

# *the* Good News

May/June 1997

## **Build a Marriage That Will Last!**

*Society's Slide Into Immorality • Hong Kong Handover  
When Friends Disagree • Will Your Marriage Survive?*

## A Divine Institution

“**M**arriage is a natural union, but a divine institution, ordained of God.”

These are introductory comments to the marriage ceremony conducted by ministers of the United Church of God, an International Association, which publishes *The Good News*. Yes, we are an organization with a biblically based core of beliefs, some of which pertain to marriage and family. This issue contains helpful advice on how to build a happy marriage; we hope you find it inspiring and otherwise beneficial. What once was common knowledge can be surprising, simply because few express it anymore. The Bible does contain essential truths in the critical area of human relationships. Indeed, the truth about marriage is one of the most profound.

A man who was not married when he wrote about marriage penned some of the most meaningful and beautiful words about marriage ever composed. Often wrongly thought of as a woman hater, the apostle Paul said to men: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” (Ephesians 5:25). Paul understood that marriage is a divine institution with great underlying significance. Whatever good happens within the marriage relationship is intended to teach us about God Himself and in particular about Christ. This is a dimension few of us ever hear about.

Paul’s counsel to women matched the wisdom he gave to men: “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body” (verses 22-23). Paul passionately believed that husbands and wives should *serve* each other. To husbands he also said: “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church” (verses 28-29).

These statements compare the human marriage relationship with Christ’s attitude of selfless service for the Church. The marital state is elevated to a much higher plane for us. We are invited to consider the transcendent significance of marriage. Paul alluded to this: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (verses 31-32).

A great mystery: Marriage can bring with it something so profound that Paul labels it a mystery. It is the intimate communion of man and woman in marriage that a depth of spiritual experience makes possible. That experience is related to the humility and self-sacrifice of Christ Himself. When we truly learn to serve the one we love, then we are coming to a level of spiritual maturity that is rare in this life.

On yet another level the Bible teaches us that we humans, male and female, may be identified collectively as a wife, the very bride of Christ. The analogy is put forward in that mysterious book the Apocalypse, or book of Revelation. It explains that Christians are the bride to be married to Christ at His second coming. This requires from all of us a meek and quiet spirit, submission to the will of Christ.

John recorded the words he heard from heaven in a vision of the end of this age: “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7). Note that the bride makes herself ready by putting on fine clean linen, symbolic of the “righteous acts of the saints” (verse 8). In other words, we come full circle in our analogies. As the human marital relationship spoken of by Paul requires the righteous characteristics of a Christlike attitude, so the wife of Christ exhibits those characteristics in her relationship to Him. We need to become Spirit-led husbands and wives so that one day we can participate in the greatest wedding of all.

Perhaps marriage is not so much a mystery after all.

