

What Makes Pacific Different from Other Churches of God?

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It's hard to believe that a little over thirteen years ago, back in 2009, the Pacific Church of God was founded. Recently I have received some questions from people who have asked,

“What kind of people are in Pacific? Who makes up Pacific? Basically, who are you guys?”.

One of my standard replies is, 1 Corinthians 1:26 which talks about all of those who have been called, certainly in this age and are the weak of the world and Pacific is the weak of the weak of the world. The reason I say that is because most of the people who have come to Pacific in those thirteen years, in the past were ignored, used and/or abused in their previous church of God experiences. They are searching for the truth out of their Father's Word. They want to find the truth and find a place where the truth is being taught. They came to Pacific—and this is a vast majority of the brethren we serve—looking for a safe church home. One where they would be spiritually fed the truth, where they would be spiritually and physically taken care of and where, of course, they would be loved and be appreciated.

People have commented, some with a raised eyebrow, that Pacific seems a little different than most, that is most other churches of God. Then they follow that with a question of, “Why are you guys so different or what makes you so different?” That's a legitimate question. A couple of weeks ago I was “noodling” on that in my head and thinking that's a legitimate question that deserves a legitimate answer. That leads to our title today:

What Makes Pacific Different from Other Churches of God?

We are going to cover seven guiding principles that we follow as a group. It's important to start off with, when I say “makes Pacific different”, I am not saying makes Pacific—absolutely not saying—makes Pacific better. I don't mean that at all. I'm not talking about that. But we are definitely different. So, we will discuss the differences in these seven guiding principles.

The first is:

1. We recognize the one true God and His Son.

The clearest statement of that is John 17:3. Christ is speaking. It's a very simple statement and yet for decades, I've read right over it until these last few years and I

think everybody in this room and certainly the vast majority of the people watching right now have done the same thing.

John 17:3 *And this is life eternal [If that is stated in God's Word then our antennas should go up and our ears should prick up because we want life eternal—and what is that?], that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (KJV)*

So, we see a distinction—a differentiation—between the one true God and His Son. Wouldn't this be the perfect time to say something about the Holy Spirit being a third party in the affair? It's not there of course because that is not the truth. There are two; the only true God and His Son. Not that Christ isn't God, He is, we know that and that's a totally different subject. But scripture reveals that the one true God is the Most High God; is the Almighty God, is the Living God, is the Lord of hosts in the Old Testament. That is who the one true God is. This one true God is the God of both the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. Again, it is very clear in scripture so let's go to Acts 3:13 and see that. Peter is talking after this man who was lame from birth was healed and Peter is explaining what happened. Notice what he says.

Acts 3:13 *The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers [you could also say the God of the Old Testament], hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. (KJV)*

Of course, their hearts were stricken and they asked what can they do about this and Peter said, repent and be baptized and you will receive the Holy Spirit. Further, Peter reemphasized that again in front of the High Priest and the Sanhedrin over in Acts 5:29. He said this in front of the gathered crowd on Pentecost in Acts 3 and then he said it again in front of the intelligentsia—the leadership of the religion of the Jews.

Acts 5:29 *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. (KJV)*

We are very familiar with that scripture and we quote it quite often, but notice what verse 30 says.

30) *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. (KJV)*

Again, differentiating the God of the fathers, the God of the Old Testament from His Son, Jesus Christ. So, scripture makes it clear Who the one true God is; Christ said it Himself and Who is the God of both the Old Testament and the New Testament? On our website there are plenty of papers, articles, sermons, that go into great depth on all of this; answering all the questions that could arise. So you might want to avail yourself of that if you haven't done so.

In addition to that, in recognizing the one true God and His Son, we recognize the name of the one true God. After all, His name only occurs 5,529 times in the Old Testament; it's there. Let's go to Leviticus 19:12. Here, the one true God is speaking. I, like so many over the years, read right over it and it just didn't register, until one day it did.

Leviticus 19:12 *And ye shall not swear by my name falsely [don't use my name falsely but He says I have a name], neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD. (KJV)*

"That's Who I am." Of course, in the translations of the Old Testament, it is translated all caps, *LORD*; that is Strong's #3068 and reading from Strong's: "Yehovah, the self-existent or eternal. Yehovah, Jewish national name of God". The implication here is very clear that His name is to be used, just not falsely. How could His name be used if it wasn't known? There is plenty of evidence in scriptures in the Old Testament to tell us what His name is. In Jeremiah 15:16. Jeremiah was writing, some 800 years later after what we just read in Leviticus and let's see if that name is kept in Jeremiah's day. As I said, 800 years have passed since Leviticus was written or occurred.

