

# The 'Great' Commission of Gwen Shamblin and Remnant Fellowship

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## **Introduction**

### **To the Reader**

The following account is the true story of how my wife and I, along with some dear friends, followed the suggestion of Gwen Shamblin to leave our church home due to its “rebellion” against God. In it I recount events from the summer of 2001 that are among the most momentous in my life for what they have taught me about faith, trust, and discernment. I hope I never forget the lessons I learned during this time.

This story is long, because I decided before writing it that I would leave out no pertinent detail, no matter how embarrassing. I do not shrink away from my sin in this story, nor from the sin of others. Abusive systems thrive on secrecy, and in this case, the secrets should be told because they attest to the true character of Gwen Shamblin and Remnant Fellowship. They have the capacity to cause serious spiritual damage, as will be borne out by this account.

I've prayed for a long time over writing this, because it bothers me to dwell on the sins and wrongs of this world, including my own. In the end, after receiving several calls from other Weigh Down Workshop participants and potential recruits for Remnant Fellowship who were confused and scared, I decided to write it out and post it publicly to warn other brothers and sisters in Christ about a real danger in the religious world.

Because I want my story to be verifiable, I've included many quotes from Gwen and tried to recreate the experience of attending a Rebuilding the Wall Weekend. I'm writing this account for all participants of Weigh Down Workshop, Strongholds, and WDAAdvanced. Although Gwen and Remnant Fellowship leadership actively encourage their followers to ignore any criticism of them by labeling such criticism as “lies” and “slander,” I encourage you to always get all the facts when making important spiritual decisions.

First Thessalonians 5:19-21 instructs us to test “everything.” I'm writing this so you can have all the information you need to do that. I don't have a multimillion dollar organization behind me to send you mass emails full of my spin of events. I can only pass this on and prayerfully trust that He who leads all who call on His name will lead you here. If you're searching the Internet, you must have questions. I hope this can help answer some of them.

I debated and prayed for some time before arriving at the decision to use the names of Remnant Fellowship leaders in this account. I still count some of the major players in this story as my dearest friends, and the last thing I want is to put a black mark on their names. I firmly believe they've succumbed to a form of mind control, and are not entirely responsible for any un-Christ-like actions. I have decided to leave their names out, and refer to them as "our friends" and "Remnant NYC." I have received confirmation that they are heavily involved in recruiting, and I wonder whether it will more ably warn others if I use their names. However, I have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ that they will leave Remnant Fellowship soon, and I don't want their to be anything, especially not shame, standing in their way. Please know that I love these people, and greatly desire to reconcile with them. They currently do not reply to my efforts to contact them, but I still hope that perhaps they'll read this and know I love them.

My prayer for you, reader, is that He Who has drawn you to Himself at this point in your life will give you everything you need to discern Christ's true will, and that His Spirit in your heart will be the plumb line by which you measure your faith and your actions. Peace.

On with the story . . .

In June of 2001, I was given a mission of great importance while attending a Remnant Fellowship Weekend at the Weigh Down Workshop headquarters in Franklin, Tennessee. I was charged with the duty of returning to my church in New York City and sharing a message of purity and total submission to God. It was made clear to me that I would not be popular because of this message; I had been given a charge similar to that of Jeremiah, who had to go to a "stiff necked and rebellious people" and convey a message of destruction because of God's wrath against His people. I was told this message was relevant to my local church because there was sin in my church — it was in open rebellion against God, and the leaders were responsible for allowing sin to flourish within the Lord's body. If this message was not received, then I was responsible before God to come out of that unclean body, that Babylon, much as the prophet Ezekiel packed his bags before the Israelites and left in the daylight. Furthermore, Gwen Shamblin told me that God had selected me for this work. Would I let Him down? Who would I bleed for? God, who was hurting because His church was in such disarray, or the people (yes, my brothers and sisters in New York) who were in open defiance of God. In an emotional pledge before God, I promised not to let Him down. I would bring back this message with which He had entrusted me. I would do His will! And no matter what the opposition, I would not shrink back from His will.

## **Welcome to Gwenville**

### **A Life Changing Teaching**

Prior to being entrusted with this commission by Gwen Shamblin at Remnant Fellowship, my wife and I had participated in and coordinated the Weigh Down Workshop and Exodus Out of Strongholds classes at our local church since 1997. We had greatly benefited from these programs, as they had encouraged us to turn away from worldly strongholds and idols and look to God to fulfill all our emotional and spiritual needs. At that time it was just the medicine our struggling marriage needed. We'd recently moved to New York, were struggling with our

weight, and were drifting apart. We had both been Christians for some time, but our faith wasn't vital or dynamic. We had studied the Bible for years, but the Scriptures seemed dry, almost irrelevant to our lives.

Tapping into these teachings about relying solely on God to meet one's needs really changed our lives. My wife lost almost 40 pounds over the years, as well as a propensity for depression, and developed into a talented and driven ministry leader. I was delivered from pornography and workaholicism. We learned how to pray again, how to enjoy Bible study. We learned to look for God's presence and blessings in our everyday lives. Our marriage was transformed. The Spirit of God was truly at work in our hearts, and it overflowed to those in our Weigh Down and Strongholds classes and to our local church. God brought intimate Christian friends into our lives who'd also been powerfully affected by what they'd learned in the Weigh Down Workshop.

Needless to say, because of this wonderful fruit in our lives we were quick to defend Gwen Shamblin in September of 2000 when the mission statement on her website denied the doctrine of the Trinity as she understands orthodox Christianity to present it. After all, how could we argue with the fruit of this ministry? Countless lives changed, people getting closer to God, our own lives transformed. Based on our understanding, the doctrine of the Trinity and Gwen's presentation of God's nature didn't seem that different from each other. We felt we needed to remain loyal to the teacher who'd helped us so much.

Just prior to the Trinity controversy, my wife attended the 2000 Desert Oasis Conference in Nashville with her fellow coordinator and friend from our congregation. While there, she was invited to an additional meeting called "Rebuilding the Wall" at the Weigh Down Workshop headquarters. There she heard the call to begin examining our church leadership for signs of reluctance to truly do the total will of God.

We began to notice quite a few problems in our church, things upon which we ordinarily would have overlooked. Instead of feeling judgmental we experienced concern, and decided to redouble our efforts to pray for our church and leaders. We'd seen a lot of growth in our home church, and while we began to feel that God was stirring the congregation, there were also times when it didn't feel as though the church was 100 percent sold out for Him. We felt that each member should have been running after God with all their "heart, soul, body, and mind," and yet we knew there was sin in the church and sometimes a sense of complacency that we felt our participation in Weigh Down had burned right out of us! Were we truly in a church with leadership that would not turn the people from their sin?

### **A Pilgrimage to Nashville — Our Visit to Remnant Fellowship**

We spent the next few months in prayer about our home congregation, but on the whole tried to remain faithful to our belief that Christ would take charge of this congregation and his church, and felt that all we needed to do was continue to pray.

We decided to keep an eye on the Remnant Fellowship church that was meeting at the WDW headquarters in Nashville. Maria and her co-coordinator had excitedly shared news with us

about this church where everyone worshipping was committed to laying down all sin and, as in the book of Nehemiah, “rebuilding the wall,” which so badly needed the attention of God’s people. In the spring of 2001 we decided to visit Nashville for one of their Remnant Fellowship Weekends to find out more about them (and just generally because we were excited to meet Gwen, David Martin, and other Weigh Down “celebrities”). We attended with her co-coordinator and her husband, another heavily involved WD couple who we were good friends with, a couple from out of town, and an elder of our church who had recently joined Weigh Down and had experienced success with significant weight loss.

The June 2001 conference kicked off with a bang. It met in the warehouse of the Weigh Down Workshop, a large bare room decorated with grim banners depicting the Flood and Noah’s ark. Those in attendance were chiefly members of small Remnant Fellowships from all across the South and the Midwest. As far as I know, our group of nine was the only one that had no members of a Remnant Fellowship branch.

We met Gwen, which was quite a thrill for many of us who’d participated in her programs for years and knew her as mainly an image on a TV screen. Prior to her opening address she seemed strangely intense and excitable — sort of “in our faces” — asking us if we trusted her, if we felt we could rely on her word due to our long participation in her programs. This seemed odd, but of course we assented: we trusted Gwen. Why else would we have come? We were given three ring binders as study guides, and sat at long folding tables as Gwen directed us.

Beginning with her keynote address that weekend Gwen broadsided us with the charge that most churches today are “counterfeit churches” because they don’t teach people that they must lay down all sin (adultery, greed, deceit, pornography, over eating, etc.) and be totally obedient to God. Gwen cited numerous Scriptures to support her contention that God’s will was for a church to exhibit transformed hearts and minds leading to perfect submission to His will. From the opening chapters of her study guide, she wrote:

This renewing means that inside your heart and mind and soul, you are putting that sin or stronghold on the altar and killing it. The early Christians understood the Scriptures that said you were called to be pure and holy because you are now the physical representative of the church — the called out — the temple of God ... That was the picture of the New Jerusalem, and God was going to walk among His people and be in His people. Now He could have this relationship that He had been longing for ... He is calling His church to unify ... He is calling the called out to repentance, and He is calling all lambs to understand this holy priesthood — that they are to be pure and holy in this choice of devotion. Instead of relying on a few people in the front of the building to lead us in worship, he is calling for us to get the foundations right in our own hearts — in this temple (the body) — and for us to grow up because God is judging the counterfeit church.<sup>1</sup>

Gwen goes on to explain the process by which believers access grace and favor in the eyes of God. After quoting 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, and 16-17, she writes:

Knowing that the church is not a building, but you are the temple and the throne is your heart, you should make sure that the foundation of the heart is strictly the sacrificial, selfless devotion

to God that is portrayed by Jesus throughout the Scripture. He was the Lamb led to slaughter, and He made it His life's work to let the world know that He loved the Father and did exactly what the Father wanted Him to do (John 14:31). With this as your foundation for everything in your life, you are as solid as the Rock you have founded your life upon. Nothing can bring you down ... God wants to rule among a group of people — the called out — a remnant willing to move their will aside and allow the holy personality of God to rule their lives. If God's will is on the throne of your heart, you will be holy (1 Peter 1:13-15). You will stumble, but as time goes by, you can experience more and more of His personality (Holy Spirit) ruling your life.<sup>2</sup>

All this seemed to make so much sense to me. Here was someone who boldly stated the truth! True Christian believers cannot continue living in sin. But I missed the fact that in these statements Gwen doesn't mention the saving work of Christ's cross as what makes us fit to be in the presence of a Holy God. Rather, she teaches that it's our effort to finally lay down our will that makes it possible for Him to have the relationship with us He's been longing for. Gwen explains her position much more clearly in the following quotes:

The purpose of Christ is clear: He came to forgive us for making the choice of being in control (being our own god) or being under the control of a false god or Satan (an ex-employee of God's — which is no god at all). We have been forgiven of those two foolish mistakes and we have an opportunity to turn back to the right God after we have rejected Him. We are allowed to enter God's kingdom and to serve and worship Him from now on. We do not believe that the blood of Christ was intended for us to jump back and forth from one Kingdom to another and from one God to another at our own whims. Like Joshua, when we come to Christ, we must choose this day whom we will serve and stick with it. Our choice will be measured by seeing whom we bow down to — and our heart's passion will become apparent. We will prove our choice by our deeds.<sup>3</sup>

We believe that all have sinned and fallen short of God's will and we believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died for the remission of our past sins and future stumbling sins. We believe that Jesus' sacrifice is the only way we could be forgiven. We believe that this does not take away our responsibility not to "continue in sin." Rather, we believe this grace teaches us to say "no."<sup>4</sup>

At the time, I assumed that the idea of Christ as the ultimate source of grace and a relationship with God was a given in Gwen's mind. I didn't understand the import of the above passage, or the significance of it in the theology of Remnant Fellowship. I wasn't sure about what was meant by a "stumbling sin." It seemed clear to me at the time, but in hindsight I'm not so sure.

I now understand that what Gwen Shamblin and the folks at Remnant Fellowship have done is confuse the teaching of grace for salvation as it is written about in the Scriptures with the ongoing work of sanctification done by the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart. Her essential argument is, "Unless sanctification has been completed, you cannot be saved." But the crux of the New Testament message is, "Because you have been saved, allow the Spirit to do the work of sanctification in your heart."

Gwen's approach to the grace of Christ and His reason for dying on the cross are discussed more thoroughly in other pieces available on the Internet. An excellent piece titled "Weighed Down with False Doctrine" by Don and Joy Veinot, which thoroughly discusses Gwen's view of grace as it differs from mainstream Christian theology, is available on the Web site of Midwest Christian Outreach (in its section titled "The *Journal*"). I highly recommend this article for a more in-depth analysis of Gwen Shamblin's theology of grace.