—David Hulme

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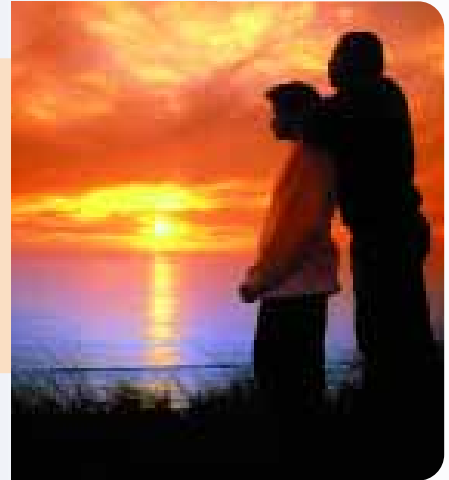
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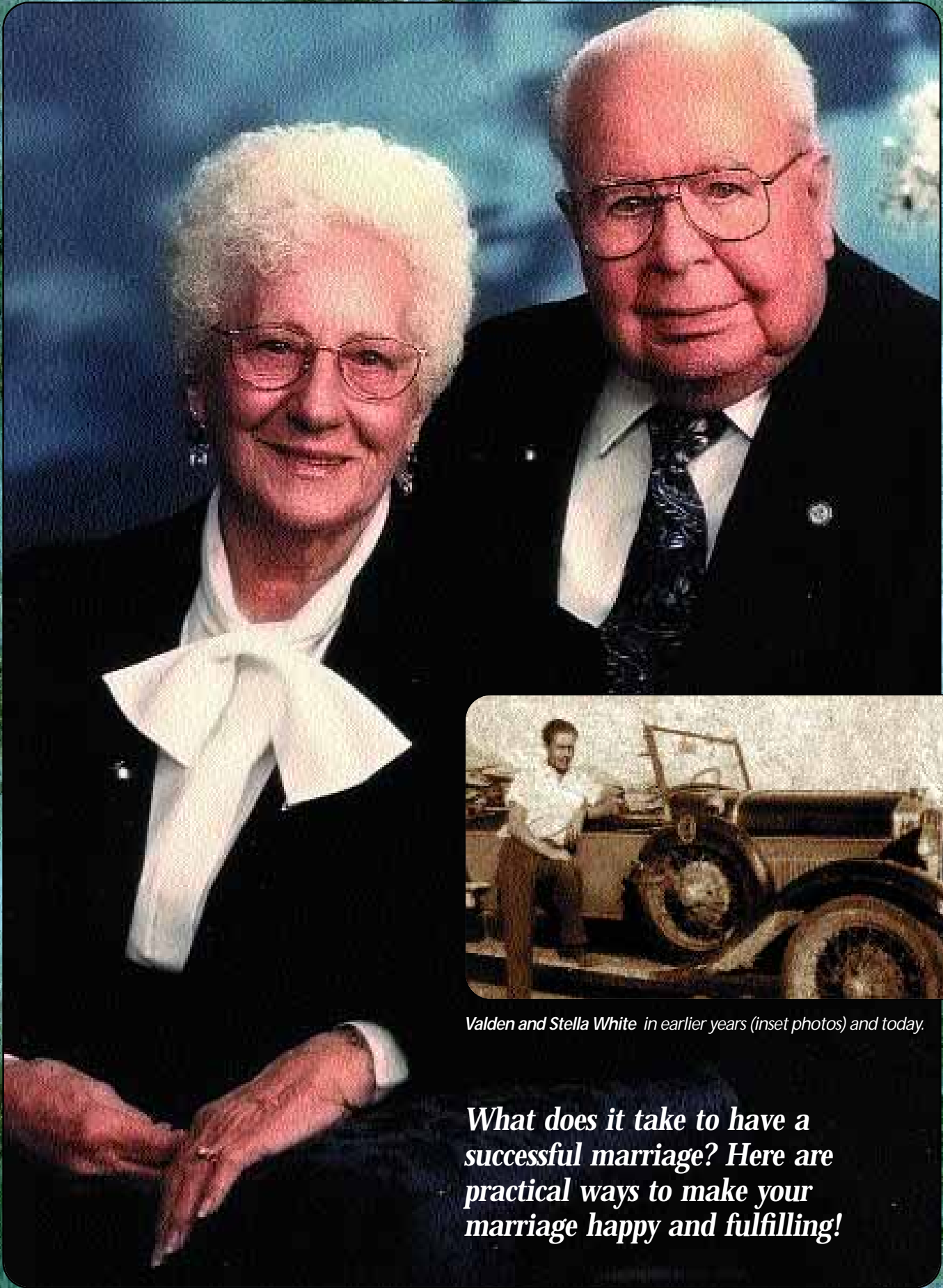
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*Valden and Stella White in earlier years (inset photos) and today.*

***What does it take to have a successful marriage? Here are practical ways to make your marriage happy and fulfilling!***

# Keys to a Lasting Marriage

by David Treybig



Sixty-five years ago Stella Fels and Valden White were married in Manson, Washington, part of that state's famous apple-producing area. During those years of recovery from the Great Depression, which had begun in 1929, people in the U.S. Northwest were fortunate to find stable work in orchards. Times were tough, but most families managed to make enough money to keep themselves in food and clothing.

This was the setting for the real-life love story of Stella and Val that has stood the test of time.

## Chance meeting leads to lifelong love

Even though as children they lived only eight miles apart, they didn't meet

This was the beginning of many automobile rides and a lifelong love that sustained them while raising two children and working at four occupations. This same love now graces the golden years of their lives.

