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## INDIVIDUALLY RUN MAGAZINES, COLLEGES, ETC.

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I have observed for some time now brethren differing in opinion over magazines, study material & colleges run by brethren. As with anything, it is appropriate & necessary to examine these items by the word of God.

**1. Is it right for brethren to publish magazines & run colleges?** Due to principles about gainful employment (1 Thess. 4:11-12, Eph. 4:28), these are fine in & of themselves. These are in the same category as a tentmaker who sells tents (Acts 18:3). There is nothing sinful in & of itself with publishing magazines, study material or in running a college.

Consider for example, Pharmaceutical companies that make drugs to help the sick. It is authorized to be a manufacturer of these things for this good purpose, just as it is permissible for Christians to use medicinal drugs (1 Tim. 5:23). *Both actions are fine.* But, if we are involved in making or using drugs that are illegal (Rom. 13:1-4) or for a sinful purpose (1 Pet. 4:3), then we violate God's word.

**2. Are there circumstances where it would be wrong?** In the previous paragraph we noted that when another principle is violated a thing which is lawful in itself becomes unlawful. Anything that is lawful (Scriptural) can be misused.

Furthermore, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not." (1 Cor. 11:23) Paul says we can eat meats & visit an idol's temple because we know an idol is nothing (1 Cor. 8:4, 10; 10:27). But, this is not always an expedient, good or wise thing to do (10:23)! If, for example, you go & eat, another may be emboldened to sin (violate his conscience) by your behavior (8:10). If so, then what is in principle permissible, becomes forbidden & sinful (1 Cor. 8:10-13; 10:28-33).

So, what about magazines, colleges, study material printed & run by brethren? In principle

these are lawful. And we have authority to obtain things which accomplish teaching. For example we can pay for a place to meet (Heb. 10:25) or materials for teaching (song books, Bibles, study booklets, etc.) (Acts 20:7; 2 Tim. 2:2). Generally, whether we buy items from brethren or not is irrelevant in & of itself.

Even so, at times we may obtain material that is not appropriate, such as Bible class material that promotes the social gospel or other errors. If we can find better material, let us do so. If we cannot find better, then we can make our own. (In fact, making our own is probably good for us!) The point is, let us be discerning & perceptive teachers. We would never eat rat poison because it is convenient. For even though it is 98% cornmeal, the remaining 2% is deadly. So, let us be careful in what materials we use.

Sometimes churches buy bundled magazines & indiscriminately distribute them to members & visitors. Regrettably, if we do not always read these items before distributing them we could be in for a surprise. Too often we tend to rely on the reputation of the periodical & brethren who write in it without consistently examining the content. Editors & writers who can teach truth on many things, can also tout opinions or even error on others (Mt. 10:16).

Additionally, colleges & magazines have a historically documentable tendency to shift & drift. Can you think of a single magazine or college that has not changed doctrinally in 50 years? We cannot just assume that because a group has a reputation for good & has historically stood firm in Truth, that they will always stay firm. And beyond that, just because a group stands firm on one issue, does not mean they will on another. Often, these kinds of changes are subtle and it takes time for people to recognize them.

One brother I conversed with years ago on this topic expressed a different concern: "...a person can develop an inordinate desire for food, and be guilty of the sin of gluttony. That doesn't mean that food is inherently sinful, but rather that **one needs to discipline himself** in its proper use. There may be some foods which do not lend themselves to this discipline, and therefore while lawful, are not expedient (for me, ice-cream, hamburgers, etc. come to mind). Likewise I think we do well to recognize the potential for abuse of 'brotherhood magazines' and guard **ourselves** against developing an inordinate appetite" for such things. He added: "...**We** also need to guard against being unduly influenced by the popularity... of magazines, papers, books, colleges, etc. None of this suggests that papers (or cheeseburgers) are inherently sinful, only that they may at times not be expedient." I have

highlighted a few words for emphasis. Even when things are technically lawful, **we** still need to beware of developing an inappropriate dependence upon them. God has supplied us with everything we need for life & godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). While the expedients mentioned above may be found to be helpful in some cases, we should never lose sight of what our faith is based upon (Rom. 10:17) & in whom we depend completely (2 Cor. 1:9).

Brethren today are struggling with the issue of magazines & colleges run by **individual** brethren. The problem is not error regarding organization, since they are owned & operated by individuals, not churches. Rather the concern is that these businesses are being used for sinful purposes & gaining an inordinate influence for evil. When erring brethren use a business to spread their influence, then the lawful businesses loses its expediency in that case.

Friends, we cannot control the behavior of others, nor can we say having a business is sinful in itself. But **we** can choose where **we** buy things. **We** can identify doctrinal error along with those who promote & fellowship it. **We** can also identify the means by which error is being spread, whether it is through a local church, through a business, in government, etc. Truly, **we** must contend for the truth & expose error (Eph. 5:11; Jude 3). And whatever the consequences are for not "going with the flow" of error - we will just have to grit our teeth & face it. This life isn't always fair & sometimes evil gains prominence. Even so, our faith must remain firm in Christ as the final & ultimate Judge (2 Cor. 5:10).

**THINGS TO REMEMBER**

- **Business Meeting** – Sun. July 30 @ 5pm.
- **Men’s & Ladies Classes** - Every 2nd Sun. @ 5pm.
- **Door to Door** - Every Tuesday @ 6pm.
- **Home Bible Study** – Sat., August 5 & 19.
- **Gospel Meeting** - Ron Roberts, Oct.15-20, 2006.
- **GM in Knoxville** - Doug Hill, Nov. 17-19, 2006.
- **GM** - Jeff Smith, April 15-20, 2007.
- **GM** - R. McPherson, Oct.14-19, 2007.
- **GM** - TBA April 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

**PRAY FOR**

**Mag Bumbalough, Thelma Cunningham, Holly Jernigan** (Joyce Gardner’s niece), **Mary Cox, John Ross Key** (Mary Cox’s son), **Marci Miller** (Alisa Fletcher’s mother), **Monie Petty, Dave Poteet, Misty Poteet, Rose Taylor, Dorris Williams, Horace Jones** (Doris William's brother), **Ruth Williams** (Betty England’s niece), **Robert England, Pauline Hickey, Nanny Witaker, Dylan Roberts** (grandson of Marilyn's friend). Those in Iraq: **Jason Zelenak** (Alisa Fletcher’s brother, returns home August).

**We Invite You To All Our Services!**

Sunday Bible Study	9 am
Sunday Morning Worship	10 am
Sunday Evening Worship	6 pm
Wednesday Bible Study	7 pm

***North Sparta church of Christ***

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***Speaking As The Oracles Of God (1 Pet. 4:11)***