Jeremiah 15:16 *Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD [Yehovah] God of hosts. (KJV)*

We have plenty of material on our website that you can research the meaning of the name but it basically means—*Yehovah—He who was, He who is, He who will be*. In other words, He is saying, I have always been, I will always be and I am right now. I am the Living God, right now. Please go to our website and we have plenty of material regarding in detail, the identity of the Father and His Son, Their roles, Their titles and more in-depth, our Father's—(Yehovah's)—name.

In addition to that, we do our best to emphasize the two great commandments. Sometimes it's easy to just blow past them and get off in the weeds and twigs. We can just forget that there are two big ones and we best pay attention to them because they come from our Father and from His Son. In Luke 10:25, there is a big overview and it's nothing new but it's always good to remind ourselves. The scribes, the Pharisees, the religious rulers were trying to get Him to make a mistake, to trip Him up so they could accuse Him.

Luke 10:25 *And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him [the Greek word for tempted can mean "tested"], saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*

26) He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou?

27) And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul [with all your being], and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28) And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. (KJV)

Remember the subject is eternal life; this isn't talking about living physically. You will have eternal life if you obey these two great commandments. Summing up this first point, because our understanding of the Father and His Son is different than most churches of God, Pacific and the brethren in Pacific have been persecuted and, in some cases, ridiculed by others, but the fact is, the truth is the truth. We will continue to teach the truth because that's what God wants us to do; our Father wants us to do that. We will continue to do that, no matter what. That is one area that is a guiding principle and a differentiation between us and other churches of God.

The second one is:

2. We believe that Elders and Deacons are to serve, rather than be served.

Most of the brethren that are in Pacific, most of the brethren listening or watching right now, have come from the Worldwide Church of God and have that background. There are some who have not, so just be patient with us as we walk through this, because you don't have that background. In the Worldwide Church of God, in many cases, the Elders and Deacons were responsible for abuses of leadership in the past. When Pacific started, we sat down and agreed that we weren't going to follow that example. We didn't want to follow that example. It's just my personal opinion, but I think it started when Ambassador College began to be referred to as the 'West Point of the work'. Meaning the graduates were the West Point of the work. The implication then was that the graduates were of a superior class or rank than anybody who did not go to Ambassador College.

The brethren then were referred to by some ministers, in all too many cases, as "dumb sheep". So, you had the 'West Point' up here and the "dumb sheep" down here and that began to be a distinction that occurred within the church. I'm not blaming any individuals at all, I don't mean that, but the fact is, it did occur and anybody who was there at the time knows it occurred. The result was, the brethren in that sense, were subtly or not so subtly put down and the ministry was subtly or not so subtly elevated. In that sense, the brethren I believe were disrespected as our Father's children. If you're a child of God and are called now—all humans are a child of God—but now, the Firstfruits are children of God and I think we are on very thin ice and very dangerous ground if we start disrespecting the children of God.

Does the Father and His Son view His own children as "dumb sheep"? I don't think so; let's go to 1 Peter 2:9 and see that just the opposite is the case. Sometimes things happen within institutions and you get a phenomenon called institutional momentum. Something starts down a certain path and it's like an avalanche going down a hill; it gains momentum, it gains mass. It goes faster and those things can happen within human organizations. Satan is right there to see that it occurs within God's church. 1 Peter 2:9 out of the New King James.

1 Peter 2:9 *But you are a chosen generation [called by God Almighty], a royal priesthood, a holy nation, [notice this last phrase] His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you [Firstfruits are called] out of darkness into His marvelous light; (NKJV)*

Our Father views His children who are called at this time—the Firstfruits, as His own special people. We try our very best to respect that and show respect to all of those our Father has called. That will tie into the very last point we are going to make today.

You see in the beginning, the disciples had the same problem, exactly the same problem. Human nature is human nature and the disciples weren't immune to human nature. We're breaking into the context, the Passover ceremony is over, the foot washing has occurred, the bread and the wine have occurred. I'm going to read this out of the New Living Translation.

Luke 22:24 *Then they [referring to the disciples] began to argue among themselves about who would be the greatest among them. (NLT)*

This is after Christ had just washed their feet.