Some people believe marriages like the Whites' are anomalies and virtually impossible in the postmodern world. Based on current divorce rates, that view seems sadly accurate. But where does that leave us? Do happy marriages have to be a thing of the past, or can we hope for a life-long relationship with our mate that grows deeper with the passing of years?

Marriage is a natural union between man and woman, but it's also a divine relationship instituted by God at the

marriage work, and He reveals this knowledge to us through His Word, the Bible.

## The reason for marriage

To learn how to have a happy marriage, let's examine God's purpose for marriage and what marriage symbolizes.

We find the earliest biblical writing on marriage in the first two chapters of Genesis. There we learn that God created humans male and female and instructed them to populate the earth and exercise dominion over it (Genesis 1:26-31). God said marital partners were to leave their parents, be joined together and have a sexual relationship (Genesis 2:24-25). Noting that "it is not good that man should be alone" (verse



until 1931, after Val had graduated from high school in Chelan and Stella was in her last year at Manson. One day Val was driving along the highway between the two towns when he spotted three girls walking along the highway. Stopping to give them a ride, Val first met Stella and her two cousins. From the moment Val saw her, he thought Stella was one of the most attractive girls he had ever seen.

## HOW TO PRACTICE LOVE AND RESPECT

How can you practice love and respect in your marriage? How can you start living these two important principles?

The Bible gives many practical, workable ways to love and respect your spouse. Consider the following instructions from the Bible:

- *Be faithful.* Engage in sexual relations only within marriage, as God instructs (1 Thessalonians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 6:13, 18; 7:2; Galatians 5:19; Matthew 5:32). Faithfulness in marriage promotes a special emotional bond between mates.

- *Share your financial resources.* "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household," wrote Paul, "he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8). When couples work hard and unselfishly share their money for the good of the family, they demonstrate their commitment and promote respect.

- *Don't speak unkindly to each other.* One of the surest indicators of a couple's relationship is the way they talk to each other. Proverbs 15:1

says, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." A courteous tone of voice allows couples to focus their energies on the subject at hand rather than on each other.

- *Forgive.* We must forgive others if we want God to forgive us (Matthew 6:12-15). Without forgiveness, any human relationship is doomed to failure.

- *Remember romance.* Before marriage most couples spend much of their time wooing and courting. The special attention given to each other before marriage is a "wonderful" thing (Proverbs 30:18-19), and it should not cease after marriage. Thoughtful acts, including saying, "I love you," reassure a wife that her husband thinks she is special (and vice versa).

- *Include God in your relationship.* "Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1). Look to God for enduring values, including the purpose of your marriage. **GN**

—David Treybig

foundation of the world. As the Creator of marriage, God knows what makes

18), God gave humans the wonderful gift of marriage.

And what a gift it is! Besides giving the delight and satisfaction of the marriage relationship to husband and wife, marriage provides structure to civilization.

Some 2,500 years ago ancient Israel wallowed in moral decay. Its leaders were not teaching God's values (Malachi 1:6; 2:7-8). Just as today, marriages were falling apart as people selfishly sought only their own gratification. In this setting God sent the prophet Malachi to identify the Israelites' mistakes and explain what they should do to secure God's blessings again. In doing so, God revealed another purpose of marriage. What had the Israelites done wrong?

"Judah has broken faith," Malachi explained under divine inspiration. "A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the LORD loves, by marrying the daughter of a foreign god" (Malachi 2:11, New International Version).

Many Israelite men had married women from other nations who enticed them to worship their gods rather than the true God. When some of these men decided to worship God in addition to these foreign deities, they found that He would not accept their offerings (verses 12-13). But there was more.

"You ask, 'Why?'" proclaimed the prophet. "It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, *because you have broken faith with her*, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because *he was seeking godly*

the men of Israel also sinned by breaking their marriage covenants and divorcing their wives. These actions thwarted one of God's great purposes for marriage, the development of "godly offspring" (verse 15); that is, children who accept God's values as their own. One reason God hates divorce is that it hinders such children. Instead of witnessing a successful marriage, children of divorce experience the negative effects of a failed relationship.

