of friends. Somehow I overcame my conditioned bias against the "rebels in Birmingham," so I emailed Gary Mercer some very pointed questions. I was pleasantly surprised by his answers and the study material he sent me. Also at that time, "In Transition" was becoming more thought provoking and I had just begun subscribing to "Servants' News." Late that Fall, an old friend who had moved away two years earlier, Jon Pike, called me from Phoenix to "take my pulse" and we quickly discovered that our ideas were in sync. with each others'. He also introduced me to Jim Rector's tapes during that phone call (what a blessing!). I was realizing that I was far from being alone, rather that there were many more brethren out there that thought just like me.

It was now pushing late December '95 and my personal email copy list was only a dozen. It was at this time that I decided to start inviting others to a forum dedicated to the shared-ministry of the royal priesthood from 1Pet.2:9. I realized that we "walked together" because we agreed. At that time, I came across Phil.2:1-4 and it struck me that this described exactly what I hoped to accomplish by this forum. From then on, the forum was known as "like minds." Any brethren of like mind are invited to subscribe and participate. Send your request to my email address: stanczak@teleport.com. Warmest regards,

Question from Jon Pike:

As one who was part of the 1995 exodus from WCG, in the years that have gone by since then, many have thought through the implications of their heretofore unthinkable conclusion of leaving the

WCG. This has laid bare the notion that one's church organization affiliation will be instrumental in saving them. We were encouraged to believe that God viewed our loyalty to WCG as central to his overall appraisal of our lives. The inescapable effect of the teaching of the "sanctity" of WCG inc. is that many were led into idolatry--commandment breaking, which is the opposite of spiritual growth.

One major impetus to the founding of like minds was the goal of helping God's people recognize this--as many of the 1995 escapees were still in denial and desired to pretend that they were the ones who left under the "correct" conditions, unlike those that preceded them, and that their new church affiliation would be as valuable as they thought their WCG affiliation was--that they were part of an even <more> select group, (that stood up for the truth) now. Not surprisingly, their leadership was less than fully motivated to clear this matter up for them, as this mental predisposition benefitted them and made their job of leading easier.

Ideally, the promotion of this understanding (that you've had for some 20 years now, but is new to many) was initially intended to NOT be acrimonious and accusatory--especially in terms of personal criticism. That is why when I write on the subject, I try to make it clear that the problems of misunderstanding in this area are systemic, and not due to evil motives, in the main. We fail to optimize the opportunity to help free God's people from this deception when we do a less than perfect job of separating out the detrimental spiritual effects of our former errant "God's gov't" belief from the personalities involved and person hurts that it engendered. So Skip, you make a very valid point. Like minds was never intended to be an advisory to church organizations, but a dis-incentive to become or remain spiritually dependent upon them. God's people need to "not need" their church organizations in a dysfunctional way, but that doesn't mean that they need to <oppose> these organizations and their gospel spreading efforts.

Jon

LIKEMINDS FORUM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Over time, we have found that many of the same questions are repeated over and over as new people join the Like minds Forum. This is only natural, since our Christian walk is <very> different from that of the dominant religious culture.

This FAQ is provided so that those new to Like minds can have on hand a very ****brief**** summary of the common understanding shared by many on this Forum on several popular topics. This document is a collaborative effort of several forum members, with participation and input into the process solicited from the forum as a whole.

This FAQ document is *****NOT***** intended to be an exhaustive study, nor is it "written in stone." It is, rather, a living document, subject to change over time as we study and pray together to discern the will of our Father more clearly. Further study material is found on the like minds homepage:

<http://www.teleport.com/~stanczak>

The questions addressed here all relate to our main difference from the dominant religious culture-- namely, our belief that: "Shared ministry / shared leadership is the BEST WAY for the Church of God"

Phil.2:1-4; John 13:12-15; Mat. 23:8-12; Eph.5:21 Gal.6:2; 1Pet.2:9; 1Pet.4:10; 1 Pet.5:1-5.]

Definitions:

Ministry = service

Shared = open, non-exclusive, non-discriminating,

non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian

Leadership = the application of Christian wisdom to decision-making, in a way that sets an example, and thus edifies and motivates. Leadership functions are performed by those who have the most experience/wisdom/talent relating to the task on hand.

Best way = better than all others. We recognize that God can, and has, used other ways and systems. However, we believe that shared ministry/ leadership is the best way, in that it most closely adheres to the Spirit and Teaching of our Leader, the living Jesus Christ.

Church of God = The sum total of all people, everywhere, who have been called by God, and made members of the body of Jesus Christ through repentance and baptism.

To assist in explaining some of the answers, quick dictionary definitions of some words will be provided. Unless otherwise noted, these are all from the "Webster's New World Dictionary, Second College Edition" 1986