25) Jesus told them, "In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called 'friends of the people.' (NLT)

King James and the New King James say benefactors.

26) But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant.

27) Who is more important, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? The one who sits at the table, of course. But not here! For I am among you as one who serves. (NLT)

He had demonstrated that a few minutes earlier by washing the disciples' feet. In Matthew 23:1 Christ is discussing human leadership and the example He is using is the Pharisees. The whole chapter is a rampage against the Pharisees; but it's really a rampage against human leadership.

Matthew 23:1 *Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, [He's educating them.]*

2) Saying, the scribes and the Pharisees sit [I might add, seated themselves] in Moses' seat: (KJV)

As James pointed out recently in a sermon:

3) All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe ... (KJV)

The word "they", as James pointed out is a manuscript error; it should be he, that is Moses.

3 continued) ... that observe and do; but do not ye after their [meaning Pharisees] works: for they say, and do not.

4) For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. (KJV)

Meaning there is a two-class system; there were the Pharisees and then there was everybody else.

5) But all their works they do for to be seen of men [to aggrandize the self]: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

6) And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

7) And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. (KJV)

Rabbi is Strong's #4461, in the Greek. I'm quoting Strong's: Of Hebrew origin, it means "my master". The Pharisees wanted the dumb sheep, so to speak, to call them "my master". That was not our Father's intention at all. Notice verse 8.

8) But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

9) And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

10) Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. (KJV)

So, we see there is one Father and one Master. There is God Almighty, Yehovah and there is His Son, Jesus Christ.

11) But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

12) And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. (KJV)

That is just the opposite of what we see in the world today; exactly the opposite.

25) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

26) Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup [meaning inside our body, our character, our nature] and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres [they are above ground, white washed, glistening in the sun], which

indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

28) Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. (KJV)

We see that pride, vanity and a desire for power, desire for status, have been a problem throughout human history. We look around the world today and it's everywhere. It's in politics, it's in entertainment, it's in sports—it's everywhere. That desire crept in, over time, to the churches of God because, who does Satan want to turn first? God's children. So he doubled down to make sure to do his best that this idea of a class separation—one to be served and the other to be serving—was injected into the church of God. At Pacific, when we started, the Elders and Deacons and other people, wanted to change all that, other brethren who came in the very beginning. Elders and Deacons are dedicated to serve the brethren; not to be served or exalted in any way.

That leads to the next guiding principle.

3. We believe that brethren are to be served and not ruled.

In Mark Sappington's sermon last Sabbath, he said—and I'm quoting—Man was not intended to have dominion over man—over one another. That is true; the only one to dominate us in that regard is God Almighty and His Son and they don't dominate, they lead through the Holy Spirit. The fact is, we have only one Father and one Son and only one true God and His Son. Our Father never intended one man or one group of men to dominate another man or another group of men.

I remember working for a pastor back in the 1970's, who was out in this area. He became absolutely outraged one day because a widow in the congregation dared move from one apartment in the town to another apartment in the same town without counseling with him first and getting his permission to make the move. That's how domineering and dominating the administration could be in certain places. I'm not saying it happened everywhere in the world in the church of God—I don't mean that—but it was prevalent enough and was visible enough that it bothered a lot of us.

Rather than that, Elders and Deacons are here to be your helpers and servants. Let's go to 2 Corinthians 1:24. Paul says that directly. Paul is writing his second recorded Epistle to this dysfunctional church. He had to put the man out of the church in the first Epistle. Notice what he says though.

2 Corinthians 1:24 *Not for that we have dominion over your faith [we can't dominate your faith, we don't rule your faith], but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand. (KJV)*

The Greek word for *helpers* is Strong's #4904, it's the Greek word *sunergos* and it means, "a co-laborer, a companion in labor, a fellow helper". We are not here to walk around with jack boots and a swagger stick, ordering people around and barking orders.

What we're here to do is to help—to be a coworker, a companion, a fellow helper. Notice what the New Living Translation says in verse 24.

24) But that does not mean we want to tell you exactly how to put your faith into practice. (NLT)

We don't want to tell you exactly how to put your faith into practice. In modern terms he is saying, "I don't want to micromanage you. You don't have to come to me to change an apartment. I'm not here to micromanage you in that regard."

24 continued) We want to work together with you so you will be full of joy as you stand firm in your faith. (NLT)

Not the faith of the organization, not the faith of a minister, but your faith. Notice what he goes on to say in 1 Thessalonians 2:19. Paul is saying to the people in Thessalonica and us today, "this is my goal, this is my aim. This is what I'm seeking". We will read this out of the New Living Translation.