Divorce brings additional problems, from financial hardship to the scars of emotional trauma. One of the greatest fears of young people today is that their parents will separate.

#### Instruction about divorce

Because not everyone accepts or practices God's ideals for marriage, some conclude that divorce is sometimes the only answer. Jesus Christ addressed the problem of divorce by first affirming God's values as stated in Genesis and then by saying, "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:4-6). Jesus was not

in favor of divorce.

When pressed, however, Jesus said divorce

was allowed for "sexual immorality" (verse 9). Jesus' perspective was that divorce should be legal but rare. If everyone would refrain from sexual intercourse before marriage and experience it only within marriage, many divorces could be avoided. Tragically, sexual permissiveness is rampant in our society. Few couples today enter marriage as virgins, and, sadly, many will not remain faithful to their marriage partner.

Most people *want* happy marriages, but they don't want to follow God's advice on *how to achieve them*. The same was true in Jesus' day. Few were willing to live according to God's instructions. This is why Jesus said, "All



Valden White and Stella Fels about a year before their wedding.

cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given" (verse 11).

#### A higher relationship

The apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians explains how husbands and wives are to treat each other in marriage. After giving specific instruction to husbands to love their wives, Paul wrote: "For no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, *just as the Lord does the church*. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, *but I speak concerning Christ and the church*" (Ephesians 5:29-32).

Here Paul teaches us that the marriage relationship is similar to our relationship with Jesus Christ. Physical marriage is modeled after a godly relationship. A proper relationship between a husband and wife gives insight into the spiritual relationship God wants to have with each of us. This spiritual aspect of marriage sets it apart and puts it on a higher plane. Marriage is a *God-plane* relationship.

Just as marriages produce families,

### God provides for the right spiritual relationship between a husband and wife to teach us about Himself and His great purpose.

*offspring*. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

"*I hate divorce*," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith" (Malachi 2:14-16, NIV, emphasis added throughout).

Besides paying homage to other gods,

God is building *His* family. God provides for the right spiritual relationship between a husband and wife to teach us about Himself and his great purpose.

Throughout the book of Ephesians, Paul speaks repeatedly of the family God is developing. He begins by speaking of our "adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself" (Ephesians 1:5). Then he calls us "members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). Later he writes, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*" (Ephesians 3:14-15). Thus, when Paul speaks of godly marriage as similar to "Christ and the church" in Ephesians 5:32, he is explaining how *human* families, on a physical level, can be like God's *spiritual* family.

As the head of His spiritual family, God promises never to break His relationship with His people (Revelation 3:21; 21:7). He makes a covenant with them and writes His laws in their hearts (Hebrews 8:10) and promises never to forsake them (Hebrews 13:5). Just as God honors His commitments, so should we honor our marriage vows.

The most wonderful marriages human beings can experience parallel a proper spiritual relationship with our Creator. Understanding this higher spiritual purpose for the marital relationship should give us added respect and appreciation for happy, fulfilling marriages now.

### Building lifelong, happy marriages

When Stella and Valden White were wed 65 years ago, people expected marriages to last a lifetime. Though formal sexual education was virtually nonexistent, many marriages of that era proved stronger than those of today. What made the difference? The Whites believe part of the answer lies in attitude.

According to Stella and Valden, too many people fail to show loving respect for their marriage partner. If couples encounter a serious problem, the simple solution is to get a divorce and start over with someone else. The Whites say they experienced tough times but never faced a problem they were not determined to work out. They believe being honest and considerate of each other can make a lasting difference in relationships.

Practicing God's values is a time-honored key to building a happy marriage. Further, as we submit to God's marital roles for us in this life, we learn how to submit to God for eternity. Let's now consider two important keys to success.

### Love and respect

In Ephesians 5:33 Paul summed up a passage on marriage: "Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." Love and respect are two simple but important principles husbands and wives can use to build sound, stable, happy marriages.

People think that love is an uncontrolled and uncontrollable emotion. They believe it just happens and that humans fall prey to this seemingly unpredictable force. We speak of "falling in love" as though it were some fortunate accident. By popular, idealized convention, love continues ever joyful and fun.

