



A Closer Look

AT THINGS PERTAINING TO THE FAITH

October 2003

Interview with Jared Jackson

(Editorial Note: Jared Jackson is one of Wayne and Betty Jackson's sons. He designed and maintains ChristianCourier.com.)

STEVE: How long has your web site been up and running and what is the primary purpose for the site?

JARED: ChristianCourier.com officially went "live" on October 1, 1998. Our congregation had a web site prior to that in late 1997, but we quickly realized, with the first effort, that some important issues needed to be addressed.

We spent the spring and summer of 1998 planning the new web site. Our first step was to narrowly define our goals. At that time, we observed that many church related web sites were merely elaborate advertisements (i.e. service times, contact information, etc.). A few had some articles, and most included the basic plan of salvation.

While these types of web sites serve a purpose, they tend not to have very much influence. In order to make an impact, you need to have sustained contact with individuals over time. Readers then will gradually develop confidence in your ability to handle a variety of biblical topics in a balanced and responsible way.

Since readers, and especially internet users, constantly look for new items of interest, we felt we could develop a consistent readership by frequently publishing new content so that our readers would return on a regular basis.

Another primary goal was to target members of the church. While many have developed excellent tools for reaching the lost, we see the church itself as a great mission field in many places. We frequently characterize this effort as fulfilling the second part of the "Great Commission," teaching the disciples to observe all things our Lord has commanded (Matt. 28:20). So, many of our articles ad-

dress topics that help the new convert develop a deeper and more complete understanding of the Scriptures.

STEVE: Your web site is a cornucopia of information. Would you break down the various materials you have available there?

JARED: The ChristianCourier.com web site is divided into a number of sections or departments that have different purposes.

Each month we publish a Feature article. These essays are more lengthy treatments of a wide variety of biblical topics ranging from apologetic argument to doctrinal treatises.

On a weekly basis, we publish articles in two departments: "Penpoints" and "Questions and Answers." Penpoints are brief articles that address general religious themes, or topics of high interest in current events. These commentaries are brief enough to be incorporated into church bulletins, or printed out and given to friends for a quick read.

The Questions and Answers section is exactly that: readers send in questions, we provide a biblical answer.

Additional departments have content added on an unscheduled basis. Our Archives department contains many articles that have been published in the past, mostly from our printed edition of the Christian Courier, but also from a number of publications. For example, I recently found an old booklet that brother Jackson had written many years ago titled, Alexander Campbell and Christ's Church. It is an excellent article detailing some of the history of the restoration movement. When we have completed that article, it will probably go into the Archives area.

We regularly publish brief articles in a section called

“Notes from the Margin of My Bible.” These contain brief explanations of specific passages with advice on notes you can write in the margin to help you remember a particular point.

Through the internet, we can now deliver a complete sermon in our audio section, “The Spoken Word.” We have receive email from people as far away as South Africa who can “tune in” and listen to the gospel via our web site.

We have also had some areas specific to women and children. At this time, our current workload does not allow further development of these areas. We hope, however, to get those sections back “online” in the near future.

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STEVE: Do you have anyway of tracking the number of “hits” your site gets on a weekly or monthly basis?

JARED: We have a program running on our server that tracks incoming traffic. It provides us with a great deal of information that is useful in planning and implementing services on our web site.

I can review the web traffic for a day, a range of days, or by the week, month, or year. In 2002, we served just under 1.2 million pages to more than 120 different countries. In 2003, we increased our volume more than 43% to just under 1.7 million pages. And it continues to grow. We are on track to exceed 2.25 million pages this year. We will have already reached 500,000 pages viewed by more than 75,000 unique individuals by the end of this month (March).

It’s really hard to get an idea of the significance of the statistics, though. To be able to distribute the volume of biblical literature that we are able to do through the internet would be virtually impossible any other way. We are able to contact interested individuals, 24 hours a day, and provide them with the information they are looking for instantaneously at the rate of thousands per day.

I’ve tried to explain it like this. Imagine you wanted to pass out tracts at the largest mall nearby. You plan to

distribute 5,000 tracts per day for an entire month, approximately the equivalent of what we are doing at the web site.

An obvious problem would soon arise. Most of the tracts would end up in the nearest waste container. What if, though, you could actually know what people were thinking about as they passed by?

Perhaps one person is wondering about baptism, another about marriage and divorce, another about evolution, another about Christ’s return. And you were able to instantly know what each person was thinking about, and hand an answer to their Bible questions the moment that topic is on their mind. That would be powerful!

That is roughly what we can do through the internet. The statistics cited above really don’t reflect on the surface that the thousands of people every day coming to our web site are for the most part people who are looking for

spiritual answers. And they are finding biblical answers through the ChristianCourier.com web site.

STEVE: I would imagine you get mixed reactions to the work you post on the site. Can you give us an example of some of the favorable reactions you have received?

JARED: We really do receive a large volume of email. Many are simply encouraging comments about the web site in general. Many are rather lengthy comments or questions regarding a particular article or topic. Others are “reports” of how the web site is being used.

I would say that the most interesting letters we receive are from individuals who have never been exposed to the pure, unvarnished truth of God’s Word, though they have been “religious” for many years.

A student recently wrote,

“My name is Tom and I was searching through the NET for some information on that passage in 1 Peter about preaching to the spirits in prison when I found your site. I am a seminary graduate and I have to say that your exegesis was quite good and insightful, far exceeding most web based Christian

resources that I have found. I was wondering who writes the articles - who checks them over - and so forth. Just to make sure that I am being faithful to my Sunday School and know what I am telling them.”

