

GCI: THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP

***Transformed by Truth*, by Joseph Tkach Chapter 4**

When word first started to circulate about the transformation taking place in the Worldwide Church of God, my dad received a call from Calvin Burrell, president of the Church of God (Seventh Day). This church was the parent organization of the Radio Church of God, which Herbert Armstrong founded. For sixty years we had called this church “dead,” identifying it as the Church of Sardis mentioned in Revelation 3 (while we, of course, believed we were the living Church of Philadelphia). The conversation between my dad and Mr. Burrell eventually led to a meeting in Denver, Colorado, between representatives of his church and Greg Albrecht, J. Michael Feazell, me, and Victor Kubik (who has since left us for a splinter group).

We were not surprised to find these gentlemen were wonderful brothers. While they didn’t understand or necessarily agree with everything that was happening in our church, they did welcome many of our changes. They were glad to meet with us and very happy when we said that we would no longer pejoratively label them “dead” and identify them with the Church of Sardis.

As we returned home from this landmark meeting, we reflected on our disintegrating exclusivity. We had long taught that the Worldwide Church of God was the only true church. This meeting showed us we were wrong.

Shortly after we met with representatives of the Church of God (Seventh Day) we somehow came into contact with Sabbatarian Christians living in the Ukraine. To the surprise of some of our denominational leaders, these people seemed to be genuine believers. So despite our longstanding exclusivist, separatist practices, even some of our hardliners felt safe with these people because they lived in the Ukraine, a world away. They spoke Russian and therefore wouldn’t be attending our church. They could be accepted as true Christians ... from a safe distance. Doing so wouldn’t disturb our lives of faith.

Even before this, my dad had begun to say publicly, “You know, there are Christians in other churches, whether they’re keeping Saturday or Sunday.” That breakthrough recognition was met with profound resistance from many quarters in the church but was the first step toward reconciliation with Christians from many denominations.

Bill Brafford and the Foursquare Gospel Church

After we started making significant doctrinal changes in 1987, the first evangelical pastor I talked to who was cheering us on and who showed us any Christian brotherhood was Bill Brafford, the pastor of Valley Community, a Foursquare Gospel congregation in El Monte, California.

It’s interesting how we met. Years ago the family of a lay elder in Bill’s congregation used to attend our church. This elder, Bill Burns, even went to Imperial Schools, our high school. Bill has always been the kind of guy who might say or do anything—the kind of personality that presents real challenges for legalism.

Bill Burns ended up going to Vietnam. Sometime after he returned home, he started attending Bill Brafford’s church. Whenever he heard people in his congregation say disparaging things about the Worldwide Church of God, he would reply, “Hey, don’t do that! My parents used to attend there. There are a lot of good people there. A lot of knuckleheads, but a lot of good people too.” Eventually this came to the attention of his pastor, who gave Bill what I consider uncommon advice. After hearing Bill’s painful story of his own experiences, his pastor told him: “You still have some issues you need to reconcile over there. You ought to go over to the Worldwide Church of God and talk to those folks. Go there, unburden yourself, and rectify this. You’re still carrying a lot of baggage, a lot of bad feelings toward them. You need to deal with this.” Even at that early date, Pastor Brafford knew things were changing within our church.

Soon a meeting was arranged. Greg Albrecht and I met with Bill Burns and his pastor for lunch, and Bill was able to talk about some of his pain and hurts. After we were finished, Pastor Brafford asked us a few questions about what we now teach. From then on, he has been a close friend. We often go out to eat, call each other, and pray for each other. It was he who introduced us to John Holland, president of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

From the very beginning, Dr. Holland has been a gracious brother to us. A few years after he got to know us and to understand the changes taking place within our church, he invited us to his denomination’s 1996 convention at the Pasadena Civic Center. In one plenary session he told a bit of our story, thanked us for standing up against the state of California when it wanted to begin regulating churches, warmly welcomed

us as brothers, and asked me to briefly address the large audience. I was both awed and thrilled as five thousand Foursquare representatives energetically applauded and cheered my brief remarks. I even got a very public hug!