The apostle Paul, though, penned

a different definition "Love suffers long," he wrote

(1 Corinthians 13:4). Paul's words equated loving someone with being willing to suffer *for* or *with* that person. True love, as defined in the Bible, requires a willingness to suffer patiently *for* or *with* someone for, if necessary, a lifetime. This kind of love comes by choice, not by accident. This love demonstrates an unselfish concern for another, even when showing such love grows difficult or inconvenient.

"Love suffers long and is kind," Paul continued; "love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (verses 4-8). This kind of love will sustain a relationship, not just through the good times, but through the difficult and bleak times all marriages encounter.

Like love, respect implies that a *choice* has to be made. We can choose to respect someone for his positive attributes or disrespect him for his faults.

As marital partners, our choice can support our relationship or help destroy it.

The time for couples to seriously contemplate whether they can love and respect each other comes before they marry. Once married, husband and wife simply need to do it or they will risk seeing their marriage founder and fail.

Many more principles could be added to a discussion of how to have a happy marriage. Most of these, however, simply demonstrate the two great principles: love and respect (See "How to Practice Love and Respect," page 5).

### Peter's principles

The apostle Peter also wrote on marriage. After echoing some of Paul's instructions (1 Peter 3:1, 7), Peter gave some advice that is sound for all relationships: "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tender-hearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the

**True love, as defined in the Bible, requires a willingness to suffer patiently for or with someone for, if necessary, a lifetime.**

contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing" (verses 8-9).

When we treat others as God commands, we enjoy the fruit of His way. As Peter asked, "who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?" (verse 13). God's instructions work. They produce happy, fulfilling, stable relationships.

Wise King Solomon said, "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint: but happy is he who keeps the law" (Proverbs 29:18, NKJV). Even though this famous king experienced his own marital problems (1 Kings 11:1-4), he did understand an important connection between happiness and practicing God's ways. During the past 65 years, Stella and Val have proved this point. They began with the goal of a happy, life-long marriage. They never considered anything else, and their goal became reality. So can yours if you accept God's purpose for marriage and obey His laws and the divine principles governing it. *GN*

# Will Your Marriage Survive the Tough Times?

*We all face difficult times. When the storms of life hit, how will they affect your marriage? What can you do to make sure your marriage will survive?*

by Becky Sweat

**L**ast year Mike and Ramona Taylor were forced to shut down their restaurant, which they had used their life savings to start only a year earlier. “Losing the business was especially hard on Mike,” Ramona says. “He’d just sit around the apartment every day, hardly saying a word. If I suggested he send out some résumés, he’d take that as criticism and storm out the door in a huff. Eventually he found work, which

***Sooner or later most couples face a test of their marriage vows. Tough times can leave a husband and wife more committed than ever before, or they can sever their relationship.***

helped our finances. But still there’s a distance between us that wasn’t there a year ago.”

After a fire destroyed the home of Bob and Arlene Larson, they spent three stressful months living in a motel room with their two small children. “Our kids bickered the whole time, and we had one hassle after another with the insurance company,” Bob says. “But, even though it was a rough time, my wife and I both look back at what happened and feel we have a stronger marriage as a result.”

## **For better or for worse**

Sooner or later most couples face a test of their marriage vows: a serious automobile accident, the loss of a job, a diagnosis of cancer in the family, a house fire, the death of a loved one. Going through tough times can leave a husband and wife feeling closer and more committed to each other than ever before, or it can sever their relationship.

How would your marriage fare in facing such traumatic times? Would it survive?

The key to helping your marriage survive tough times is to make sure your relationship is built on a strong foundation *before* hard times strike.

“Some couples come through a crisis and feel that it strengthened the bond between them because they conquered the problem together,” says Norman Epstein, professor of family studies at the University of Maryland. “But in the majority of cases, unfortunately,

tragedies tend to drive husbands and wives apart.”