The broad range of response we receive, both good and bad, is a vivid illustration of the Parable of the Sower. By scattering the seed so broadly, surely we are finding “good soil” that may have never been reached otherwise.

STEVE: In the future do you plan to provide more of the same on your web site or are there additional features to the site we can look for?

JARED: We are constantly trying to develop new ideas that will both expand and promote the services we offer through the internet. It seems, though, that with our limited resources, we can never quite catch up with our ideas. We do have several things that are in development, some that are really exciting.

Our web site, <http://www.women-of-hope.com> has not been updated for quite some time. Sister Jackson has written most of the articles on this web site directed towards Christian women. But for the past year, with brother Jackson’s health concerns and her volunteer time spent in our office, her writing has slowed significantly. It is our goal in 2004, to be able to reduce her hours in the office and get “Women of Hope” back up and running, full-steam.

We will also be making a major investment in the audio capabilities of our web site. As we can complete some projects that have been waiting for attention, and fully develop new features, we will make public announcements regarding those items.

ChristianCourier.com
Investigating
biblical apologetics,
religious doctrine,
and ethical issues

STEVE: In a casual conversation with your father some time ago, he said he was contacted by a television studio in the hope that he would take part in some kind of interview concerning religious matters, all as a result of your website. What can you tell us about that?

JARED: While we have never really gone out of our way to capture media attention, it is nice to be noticed, especially for the sake of the cause.

Attention to the material on our web site has been gained from a number of sources. On one occasion, a radio talk-show wanted to interview brother Jackson re-

garding a relevant topic in the news. We declined at that time, because brother Jackson was ill. A reporter from the St. Petersburg Times (FL) interviewed brother Jackson regarding the theological implications of the discovery of the alleged ossuary of James, the brother of our Lord. There was also a television program, “Mysteries of the Bible” that wanted to do an interview, however, that has never materialized.

There have also been a number of universities that have found articles on our web site credible and have published links to them, either on school web sites or in student materials. One university textbook published by Houghton Mifflin, *The Well-Crafted Argument*, even noted our article on “Are Science and Faith Compatible?” in a review exercise.

STEVE: Your father has written a host of books. Can they be purchased on your website?

JARED: Actually, we have set up an online bookstore at a different web site: <http://www.courierpublications.com>

Readers can purchase most of the books written by Wayne Jackson. He has also selected a number of resources that he recommends which are also available through our bookstore.

We also send out special offers to the subscribers of our email newsletter, the Christian Courier UPDATES. Our goal is to provide a variety of solid, biblical reference works that will help the average person develop a greater understanding of the scriptures.

All of the proceeds from our bookstore are used to develop new materials and resources.

We currently have a number of projects in production. A number of years ago, we produced a book called, *Select Studies in the Book of Revelation*. We are revising this vol-

ume and adding to it a section of commentary notes on select verses from each chapter of Revelation. The book will double in size, and have a newly designed cover.

We also have a new book that is being edited at this time on figures of speech in the Bible. There are other projects, as well, that are in various stages of development.

STEVE: The books your father has published are not only well written but the books themselves are produced with beautifully designed covers. The same could be said for the web site. Who is responsible for the graphic design

work of the books and web site?

JARED: For several years now, we have published all of his books ourselves. The cover designs and layout of the books is a collaborative effort. Wayne or I will have an idea, then I will start working on it. Eventually, we settle on something and go with it. We really have made an effort to make the books attractive to the eye. Our goal is to produce a quality product, cover to cover.

I also take care of the maintenance and design of the web site. I spend a lot of time trying different things. The web site design is much more difficult for a number of reasons. Technology is always changing, and it is easy to think of new things to add or changes to make. But from the beginning we have tried to remain focused on our goals. If something doesn't serve a purpose, or if it isn't effective, it's just clutter on the page and in the way of the message.

There are many improvements we would like to make, but our time is limited. Our staff and financial resources are limited, so we "make do" with what we can.

STEVE: The potential audience for a web page seems hard to estimate because the potential audience is anyone with a computer and access to the internet anywhere in the world. If someone wanted to take part in your work financially how would they go about contributing?

JARED: Our work truly is a fellowship of churches and individual Christians interested in preaching the gospel throughout the world. The impact we are making would be impossible without many brethren who have helped us financially. Of course, we try to be good stewards of our resources, and we believe we have an obligation to do so. It seems we are always needing to update our software, or buy additional equipment that will help our efforts be more productive. But that is the nature of working with technology. In fact, we need to purchase a number of items at this time, but we will have to be patient until the funds are available.

Those who may be interested in helping us in these areas may contact our office by telephone at (209) 472-2475. They may also write to us by regular mail (below) or contribute through our web site (<http://www.courierpublications.com>).

All contributions are tax deductible.

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Our work
truly is
a fellowship
of churches
and
individual Christians
interested
in preaching
the gospel
throughout the world.

Jared Jackson

Future Issues:

Interviews with:

Denny Petrillo's reflections on adult education in the church.

Ed Smithson on "The Forgotten Commandment" on church discipline. This interview is conducted by Tom Steed.

Jim, Tom and I are working on a list of additional topics for future issues. The usual format for this paper is to select a topic and to have two articles that address that topic from two different aspects, such as we did in the recent trilogy of topics on faith, hope and love.

If you are interested in looking at any of our past issues, you will find them at:

www.ChinoChurchofChrist.org

This web site is faithfully maintained by Anne Rupel.

Steven Lloyd