Ruth Tucker's Early Interest

Ruth Tucker is a church historian and visiting professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. She is the author of a dozen books, including *Another Gospel: Alternative Religions and the New Age Movement*.

Our contact with Dr. Tucker began when our church relations director, David Hulme, asked his assistant, Michael Snyder, to contact her to update her regarding changes we had made since the publication of her book about cults. Ruth was a gracious and delightful Christian friend from the first phone call. She worked closely with Michael Snyder and David Hulme to bring her book up to date. She became an advocate for the work of the Holy Spirit in our fellowship. She invited David Hulme to be included in a special lecture series at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

David presented the Worldwide Church of God, answered questions, explained changes, and cleared up some of the myths about us. No, we didn't sacrifice animals, and no, Garner Ted hadn't been part of our organization since 1978. His presentation was well received. Some evangelicals in attendance told David that they would stop writing negative articles about us.

Dr. Tucker was excited about our reforms and encouraged us in every way she could. We consider her a gift from God.

David Neff And Christianity Today

In October 1995, David Neff of *Christianity Today* wrote a short editorial about the reforms that were sweeping our church. He welcomed the new developments and explained:

CT met with a representative leadership group several years ago and was convinced of their commitment, both to Christ and to authentic biblical truth.... CT readers will be glad to know that they are no longer considered among the harlot daughters of the Great Whore.

But how will we respond? Sadly, Christians outside the WCG have been suspicious and slow to extend the right hand of fellowship ... by and large, Christians have made the WCG journey of faith and doctrine more difficult. CT commends the WCG leadership for

its courage in pursuit of truth. Can we now welcome their people into this trans-denominational fellowship we call evangelicalism?¹

His comments were an enormous encouragement to us and paved the way for a major article by Ruth Tucker in the July 1996 edition of *Christianity Today* on the vast changes in the Worldwide Church of God. Her article was the first full-length treatment of our reformation to appear in a major evangelical publication. She began:

For most of a half-century, no book on cults was complete without a chapter on the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) and its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong. The late Walter Martin, in his classic *The Kingdom of the Cults*, devoted 34 pages to the group, documenting how Armstrong borrowed freely from Seventh-day Adventist, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormon doctrines. And it was during my own research and writing on cults and new religions in 1988 that I became aware that something unusual was happening.

I had earlier written to the Pasadena headquarters requesting literature and statistics from the WCG but had received no response. Then came that phone call I will never forget. It was from Michael Snyder, assistant to the director of public relations, who had just discovered my letter and was calling to find out if there was still time to incorporate new information into my book.

The conversation that followed was nothing short of astonishing. I knew that Armstrong had died in 1986 and that Joseph Tkach, Sr., had succeeded him as pastor general. But I was not aware of changes that signaled a dramatic turnaround in the church.

From Snyder I learned that books written by Armstrong, once the defining literature of the movement, were being revised or taken out of print. I also learned that Joseph Tkach, Sr., had informed the church membership that he would not shrink from his responsibility to correct any doctrine proven to be in error. But most astonishing was Snyder's own testimony of faith, which convinced me he was a brother in Christ.

In the years following, I have had many more meetings with leaders in the church and have closely followed every change in doctrine and practice that has transformed this heretical sect into an evangelical denomination. I am taken aback by the transparency and open profession of faith by these Christians who, by their own testimony, have come out of a "fog of legalism."²

A little later in her article Ruth wrote, “The ‘changes’—as they are referred to by insiders—are truly historic. Never before in the history of Christianity has there been such a complete move to orthodox Christianity by an unorthodox fringe church.”³ In a similar vein in another publication she said: “Let this go down forever in history, that a movement outside orthodoxy can turn to God, turn to truth, and hold its name high. As a church historian, I cannot cite anything else like this.”⁴

The rest of Ruth’s article in *Christianity Today* [full text available [here](#)] details many of our doctrinal changes and gives readers a brief historic background of our church. One sidebar to the article especially moved me. Camilla E. Kleindienst, a lifetime member of the WCG, wrote of her struggles with the changes and how she finally came to believe they were of God. She wrote: “I have never seen our congregation this happy and energized. I am living in the most exciting time of my spiritual life because, in a historical event, God laid his hands on our organization and steered us in a direction we had not anticipated to a place us where he wanted us.”⁵

I’m grateful for Camilla’s honest and encouraging comments. I’m also grateful that God has continued to steer us to new friends who have made our transition easier. One of these new friends is Hank Hanegraaff, president of the Christian Research Institute in Rancho Santa Margarita, California.