It’s during tough times that couples often do the things that tend to undermine their marriage, just when they need each other the most. “When couples are under a lot of stress, they tend to only do the necessary things for day-to-day survival, and their relationship fades into the background,” Dr. Epstein says. “They focus all their time and energy into the crisis and don’t have any energy left for their marriage. Eventually they may get worn down to the point where they feel alienated from one another.”

## **Who’s counting?**

“If you let a stressful situation dominate your life, that’s when it’s easy to start thinking your mate is not doing his or her share of the couple’s responsibilities and begin keeping score,” says Scott Stanley, codirector of the Center for Marital and Family Studies at the University of Denver and author of *Fighting for Your Marriage*.

“Keeping score is one of the worst

things you can do, because marriage partners rarely keep score fairly,” he says. “You usually see everything you do that’s positive in the relationship, but only a fraction of what your partner does. If you start keeping score, even if you’re totally accurate, you’re going to end up resenting your mate before too long.”

Along with scorekeeping often comes blame-placing. “Pointing the finger is the hallmark of a couple under a lot of stress,” Dr. Stanley says. “It’s easy for couples facing a difficult situation to start thinking each other is not pulling their weight, that one’s doing more, being more responsible or working harder than the other. But all that does is create a sense of divisiveness. It ends up me vs. you and you’re not doing enough.”

Marriage partners blame each other for problems in an ill-advised attempt to try to gain some control over a situation, according to Douglas Sprenkle, professor of marriage and family therapy at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana. “Oftentimes when terrible events happen in life, what makes you feel the worst is the fact that you have no control over what happened,” he says. “Blaming can be a way of gaining some control. If you can at least point the finger at your partner, then that makes some sense of the situation rather than it just being a random, uncontrollable event.”

It doesn’t have to be a negative experience such as the loss of a job, health problems or a natural disaster to create marriage stress. Even predictable, life-in-progress events such as the birth of a first child, job promotion or retirement can strain a relationship. “Any kind of change that requires the individual and



the family to reorganize is going to mean a certain amount of stress," Dr. Epstein says.

Every married couple is going to have its share of stressful situations. Obviously, you want to use tough times to draw closer to your mate and build a stronger marriage, rather than let a tragedy create a wedge between you and your spouse. "The crucial factor is the degree to which you and your mate can handle stress and how well you work as a team," Dr. Stanley says.

Here are 10 ways to strengthen your relationship and keep your marriage intact when the going gets rough:

### Work together

- *Talk matters out.* Be willing to share your concerns, fears and hopes without criticizing or judging. "In order for a couple to work as a team, they have to know what each other is thinking," says Pauline Boss, professor of family studies at the University of Minnesota and author of *Family Stress Management*. "The longer you wait to talk to your spouse, the greater the chance of your feelings being buried under the rug and never being addressed."

Ask each other for ideas to improve the situation. Think in terms of presenting a united front against the problem, rather than allowing the problem to divide the two of you. Talk about out how you can work together to ease the stress.

- *Accept each other's differences.* When you talk to your spouse about the situation, you may be surprised at how differently he or she sees things. "It's a big mistake to think your mate sees everything the same way you do," Mr. Stanley says. "The same event may make one person angry or frightened, while the other is hurt or depressed."

Each person has his own perspective. Learn to respect your spouse's opinion, even when he or she sees things from a different point of view.

- *Avoid finge-pointing.* Fight the urge to keep score, cast blame or say I told you so. Stop and think about the advantages and disadvantages of blaming.

"There are some temporary advantages that can make you feel better about your own role in the situation," says Dr. Epstein. "The disadvantage is that if you blame you're probably going to get blamed back, and you're going to feel like adversaries instead of teammates."

Rather than point a finge, you should protect each other from self-reproach and criticism. Reassure your mate by telling him or her: "I know you did all you could do," or "This could have happened to anyone."

### Worst-case scenario

- *Keep the tragedy in perspective.* Distinguish your fears of the worst-case scenario from what is likely to happen.



"People have a tendency to think in terms of catastrophes when they're under stress," Dr. Stanley says. "This tends to either freeze them into helplessness or have them rushing around in hysteria, which doesn't accomplish anything."

Ask yourself, "What is the worst thing that actually could happen?" When you think things through and look at the evidence, often you'll realize the situation isn't as bad as you thought.