### **"Come Out of Babylon" — The Counterfeit Church**

As for me, not until she began to draw up an indictment of today's church and delivered her recommendation did I began to question what we were being taught that night. Gwen declared that many of the churches of today were counterfeits, like the church that was written of in Revelation 17-18 and called "Babylon." She said, "... much of the church has become drunk with the 'safe grace' message," and went on to explain her view of what God's true church would resemble:

Counterfeit churches have a safe grace plan, or they are strict for manmade rules. The Apostle Paul said that he wouldn't allow these difficult, legalistic, non-heart-effective, distracting, man-made rules in for one moment (read Gal. 1-6). The true universal church, whether a home group, a small group, or a large number anywhere in any city, will teach strict heart lessons, and the foundation will be Jesus Christ. It will be made up of people who are so radically different, they are transformed — new creatures.<sup>5</sup>

Gwen then discussed this image of the counterfeit church as Babylon, and quoted Revelation 18:4 with the following explanation:

"Then I heard another voice from heaven say: Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven." When God calls you out of Babylon—that is the counterfeit church or religion, or the world—to be different and to be holy (a holy priesthood), it may not always be easy to obey.<sup>6</sup>

She went on to compare the exodus from Babylon (the counterfeit church) to the story of Noah, whom God saved from a wicked society. She related how she and her family, and the Martin family (coincidentally numbering eight people) were like the eight people God saved from the flood, in that they'd exited their previous congregation without looking back and founded this new Remnant Fellowship. They were the holy and faithful remnant that had been prophesied about.

Then Gwen laid down this charge: any faithful believers who were part of the "counterfeit church" needed to depart from those fellowships and get under a true, God-given authority (presumably, Remnant Fellowship). To support this she quoted a variety of New and Old Testament passages indicating that God wanted His people to be separate from the world. The one that remained with me the most that evening, however, was 1 Corinthians 5: 9-13:

I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people — not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In

that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard, or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.”<sup>7</sup>

Gwen said that in the days of the early church, there was only one brother who was immoral enough to be expelled from the church. However, in this modern day, the churches are full of immoral, greedy, idolatrous people. If the leadership is not forbidding such behavior to occur, then this passage makes it clear that the “loyal Remnant” must leave; to stay in that church would be to condone its tolerance of sin. At the same time, she complimented us on already knowing these truths, for being that Remnant who had recognized this truth, and who had already left the “counterfeit church,” or were taking steps to leave.

The atmosphere in the warehouse resembled a wake. All around us the faces of the audience were somber. It was as if we had just pronounced death on the modern church! I know I was feeling uncomfortable because I belonged to a church where I knew that there was sin in every member’s life, including my own, and that not everyone seemed to be “100 percent sold out for God.” I’d often been frustrated by that, but now I felt condemned. Members of our group were scared, because we felt that we needed to get away from that church as fast as possible, and “get under a true, God-given authority.”

Still, I had some serious misgivings. Gwen seemed to assume a lot of authority regarding how to interpret some difficult-to-understand passages of Scripture. I heard many of these passages more carefully exegeted by scholars, but she seemed to dispense with any pretense of careful contextual analysis.

Furthermore, her call to leave churches didn’t seem to gel with other passages of the New Testament focused on restoring fallen brothers and bearing with the failings of the weak. During question and answer sessions, I repeatedly tried to ask Gwen about these issues. She listened to my questions, and then launched into lengthy evasions that always found their way back to the conclusion that faithful Christians would not fellowship in churches that had disobedient people in them.

## **GwenThink 101**

### **How Did We Fall For This Stuff?**

Many in our group continued to experience misgivings throughout the weekend, but by the time it ended we came to agree heart and soul with Gwen’s message. Looking back I wonder why I accepted these teachings without more careful thought. A healthy dose of skepticism would have saved myself, my wife, and my church some serious heartache. However, in hindsight, I can recognize many of the factors that led to my eventual acceptance of this message.

First of all, Gwen, David Martin, Gwen’s children, and various members of Remnant Fellowship hammered on the same themes repeatedly over long, almost mind-numbing periods of time. We

sat at the tables as captive audiences and listened passively for hours on end. They emphasized their point that believers need to leave the “counterfeit church” so many times, quoting Scripture after Scripture to support this contention (e.g., the narratives of Ezra, Ezekiel, Nehemiah), that we literally became exhausted just listening to the same message again and again.

I believe this continual emphasis and re-emphasis eventually broke down our defenses. Furthermore, this was also teaching to which they had been exposing us for years as participants of Weigh Down and Strongholds. Remnant Fellowship was simply presenting the logical conclusion of the legalism we’d been practicing for the preceding months and years. (More on that, later!)

Secondly, the brothers and sisters in Christ at Remnant Fellowship were incredibly nice, submissive, and humble. I’d never met kinder people. Each one of these Christians was continually speaking only encouraging, loving things. They were constantly building one another up and watching their language to make sure their speech was acceptable before God. They were extremely mindful of who was in authority over them, whether a church elder or a teacher. Wives were submissive to their husbands. Children obeyed their parents. (Somewhat oddly, it seemed that all of the women were submissive to all of the men, which I never inquired about fully, and may have misinterpreted.) They served one another without complaint. This was definitely a body of Christ where everybody seemed to take seriously every command and injunction in Scripture. It seemed a little stilted, but it was nice to be around a committed group of believers.

Thirdly, as I look back on that weekend only seven months ago now, I must admit to experiencing a massive dose of injected pride that simply intoxicated me. Over and over we were affirmed as people whom God had obviously called to holiness and submission, and that He was now calling us to expose the sin and failed leadership of our church. God had set us apart for an important mission.

Unfortunately, I believe this pride had already existed in me for some time, and that I simply needed the urging and affirmation of others to galvanize it. It was a pride borne of the fact that I had been delivered from sin and was striving to become more sanctified on a daily basis. We’d spent the whole weekend listening to how “rare” that supposedly was. Suddenly, I felt as though I was truly different from other believers in my willingness to submit to God. Why else would He have called on me to lead Strongholds? Why else would He have called me here on this weekend?

This pride, unleashed in my heart, was a subtle creature that disguised itself as the humility of “a true and faithful servant.” If I was insisting that other believers conform more rigidly to what I believed Christ was calling His church to, wasn’t that simply because I was trying to do my duty as one of God’s “holy priests?” Could I be blamed for returning to my home congregation and sharing what God had put upon my heart?

## **The Pharisaism of the Heart**



Before continuing with my narrative regarding the impact that this teaching had on my church and my Christian relationships, allow me to digress on the point of pride and pharisaism. Jesus often opposed the Pharisees throughout the accounts of His life in the Gospels. The Pharisees believed that they could live holy and sanctified lives before God by rigidly obeying all of God's laws, along with the traditions based on those laws – traditions taught by previous teachers of the law. Jesus opposed them because, although they clung to the laws of God, their hearts were far from God and the overall intent of His laws. In Matthew 23:23-24, Jesus says:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel!<sup>8</sup>

In the same passage, Jesus also excoriates the Pharisees for looking good on the outside, but on the inside actually being like “whitewashed tombs” (v. 27). He states that the Pharisees “tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them” (v. 4). I want to point out the example of the Pharisees because I believe that the Pharisees and their self-righteous emphasis on doing the will of God is quite similar to the emphasis that Gwen Shamblin and the Remnant Fellowship place on obedience and doing the will of God. Here are some quotes from the lecture notes we received from Gwen that weekend.

In truth, doing the will of THE ONE TRUE GOD OF THE CHURCH is the one and only thing to worry about and to expect from its members that bear its name.<sup>9</sup>

They (the early church) understood that the only ones who were saved were not those who heard the word of God, but rather those who put it into practice.<sup>10</sup>

The Apostle Paul said that he wouldn't allow these difficult, legalistic, non-heart-effective, distracting, man-made rules in for one moment (read Gal. 1-6). The true universal church, whether a home group, a small group, or a large number anywhere in any city, will teach strict heart lessons, and the foundation will be Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup>

Of interest to me is the similarity between Remnant Fellowship's approach to holiness and the efforts of the Pharisees. While the Pharisees tried to become holy through a lifestyle accommodated to the Law and the traditions, Gwen Shamblin teaches holiness by conformity to “strict heart lessons.” In my opinion, what this means is they are substituting the original pitfall of the Pharisees (the Law) with a new pitfall, a new set of external demands (Weigh Down's “strict heart lessons” that limit how much food a believer may eat, for example). It is not that heart lessons are not good. Jesus taught heart lessons. Remember, however, that His heart lessons were always tempered with love and compassion, and that one of His heart lessons was to “not judge, or you too will be judged” (Matthew 7:1).

What I believe has happened is that over the years of teaching and emphasizing her call to obedience, Gwen Shamblin has fallen into a new pharisaism, a “pharisaism of the heart,” which demands external signs of inward heart changes. This type of pharisaism keeps the focus off of God, and what He has done for us through Christ, and puts the focus squarely back on ourselves!

What better way for Satan to distract us from the joy of serving God, and the gift of Christ? Remember the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14?

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men-robbers, evildoers, adulterers-or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ I tell you the truth that this man, rather than the other, when home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”<sup>12</sup>

Notice who is going home justified? The one who recognized his own unworthiness, and appealed to God, not the one who was so blinded by his “righteousness” that he wasn’t really thinking about God, but rather himself. The trap of pharisaism invariably leads to self-centered pride. I can truly say that I had fallen into this trap well before I journeyed down to Nashville to learn at the feet of Gwen Shamblin. However, I contend that this approach to the Gospel of Christ, where one’s salvation is thought to be secured by one’s own “doings” instead of by trusting in the grace of our blessed Savior, will inevitably lead anyone further into the pitfall of pride.

### **What Happened Next?**

Needless to say, our group left the Remnant Fellowship weekend with very heavy hearts. We were returning to a church body that we (that is, most of us) dearly loved, full of brothers and sisters who we had served alongside for some time. We now had the charge to go to them and tell them that they were in error for allowing so much sin in the body, and if they would not repent of it, our duty was clear: we would have to leave our church.

Prior to leaving Nashville, we were able to secure some individual face time with Gwen Shamblin and David Martin, and we had sought their advice regarding what we should do at our church. Gwen was honest enough to admit that she did not know the extent of the rebellion present in our church body, but that she had never seen any church leadership turn 180 degrees and repent for allowing sin in the church body. We were encouraged to bring the message back to our church family, but we were also prepared for the idea that repentance was unlikely, and that in all probability, we would have to leave our church. We were also prepared for the fact that in all likelihood, we would be rejected by our church, and that our church leadership would not want to study these issues because they were so convicting.

The events over the next three months are some of the most embarrassing and painful of my life. It is difficult to share them, partly because they expose my own weakness, but also because they expose the weakness and mistakes of others whom I dearly love. To save both time and to spare my brothers and sisters in Christ needless embarrassment, I will not share all of it in detail. Furthermore, I am not going to reveal names unnecessarily. However, if I do not share the embarrassing details of how I followed foolishness with more folly, then I will be shying away from exposing just how destructive the fruit of this teaching truly is. Therefore, I intend to be

brutally honest regarding my part in this story. I will be a little more selective about the part of others. In the interest of time, I will compress the events that occurred over the next two and one half months. To do so means that I will have to leave some events out of this story, but I will try to include everything that bears upon the final outcome.

In the end, myself, my wife and our four friends (the other couple was from out of town) decided that we should approach the elders of the church and share our concern, giving them an opportunity to consider the message we had to bring. Initially, the elder who had visited Nashville with us also felt compelled to raise these issues. We decided that one of husbands and I would set up a meeting with the elders and talk about these issues, asking that our leadership prayerfully consider the degree of rebellion present in our church and what the Lord was leading our church to do. We also agreed to not talk about these issues with other members of the congregation, because we did not want to sow any dissension or fall prey to the temptation to gossip. Rather, we decided that if anyone caught wind of what was going on, we would let them know we were meeting with the elders to discuss some concerns, but that we felt that if people wanted to know what was happening, they ought to discuss the issues with the elders and hear what was going on from them. (I can honestly say that this decision was the only bit of wisdom that we showed throughout the entire process; it kept uninvolved people out of the ensuing mess, and provided the church elders an opportunity to exercise damage control.)

