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## ***FOWEY FABLES – MARCH 2003***

Arguing about the Bible does not sound very spiritual. Then why did the writer of Hebrews so strongly encourage the idea when he wrote, “Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.”? (Heb.10:24) The Greek word for ‘stimulate’ means ‘to sharply disagree’. The context as always makes all the difference. He has just spoken of a heart which is sincere and clean, a faith of which we are really sure, and a hope which does not waver, so we are to be sure where we stand with God first. Then he goes on to tell us that our ‘sharp disagreement’ will lead to love and good deeds, not division and bitterness. This is what King Solomon had in mind when he said, “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” (Prov.27:17). The sharp iron sword of the Bible was a picture of the word of God. (Eph.6:17) One sword could be brought across another to sharpen it, or they could clash blunting both. This was probably what happened on the only other occasion when the word for ‘sharply disagree’ was used in the New Testament. Paul and Barnabas, who had just completed a delicate mission to resolve a major difference in the early church, fell out over whether to take John Mark on another journey. (Acts 15:39) Each one wanted his way and neither would back down. Presumably the difference was resolved in time but for the moment their clash did nothing to produce ‘love and good deeds’.

It is a major modern tragedy in the Christian church that we are fearful of disagreement lest we ‘rock the boat’. The consequence is that our grasp of truth is dull and our capacity to handle wrong teaching is weak. No wonder the church is retreating fast in most Western countries. Instead of challenging on the things that do matter we bicker over trivia while the world looks on and despises us.

A new term of Bible School is under way with our biggest group of students ever, and some major changes. Because our morning classes are far too large to squeeze into the lecture hall, we are holding them in a local church. To ensure that every student is part of a weekly tutorial group we have recruited quite a number of new tutors. To give opportunity for everyone to know each other by name we have introduced student ID cards. The students now have a handbook with all the practical information they need to know. God has not changed however. Our message is the same and so is our confidence that Jesus Christ who lives in us will supply every need and meet every problem.

The biggest challenge from a teaching point of view is the same as ever, persuading students that they are allowed to disagree with the lecturer. Time and again I tell students not to believe anything I say – unless they have checked it out in the Bible and with the Lord for themselves! Many are horrified when I say this. They are afraid to question because their church as well as their national cultures have taught them that to do so is to attack authority, and that God disapproves. It is exciting to see a new confidence growing when they realise that they will not be struck by lightning if they question God and each other.

At the Lodge we have always encouraged an inductive approach to Bible study in which students learn to let God teach them in the context of the immediate passage, the rest of the same book and the whole Bible. Coming in touch with Precept Ministries 12 years ago opened up new doors of opportunity because their teaching methods and material were so good. It has fitted beautifully into our overall vision of what God has called us to do. Ten years ago, Nick and I went to Precept headquarters in Chattanooga, Tennessee for the first time. Three years back Chris and I went there for their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary and enjoyed a wonderful experience. This January Nick and I returned and Barbara Kipfer came too. The occasion was their international conference in which we met amazing people from every continent (except Antarctica!) with extraordinary stories to tell of how God is working when people learn to study His word for themselves. Now that we are back we are keener than ever to see this approach used not only in Bible school but all over New Zealand. Barbara is taking up opportunities in churches to teach people to study inductively, and quietly the idea is catching on. Ask her to show you some of the new materials which are proving so effective.

On the way home Nick and I stopped for several days in Los Angeles with Chris and Craig Cowgill. Some of you will remember Chris' visit here last July when she put on some great concerts at the Lodge and elsewhere. Many of her songs she has written herself. Chris and Craig are hoping to visit NZ again this coming November so we will be looking for opportunities to make the most of her exceptional gift.

We also had some time with Owen Chamberlin who dropped us at LAX airport. Owen is originally from Ponui Island in the Hauraki Gulf, the scene for so many wonderful Water Week camps. He came to the very first Bible School at the Lodge back in 1966. He has spent most of the years since in California, first as a student, then a pastor, and more recently has been deeply involved both in supporting missionary work in the Philippines and encouraging Internet based Bible teaching. He continues to be full of ideas and energy, so we had three exciting hours together, talking flat out, and sharing dreams and plans. More of that later...

A recent cyclone damaged the new house at Muanicula, our centre in Fiji. Last year a team from USA, Australia and NZ built a new student kitchen and laid the foundations for a new meeting house. This year we hope to go back to repair the damage and complete the meeting house. Anyone feel like a Pacific Island (?) holiday in July?

Water Weeks this January were a disaster and a success. A tropical cyclone prevented us landing more than a small expeditionary force on Ponui, which was a disaster. Instead we camped successively with 2 large groups at the Lodge and enjoyed a brilliant time. The secret was an outstanding group of leaders who worked beautifully as a team. Nick is wanting to keep the team together for two camps in the April holidays, one in Rotorua and one in the Bay of Islands, and then hopefully a snow camp in July.

Our Sunday morning fellowship, which meets in the lounge of the main house, has quietly grown both in numbers and maturity. They have been a great support to so many of the activities which go on at the Lodge, and to us personally. A Wednesday night Bible Study group meet at David and Sharon Cordery's home, 37 Gillett Place, Howick at 7.30pm. There is now enthusiasm for a Sunday evening meeting in the lecture hall.

With help from John Andrews we are redesigning the website, separating the medical practice, [www.drhanne.co.nz](http://www.drhanne.co.nz) from the Bible school which in future will be [www.foweylodge.co.nz](http://www.foweylodge.co.nz). We plan to offer many more Bible studies on the site together with links to ministries to which we are very close.

Nick's magazine, Incite, continues to be well received. A new issue will be out shortly. We will post it on the website or you can receive it in the old-fashioned way – on paper. Nick's e-mail address to order is [magillaguerilla@xtra.co.nz](mailto:magillaguerilla@xtra.co.nz) Pete's cricket is going well. He is scoring runs as well as taking wickets, and loves it. He is still home schooling and flourishing. Chris and I continue to live a life which is full and fulfilling. We manage to escape for a weekend here and there to preserve our sanity. Chris is doing a huge job managing both the Bible school and the medical practice, and building a great team of helpers. God's continuing provision of good friends has been a source of immense delight.

Thank you for being one of those friends.

Our love in Christ,

Tony and Christine