1 Thessalonians 2:19 *After all, what gives us hope and joy, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus when he returns? It is you! (NLT)*

Paul is saying that is what we work for as Elders and Deacons and in his case obviously, as an apostle. This is what the goal is, to have every brother and sister attain the Kingdom of God. If an Elder and Deacon can help along the way, be a co laborer in that help, that's what we want to do.

Paul put these matters into perspective in this church in Corinth which was just full of all kinds of divisions and factions. Let's go to 1 Corinthians 3:4. The people were claiming allegiance to this guy or that guy, they had their minds off the Father and His Son. They were turning it into a popularity contest of who they were going to follow and who they were going to look to.

*1 Corinthians 3:4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?
5) Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? (KJV)*

The Greek word for *ministers* is Strong's #1249 and it's the Greek word *diakonos* and we get our English word *deacon* from that. I'm quoting from Strong's: "An attendant, a waiter at a table or other menial duties, especially a Christian teacher and pastor, deacon or deaconess, a servant". Paul is saying, we are just servants. We help you along the way, help you believe but God opened your minds, as He said He gave to every man the Holy Spirit. Going on in verse 6.

6) I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

7) So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. (KJV)

We are all servants of our Father and we're servants of His Son and all the credit goes to God Almighty, our Father and not to any human being. That has been a problem within the churches of God, to look to human beings, to look to men, instead of looking to the Father and His Son.

8) Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. (KJV)

Verse 9 is out of the New Living Translation. It's an interesting translation.

9) For we are both God's workers. [He and Apollos, the one who waters, the one who plants.] And you are God's field. You are God's building. (NLT)

Meaning the brethren are not the property of a minister. The brethren are not the property of some kind of human hierarchy. The brethren are the children of God and belong to God. So Pacific Elders and Deacons are here to serve and help each one to attain the Kingdom of our Father.

Now we come to the fourth point that applies to everyone—Elders, Deacons, brethren, and is:

4. Pacific believes that all of us are here to become like Jesus Christ and follow in His footsteps.

Our Father's church is not a social club. Our focus should not be on the physical; potlucks, family weekends, retreats, basketball tournaments and the list goes on and on. They are not wrong but they shouldn't be the primary focus. Paul tells us in two Epistles what our focus should be. Let's go to Colossians 3:1. It's very simple when we get down to the nitty gritty of it. We will read this out of the New King James.

Colossians 3:1 *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, [not on the earth] where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.*

2) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

3) For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

4) When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (NKJV)

Verse 5 out of the New Living Translation.

5) So, put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. (NLT)

Due to our human nature and Satan.

5 continued) ... Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. (NLT)

Putting something before God Almighty. In verse 6 we'll come back to the New King James.

6) Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

7) in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

8) But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger ... (NKJV)

The Greek word for *anger* (the next word is *wrath* and *anger* and *wrath* in English are about the same thing) but *anger* has a “component of violence” to it. Whereas *wrath*, does not; it just means being “angry but not violent”.

8 continued) ... wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

9) Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

10) and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, [Jesus Christ]

11) where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. (NKJV)

Then, in Ephesians 4:17, let's go there. These two portions of two different Epistles go hand in hand because they are covering the same subject—obviously written to two different churches—but written to us today. This out of the New Living Translation.

Ephesians 4:17 With the Lord's authority I say this: (NLT)

In other words, he's saying this isn't coming from me, this isn't my opinion, this is coming from the Lord Himself.

17 continued) ... Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused.

18) Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. (NLT)

The world has done just that in the last two or three decades.

19) They have no sense of shame. [Is that true today?] They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.

20) But that isn't what you learned about Christ.

21) Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him,

22) throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life ... (NLT)

The King James and the New King James say “*the old man*”.

22 continued) ... which is corrupted by lust and deception.

23) Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.

24) Put on your new nature, [King James and New King James say ‘a new man’] created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

25) So, stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body.

26) And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry,

27) for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

28) If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need.

29) Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.
(NLT)

We need to pay attention to that always.

30) And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live.

Remember, he has identified you as his own, [the brethren belong to God Almighty] guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

31) Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. (NLT)

In verse 32 He says what we ought to be doing.