## **Removing Specks, Ignoring Logs**

### **The Great Confrontation**

We met with our senior pastor (one of the elders) and gave him a glowing report regarding the Remnant Fellowship church, and the powerful teaching that we had encountered there. We shared our excitement about being among a truly repentant body, and our concern for our church, because it seemed that so few were truly sold out for God “heart body soul and mind, 100 percent.” We also expressed concern because it seemed that there were members of the congregation who were openly living in rebellion to God, and that this did not seem to be addressed, either stridently from the pulpit, or in any form of church discipline. We asked our pastor to study the Remnant Fellowship materials and study them out with us.

In truth, I was hoping our pastor would study the passages, and agree to go over them in depth with us. He is a reputable New Testament scholar, and something didn’t feel right about what we were saying or bringing before him, but I didn’t know what. All I had to go on were some vague misgivings about Gwen Shamblin’s intentions. The only thing that I could put my finger on were my disagreements with the way she interpreted some passages of Scripture, and that she never seemed to want to discuss other legitimate ways these passages could be interpreted. But she had handed me her thoughts in a three ring binder in which she backed everything up with Scripture after Scripture. She had the Word of God on her side, supporting everything that she said. All I had was a feeling. In some ways, I hoped that my pastor would reveal to me what it was that I was missing.

We left that meeting without a lot of hope. Our pastor listened intently, but didn’t say much. He agreed to go over the materials in detail. And the elders agreed that we would meet again in the

near future. Although that sounded promising, we were sure that, eventually, we would get the reaction we had been warned about; the leaders would close their ears to this message and refuse to listen to the truth that God's Word had revealed. Nonetheless, I had an odd, almost guilty feeling in my heart. Both of the men I had just challenged with faulty leadership had actually been very kind and fatherly to me for as long as I knew them. It pained me to have to be the one to bring them such a tough message.

Over the next few weeks, we prayed that God would reveal the truth to our church eldership, and that they would see how, not only were there many in the church in rebellion to God, but that there were aspects of their own lives in rebellion to Him as well. We felt that we were being humble, but pride was running the show. There were some in our "little fellowship" that felt we had done our duty, passed on the warning, and that now we could leave that church and start somewhere else. Where we would go was a matter of debate. Some of us felt we should start a Remnant, New York City. Others (including myself) thought that if we were going to leave our present church, we should get to know the people at Remnant Fellowship a little better before putting ourselves under their authority. We didn't want to make the same mistake we had already made, and wind up in a church with disempowered shepherding. However, I was still hoping that things would turn around at our church, and that we would find some common ground with our church elders.

We had a second meeting with our pastor and the elder who had attended the Remnant Weekend. We reiterated our concerns, again appealing to the compelling fruit of the Remnant Fellowship, and asked if he had read the materials. He had, and shared with us that what he saw in the Remnant Weekend lecture notes was "not the gospel." He stated that, in his opinion, while there was a positive message of obedience to God, that the gospel of Christ had been distorted, and that there was a strange absence of reliance on the cross of Christ. He stated that the teaching seemed to emphasize man by man's own efforts trying to do what God wanted him to do, rather than God working through people. It was difficult for us to hear, or even accept, as indoctrinated as we were with the message we had received at Remnant Nashville. After all, we had been prepared for the fact that the leadership at our church would not want to turn from their sins. Wasn't this just confirmation of the prophecy we had received in Nashville?

We responded with the challenge that these things were being taught in our WD and Strongholds classes, and that many lives had been changed. If what we were teaching was wrong, why were we still being allowed to teach it? To our surprise, he agreed with us. He stated that we could no longer hold these meetings at the church, that the church would no longer sponsor them. Challenge accepted!

Before concluding that meeting, we told our pastor that if things did not change in our church, we felt called to leave. Before our impending "exodus," we requested that the elders study out this issue with us in the Bible (perhaps to give us one last chance to convince them, perhaps so that they could convince us). We proposed setting up a regular study of this issue with all of the elders and all six members of our group. I don't know to what degree this request was realistically considered by the elders. Looking back, I wish they had accepted the challenge.

## **Exhortation to Stand Firm**

Throughout this entire process of meeting with our elders, various members of our group had remained in constant contact with the leadership at Remnant Fellowship. I had been encouraged to write to them to update them regarding our meetings with the elders, and after our first meeting, I emailed Jayne Fiedler (a counselor and psychologist who works on the Weigh Down staff, and a confidant of my wife), Joe Langsdon (a deacon for Remnant Fellowship), and the Northeast team for the Weigh Down Workshop. I informed them how the meeting had gone, including our pastor's response. I received the following responses from Joe Langsdon and Jayne Fiedler. An email Joe wrote, dated July 9, 2001, included the following:

Please stay on the path that God is leading you down. Don't be swayed. Don't look to the right or the left and don't look back. Follow the fruit. Stay strong. You are in our prayers.<sup>13</sup>

Also on that same day, Jayne Fiedler gave us her answer to our pastor's concerns about the theological soundness of Remnant Fellowship doctrine:

God bless you my Friend in Christ — Stand on God's Word and be firm-God calls us to obey, to DO His will, to repent from sin and HE gives us the ability to DO these things — it is then our choice as to whether we crown self or crown God Almighty — as you correctly stated, it is not the "flesh" that takes credit for these things, it is our willingness to die to self-will and our willingness to demonstrate this death by our loving obedience and submission to His Lordship ...the CROSS is THE most central aspect of Weigh Down materials in that it is only through Jesus Christ [sic] death that we even have this opportunity to approach the heart of God the Father — ONLY through Christ (who is our perfect model for death to self) can we know that it is possible to lay down sin, to obey wholeheartedly and to surrender self...<sup>14</sup>

These emails were so reinforcing, and reminded us that this was a spiritual battle. God was calling us to obey, and we needed to do His will in this confrontation with our church leadership. At the same time, there was a part of me that wanted to control the information flow from our group to the Remnant Fellowship leadership. I was not the only one communicating with Nashville, and I knew that my wife and her co-coordinator were giving regular updates of what was going on to various friends and associates at the WD headquarters. Something about that made me nervous, because our group had not decided to join Remnant Fellowship at that point. I certainly didn't want to give them the wrong impression. We had decided in prayer as a group that whatever God wanted us to do, He would reveal it to us all, and that there would be no doubt.

Throughout the process of meeting with our pastor, we were also asked by David Martin to set up regular conference calls so that he could keep tabs on how we were doing. I recall having one conference call with him, Joe Langsdon, and a couple of other men from Remnant Fellowship. We also had a group conference call with all six of our group in New York and Gwen Shamblin, David Martin, Joe Langsdon, and a few other Remnant leaders. On most of these calls, we usually informed them how things were going with our meetings with our pastor; they always encouraged us, and they agreed to pray for our conversations with our pastor.

During these calls, some of us also asked questions about Remnant Fellowship, because it was still unclear concerning who was in charge of the movement. When we were in Nashville, David

Martin had made a statement indicating that although he was a church elder, he submitted to Gwen's authority as a prophetess. Furthermore, we were taught in Nashville that the church that God wanted would submit to the "global authorities" which he put in place, similar to the global authority that the apostles seemed to enjoy in the Book of Acts. Since I came from a church tradition that emphasized the autonomy of the local church, this was odd to me.

It was very important for me to nail down the parameters of this global authority. In the back of my mind, there was still the question of character; frankly, I just doubted the maturity of the leaders of the movement, given the example of the two elders. When in Nashville, I had hardly been able to interact with David Shamblin, one of the founding elders. He seemed uninvolved with the ongoing activities, at least that weekend. And David Martin, one of the other elders, seemed to indicate that he took his leadership cues from Gwen. What seemed to constantly revolve in my mind was whether this was truly how God had set up this church, or whether Remnant Nashville had been set up to accommodate Gwen Shamblin's need to be in control. While I wanted to believe that they had the best of intentions, I couldn't shake my doubts about integrity; I just wanted to make sure that there was nothing deceptive about what we were being told. More and more, I began to be the only member of our group who had serious doubts about the Remnant Fellowship in Nashville. Other members of our group began to become anxious to join their movement. I think that many wanted to join Remnant quickly because we had received so many nice calls, cards, and emails from members of Remnant Fellowship. All the attention and encouragement was intoxicating! It was such a contrast from the suspicious looks and "cold shoulders" we were getting from some of our current church family. Also, we were constantly being urged to get under God's "rightfully appointed" authority, and that outside of that authority, we would be outside of His will, and prey to deception.

### **Leaving Babylon: Our Departure From the "Counterfeit Church"**

In early August, things came to a head with our pastor. My wife, who worked for over three years as his office manager, had begun to find the interpersonal pressure with him to be intolerable. The theological differences we felt were just too vast! They mutually agreed that they could no longer work together; consequently, she was fired, and left the office that day. We had one more meeting with our pastor, to inform him that we had changed locations for our Weigh Down and Strongholds classes, and to express our disappointment that he had fired Maria. He answered back that he could not have someone working under him who did not believe in what he was doing. We informed him that we were also disappointed he had not made any effort to study the issues with us. And we wanted to know whether there were any intentions on his part to make changes in our church.

He and the other elder present stated that he felt that we were trying to force the issue and moving too fast, but also that they felt that the message we wanted to bring to the church was flawed, and that they would not make room for it. We again challenged our pastor to compare the fruit of Remnant Fellowship with the fruit of our church. He responded with a statement that would stay with me for the next few months. "I know that the fruit of their church seems attractive. But, there are different kinds of fruit." Our pastor pointed out how other Bible-based movements, in their desire to produce good fruit (evangelism, for example) for the Lord, had perpetuated spiritual abuse on their members and displayed "another kind of fruit." These

movements betrayed that man was behind them, because they had decided that the ends justified the means. “Remnant Fellowship seems excited and fervent about obedience and holiness. But it’s an excitement that seems to be based on man’s efforts, and when people are behind it, it eventually gets twisted. Mechanisms get put in to control people, and suddenly you have something very different.” Despite the outcome of our meeting, those words kept turning over in my mind.

That was the day that we left our church. Maria and I wouldn’t return until we were made much wiser.

From that point on, our small group began to meet as a small church three to four times per week, worshipping, praising God, and reading the Bible voraciously. We would devour whole books in one sitting, and looked for every opportunity to get together. We prayed over and over for God to reveal the next step in the journey for us. We began to follow the Corinthian model in our worship, each one bringing a verse or a song or a thought to share with each other. And always, nearly every time we met, we would discuss whether we should join Remnant Fellowship. Our group was seriously divided on this issue; most felt called to join Remnant. The two of us who had met with our pastor and elders felt that we should spend more time with them, perhaps even take another trip down to Nashville to talk over some issues with the leadership there. One thing Gwen had taught us was to scrutinize the leadership we were under. We felt it would be a mistake to not scrutinize them as well, as we knew them much less well than the leadership of our previous church. Gradually, the debates between us on the issue began to dominate our time together. I started to feel that I was the only one who seriously felt doubt about the decision. I was in an uncomfortable position. The main doubts I harbored were about Gwen Shamblin herself. How do you question the leadership of a movement that you are thinking about joining? For some reason I sensed she would be unapproachable on this issue.

Finally, the discussions in our group became too much, and it became clear that I was the only real holdout. We had been told several times we needed to get under a “true authority,” and begin to feel the benefits of tapping into the “true Head.” At the Remnant Weekend Gwen likened getting under a true church authority to tapping into the true heavenly brain, where that brain, not our rebellious selves, was in charge. Other members of the group were truly beginning to feel restless, and I was stalling. I agreed to take all my questions to Gwen in one final question-and-answer session, and settle in my mind once and for all how I felt about joining Remnant Fellowship.

On September 9, 2001 we called Remnant Fellowship to set up another conference call. We felt an urgent need to settle the issues, and although they were busy with shipping out Weigh Down Advanced, they agreed to have a conference call with us on September 12.

Before we could have this conversation, though, we woke up to the horrific events of September 11, 2001. Our city was shaken to its core when the World Trade Center towers fell to the ground. We could see the towers from our apartment window, saw the smoke and could see that they were no longer standing, but we couldn’t believe what had happened.

Compounding our fear was the fact that one of our group was a New York policeman stationed near Ground Zero. For hours after the attack he had still not called his wife. We prayed nonstop, afraid that he was dead, until he finally called home a few hours later. Again, we traded many calls between New York and our new spiritual friends in Nashville as they agreed to pray for our friend.

For the most part, their calls were a comfort. However, we noticed a disturbing trend among many members of Remnant Fellowship who were quick to label the attacks and resulting tragedy as acts of vengeance from God on our country for being so sinful and unrepentant. To say the least, it was insensitive. We still had no idea who or how many of our friends, Christian family, and coworkers might still be unaccounted for. Maria and I felt sick when we heard their interpretation of the event, and blatantly told them so.