Hank Hanegraaff’s Helpful Response

As the transformation of our church began to accelerate and increasingly focus on major tenets of faith, David Hulme found himself in a difficult situation. As our director of church relations, he was given the task of articulating what the church believed to the outside world—yet he himself did not believe what the church now taught. (David currently heads the United Church of God, our largest splinter group. [This was true at the time of writing, but is no longer true.]) For a year or so, that task fell to Greg and Mike and me. We would contact people who reported about the WCG and say to them, “Look, in your literature you say that we believe X, Y, and Z. Well, we want to update you on what we do believe; we don’t believe that anymore. You’re publishing information that’s ten or twenty years old. Could we update it for you?”

As one thing led to another, we finally said, “You know, Hank Hanegraaff is a person we should talk to. We think he’d listen.” We knew about Hank through his radio broadcast, *The Bible Answer Man*. Several of us had been listening to Hank on the radio, as well as to a number of other teachers. Unfortunately, our church at the time was in such turmoil that it was difficult to receive all the nurturing we needed. We were reading people like Chuck Swindoll and Max Lucado and listening to selected radio programs, including Hank’s. Greg and Mike were also aware of Hank’s ministry, so together we decided to write to him. Here’s Greg’s letter, dated January 5, 1994:

Dear Mr. Hanegraaff,

May I congratulate you and your staff for the ongoing work of the Christian Research Institute. In addition, I thank you for your work in writing *Christianity in Crisis*. Your book is a valuable contribution and a well-documented resource for the body of Christ. I am writing to request a favor. As editor of *The Plain Truth*, I hear from readers who have asked the Christian Research Institute to advise them about our mission and teachings. Last month a reader commented that he no longer wanted to receive *The Plain Truth* because the Christian Research Institute told him that we do not teach the deity of Jesus Christ.

This letter is like others we receive in that it accurately echoes and reflects a past, historical position of the Worldwide Church of God and *The Plain Truth*. I have no quarrel with the fact that the Church's past teaching about the deity of Jesus Christ was woefully inadequate. However, such a statement is most definitely not an accurate representation of our current teaching.

Since Herbert W. Armstrong's death, the Worldwide Church of God has been in the process of examining many fundamental teachings, some of which distanced us from more orthodox Christians. I enclose our most recent edition of *Statement of Beliefs*. In addition to our desire for doctrinal and biblical accuracy, the Worldwide Church of God is redressing the errors of being exclusivist and inbred in our approach to other Christians.

We do not wish to be antagonists with you or the Christian Research Institute. It is our desire to be understood, and to be properly represented. We know that we have made mistakes, and like all Christians, we would like to change some of the things we have said and done in the past. We wish to be viewed and examined on the basis of what we are now preaching and teaching, rather than on the basis of our past.

We realize it is difficult to maintain current files about the teachings of the Worldwide Church of God. Therefore, in order to be of assistance, we would be happy to meet with you or your representatives. We would like to provide current doctrinal information and written statements to help you in your work.

We look forward to meeting with you at your convenience.

Greg R. Albrecht, Editor, *The Plain Truth*

A few days later Hank's office called Greg to set up a meeting. From the first time we met, Hank recognized the enormity of our task and understood that we were facing some tremendous battles. After thoroughly quizzing us about our faith and expressing satisfaction with our answers, he invited us to be guests on his radio program. Our fellowship was not ready for that at the time. Hank understood and said, "Anytime you're ready, you just say the word." We finally appeared on his program a number of months after our initial meeting, and when we did, he introduced us to his listening audience as "brothers in the Lord." We taped for three hours, enough to put together three one-hour programs.