32) Instead, be kind to each other [what a concept], tenderhearted, forgiving one another, [if people would do that and just forgive as we have been forgiven] just as God through Christ has forgiven you. (NLT)

So, our mission as individual members of the body of Christ, closing out this fourth point, is to change ourselves through the power of the Holy Spirit, to be in the likeness of the Son of Almighty God and to follow in His footsteps.

Now to the fifth point. This is a pretty straight forward one.

5. Pacific is not after your money.

Let’s go to Mark 7:1. The Pharisees and the lawyers were coming to confront Jesus Christ. I’m going to read this out of the New Living Translation. I think it’s more to the point and puts it in language that we can readily understand.

Mark 7:1 *One day some Pharisees and teachers of religious law arrived from Jerusalem to see Jesus. [That was their mission]*

2) They noticed that some of his disciples failed to follow the Jewish ritual of hand washing before eating. (NLT)

Verse 3 and 4 are parenthetical verses, explaining this ritual washing.

3) (The Jews, especially the Pharisees, do not eat until they have poured water over their cupped hands, as required by their ancient traditions.

4) Similarly, they don't eat anything from the market until they immerse their hands^[b] in water. This is but one of many traditions they have clung to—such as their ceremonial washing of cups, pitchers, and kettles.)

5) So, the Pharisees and teachers of religious law asked him, "Why don't your disciples follow our age-old tradition? They eat without first performing the hand-washing ceremony."

6) Jesus replied, "You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

7) Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.'

8) For you ignore God's law and substitute your own tradition."

9) Then he said, "You skillfully sidestep God's law in order to hold on to your own tradition.

10) For instance, Moses gave you this law from God: 'Honor your father and mother,' and 'Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death.

11) But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, 'Sorry, I can't help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.'

12) In this way, you let them disregard their needy parents. You not only let them; you encourage them.

13) And so, you cancel the word of God in order to hand down your own tradition. And this is only one example among many others."

14) Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear. "All of you listen," he said, "and try to understand.

15) It's not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart." (NLT)

Pacific is never going to ask you to turn your inheritance over to us and set up a system where you can do that. We're just never going to do that. We will never ask you to sell your house and send us the money, or to take a second mortgage on your house and send us the money. That's one of the reasons why, on the Holy Days, we don't pass around a basket. That's a Catholic and Protestant tradition going back hundreds of years and it puts subtle pressure on the brethren as that basket goes down the line and everybody is watching and looking to see who is putting what in and puts the subtle pressure on. That should frankly, not be. All of the above—from selling your house to an inheritance—are currently being done in the churches of God. Of course, each one of

us as individuals have to decide, is that the right thing to do or is that the wrong thing to do? When we started, we decided, we are just not going to go there or do that. From the beginning, we have decided, where are we going to put our financial trust? Is it going to be in a campaign to get more offerings or a campaign to get more inheritances or a campaign to beat up the brethren for more money? Back in the Worldwide days that happened occasionally.

Here's what we trust in—we won't turn there—but in Genesis 22, you remember the story of Abraham and Isaac. Yehovah told Abraham, "I want you to take your son and sacrifice him; your only one, your only son, the one you've waited all these years for, I want you to go kill him as a sacrifice for me." They went on this journey and took a fire and a knife and Isaac asked his dad, "we have the fire and knife, where is the offering? Where is the lamb? I don't see a lamb." Remember what Abraham said to his son? He said three words, "God will provide". He had faith and trust that somehow God was going to take care of the situation. This was involving his own son. We've learned over the years to trust in God Almighty and to trust in His Son, because over the years they have always provided what we needed, when we needed it. Sometimes just seconds before we needed it, but it was there. They always provide, so we are not after your money. Your money is between you and God Almighty. We know that one way or another, our Father will provide, His Son, as Head of the church will provide for whatever it is that we need.

The sixth point, this is a founding, primary principle and a differentiation.

6. Pacific is not fixated on growth.

We are not focused and fixated on growth. That is not a primary reason why we are here—to grow. In the past, as well as today within the churches of God, the church measured how pleasing they were to God by how many people were in the rows. How many people, we would say today, were on the database. If it was large, then we must be pleasing to God and God is smiling on us and His face is shining on us. So, the more we can grow the rows, the more God is going to be pleased with us. After the split of Worldwide, one of the first groups we went to, in the mid '90's, I, as an Elder got to know a little bit of the inner workings of that group—I wasn't part of it but close enough to observe—and once somebody was added to the database they were never taken off. After they died, they were still on the rolls. If they got mad and stormed out and went somewhere else, they were still on the rolls. It was a point of "bragging rights" we would say today.