## **Who Dares Question the Great Oz?**

### **Sitting in the Seat of Mockers**

By the next day, the city was still reeling. However, we felt the urgency to go ahead and have our conference call with the leaders of Remnant Fellowship. Our police officer friend could not be there understandably, but he and his wife didn't voice any questions about Remnant Fellowship. They were the ones who felt most comfortable about joining the group, and so Maria, myself, and the other couple continued with the conference call. We gathered around the speakerphone after prayer to ask our questions of Gwen Shamblin and the leaders of Remnant Fellowship.

As I recall, all four of us somehow had the feeling this phone call would be decisive. For myself, I decided to go ahead and ask the tough questions I'd been holding back. All my life, both at home and throughout my education, I had been taught to never shy away from the tough questions. I had the strange feeling that I was about to do something forbidden, but I believed that if this leadership had true confidence in their God-given sanction to lead, they wouldn't be afraid to answer tough questions. After all, the leadership we had just left at our "counterfeit church" responded to our request for discussion, allowed us to come into their offices with extremely tough questions, and admitted that they didn't have perfect answers. We'd even questioned their right to lead (respectfully, we thought), if they were not planning to obey "all of God's Word."

I believed the leadership at Remnant Fellowship was much more holy and driven to obey God than any other leadership I'd encountered, and so unless Remnant Fellowship wasn't what it appeared to be there should have been no problem asking them the same kinds of questions. After all, it was they who urged us to be deeply concerned with the obedience of a church's leadership. Surely they'd recognize the wisdom in our applying the same measure (commitment to obey all of God's Word) to them, given that, in truth, we hardly knew them.

My questions centered on who was actually in charge of the movement. Who was the spiritual authority? How much autonomy did local Remnant Fellowship branches have? What were the parameters of this global authority they were talking about? What hermeneutic did they use to



interpret the Scriptures? What did they do when leaders differed regarding how certain passages were to be interpreted? These are just a few of the many questions I did not have answers to.

But despite their appropriate nature, I had a sinking feeling in my stomach that it would be a big mistake to ask such questions. I told our little group that I thought that how they handled our desire to ask tough questions would tell us a lot about them. They would either overwhelm us with their soul-searching honesty, or they'd be angry.

That night, we got a call from Gwen Shamblin, David Martin, Michael Shamblin (Gwen's son), Joe Langsdon, and Jayne Fiedler. (I can't recall if anyone else was on the Nashville end of the conversation.) After asking about our safety and expressing their sympathies, they asked if it would be all right if they taped the conversation for our absent friends. I thought it to be a kind of odd request – after all, why shouldn't our friends get to be privy to the discussion? – but I didn't object.

I never received a copy of that audio tape, but I can reconstruct the highlights of the conversation from memory. Remnant Fellowship may yet retain the original tape, and might provide it to someone requesting a copy.

At the very beginning of the “Q & A” session I decided to address the sinking feeling in my gut, and began by asking, “How do you, Gwen, and the leadership, feel about us asking these questions?” I expected encouragement to continue. What I received was quite different.

Gwen asked if she could be frank, and then related to us how put-off she was because we were still questioning whether we were going to be involved with the Remnant Fellowship church. She took our questions very personally, and considered them to be rude, because she had forfeited her time, energy, and long-distance charges to speak to us several times. She seemed to be insulted that we could still doubt her intentions, and expressed to us that while she felt it was okay for us to ask a few questions, she had caught wind of the fact that many of the questions we had been hinting around about and discussing amongst ourselves were questions about her character.

She was surprised that we could still be asking questions when God had revealed Himself so clearly in the events of September 11, and (I'm paraphrasing here) wanted to know how much more destruction needed to occur before we would wise up. She obviously would have us believe that the attack on the World Trade Center somehow fulfilled her previous “prophetic” statements to the effect that God was judging the “counterfeit church,” and that only a Remnant Fellowship in New York would give our city a fighting chance. She pointed out that we'd been given a book revealing all of their intentions, and that this was more than many other believers had been given.

At this point all of us sitting in the room were aghast. Not because of the audacity of what she was saying, but because we couldn't believe how angry we'd made her. Her voice was calm, but she was clearly angry with us. All the other questions I felt I needed to ask went right out the window, and I spent the rest of the conversation hoping to get a word of self-defense in, as well as hoping I wouldn't screw it up.

But I was also extremely angry. Was she really going to use the events of September 11 as an excuse to sidestep an open and honest discussion?

Gwen also expressed anger with Maria, whom she labeled as too demanding when she called on September 9 to try to set up this conference call. She then said it had become clear to her that from our phone conversations and information they'd gathered that there were divisions among us, and that she was concerned because divisions come only from the Evil One.

I felt it was time I made clear to her that I was generally the one who had most of the questions. I wanted to hear what she thought of that, and I thought it would take the heat off of everybody else if I said it.

Gwen responded, saying that while it was okay to ask questions, it was her impression that many of my questions had an insincere, "mocking" quality to them, and were specifically intended to mock her. She said she felt that I was dangerously sowing confusion and dissension in the group through my questions, and that we were wasting God's time by not making a decision. She also indicated that while she'd been planning to come to New York for a Rebuilding the Wall Weekend, she was now canceling the trip because there was currently no Remnant Fellowship there — implying that we were responsible for her decision.

I was angry. It was difficult to get a word in edgewise and I could see she'd just ripped any credibility away from any question I might ask by single-handedly assigning blame for any arguments or confusion in our group to my questioning nature. She then said that perhaps it would be better if we avoided any more of these group "Q & A" sessions, and suggested that if I had any more questions, perhaps she and I could discuss them person-to-person. While still angry, I saw this as the only alternative to getting my questions answered, and agreed to email her as soon as possible.

The conversation ended with the other couple apologizing for causing such trouble, and for letting their pride run the show. We agreed to get in touch with Remnant very soon. I was surprised when after we hung up the phone, everyone in the room wanted to join Remnant! I felt just the opposite. Didn't this just show what I had predicted? Wasn't I being assigned all the blame for asking the questions, and yet, none of the questions had been answered? Or even allowed to be asked?

My brother and sisters differed. They viewed what had just happened as "spiritual discipline" which our actions deserved, as we had been arrogant to God's authority on earth. (In truth, God had been convicting many in our group of arrogance, and so, somehow, the shoe seemed to fit!) They told me that they felt Gwen had been trying to show us love by correcting us in our sin, and that I should be grateful that she was such a strong leader. She was just trying to keep us pure, as well as the church. While I now had serious checks in my spirit, I began to doubt my own feelings. Maybe I was blinded by arrogance. Maybe I was further astray than I ever imagined. Still, I could not imagine joining a group where the leadership was not open to core questions being asked. How else could the leadership be held accountable?

I agreed to send the proposed email. I was still the only holdout. Everyone else seemed committed to the idea of joining Remnant. I felt the cold wind of isolation. I couldn't go back to my old church. It was in rebellion to God. I might not be able to join Remnant Fellowship, because I doubted their integrity. Yet, where would I find a church where all the members were sold out for God? We prayed over the previous discussion, asked God to reveal His will for our group, and then parted.

## **Divide and Conquer**

I woke up on September 13 with a very heavy heart. I had a feeling that I had made a huge mistake on the previous night, but I felt positive about the fact that Gwen had acknowledged that she and I should discuss my questions person-to-person. I began busily working away on my email to her. I decided that many of the questions I had were peripheral to the issue of "global authority," and decided to address only that question. However, I felt that I should get the interpersonal issues out of the way. I had been prideful and mistrustful of her intentions, and I knew that I needed to apologize and explain myself. My email began with this apology.

I am very sad, because last night as we were talking I realized that I had been ungrateful to you and the saints in Nashville and had participated in gossip and prideful thinking about you. I want to offer my most profound apologies, and ask you to offer me forgiveness, as you said words that were undeniably of the Holy Spirit which convicted me and made me see how foolish I have been. I know that you probably understand where I am coming from, and I know that you are probably quick to offer forgiveness . . . I want to affirm to you that you were right last night. I think some of our wires got crossed, because the whole conversation felt very accusatory. But, I was definitely struggling with pride regarding you and the message of repentance. I really felt that we could take you guys or leave you, and that it was up to us. In truth, it's up to God, and all roads appear to be leading to Remnant at this point. But I want you to know that my concern and even fear was not just about you; I love this group of NYC exiles here so much, and I just don't want any of them hurt. I am very jealous that nothing will damage their relationship with God or confuse them, and I was afraid that this is what Remnant would do to them. I have seen what happened with the International Churches of Christ and the vicious tactics of control imposed on brothers and sisters in that church by calling down sin upon those who question the church leadership. I really wanted to protect this group here, and in truth I was the one bringing confusion on them. I guess I didn't trust God to be the protector. I feel foolish.<sup>15</sup>

In the aftermath of the whole affair, I am embarrassed that I was so apologetic. However, I truly did feel convicted about my attitude towards her as a person. Even if I had disagreements with the way she interpreted Scripture or conclusions she had therefore drawn, I had been snotty and prideful and somewhat unloving in how I spoke about her at times when she was not there to defend herself. That is definitely behavior that requires confession and repentance.

Looking more closely at the email, however, also demonstrates how much I had been confused by Gwen's accusations. We truly had been experiencing confusion regarding some of her teachings. I remember a time when one of the members of our group was convinced that she was eternally damned because she couldn't get her eating under control (following the food

rules). But in my email, I take the blame for all of the confusion! That “spiritual discipline” really had me reeling!

As I was working on the email, I got a phone call from my friend on the police force. He stated that Remnant had called he and His wife that morning, had stated that it had been a very heavy conversation the previous night, but that they felt the Spirit leading them to approach them to found a Remnant Fellowship, New York City, with or without the rest of the group. Apparently, the Remnant Fellowship leadership in Nashville had realized that he and his wife had no objection to joining, were only waiting on the rest of us to agree, and so they decided to move right in and get the job done! My friend stated that given what he had gone through the past two days (the events of September 11), he felt that he couldn't delay any longer on God's calling. He assured me that even though I still had doubts and had not made the decision to join, he didn't want me to worry that this decision would ever come between us in friendship or brotherhood. “I don't want you to worry that this will affect our friendship,” he said. In retrospect, he meant well, but that was a promise he would not be able to keep.

I had a sinking feeling. We called the other couple who had been present for the phone call the previous night. It seemed they had been in contact with Remnant Nashville, and had also decided to join Remnant Fellowship. I started to wonder what had happened to our agreement to make this decision together as the Lord led us.

I suddenly had a feeling that I'd better get this email off in a hurry. I was now “out of the group.” My wife was despondent. We didn't want to be on the outside looking in. I went on to state that I felt that I wanted to join Remnant Fellowship, and that it seemed that that was the decision God was leading our group to. But, as I had questions, I wanted to just get one concern out of the way.

Gwen, if your patience has not totally run out for me, may I respectfully submit one concern? I want to assure you that I am in no way attempting to undermine your authority, and I ask this because just as you want to present this fellowship before Christ “without wrinkle or blemish,” I want to believe in that too! . . .As we were talking last night, all the peripheral issues and doctrine stuff was swirling around in my head, and it all became very clear to me and “jelled” around one central issue. On three occasions, I have heard David Martin say that he, as an elder, submits to your authority, recognizing that you are speaking God's truths and that a discerning man will listen. I agree with him; he is right. When a prophet speaks, everybody should listen. Furthermore, you do seem to have a global authority that God has given you. However, my concern is that this movement is so young, and so new, and I worry that, as of yet it is unlike the early church, where there was a plurality of apostles and elders, so that when Peter's flesh got in his way (Galatians 2) Paul had the discernment and the authority to rebuke and restore him. Gwen, I am asking this because I know that you, as a human being, must still struggle with flesh at times. I just want to know that there are those (or that you are looking forward to the time when there will be those) who have the maturity to also shepherd you, to discern when you need guidance and shepherding. I want to know that this is a body that will raise up a plurality of global leaders (evangelists, apostles, elders, teachers, prophets) that will expand even beyond Weigh Down, Weigh Down Advanced, and that God will use. I guess that I am praying that you also want this. When I ask about vision, and calling, this is what I am talking about. . . But my

heart is heavy for you, and you are in my prayers because I worry whether you are being shepherded by those around you? Who is caring for you? Is there someone there capable of exhorting you, encouraging you, building you up? Are people growing into those gifts? Do you see it happening?<sup>16</sup>

In my mind, I had done the best I could to ask a searching question in a respectful way; I intended it to open up the door for dialogue and discussion, so that I could learn more of Gwen Shamblyn's character. Not just what she said on her videos and audiotapes, not just the impressions we had gotten when we met with her in Nashville, not just the doctrine in the notebook. I wanted to know her heart. I wanted to be able to trust it. I had only to wait a little while for my answer.