- *Be flexible.* Routine tasks and responsibilities may need to be rethought or reshuffled in an emergency. For instance,

she goes grocery shopping once a week as part of her routine. When he loses his job and she goes back to work to help with the family finances she asks him to help out by going to the market. If he ignores her request, this seemingly small matter can blow up into an argument.

"Rigidity often produces more problems than the stressful event itself," Dr. Sprenkle says. "Couples who survive best in a tragedy are those flexible enough to accept new roles gracefully." Learn to view these new tasks as a challenge rather than a burden.

- *Seek help from others.* Make sure you get enough support from family and friends outside your marriage so that you're not overly dependent on your mate for support. Don't be shy about accepting offers of help from other people. A neighbor who brings over a casserole, offers to baby-sit or runs some of your errands may be giving you just the break you need.

Talk to other couples who have lived through similar situations. It's usually encouraging to hear from others who have been through the same kind of tragedy and survived. "One of the worst things you can do is isolate yourself and suffer alone," Dr. Epstein says. "You need the support and encouragement of others."

- *Keep yourself active.*

Don't let the tragedy or negative thoughts dominate in your lives. Schedule activities to get your mind on something positive. Get together with friends and relatives. Do something fun with your kids. Plan a dinner party. Get involved with a new hobby. Take an exercise class. The key, says Dr. Epstein, is "not to wallow in self-pity." Take control of the situation before it takes control of you.

### Make the time

- *Plan for couple time.* Block out some

*Continued on page 29*



*Basic misunderstandings can lead to lack of romance later in marriage.*



After 25 years of marriage, Bill and Ann finally discovered the secret to keeping the romance alive in their marriage:

"I started dating another woman," he said proudly. "It was my wife's idea."

Ann took Bill by complete surprise with this advice: "Life is too short not to spend more intimate time with the one you love. I think the more time you spend with her, the closer you will become to her."

before. She began to look at life anew, recalling the times she had spent with Bill when they were younger and newlywed.

Bill and Ann put romance back into their marriage. You can too.

#### **Myths and unrealistic expectations**

When two people marry, ideally they experience a delightful sense of togetherness. They can't wait until the minister says those exciting words: "I now pronounce you husband and wife." Although

life. It's then that unrealistic expectations and myths about marriage surface.