We are not dedicated to go out and recruit members. We're not dedicated to have some kind of mission to go out and recruit people. Why? Because we don't call people—God Almighty calls the people. We can't force God to call people. God calls the people He is going to call. That's all up Him; we have no influence on that at all. Let's go to Acts 2:39 and remember a fundamental principle about what is happening in the world today. Most of the Christian religions believe there is a gigantic war between Christ and Satan. There's this giant fight and we have to take up swords and do what we need to do to

fight Satan and go out and fight evil and all of that. If that's the case, if that were true, then Christ is losing badly right now, given what is going on in the world. But notice what Peter said on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:39 *For the promise [he's referring to the Holy Spirit coming into us] is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, [notice the qualifier] even as many as the Lord our God [the Father, Yehovah] shall call. (KJV)*

We can't go beyond those whom God chooses to call. Since it's up to the Father to decide who He is going to call, who are we to go solicit people and tell God, you have to call this one or that one because I'm going to go out and start preaching to them and twisting their arm or whatever it might be. Here is what we have to trust in. Let's go to John 10:27-29 and listen to what Christ had to say. This out of the New King James.

John 10:27 *My sheep hear My voice, [that's a fundamental fact] and I know them, and they follow Me.*

28) And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

29) My Father, who has given them to Me [after we are called, we are given to His Son as head of His Father's church], is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (NKJV)

So, we see this in Acts 2 and John 10. Our Father does the calling. He gives those He has called into the care of His Son. We do our very best to do our Father's will, to set a good example for those in the church and out of the church, to our neighbors, to our community, to the brethren in the church. We do our best to set a good example and wait for our Father to send us, whom He will, who He wants to come. We aren't against growth but we aren't interested in growth for growth's sake. As some kind of point of pride. We are not interested in growth for growth's sake. It is indicative in the end time, it appears that the church will be very small. In Luke 12:31-32 Christ is speaking and He's telling us where our thoughts should be placed.

Luke 12:31 *But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. (KJV)*

Notice verse 32.

32) Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (KJV)

The Greek word for *little* is Strong's #3398, it's the Greek word *mikros*; we get our English word *micro*—like microscope or microchip or other words like these. It means, and I'm quoting from Strong's now: "Small in size or quantity, the last or the less". This seems to tell us that those seeking the Kingdom of God will be small in number. Christ doesn't say small relative to what. Relative to X number of billions of people that are on the earth or have been on the earth—we don't know. You look around at what is

happening within the churches of God and we don't see some kind of major stampede into the church. That can change with the two witnesses, it can change with a lot of things happening but the point is, it's probably going to be fairly small. The real point is, we are going to be satisfied with however many our Father chooses to send—small or large—it's His doing, it's His will and we will be happy regardless because we are doing His will. We will take care of those to our very best ability, inspired by the Holy Spirit to take care of those He sends our way.

To the seventh and last point.

7. We recognize our Father's children are in most, if not all, other groups.

In other words, we are not saying that the Pacific Church of God is the only place where God's children exist or the only place where converted people are. We do not say that at all, never have said that. First, let's try to get our Father's perspective because there are groups out there who claim they are the only true church of God. There are several claiming it simultaneously. Just like there are several claiming simultaneously that they are going to be one of the two witnesses or something like that. Let's try to get our Father's perspective by asking two questions.

A. Can a humanly devised corporation exclusively be THE church of God?

Think about that.

B. Is our Father somehow limited by humanly devised corporations?

In other words, does the Father say, since this humanly devised corporation is the only one, I can't go outside of that, I'm somehow limited and can't do that.

When you look at these two questions, it's silly when one thinks about it. The church of God is not a singular manmade corporation—it can't be. What is the church of God then? Some think, it's a corporation—a 501C3 corporation in the United States of America; some think that is the church of God. That is not true—it can't be. Look at Romans 8:14; this tells us who God's children are. Paul says it very clearly.