Notice in this email how I tiptoed around Gwen's feelings about being challenged? I had been burned once. I was bound and determined to not be burned again! I sent the email to Amy Stites, Gwen's personal assistant. I decided that since it was an apology, and since the question pertained to church leadership, that I should also send a copy to David Martin, Jayne Fiedler, and Joe Langsdon. In my email, I asked Gwen or David Martin to call as soon as possible so that we could repair our relationship and work out our differences. I included numbers where I could be contacted, and sat back to wait for what I knew would be a humbling conversation.

## **The Left Foot of Disfellowship**

### **A Meeting With Remnant Fellowship, New York**

The call never came. At first, on Thursday night as I stewed about what Gwen would say to Maria and me, I was nervous. I knew that she would call soon, because I had humbled myself in the email. I had been as contrite as I knew how to be. I was very anxious, too, because I do not like to be at odds with another believer, and it was important to me to clear the air. But by Friday morning, when no call came, it became fairly clear to me that there was not going to be a call. Just in case, I placed a call to David Martin and Jayne Fiedler. In both cases, I was given their voice mails. I left messages, but I was pretty sure that they would not be answered.

Finally, the stress and strain of waiting became too much. Our city was devastated and we could still smell the smoke in the air. Not only were we getting the cold shoulder from Nashville, our friends began treating us somewhat oddly as well. They still took our calls, but they were strangely formal, not casual as the calls usually were. They listened to our concern as we vented our frustrations because we couldn't get in contact with Gwen or David Martin, and continually encouraged us to pray.

We decided that the best thing we could do was to get out of town, put some distance between us and the city and the cold, uncomfortable situation we were in. We took a spontaneous trip to visit family in Richmond, Virginia. Driving away seemed to put the situation more and more in perspective. I mean, after all, what had we done that was really wrong? We may have been confused, and wanted to discuss some differences of opinion, but I had definitely apologized to Gwen herself. Sincerely so. I wanted to work out the problem. If Remnant Fellowship was not going to call back, didn't that betray something about the character of this movement? And

movement or not, I had written that email to Gwen. If she chose not to forgive me and try to reconcile our differences, didn't that say something about her?

We were able to stop thinking about the situation for awhile at least, until we decided to call our friends and check in with them. Again, the conversation was cold, leaving us feeling low. Maria's co-coordinator told her that the leadership in Remnant Nashville was very angry with me, because they saw a lot of pride in my letter; that they had chosen not to call me back, period. She also stated that she felt that the email was prideful as well. And they wanted us to come back as soon as possible because they had some things they wanted to discuss with us.

I had a sinking feeling. This was my confirmation that I had messed up royally, that I truly was a prideful man who didn't recognize God's true authority on earth when it was sitting right in front of him. I knew that if we went back to talk to our friends, that I would have to nearly grovel if I wanted them to let us back into fellowship with them.

And yet, I couldn't believe that they thought my letter was prideful. I apologized, for goodness sake! But that didn't mean that I wasn't going to ask my question! Is that what they meant by pride? That I asked a character question of Gwen Shamblin? That I called things the way that I truly saw them, and asked the issue to be addressed?

We agonized over what to do, praying and praying. What did God want us to do? We felt so trapped. Something told me that if I joined Remnant Fellowship now, I was in for a gauntlet of spiritual abuse that I would probably not be able to endure. It would mean swallowing every question I felt in my heart and conscience and just jumping in on blind faith. It would mean submitting totally to the authority of my new spiritual head, (my policeman friend), which ultimately, it seemed to me, meant submitting to Gwen Shamblin. It would also mean confessing to pride in that email, which I didn't feel when I wrote it.

On the other hand, these were our best friends. We had never been closer with other Christians before. We had worked alongside each other, studying the Word and praying constantly. We had confessed sins to each other, and built each other up in times of need. One had a baby due imminently, and she had asked Maria to be in the delivery room with her. We had vacationed together. And at a large gathering of friends and family, they had toasted me and said the kindest things that friends could ever say about me. We loved these people. There was no way that they would let us be harmed. We trusted them to shield us from the leadership in Nashville, intercede for us and help us correct the misunderstandings.

I cannot describe the torment that I was in that night, as I tried to decide what I would do. I vacillated between turning my back on Remnant Fellowship and embracing it. I knew I had a penchant for pride. Perhaps this was God's will for me, to be humbled so that all the pride in my heart could be burned out of me, and I could finally stand before Him without it burdening my heart. In the end, we decided to go back early to New York, demonstrate our humility, try to explain what had happened, and "throw ourselves upon the mercy of the court."

In many ways, I think part of my decision was made out of fear. We had been told over and over while in Nashville that there was only One Church. If we didn't join Remnant, would we be

missing our chance to be a part of that church? And besides, where could we go? We couldn't go back to our old church, and we knew of no other church that demanded total obedience to God and His authorities as did Remnant Nashville. Therefore, I reasoned, perhaps I should just swallow my questions and misgivings and trust that God would just work out things through His will in the Remnant church. If there were things that didn't seem right, surely since the leadership was so bound and determined to obey God, they would eventually be corrected.

Even as I made this decision, my heart was crying out within me. I no longer felt free to decide. Circumstances and my new convictions had trapped me. I cried out to God in tears saying, "God, I don't know what you want me to do! I don't agree with things here, and I'm being mistreated and misunderstood. But, I think it must be your will that I join Remnant Fellowship. I don't have the strength to do anything differently. Father, please! If this is not what you want, if this church is not the right place for us to be, let them be unmerciful. Let them send us packing. If this is the wrong decision, please save us!"

We drove back to New York with lightened hearts. We felt anxious about the upcoming meeting, but we felt that God was in control and that as long as we were humble and penitent, He would take care of the rest. We sang hymns to Him, prayed and read Scripture.

## **Who Are These People?**

Our friends seemed odd, distant, when we finally got to our friend's apartment that Sunday night. They had not wanted to hug us, a usual ritual amongst us all. They weren't making small talk. They had us sit down, and informed us that since our absence, they had been praying about this moment. They had also been sitting for two days and thinking over every sin and misdeed that we had ever forgotten, trying to plumb the depths of the evil in our hearts. Maria's co-coordinator then stated that they were about to expose our sin, and the lies and deceptions that had clouded our relationships with them since the beginning of our association. "This is an accusation," she began. "We are bringing out all of the darkness into the light." And with that, most of them began to list every sin that we had ever committed in our relationship with them.

They started in on Maria first. The onslaught of icy condemnation was crushing. They accused her of sins she had committed. Exaggerations she had told, gossip she had indulged in (with them), and deceptions. Some of what they said was true. Some of the incidents were misunderstandings that could have been cleared up if they had asked questions first. And some of what was said was just plain ludicrous. One of them even accused her of being greedy and thinking only of material success (this to a woman who is rarely aware of how much she gets paid and would work for free if she thought the job was fun!) But much of what they were condemning Maria for was regarding interpersonal conflicts that the three wives had gotten into at different points in their relationships, for which they were all responsible. These events (many of them confessed and dealt with long ago) were dredged back up and recast with most of the responsibility attributed to Maria's "sinful divisiveness." Throughout the conversation, it became clear that at least one member of the Remnant Fellowship leadership in Nashville had assisted in amassing Maria's sin list. Maria did not answer back. She listened, cried, and apologized.

I was next. I was chastised for being prideful, controlling, mocking, and divisive. Times when I had dominated our Bible studies and discussions with involved Scriptural arguments and interpretations were recounted. But my biggest fault appeared to be my lack of submission to authority, and my evident lack of respect for the leadership of Remnant Fellowship.

After listing our transgressions, they calmly said, “Because this is the way you are, and because our friendship has always been twisted by this sin and deception, we don’t even know who you are. We don’t want to have a relationship with you any more. We’d appreciate it if you take back these things (gifts we had given them) and not call us or contact us anymore. Our friendship is over.” They went on to inform us that they were making this decision on their own, that the leadership at Remnant Nashville had stated that it was up to Remnant New York to decide what to do about us, although they made it clear that they would no longer deal with us. We were told that one of the other women would run Weigh Down Advanced, and that the current Weigh Down and Strongholds classes would be cancelled. Furthermore, they informed us that they were clearly being led by the spirit of God to disfellowship us, because in their flesh they would never go through with such a drastic measure. “As far as we’re concerned, this meeting is over. You can go now.”

We were stunned. We thought they were listing all of our sins to help us get them out in the open and be better Christians. We had no idea that this was where they were headed. We just stared. The men wouldn’t look us in the eye. We asked them to do so. One responded (the one that had not joined in on the “accusation”) that God had silenced him for his pride, and that he couldn’t say anything about what was going on.

Finally, I spoke. “We came here to apologize for our sins, and put ourselves under your authority. I’ve never been more sincere. That doesn’t matter?”

They responded by telling us we needed to get on our faces before God, and apologize to Him for our sin. I’ll never forget Maria’s terrified, tearful words. “But, there’s only one church, right? And if we’re not in it . . . what’s going to happen to our souls?” Her best friend answered, “That’s not my decision to make. I just know that our relationship is over.”

I thought I would vomit, seeing what my wife was being put through. “Okay, then,” I said, standing up. “We’ll go. We continue to love every one of you.” We walked out the door, never to see any of them since.

## **The Hand of God**

### **Strange Deliverance**

By the time we hit the fresh air, and began to walk back to our car, we felt ten times lighter. God had answered our prayer. He had answered our prayer! We had not sinned so badly that He was no longer watching out for us! Praise Him! It suddenly became clear to me what a narrow miss we had just had. “We almost joined a cult,” I said to Maria. “We almost joined a cult, and God rescued us from it because we asked Him too.” When Maria rejoined with a snappy, “At least we know we’re not cult material!” I knew that eventually, we were going to be okay. We were



sick about our friends. We were disoriented, and had no idea what to do next. But I knew we would be okay.

By the time we got home, we had enough clarity to start making phone calls. We called every current member in Weigh Down and Strongholds, and informed them that we would no longer be leading the programs, that our friends had cut off their relationships with us in a bizarre manner, and that they should proceed with the programs and Gwen Shamblin's teachings at their own risk. It was amazing how many of them guessed that something had been wrong for a while, and wanted to pray for us on the spot. We promised more information as soon as possible, and began composing a letter that we could send to all current and past Weigh Down and Strongholds members. We knew that we would be sending the letter to many young Christians, some of who had ongoing relationships with our friends. We decided to choose the diplomatic approach and reveal only the theological reasons and our mistakes for why we were no longer participating. That letter is currently posted on the World Wide Web. You can access it at [www.goldenrocket.com](http://www.goldenrocket.com).

We also decided to make one last ditch effort to save our friends from future pain. I wrote a letter to my "silenced" friend, who was the only one of the four that had not asked us to not contact him. I thought I would point out how foreign this kind of behavior was to how he normally acted, in the hopes of convincing him into reconsidering his choice. In an email sent by registered mail on September 17, I wrote:

I came to that meeting yesterday swallowing considerable checks in my spirit that I had labeled as "pride and arrogance," willing to cease my questioning, willing to submit myself to Gwen, to David Martin, to (you). I was willing to never teach, never speak in an assembly again, if necessary, only if I could be offered forgiveness. I was on my face for two days before God, and was given Psalm 51 "The sacrifices of the Lord are a broken and contrite spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." I had never been more broken. Never been more humble. I felt that the Lord's will for me was to be humbled in Remnant. But I also prayed that if this was not His will for me, that if there was no mercy in this place, could He please reveal it to me? I was sure that given my heart, given my brokenness, I would be loved and restored, unconditionally forgiven, forgiven my debts just as Christ forgave yours. ...I know that you believe we were being handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme, but instead, you have wounded the body of Christ. I believe that you did not agree with what happened. But I can see that you had chosen to silence yourself.<sup>17</sup>

I shared with him my belief about the group's fitting the definition of a "cult" group, something I couldn't convincingly argue previously until I had seen first hand its capacity for destructiveness. I tried to convince him at least to talk with a mutual friend he trusted who had belonged to a Bible-based cult group for many years, and at least get more information.

I asked God for confirmation that this is a cult. I have it now. I have been doing some reading over the past two months, trying to be understand how cults work. They emphasize conformity, denigrate and shame independent thinking, have rigid authority and hierarchy structures, move people by group thinking, use fear as a motivator, and quickly and permanently expel anyone who persistently questions. These things are present in Remnant. They are disguised under the

name of “love”, and “vertical emphasis.” But they are strongly present, and God has revealed the check that I had ever since we went down to Remnant in June. . . . We are afraid for you, and will pray daily for your deliverance too. Run. Run away. Cut off contact with these people, or at least talk to (our friend). I know that you trust his walk.<sup>18</sup>

I also poured out every previously unexpressed suspicion about the character and intentions of David Martin and Gwen Shamblin. It seemed moot to me, but I felt my friend needed a chance to think for himself.