Hank helped us tremendously by letting his many listeners know that something good was happening in the Worldwide Church of God. He was the first one to announce the news to the larger public. He did so not only on his broadcast, but also in print. In a winter 1996 article appearing in the *Christian Research Journal*, he made the following remarks:

This is unprecedented in church history. It's the very kind of thing that those who have given their lives in ministry to the kingdom of the cults hope for. Rather than developing hurdles for these guys to jump over, our job is to facilitate the process, recognizing they had an enormous tactical problem in winning over their own members. They don't want to galvanize people around Garner Ted Armstrong or other splinter groups.

Many other Sabbatarian groups have looked to what the Worldwide Church of God has done and said, "How did you do this? How do we do this?" They're charting brand-new territory.⁶

Hank has been a good friend from the beginning of our relationship. He agreed to be the commencement speaker at the 1996 graduation exercises for Ambassador College and attended graveside services for my dad. I appreciate the way he announced my dad's death to his constituents:

Christians across the globe mourned when Joseph W. Tkach, Sr., leader of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), died on Sept. 23, 1995 of complications from cancer. He was 68.

As successor to WCG founder Herbert W. Armstrong, Tkach boldly led the Pasadena, California-based church from cultism into Christianity. .. [Hank Hanegraaff] praised the late Joseph Tkach, Sr., as "a man who risked losing his reputation, his livelihood, his career, and world respect in his all-out devotion to finding and proclaiming the truth."⁷

Hank has been a breath of fresh air to us. Not all countercult ministries initially responded to us as he did. He always has been gracious, welcoming, and encouraging to us, and we thank God for him and his ministry. He is our brother in the Lord.

George Mather Extends His Hand

A Lutheran minister and author named George Mather once worked with Walter Martin, Hank's predecessor at the Christian Research Institute. George helped Walter put together his classic work, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, and is the coeditor with Larry A. Nichols of a more recent book called *Dictionary of Cults, Sects, Religions and the Occult*. He and Larry are writing his own book for InterVarsity Press on the changes we've made in the WCG.

George was introduced to us about the same time we were getting to know our Foursquare Gospel friends. George was so moved by what he saw happening among us that he started telling his Lutheran colleagues. Soon we received a call from Al Barry, president of the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. He wanted to meet us. We flew to St. Louis, where we met with Dr. Barry and other church leaders. We also appeared as guests on Don Matzat's radio program, *Issues, Etc.*, broadcast on the jubilee Radio Network based in St. Louis.

More Friends at Azusa Pacific

Another organization that should be noted for its help to us is Azusa Pacific University. Our connection with Azusa began when Greg Albrecht started taking classes there back in the late seventies. But perhaps he should tell this part of the story:

I started going to graduate school at Azusa Pacific (then Azusa Pacific College, now Azusa Pacific University, APU) in 1976. I went at the time because Ambassador College here in Pasadena was pursuing accreditation. I was teaching in the religion department, yet held solely a bachelor of arts from Ambassador itself. I needed at least a master's degree and was asked to get one. I had no idea where to go; I only knew of a few schools I did not want to attend.

When I learned of Azusa Pacific, I found a school that had a high view of the Bible. That was important to me, since I was a traditional Worldwide Church of God believer. The infallibility and authority of the Bible had always been important to us. But because I was a true believer of Armstrongism, when I went to Azusa I carefully guarded against the "Protestant Theology" I needed to learn for the master's degree I was granted in 1977. I was on guard against what we called at the time "the leaven of

intellectualism.” I needed the respectability of a degree, but I certainly didn’t want any of the beliefs of the historic Christian church, as I see them now.