Romans 8:14 *For as many as are led [emphasis on the word 'led'] by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (KJV)*

Must have God's Holy Spirit and must allow that Spirit to lead them. A useful way to visualize this issue is to put yourself, from God's perspective, looking down on the earth. It's rotating and let's say every human being He has called, who He has given His Holy Spirit to, who has obviously repented and been baptized, every one of them being a point of light on the earth. It's rotating around and our Father is on the dark side of the earth. As the earth rotates, these points of light begin to appear. Of all the people—the point of light of every human who He has called and is part of His church—look at it from His perspective as He looks down on the earth. Do you think He respects

manmade borders of nations? Does He really? Or does He respect manmade corporations and the earth is turning and lights appear? Do you think He respects a corporation and says, they aren't part of that corporation so I'm going to shut their light off? Does He really do that? Are there individuals who have the Holy Spirit, led by the Holy Spirit in other groups around the earth? Of course. Absolutely. Therefore, because of that fact, we have always tried to work with other groups as they allow us to do so. We aren't going to throw stones and rocks at them. We try to work with them and cooperate as they allow us to do so. Look at Romans 12:16 out of the New Living Translation; Paul is writing and notice Paul's admonition to the church at Rome and to us today.

Romans 12:16 *Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!* (NLT)

Good admonition.

17) Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.

18) Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. (NLT)

We make every attempt to do that. Some groups don't want anything to do with other groups. That's their choice and we try to cooperate. But I've been rebuffed in trying to do so. For the sake of time—I had an example but I won't give it—but there are times when you try to do what is right and go to a group and say I have some information that might help you and because you are not of their group, they don't want to talk to you. Despite that fact and those experiences, we do want to cooperate and we want to get along with other groups because our Father's children are in those groups—most of them, if not all of them. The reason I say "most" is because there might be a group somewhere of say, five people, out in who knows where and none of them may have God's Holy Spirit—I don't know. Only our Father knows that. That's why I say most, if not all. This is what we should avoid in our perception of other groups. Paul gives us an admonition and a warning of what we should avoid as we look at other groups. Galatians 5:15 again out of the New Living Translation.

Galatians 5:15 *But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.*

16) So, I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.

17) The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. [This last sentence is so true.] These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. (NLT)

In this life, we have this battle going on inside of us, between good and evil, between light and dark, between God Almighty and Satan.

18) *But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.*

19) *When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures,*

20) *idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division ... (NLT)*

Notice the last sentence of this section in the New Living Translation because it puts it into perspective. These are evil desires and our sinful nature.

21) *the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group.*
(NLT)

We've seen that in the past and maybe some of us have participated in that in the past, but this is a warning from Paul that we can't do that—these are God's people. Pacific is not an exclusivist organization. What do I mean by that? For example, when the time comes to gather for the Feast and on that opening night or the first Holy Day, people walk in, we don't have some Super Deacon or Deacon at the door with a checklist of the membership of the Pacific Church of God and he has to see your identity and check you off before you're allowed into the room. Some groups do that, but we do not. We welcome anyone who has basically two qualifications: like-minded or want to be like-minded and want to meet in peace, hence our name, Pacific which means "peace". We want to welcome likeminded people—people who don't want to argue, who are not coming in trying to convert us to keeping Christmas or keeping Sunday or something like that. We are not interested in that. We don't want to get into that debate or waste our time doing that. So likeminded people who don't want to argue, who don't have an agenda such as passing out papers and are wanting you to take this side or do this or do that. They want to meet in peace. So those are the only two qualifications. The point is, in closing out this last one, is that we do recognize our Father's children are in most groups and we do try to get along with everyone, even though we have our differences. We try to get along as they allow us to do so.

So, let's conclude now. I hope today, especially for those who are maybe not very familiar with Pacific or might be wanting to know who Pacific is, I hope you understand just a little better who Pacific is and how we are different than other church of God groups. We've seen seven guiding principles that we adhere to and those principles can make us different when you compare us to some other group. We recognize the one true God and His Son and we recognize the Father's name. We believe Elders and Deacons are here to serve and not be served. We believe the brethren are to be served and not ruled or dominated. We believe that all of us here are to become like Jesus Christ. The fifth one is that Pacific is not after your money. Pacific is not fixated on growth. We wait for our Father to provide the money as needed and the growth as He desires. Lastly, we recognize that our Father's children are indeed in most other groups, if not all.

The fact is, yes Pacific is indeed different from other churches of God. Some other groups or organizations have some of these principles that they hold up, but I don't

know of any other group that has all of them. Maybe groups exist out there that I'm not aware of and we certainly hold open to that possibility or probability. But I am saying that Pacific is different—I will say it again, we are different, I am not saying that we are necessarily better. You see, only you, as an individual, can decide if these differences are better for you.