Remember when (our pastor) said there are different kinds of fruit? Well, there are. And while there is a fruit of repentance and holiness there, there is also another fruit: stolen authority and arrogance and a spirit of control. God is not in control. Gwen Shamblin and David Martin are. And they have stolen their authority. Well intentioned as they may be, they are more concerned with control and the Remnant agenda than doing the full will of God, which includes forgiveness and restoration. They themselves spurn correction and sound doctrine, and despise those with more knowledge than themselves. They quibble and cause dissension about words, like the Trinity. This is a gospel of pride and arrogance disguised as humility. And they divided 6 brothers and sisters in Christ who God had obviously called together. Divisiveness, arrogance, and false authority: all the manifestations of Satan that they are so concerned with.<sup>19</sup>

I am fully aware that the above indictment sounds harsh. It was certainly fueled by indignation and hurt when I originally composed it (the day after my first, and hopefully only, “accusation”). But even in retrospect, removed from the immediate situation, I stand by it. Gwen Shamblin and David Martin bear a heavy responsibility for the leadership they exercise in the Remnant Fellowship body. The more control and power leaders have, the more responsibility they have for setting a flawless example to the flock and demonstrating the impeccable character of Christ in their leadership. This is the reason they originally separated from the “counterfeit church,” to get away from faulty leadership that does not take seriously the importance of giving the whole heart to God and submitting to His commands. Their behavior in how they treated me and my wife reveal that they are either (1) hypocrites who say one thing and do another, or (2) truly blind to their own inconsistent obedience to the commands of Savior and the example of His early church. To support this charge, I will address Remnant Fellowship’s selective attention to the commands of Jesus Christ. I will also deal with Remnant Fellowships “cult-like” behavior, and demonstrate how it differs from the church revealed in the New Testament.

## **Did He Say That, Too?**

In my email to Gwen Shamblin (also copied to the other leaders of the Remnant Fellowship Nashville church), I apologized for my behavior to her, and asked for her forgiveness. In other excerpts from that email not quoted in this testimony, I told her I was in distress because I felt the need to repair our relationship. After apologizing, I then took the opportunity to ask the questions that she had encouraged me to ask in a one-on-one basis, because I wanted to settle our differences quickly. It was another, more carefully worded question about her character, the character of the leadership of Remnant Fellowship, and her vision for the future.

Following this email, I never heard from Gwen again. She has made no effort to contact me, although I repeatedly tried to contact her. She is clearly not interested in reconciling our relationship. I am sure she and the Remnant Fellowship leadership justify this “cold shoulder” approach with passages like Titus 3:9-11, where Paul encourages Titus to warn a divisive person once, and then to have nothing to do with them. Perhaps Gwen thought that the warning I received in our phone conversation should have been my chance to learn to stop questioning. But why then would she ask me to communicate my questions to her on a one-to-one basis?

I believe that Gwen Shamblin and the Remnant Fellowship leadership (in both Nashville and New York) are guilty of selective attention to the commands of our Savior. His teachings concerning forgiveness and reconciliation are clear. Luke 17: 3-4 indicates that if a brother repents, one is to forgive him, even if he comes back seven times in one day! And Matthew 18 demonstrates in commands and a parable that forgiveness and reconciliation is simply not optional in the Kingdom of Heaven. Here Jesus instructs us to forgive our brother “seven times seventy.”

I know that these passages are not unknown to the Remnant Fellowship leadership. They have certainly read them. However, their disregard of them betrays that there is another agenda working in their midst. They are blind to them, because in my questions about their intentions, character, and purposes, I actually had the hope that if they were listening, they might be able to take a step back and evaluate whether the way they had set up their authority structure was truly from Him. I was hoping we could dialogue about that issue. My intent was not to be divisive, my intent was to find a way to communicate honestly about what I saw happening. Clearly, I violated an unspoken but universally accepted rule of the group, which was that continued and sustained questioning is “anti-authority.” I was never asked about my motives or intentions. They were assumed, and I was cut off from their fellowship. *Even if I was wrong in my assessment and had actually put my foot in my mouth in front of the holiest people on earth, surely they would be wise enough to divine my heart, address my concerns, and encourage me to “grow up?” But the actual events demonstrate that this was not their choice!*

## **A Question of Character**

Ostensibly, it was the pride and arrogance in my email that “broke the camel’s back” in regards to Remnant Fellowship leadership’s patience with me. According to Gwen, it bothers her greatly when her character is questioned, and in this case, it became a reason to cut off contact with a brother in Christ, and contribute to division between other brothers and sisters in Christ. I’m sure that in her mind and in the mind of her followers, the problem is mine (again, Titus 3: 9-11). After all, I am the prideful one who dared questioned God’s spiritual authority.

It’s telling to me that Gwen is so squeamish about answering “character questions” because of her position as a “global authority” in Remnant Fellowship. An example of a global authority in the Bible who didn’t seem to share her distaste for them was the apostle Paul. Paul seemed to enjoy a measure of “global authority” to some degree over many of the churches he planted. He could only spend a certain amount of time with each congregation, and then moved on to other areas. In his absence, confused and/or malicious teachers occasionally slipped in and tried to get

the church to question Paul's teachings and his character. Second Corinthians and Galatians are perfect and extended examples of this phenomenon.

It's interesting to note Paul's reaction on these occasions. First of all, he passionately defends his gospel and his character, reminding his flock of his love and care for them, and the gentle manner in which he treated them when he was present. In short, Paul was not afraid to be open, honest, and vulnerable with his brothers and sisters. He was not quick to discipline; rather, he seemed to exercise that option only reluctantly. Instead, he won them over by his love for them and his character. As a rule, Paul seemed to accommodate as much as he could in order to retain each one that God had given him! And he did not upbraid his flocks for having doubts. Instead, he answered their doubts willingly.

Of course, in Paul's case, his teachings were founded on a firm and solid gospel. Furthermore, he had a genuine calling from God to preach and teach with authority. Finally, although he was not a perfect man, he was not afraid to be open and answer questions about his character. And most importantly, he was quick to reconcile relationships and restore fallen brothers!

Unfortunately, Gwen Shamblin's example in this regard does not seem to match this dedication to unity and openness. Her behavior demonstrates a quick and ready reliance on church discipline and excommunication to avoid such questions. I believe that this is because she is teaching a twisted gospel that will not stand up to intense questioning. Furthermore, she is exercising her calling on the pretext of a false authority; she did not like the manner in which the modern church was being run, and so she stole the reins and ran away with a few confused but loyal sheep. Finally, Gwen betrays that she does not share Paul's emphasis on reconciliation and restoration. Rather, her actions demonstrate that she is concerned with maintaining her continued enjoyment of an unquestioned interpretive and pastoral authority. In short, she is more concerned with control than she is with building up each member of the flock towards an independent faith in God.

## **Gaining a Biblical Perspective**

### **Walks Like a Duck, Quacks Like a Duck, Must Be a . . .**

In the past six months, I have been doing extensive reading on cults, at first trying to determine whether Gwen Shamblin was a cult leader, and then, after my personal confirmation, trying to make sense of my experience with Remnant Fellowship. One extremely helpful resource was an article by Don and Joy Veinot of Midwest Christian Outreach. In the Winter, 2001 issue of the *Journal*, they examine Remnant Fellowship in an article entitled "Weigh Down Workshop-A Cult?" I highly recommend this article to anyone considering joining this movement. In their article, they examine the theology of Remnant Fellowship, and affirmatively label it a cult because of the movement's authoritarian rule over the lives of members, their false teachings, typical hatred of the Christian church, twisting of Christian doctrine in order to simplify it, twisting the Scriptures to defend their positions, emphasis on salvation by works and obedience rather than by grace through faith alone, and lack of assurance of salvation.

I will not retread the ground that the Veinots have covered. Rather, from my own experience and observations of the group over the past five months, I want to point out some behavioral and sociological characteristics that affirm to me that Remnant Fellowship is a cult group, and that Gwen Shamblin is a cult leader.

First of all, I believe that Remnant Fellowship demonstrates cult-like tendencies because of their recruitment tactics. Typically recruits are gathered at Remnant Fellowship Weekends, where they are often tired and worn out from a week of work and travel to the convention center. They are kept busy learning from Gwen (or others with the same message) over the entire weekend, and provided with small opportunity to ask penetrating questions. At the same time that reasoning faculties are worn down, potential recruits are bombarded with kindnesses and loving affirmations from Remnant Fellowship members, creating an emotional high (love bombing). These potential recruits are continually “love bombed” by long distance phone calls, cards, and emails in the days and weeks following the convention. Arterburn and Felton would describe such behaviors as contributing to the “intoxication of belonging”<sup>20</sup> felt by the spiritually vulnerable when they are recruited by a toxic faith system. Other potential recruits who have balked at leaving their churches have told me that members of Remnant Fellowship asked them to compare their church with the love and attention they were receiving from Remnant Fellowship members, as a test of which is the true church.

Are Remnant Fellowship members consciously trying to manipulate potential recruits? I think not. I believe that they have a lot of material they want to present at these Rebuilding the Wall Weekends. And I believe that they genuinely believe that they are doing the Lord’s will by sharing how loving their church is. However, I wonder to what degree the members of Remnant Fellowship continue to want to be involved in the lives of people who are no longer potential recruits, people who have decided not to leave their churches. That would be a telling confirmation regarding how sincere of an interest they truly feel towards people.

Also, potential recruits are gradually “inoculated” against listening to any criticism about the groups from any other source. Because such suspicion is cast upon the “counterfeit church,” pastors, friends, or family members who try to explain the grace taught in the Bible or share other perspectives on Remnant Fellowship are quickly going to be thought of as slandering a “pure group.” Remnant Fellowship uses just such a tactic to keep members inside the group from evaluating the group from another perspective by labeling criticism “slander.” In an e-mail originally sent in November 2001, and resent on January 30, 2002, Gwen encourages new members to not fall for some of the “lies” they might be prone to by associating with Christians and family members.

Remember that God sent you to these meetings and it is because you long to do the will of God — not talk about it or memorize it or hear it – you want to do the will of God. If you are to obey His commands then you need to separate yourselves from the rebellious and especially those who call themselves Christians (2 Cor 6:14-7:2). Ground yourself in the truth.

For one, your blood family could disapprove so you must remember what Jesus said in Mark 3:31-35 that his mother and brother and sisters were those who DO the will of the Father.

Another attack the flattery of Satan to get you off the track of self-denial and back on the track of self. Pharisee's greatest tool is to flatter you and try to get you to stay around the rebellious or those who allow, cater, coddle or wink at rebellion. Remember you are finally being set free. Do not entertain that path any longer – it is a trap! (See Ps 36:2)<sup>21</sup>

Gwen encourages cutting off ties with former Christian associates, and puts dividing lines between new recruits and family members. Her advice is to “separate yourself” from anyone who would put questions in your mind about her teaching. Gwen also refers to families who have left Remnant Fellowship in a recent email:

Just recently, two families have pulled off from Remnant Fellowship due to their strong desire to keep their strongholds ... They are now calling other Remnant Fellowships and are lying about what we said or did – that is all that they can find on us ... they have chosen to leave based on lies. They are actually calling up Remnant members and claiming Remnant is a cult ... How vague and how unfair and how unchristian not to take their complaint to the leaders. Both have refused to talk to the leaders – yet we have tried.<sup>22</sup>

Gwen is demonizing former members who are objecting to her leadership. It is sort of surreal for me to read Gwen's comments about these former members not taking their concerns to her, and voicing her feelings at these members not desiring reconciliation. Her comments about that being an unfair and unchristian act are self-condemning in light of how she treated my wife and me. I wish I could remind Gwen about what happened when I tried to take my concerns to her and the leaders. Instead of leaving under my own steam as these brave former members did, I was excommunicated!

A second cult characteristic that Remnant Fellowship demonstrates is a tendency towards group thinking. Steven Hassan, one of America's leading cult experts, calls this an emphasis of “group will over individual will.” He states:

In all destructive cults the self must submit to the group. The “whole purpose” must be the focus; the “self purpose” must be subordinated. In any group that qualifies as a destructive cult, thinking of oneself or for oneself is wrong. The group comes first. Absolute obedience to superiors is one of the most universal themes in cults. Individuality is bad. Conformity is good.<sup>23</sup>

In that same Remnant Fellowship service of August 22, 2001, the worship leader uses the term “one accord” (taken from the narrative of the early, early church when it was located only in Jerusalem immediately following Pentecost, Acts 2: 42-47). The worship leader uses the agreement of purpose in the early church to justify group members from thinking independently or questioning the actions of their members.