Mike began to go to Azusa Pacific in the spring of 1990. Mike, along with his assistant, C. W. Davis, were probably the first people from our fellowship to have a bona-fide educational experience at Azusa (this was a good twelve years after I had gone there). With the death of Mr. Armstrong, Mike and C. W. were free to think thoughts, to embrace questions that I had not been free to think or embrace. They developed relationships with a number of the school’s faculty members, people such as Dr. John Hartley a distinguished Old Testament scholar; Dr. Earl Grant, professor of evangelism and missions; Dr. Lane Scott; Dr. Donald Thorsen; Dr. Les Blank; as well as others at Azusa Pacific. These people embraced Mike and C. W. and identified with what they began to see happening in our church. At that time, unconnected from their experience, some of us in Pasadena were beginning to go through a dramatic, revolutionary upheaval in our world-view. We were coming to Christ and dealing with issues that were directly challenging our established belief system—biblical views that turned our world upside down (to borrow the phrase from the Book of Acts).

These faculty members and administrators at APU embraced Mike and C. W, as well as other WCG members who began attending, without trying to indoctrinate them. In fact, APU is well known for its tolerance for differing views, while carefully upholding the historic Christian faith. People from several theological streams—Wesleyan, Friends, Nazarenes—come through the university. The faculty is consistently tolerant without pushing or demanding adherence to certain views.

Staff and faculty at Azusa Pacific understood our situation and were prepared for it, based on their experience with students from various denominations. Of course, we were probably a bigger challenge than most others! Nonetheless, they accepted our people, and this helped us tremendously. For the first time, we were able to debate and work through the issues facing us. Mike was quite open about what was happening in our fellowship, and the APU faculty rallied to our support, even as they were extremely careful about how they dealt with us. They realized that people both from inside and outside might criticize if they were not careful. Despite their cautious restraint, criticism came.

Some members who left us said: “Those people at Azusa are your consultants. They’re rewriting your church doctrines and constitution. You’ve forgotten Herbert Armstrong and all the truths revealed to him.” Almost all our splinter groups see Azusa Pacific as the great Satan. They think of the Azusa people as the evil men who led us away from the teachings of Herbert Armstrong and into the Protestant church. Obviously, such

a charge is far from the truth. The staff and faculty at Azusa emphatically *did not* do any such thing. At no time did we ever formally consult with them on doctrinal issues. They refused to meddle with what we were doing, nor did we ask them to do so.

But they did offer friendship. They did come alongside us. They did offer prayers—and for that we will always be thankful. For that Azusa Pacific is to be heartily commended.

Support at Fuller Seminary

The administrators and faculty at Fuller Seminary also have been helpful to us. Richard Mouw, president of Fuller, said: “I have met with the leadership of the church and without reservation consider them brothers in Christ. I am profoundly moved by their testimonies of what God has done for them personally and in the movement. These people have led the most courageous, inspiring, and Christ-centered movement into biblical Christianity that I have ever seen.”⁸

Finding New Friends

After we started making our changes in 1987, God began to introduce us to a number of evangelicals who have become dear friends. Two Foursquare Gospel leaders, Bill Brafford and John Holland, led the way in welcoming us and introducing us to others. Dr. Holland has introduced us to scores of respected evangelical leaders, including such outstanding men as Don Argue at the National Association of Evangelicals and Paul Cedar of Mission America. It was John Holland who opened many of the doors for us into the evangelical world. Without his help, for example, we wouldn't have been introduced to Don Argue. And without Don's help, we might still be struggling with a difficult publications problem.

When *The Plain Truth* went from being a freely distributed denominational magazine that promoted the WCG as the “one and only true church” to a paid subscription Christian magazine, we had to advertise to make ends meet. But when we tried to take out advertising in the normal evangelical outlets, we were greeted with a lot of closed doors. By then *Christianity Today* had published a major article by Ruth Tucker outlining and applauding the changes within the WCG.

Word didn't seem to be reaching most of the evangelical public. We had a terrible time trying to convince potential advertisers, as well as magazines in which we wanted to advertise, that we were for real. “Well, maybe you're for real,” we'd hear, “but we're sorry. You can't advertise here. We still have a lot of subscribers who have deep feelings against your group, and we can't risk it.”