When worshipping in one accord-the one accord Jesus prayed for his disciples, for us and for himself that all would experience the unity He and the Father had-we have to have this unity or we are going to be out of whack. Only one virgin bride exists as well as only one Groom and one Father. If we are worshipping in Truth, everything will seem good by the body. If anything from authority, any spiritual authority seems weird, go back and pray and examine your heart . . .

Anytime we go to self, start praying for God's church. This is what we should be mourning over, nothing else.<sup>24</sup>

The worship leader in Nashville (presumably Gwen, although I am not sure) indicates that if anyone differs in anything, that the church will be off course. The worship leader then suggests using prayer like a "thought stopping" technique. If anything the authority does seems morally wrong or questionable, don't question! Pray, and examine your own heart! Hassan refers to thought stopping techniques as a common method for exercising thought control, and states that they are "the most effective way to short-circuit a person's ability to test reality. . . since the doctrine is perfect, and the leader is perfect, any problem that crops up is assumed to be the fault of the individual member."<sup>25</sup>

A third cult characteristic of Remnant Fellowship is the rigid authority structure that it exhibits. Members are expected to submit to the spiritual authorities above them without questioning. Different branches of Remnant Fellowship are expected to submit to the "global authorities," presumably, Gwen, and later on, those she has groomed (her children have been taking a more active role in her ministry, although her husband seems strangely uninvolved). Furthermore, Gwen Shamblin teaches that when she makes a decision, it is equivalent to God making a decision (i.e., fusion of God's will with the will of the leadership in the church). In an email sent to Remnant Fellowship leaders explaining why the long-time members had recently been disfellowshipped by the leadership, Gwen states "I have a quick bit of information. . . about some recent purging that God has done."<sup>26</sup>

The leadership at Remnant Fellowship supports their rigid authority structure by making independent questioning taboo; my own experience bears that out. However, they also work diligently to discourage concern and thought for others ("a horizontal emphasis") and continually place the focus of attention on the hierarchical structure ("a vertical emphasis"). In the August 22, 2001 worship service, the worship leader states:

To get a mindset of being able to share and looking through the eyes of Jesus (not worried how others take Truth) is to truly get past this horizontal relationship with man and get into the vertical one with God! This life is about growing closer and closer to God. . . . When we are given opportunities to share, we should only worry that God is pleased.<sup>27</sup>

This emphasis on the vertical relationship facilitates total obedience to the "spiritual authorities" above each member. In this worship service, it is indicated that members should share their faith as boldly as possible without worrying about the impact that it will have on those around them. Only God (the vertical) should be pleased. The faithful are not to worry about the feelings of man (the horizontal). At the end of the service, the worship leader drives the point home.

Stop bleeding for the people that don't want a God! Feel God's pain. We don't need to think about anything else anymore.<sup>28</sup>

This desensitization to the feelings of others, including other believers, enables the members of Remnant Fellowship to unconcernedly cut off relationships with family members, friends, and former brothers and sisters in Christ if a "spiritual authority" deems it necessary. Any qualms

about it, and the faithful are reminded who they should be “bleeding” for — God, not their fellow men. In the email in which Gwen explains why some members have left Remnant Fellowship, she says:

They have more of a heart for people that are kissing idols than for poor God who has to share glory with deaf and dumb idols! . . . You all know that total Sovereignty is the only way to go. Total obedience to the one true God is the ONLY way to go. By the way – this did not surprise some of us for we could sense their side ways allegiance to each other and people over God. We must put Him first — He is testing all of us.<sup>29</sup>

Gwen forbids other members from having contact with these critical former members. Presumably, she is trying to keep anyone else in the group from thinking independently and perhaps questioning her authority. She makes the excommunication of these former members a test of whether the Sheep will obey God by not talking to them.

One final cult characteristic strongly present in Remnant Fellowship is their elitist mentality. Hassan states that “this feeling of being special, of participating in the most important acts in human history . . . is strong emotional glue to keep people sacrificing and working hard.”<sup>30</sup> A second worship leader at the August 22 Remnant Fellowship worship service states:

I see the New Jerusalem coming. Maybe Satan’s 1000 year reign is over. He is now being exposed. It’s over! No one can stop this message now, it’s on a scroll! (WDAdvanced). . . . People who don’t want a God are not on our side. We don’t need to be with those people. WDAdvanced will be the one last seed of separation. Everyone who is left will be the pure-hearted. Everyone will then be marked (Rev 13:16-14:1). We will then be on the Holy Mountain with no foreigners-Praise God!<sup>31</sup>

The arrogance in these statements is self-evident. The leadership of Remnant Fellowship presumes to assume that whoever responds to the message in WDAdvanced will be saved by God. All others will be left out.

There are other characteristics of Remnant Fellowship that are indicative of a toxic-faith system as described in Arterburn and Felton’s Toxic Faith. For a more in-depth analysis, I would refer you to that classic text.

## **Legalism, or Holy Living?**

The pitfall that my friends and I fell into with the teaching of Remnant Fellowship is a common snare that many exuberant and committed Christians are prone to get caught up in. As the Holy Spirit begins the work of sanctification in a new believer’s heart (or in the heart of a believer who has been spiritually asleep for some time), life changes become quite prominent. Christians begin turning from sin that earlier had them in bondage. After all this is clearly a foundation of the ministry of Christ (Isaiah 61: 1-4). He came to free us from all forms of captivity that the evil one might use to enslave us. When His Spirit enables us to turn from sin, and helps us choose to live holier lives, we reap more peaceful, satisfied lives. However, we then become prone to two mistakes, which can be as destructive as the original sin. We can become prideful,



attributing the changes in our lives to our own efforts (Luke 18: 9-14), and we can become judgmental of weaker brothers and sisters in Christ (Galatians 6:1-3).

When we begin to allow pride to run the show in our relationship with God and with His children, we often begin looking for other ways in which to distinguish ourselves. We turn any principle in the Bible, even figurative language, into a rule or “law” that can be either obeyed or disobeyed. We exchange the freedom of Christ for a new set of laws. Again, the Pharisees are a perfect example of this tendency; they were so concerned about not violating the law of tithing that they even gave a tenth of their spices. However, their tendency towards legalism prevented them from recognizing the freedom that Christ came to bring out of His love for us, because Jesus was not as concerned about following their rules (he allowed a sinful woman to touch him in Luke 7:36-39; in Mark 1:41, he even touched a leper, something forbidden by the Law).

The book of Galatians was written to just such a situation. Teachers had come into the Galatian churches after Paul, convincing Jewish and Gentile Christians alike that in order to be acceptable before God, they needed to follow the Jewish law (including circumcision). Paul responded by calling the Galatian churches back to the gospel he had first preached to them.

As I discussed earlier in this testimony, I believe that the teachings in Weigh Down Advanced and Remnant Fellowship logically bring one to a place where legalism begins to blossom and flower in one’s relationship with God and others. However, I believe that the seeds are sown much earlier, and the way is prepared for this legalism to take root in one’s heart even in the Weigh Down Workshop original version, or Exodus from Strongholds. One example of how this legalism develops is the eventual transformation of the food rules, or “principles of eating within hunger and fullness” from great suggestions for weight loss to God’s rules that must be followed.

For some of my readers, I am about to challenge a “sacred cow” by even questioning whether God demands that we eat within the bounds of hunger and fullness as taught within the Weigh Down Workshop. The program presents the idea of eating only when your stomach growls and then eating only until politely full as God’s created mechanism within our bodies to help us maintain a good weight. Gwen Shamblin maintains that extra weight on our bodies is a visible sign that we are indulging a greedy desire for more food than we need, and turning to food for emotional and spiritual comfort when we should be turning to God. She challenges the idol of greed in our lives with the support of Scriptures such as Ephesians 5:3-7, and Colossians 5:5, verses which demonstrate a believer’s imperative to rid his or her life of unholy living that conflicts with their calling. She is right to emphasize these verses. There are many believers who have allowed themselves to be enslaved to many idols of this world, and, in my opinion, there is no believer that does not struggle, in the present or the past, with idolatry in some form or another.

Gwen believes the answer to the idol of greed, which often takes the form of overeating, is to employ the principles eating within the bounds of stomach hunger and polite fullness, and turning to God’s word and prayer when we are tempted to eat at other times. She teaches that these principles are found in Scripture, and supports that contention with some key verses, such as God’s command that, while wandering in the desert, the Israelites were to take only as much manna as they needed (Exodus 16), which supposedly demonstrates God’s concern that we don’t

eat more food than we need. She quotes verses from the prophets (for example Ezekiel 16:49, who compared Israel to Sodom, “arrogant, overfed and unconcerned”). She supports her argument with many other prophetic declarations (too numerous to quote here) to the effect that our relationship with God is our true sustenance (one example she uses was when Jesus stated that “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God”). Furthermore, she debunks other approaches to losing weight espoused by the medical community and other diet gurus that specify controlling the types of food consumed by referring to Colossians 2:6-23. She uses this passage to state that believers shouldn’t be restrained by “deceptive and human philosophy” with their food rules taught by men.

Allow me to assert right now that I think the core of this message is sound. If it were not, why would so many mature Christians have been helped by this message? Many, many believers do turn to food as an innocuous comfort in their lives, reasoning that food isn’t like alcohol, drugs, or illicit sex, so therefore, it is harmless. Many are enslaved to overeating to meet their spiritual needs instead of having honest face-to-face time with God in prayer and in the Word. The call of Paul in Ephesians and Colossians (who echoes Christ Himself) to surrender the heart to God and set aside immoral, impure, and greedy living is a call that should move every believer to live sanctified, examined lives before Him. And for many, these eating principles have been an efficient, simple way to get back in touch with their bodies’ natural food intake rhythms, as our Creator designed our bodies to work. The principles even worked for me in helping me lose weight!

However — and this is a big “however” — *these principles of eating within hunger and fullness are not commands of God as the only means to obey Him in this respect. They are Gwen Shamblin’s suggestions. They are not found in the Scriptures; rather, they are superimposed on the Scriptures.* (If you believe that Gwen Shamblin would not insist on obedience to these food principles, let me disabuse you of that notion! One of the former Remnant Fellowship members mentioned above decided to leave because Gwen Shamblin did not feel she was losing weight at an appropriate pace!)

In the narrative of the manna in the desert (Exodus 16), the Israelites were all told to gather one omer of manna, and when they gathered it this way, everyone’s needs were met. It does not say they measured it out by how hungry or full they were. The passage indicates that the extra manna saved overnight by some turned into maggots, indicting their lack of trust in God that He would provide manna the next day! The passages in Ezekiel 16:49 that chastens Israel for being like Sodom, “arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned” must be read in context. The prophet was upset with all of Israel because the poor were oppressed, and the wealthy were unconcerned about it. They thought that as long as they kept up with their temple duties, they could get away with anything, and this national attitude was affecting everyone. Oppression was rampant. In Isaiah 58, the Lord reminds His people that the fasting He desires has nothing to do with food. It has to do with justice!

Finally, Gwen’s use of a portion of Colossians 2 to justify obedience to her “eating principles” is most ironic. A close examination of the passage shows that she’s misusing it. The context shows that the issue Paul was actually concerned about was totally unrelated to Gwen’s interpretation. Paul’s concern was that there were some in Colosse who were teaching people to

observe certain religious days and rituals. These teachers were going so far as to advocate the legalism of circumcision and observance of Hebrew laws and traditions in order to please God (similar to the conflict going on in the letter to the Galatians).

Therefore, do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow. Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. [Colossians 2:16-23]<sup>32</sup>

This passage has nothing to do with avoiding deceptive diet plans. It is clearly about not allowing legalistic religious “teachers” fool you into trading away the grace of Christ for a legalistic deception that appears more holy! By now this should be ringing bells for you. As we examine the passage closely, we discover that it speaks directly to the legalism of Remnant Fellowship. Just look at a few key phrases:

(1) “Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink.” This is not an excuse for greed. However, it is a reason to confidently rebuke someone who wants to tell you how you should or shouldn’t lose weight (or what weight you should be) based on extra-biblical teaching imposed on the Scriptures.

(2) “Do not let anyone who delights in false humility . . . disqualify you for the prize.” Following ascetic rules creates an appearance of holiness, such as in statements similar “I would never dare take one more bite of food than God would allow me to have through hunger and fullness. That would be rebellion!” This seems like such subservient humility to God; in reality, it turns into underground pride that gives the ascetic a reason to judge his or her brother.

(3) “. . . why . . . do you submit to it’s rules: ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’” Here the passage is pointing to man made religious rules that have nothing to do with our relationship with Christ. The rules sound so similar to “Do not taste food unless your stomach is growling!” The religious rules that spring up around only eating when you are hungry and stopping when full are manmade religious rules that have to do with helping people lose weight; they do not prove one’s love for God. He certainly does not require them in the Scriptures.

(4) “Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body . . .” Paul points out that manmade rules for demonstrating one’s holiness may seem wise, because they are so self-sacrificing. After all, isn’t one demonstrating their holiness by going even farther than the next guy in their religious practice? But Paul also points out that the humility that is indicated in this type of

religious observance (obedience to manmade rules) is a false humility. The practitioner is simply not humbling himself if his religious practices then become a measure by which to judge his brother! Furthermore, such practices also lead to “harsh treatment of the body.” Anyone who has seen footage from the Weigh Down Advanced Tapes would probably join me in wondering how thin is too thin!

The problem with legalism of this type is that when it is the predominant theme of any Bible-based movement, it opens the door to all types of abuses perpetrated in the name of Christ. Of course, in Remnant Fellowship, and according to Gwen Shamblin, they don't practice legalism, they simply practice obedience. However, they believe that it is their obedience that justifies them before God, rather than obeying because they are justified. This is legalism, the belief that it is one's effort and/or ability to keep the “law” (or strict heart rules) that saves you! It doesn't matter how they redefine the terms, this is what Remnant Fellowship is encouraging it's followers to practice.

## Epilogue

### Should I Leave Babylon?

I know that some of my readers are struggling with the same situation that I found myself in at the beginning of this story. In some format (convention, WDAAdvanced, etc.) you have been exposed to Gwen's erroneous teaching that if there is sin in your church, if not all the members are sold out to total obedience, then you need to leave! This teaching is extremely compelling because it is based on real Scriptures (1 Corinthians 5, among others). *The problem is that if you accept a legalistic approach to the Scriptures, then you are bound to follow this and other directives about separating oneself from sinful brothers without the freedom to stop, think, and determine how this command best applies to your situation.*

First of all, realize that there will always be sin in the church. Christ calls us at different phases in our lives, and some are called to Him when their lives are veritable disaster zones! It may take them some time to allow the Holy Spirit to do its sanctifying work. During this time, they will require prayer and support. And sometimes believers fall asleep spiritually and stymie the work of the Holy Spirit for a season. However, this is no different than the state of the church found in the Bible. Contrary to Gwen's twisted presentation of the New Testament church as a sinless body with one immoral brother who needed to be expelled, careful reading of most of the Epistles reveals that in every church body, there were always people who were not measuring up and who needed to be admonished to continue growing up. First Corinthians reveals that one man was expelled because his sin was not even tolerated amongst the Gentiles. There were plenty of others who were engaged in sexual immorality, taking each other to court, and practicing divisiveness. Paul didn't have those brothers thrown out. Rather, he encouraged them to grow.

Secondly, remember that when one brother separated from another, rarely was it a full excommunication. Rather, evidence points to the fact that they stayed in contact to monitor whether the disciplined brother was being brought to repentance.

Thirdly, and most importantly, there *was* a situation when Christ our Savior Himself addressed many of these New Testament churches. In the opening chapters of Revelation, Christ dictates seven letters to the seven churches of Asia. The letters to the churches in Thyatira and Sardis are instructive (Revelation 2:18-3:6). In both of these churches, the situation was grim. In Thyatira, the church was tolerating a false prophetess who was leading many into sexual immorality! Jesus did not command any in that church to leave. He assured them that He would take care of the situation. And in the letter to Sardis, Christ acknowledges that only a few in the church had not “soiled their clothes.” However, He did not command them to leave and form a Remnant Fellowship Sardis. Rather, He affirmed their perseverance, and commended their walk!

What should you do if you find yourself beginning to be upset by sin and rebellion in your congregation? First of all, check your own heart. In Matthew 7:1-6, Jesus says to take the plank out of your own eye before trying to remove the speck from a brother’s eye. In other words, if you want to be of assistance to your brother, examine your own heart, and see how anxious you are to be obedient to Him. Can you look at another brother’s weaknesses without judging him? If not, then pride may be getting in your way. You will not be able to intervene until you address this with the Savior.

Secondly, when deciding what to do about sin in your fellowship, compassion and gentleness should be the watchword. Matthew 18:15-17 indicates that confronting sin in a brother’s heart is a process, and requires several steps. And I think that a defining passage to be considered is Galatians 6:1-5.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.<sup>33</sup>

This passage indicates that as we restore a brother, it should be gently, and we should be willing to “carry” that brother for a while, just as Christ “carries” us. This is Christ like! This is what we should aspire to! But this type of restoration requires a relationship, and so often we do not cultivate relationships with our fellow believers. We sit back from a distance and judge. It’s easier to do that than to courageously get involved with someone who needs to be turned from his or her sin.

There will be situations when church leaderships are so corrupt or blinded that it is best to leave and go where you can be better served, and so that you can better serve. But these situations require prayer, and true discernment. There is no “one size fits all” solution, as Gwen Shamblin would try to tell you.

### **A Small Piece of Advice**

If you’ve read this far, thank you. Many of my readers will most likely be people who are currently members of Remnant Fellowship, are current potential recruits for the movement, or are involved in any of the Weigh Down programs and are currently seeking more information.

Please allow me to offer some humble advice to those who find themselves in these situations. You are certainly free to make your own decisions about these suggestions.

If you are currently a Remnant Fellowship member or a potential recruit, it is clear from this article that I believe that Gwen Shamblin and the Remnant Fellowship leadership are not all that they appear to be, and that you are well advised to terminate your involvement in these organizations. I am not saying you should cut off your relationships with the people in them. However, I don't think it's wise to be under their authority. They will encourage you to stop up your ears against any criticism of the group, and do not honor a free flow of information to the people in their organization. They wish to test for you what is good, and by not allowing you to have all the information (by speaking to former members, reading critical articles, etc.), you are unable to fulfill your responsibility to Christ to "Test everything" (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21). My advice to you is to seek support from strong Christian friends and family members outside the group, discuss the issue with spiritual leaders in your community, and to leave. At the least, it would be wise to open up a dialogue with someone outside the group who might be able to offer you an informed but differing perspective.

If you are not personally involved with Remnant Fellowship or the leadership of Weigh Down in Nashville, but are simply taking the Weigh Down program, I would advise you to withdraw from these programs. There are excellent alternatives to Christian weight loss available, and this program only opens the door to associating with and financially supporting a pseudo-Christian cult group. Furthermore, I believe that Gwen is a very divisive person, and the Bible does warn against associating with such people. If you are looking for an alternative to Christian weight loss that employs the food principles (without turning them into a law) try [ThinWithin.org](http://ThinWithin.org). This organization is made up of many former Weigh Down staff and counselors who helped develop the materials but left or were fired for not supporting Gwen's doctrinal errors.

## **The End of Our Story**

We've arrived at the end. After our encounter with our friends (Remnant Fellowship New York), Maria and I felt spiritually raped. We had trusted them and loved them, and they had abandoned us with little consideration regarding how their actions would affect our souls or our hearts (anything can be justified by "vertical emphasis"). We had no recourse but to fall back on (guess who?) our former church. We called our pastor and our elders and asked to speak to them. They listened to our story, and we told them the whole thing. We told them that we hadn't even come to our senses, we were just rejected! We apologized for our pride and the rebellious things we had said to them. And just like that, they forgave us, and asked us to come home!

Things are definitely not the same. We damaged a lot of people's trust in us by leaving so abruptly. We have a lot of relationships to rebuild. But the day we stood up in church and apologized for our pride, we were embraced by that congregation and welcomed back. The welcome was not universal. I think a few were glad to see us go, and we have had to face gossip upon our return. But we have been given a new insight into the meaning of humility and perseverance, and we are able to find it in our hearts to love them anyway.

Yes, we have returned to a church body that has sinful people in it. It is a church with problems. But as it turns out, we fit in there! We have problems. And we have begun to challenge ourselves to not judge anyone unless we feel comfortable confronting them and then bearing their burdens as Christ would.

When I compare the treatment we received from our “spurned” church to the treatment we received from Remnant Fellowship New York (and Nashville, by extension) it’s not difficult for me to decide who is the true counterfeit. It’s a decision I can make on a rational, spiritual, and emotional level.

My heart aches for those I have met and befriended who are now part of Remnant Fellowship. I continue to pray on a daily basis for reconciliation and restoration of these relationships. I welcome your prayers for myself and my wife as we heal and find new ministries in our lives. And please pray with me for Gwen Shamblin, David Martin, and the Remnant Fellowship leadership all over the country. God loves them exceedingly, and wants to see them cease this division. Let’s trust Him to work it out.

Peace to you. If you need anything from us or need to talk, please contact us at [faithwithoutstrings@yahoo.com](mailto:faithwithoutstrings@yahoo.com).

1. *Rebuilding the Wall Foundational Beliefs*, “A History of God’s Relationship to Man,” p. 23. Conference notes received at the June 2001 Remnant Fellowship Weekend in Nashville. [↵](#)
2. *Ibid.*, p. 24. [↵](#)
3. *Rebuilding the Wall Foundational Beliefs*, “Remnant Introduction and Mission,” p. 6. Conference notes received at the June 2001 Remnant Fellowship Weekend in Nashville. [↵](#)
4. *Rebuilding the Wall Foundational Beliefs*, “A History of God’s Relationship to Man,” p. 31. Conference notes received at the June 2001 Remnant Fellowship Weekend in Nashville. [↵](#)
5. *Ibid.*, p. 30. [↵](#)
6. *Ibid.*, p. 31-32. [↵](#)
7. *New International Version*. [↵](#)
8. *New International Version*. [↵](#)
9. *Rebuilding the Wall Foundational Beliefs*, “Remnant Introduction and Mission,” p. 2. Conference notes received at the June 2001 Remnant Fellowship Weekend in Nashville. [↵](#)
10. *Rebuilding the Wall Foundational Beliefs*, “Christ’s Church,” p. 2. Conference notes received at the June 2001 Remnant Fellowship Weekend in Nashville. [↵](#)
11. *Rebuilding the Wall Foundational Beliefs*, “A History of God’s Relationship to Man,” p. 30. Conference notes received at the June 2001 Remnant Fellowship Weekend in Nashville. [↵](#)
12. *New International Version*. [↵](#)
13. Email correspondence received from Joe Langsdon, Deacon at Remnant Fellowship Nashville, July 9, 2001. Email on file. [↵](#)

14. Email correspondence received from Jayne Fiedler, Counselor at Weigh Down Workshop and member of Remnant Fellowship Nashville, July 9, 2001. Email on file. [↵](#)
15. Email correspondence sent to Gwen Shamblin, David Martin, David Shamblin, Jayne Fiedler, and Joe Langsdon on September 13, 2001. Email on file. [↵](#)
16. Ibid. [↵](#)
17. Email correspondence sent to my friend by registered mail on September 17, 2001. Email on file. [↵](#)
18. Ibid. [↵](#)
19. Ibid. [↵](#)
20. Stephen Arterburn and Jack Felton, *Toxic Faith*, (Waterbrook Press, 2001), p. 108. [↵](#)
21. Email correspondence sent by Gwen Shamblin to new recruits of Remnant Fellowships on January 30th, 2002. Email on file. [↵](#)
22. Email correspondence sent by Gwen Shamblin to leaders of Remnant Fellowships on February 6, 2002. Email on file. [↵](#)
23. Steven Hassan, *Combatting Cult Mind Control*, (Park Street Press, 1990), p. 80-81. [↵](#)
24. Remnant Nashville Worship Notes From August 22, 2001. A transcript sent by email is on file. [↵](#)
25. Steven Hassan, *Combatting Cult Mind Control*, p. 63. [↵](#)
26. Email correspondence sent by Gwen Shamblin to leaders of Remnant Fellowships on February 6, 2002. Email on file. [↵](#)
27. Remnant Nashville Worship Notes From August 22, 2001. A transcript sent by email is on file. [↵](#)
28. Ibid. [↵](#)
29. Email correspondence sent by Gwen Shamblin to leaders of Remnant Fellowships on February 6, 2002. Email on file. [↵](#)
30. Steven Hassan, *Combatting Cult Mind Control*, p. 80. [↵](#)
31. Remnant Nashville Worship Notes From August 22, 2001. A transcript sent by email is on file. [↵](#)
32. *New International Version*. [↵](#)
33. *New International Version*. [↵](#)