In the fall of 1996, *Charisma* magazine was considering whether to take advertisements promoting Plain Truth Ministries. When a staff member called Don Argue to inquire about us, he told them, “I can vouch for them. Take the ad. They’re for real.” We’re deeply grateful to God for all these friends and for the new friends we continue to meet. We were especially gratified in November 1996 that the Evangelical Christian Publishing Association welcomed our Plain Truth Ministries into membership. At that time I felt constrained to quote from the March 1996 edition of *The Plain Truth* magazine:

We’ve been wrong. There was never an intent to mislead anyone. We were so focused on what we believed we were doing for God that we didn’t recognize the spiritual path we were on. Intended or not, that path was not the biblical one.

So we stand today at the foot of the cross—the ultimate symbol of all reconciliation. It is the common ground on which estranged and alienated parties can meet. As Christians, we all identify with the suffering that took place there, and we hope that identification will bring us together. [full text available [here](#)]

I’m not certain the ECPA was right when it said in its November 11 1996, newsletter, *Footprints*, that “the journey of the Worldwide Church of God is indeed the top religious story of this decade,” but I am full of gratitude that we can now address one another as brothers. Yet there is work to do, especially in convincing people that the best response to news of our changes is not, “Yeah, right.”

Doctrine: Sometimes Easier to Teach Than to Do

Greg Albrecht and I attended the Mission America meeting in Washington, D.C., in May 1996. The guest speaker for the day was the energetic president of Moody Bible Institute, Dr. Joseph Stowell. Joe Stowell delivered a powerful message about how Christians need to recognize the barriers that stand between their different traditions in order to get beyond those barriers and enjoy rich Christian fellowship. He spoke of one friend in a tradition different from his own whom he was getting to know better. In a phone conversation, Joe Stowell asked the man what his children were going to do for Halloween. What costumes would they wear? After a short silence, the man replied, “Joe, we don’t do that in our denomination. We don’t celebrate Halloween because of its pagan roots.”

Dr. Stowell was not at all offended but asked, “Well, what will you be doing with the kids?”

“Oh, we’ll be going out to eat and then take our kids to a movie,” the man replied.

With a loud chuckle Joe Stowell responded, “Well, we don’t do *that*. Our tradition doesn’t believe in going to movies.”

His point, of course, was that we shouldn’t let our traditions and backgrounds get in the way of genuine Christian fellowship based solely on our trust in the atoning death of Christ. We are all one at the foot of the cross. It was a tremendous message that greatly encouraged us.

Afterward I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Stowell. As I shook his hand, I introduced myself by saying, “I’m with the Worldwide Church of God.” In that instant his face fell and his expression visibly changed, almost as if to say, “Should I really be here, shaking this guy’s hand? I mean, this guy is with the Worldwide Church of God!” When I proceeded to compliment him on his great message, it wasn’t hard to tell that a good deal of dissonance was exploding in his brain.

I could see the turmoil in his mind. The irony of giving that message and then, immediately afterward having to shake the hand of the president and pastor general of the Worldwide Church of God! Although I wanted to say something, the decorum of the moment prevented me from doing so. What preacher hasn’t given a message that he found more difficult to apply than to deliver? Besides, perhaps he hadn’t heard the news about us. Or perhaps he had received conflicting reports and concluded the news was “too good to be true.” I’m sure that Joe Stowell and I will have occasion to talk again and recount this brief discussion!

I don’t blame anyone for being cautious about accepting the idea that the Worldwide Church of God is now thoroughly evangelical. Joseph Stowell is not the only one who has been shocked to meet members and pastors of the Worldwide Church of God in places like Promise Keepers, interfaith prayer breakfasts, and Christian relief efforts. We are beginning to learn that genuine Christian fellowship is not based on goodwill or great hopes, but on agreement concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The Central Role of Prayer

It was such a refreshing experience for us to meet people like Kevin Mannoia, [then] the superintendent of the Free Methodist Church in Southern California, who gave us unconditional fellowship and prayerful support during certain administrative crises that faced us. Or like the Southern Baptist who recently said to me, “Brother, I hear what’s happening with you. Can I pray with you?”

You bet you can! Especially because our recent journey has shown us what astonishing power there is in believing prayer! How have these radical changes in the Worldwide Church of God come about? What prompted them? What motivated them? When all the analyses have been done and the sociological studies have been completed and the surveys taken and tabulated, I’m convinced one factor stands miles above

them all: prayer. What has happened in the WCG is a sovereign move of God, prompted in large measure by the believing prayers of people concerned about the welfare of one little part of God's church.

We continue to hear stories of men and women who have prayed for years, even decades, that God would do a miracle and reform our church. Despite the long years of apparent divine silence and regardless of the hostility they may have felt from our members, they continued to pray. Finally, God answered.

A letter to the editor from David Scott in the March 1997 issue of *Charisma* says, "We were once members of the Worldwide Church of God with Herbert W. Armstrong. It is wonderful to hear that they have seen the light. It has been my prayer that God would turn them from the teaching of a man to the teaching of Jesus! We wept when we heard that they have repented. Let's keep praying and see what God will do."⁹

Don Mears, a long time WCG pastor, said: "During the late 1970s I was preparing for a Bible study series on the Epistle to the Romans and began to study the epistle in more depth than I ever had before. I was dismayed at what I found, as I began to realize how far our preaching and practice in the church had strayed into legalism and away from the gospel of grace that Paul described. Ever since that time, my wife and I have been praying for the church to come to a deeper understanding of the grace of God."¹⁰

Jack Hayford a prominent evangelical and pastor, addressed leading ministers and regional pastors of the WCG in Pasadena on March 18, 1997. In his closing remarks he said that one day more than a dozen years ago one of the former elders in his church, John Darnell, called him and asked if he would accompany him to a particular spot to pray. "Where?" Dr. Hayford asked. "I don't even know why I feel this prompting from the Lord," John replied, "but do you know where the Worldwide Church of God offices are? I feel as if I'm supposed to go over there and walk around that place and just pray." So that's what they did. Dr. Hayford and John Darnell drove over to our offices, parked nearby, and prayed as they walked inconspicuously around the campus. Their visit came very early on a Saturday morning so almost no one was around. When they finished, they got back in their car and left.

As he was wrapping up his comments to us, Dr. Hayford said, "You can't help but wonder—how many people did God move to pray for you? We actually walked around this place. I sensed then that if someone is willing to do a little thing, then God is willing to do a big thing. It's like Israel when the people walked around Jericho and God won the battle. The walls fell down, didn't they?"

Yes, they did. Thank God they did! In the past few years we have heard many reports from people who tell us they've been praying for a move of the Spirit in our midst for a long time. O, how glad we are that God answers prayer!

Endnotes

1. David Neff, "The Road to Orthodoxy," *Christianity Today*, October 2, 1995, 15.
2. Ruth Tucker, "From the Fringe to the Fold: How the Worldwide Church of God discovered the plain truth of the gospel," *Christianity Today*, July 15, 1996, 26-27.
3. Ibid., 27.
4. Doug LeBlanc, "The Worldwide Church of God: Resurrected into Orthodoxy," *The Christian Research Journal* (winter 1996): 7.
5. Tucker, "From the Fringe," 29.
6. LeBlanc, "Resurrected into Orthodoxy," 7.
7. "New Beginning, New Leadership for Worldwide Church of God," *Christian Research Newsletter* 9, no. 1 (winter/spring 1996): 13.
8. Tucker, "From the Fringe," 32.
9. Letter to the Editor, *Charisma*, March 1997, 9.
10. Tucker, "From the Fringe," 32.

To chapter 5

Author: Joseph Tkach

RELATED ARTICLES

Conspiracy Theories and...

JAN 11, 2010

Transformed by Truth, by Joseph Tkach Chapter 5

Just before he died in January 1986, Herbert

Armstrong told his...

[READ MORE](#)



Unless indicated otherwise, all scripture quotations on this website are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978,

1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