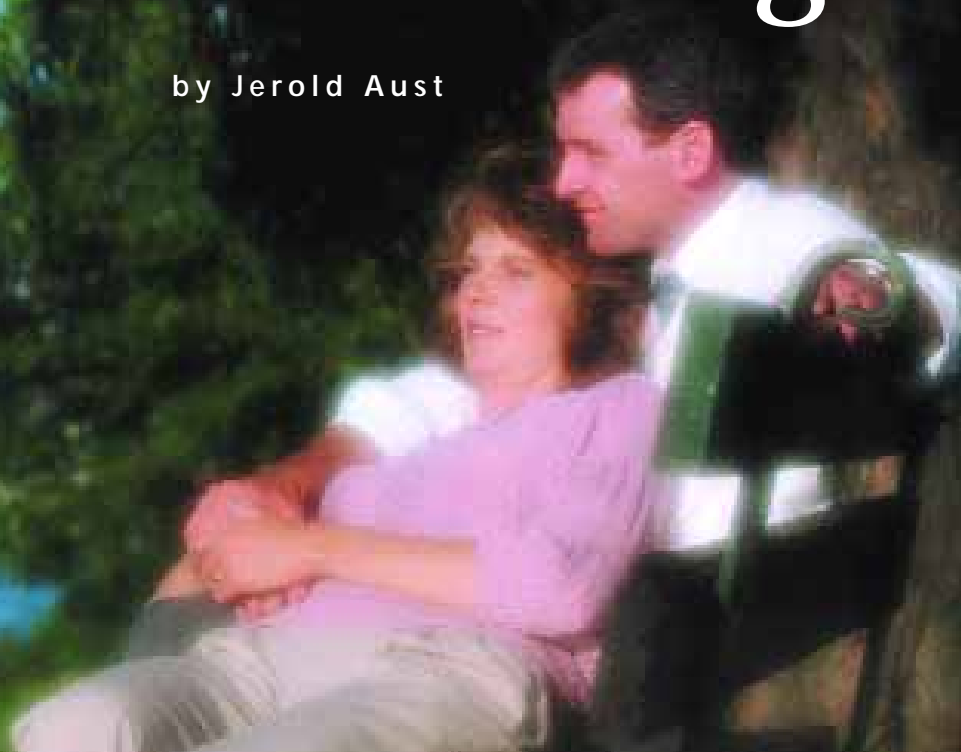
#### **One couple's experience**

Robert and Dawn were deeply in love. Floating on clouds of imagined marital bliss, they planned their wedding.

Everything went well until, six months into their marriage, Dawn began to feel that Robert wasn't as loving as he had once been. Robert began to feel that Dawn was trying to change him, being

# Putting Romance Back Into Marriage

by Jerold Aust



Bill followed her advice and began immediately and openly to date this other woman, to show her the attention, care and love he had felt toward his new bride some 25 years earlier.

Ann was right. It did draw them much closer together. Their romance blossomed.

The other woman was none other than Ann herself, Bill's wife of 25 years. Ann was not the same Ann she had been

the bride and groom know they have lived different lives, they minimize those differences in the light of this momentous event. Although they may realize they will experience conflict in their future most assume that their love is strong enough to conquer any future problems.

Heartfelt intentions stated before hundreds of witnesses can, however, be all but forgotten in the routine of everyday

too picky about minor things.

Soon they were retreating from each other, justifying their actions against a backdrop of real and imagined offenses.

After seeking counseling, Robert and Dawn began to recognize their unrealistic expectations. They resolved to become more tolerant, more understanding with each other. They also agreed to spend more time thinking about each other's

## Here are practical ways you can renew and revitalize your marriage!

needs. These course corrections put them back on track for a productive and fulfilling marriage.

### Rude awakenings after marriage

The roots of marital disenchantment are usually exposed shortly after marriage, when reality intrudes on fantasy. This adjustment period reveals the other's imperfections. Shortcomings,

once viewed as minor and glossed over in the full bloom of love, suddenly take on ominous dimensions. Cute eccentricities grow into annoyances. Rudeness replaces romance.

Each spouse defends his or her own territory, and the one union reverts to two identities as the fantasy of romantic oneness begins to fade. Requests become demands. Marital disharmony takes over, and negative actions, left unchecked, can spell disaster for two well-intentioned former lovers.

Sometimes marriage partners in difficulty realize they've invested much in their union and don't want to give up without asking for outside help. Marriage counseling, however, is never a guaranteed solution to problems. If, for example, the counselor simply urges the couple to communicate more, this advice may inadvertently compound the problems. Although communication is important in resolving differences, simply communicating more may lead to finding new ways to blame and complain.

A better answer to the dilemma is available. It consists of taking action. Acting, *doing*, impacts another person more

tions of the other. Each mate takes full responsibility for his or her thoughts and actions, whether they are realistic or selfishly imagined. Now change can begin to take place in a marriage.

"The implications of this new approach are enormous," write Drs. Kinder and Cowan.

"It takes two people to have a marriage, but only one to change it. We end up feeling helpless and out of control in our marriages simply because we can't control our partners. The truth is that we need only learn to control *ourselves*. We ultimately come to feel alone in our marriages because we have replaced an accepting attitude toward our partner with unconscious expectations that are ultimately self-defeating" (Kinder and Cowan, p. 13, emphasis added).

### Power to the partners

Being self-directed—taking personal responsibility for one's own actions—empowers both husband and wife. Rather than feeling victimized, each mate gains



## Shortcomings glossed over in the full bloom of love can take on ominous dimensions. Cute eccentricities grow into annoyances. Rudeness replaces romance.

than *just communicating*. Positive action, mixed with healthy and positive communication, can dramatically improve a failing marital relationship.

### The secret power of self-direction

To enjoy a happier marriage, partners must become self-directed.

Drs. Melvyn Kinder and Connell Cowan, in their book *Husbands and Wives*, explain the concept of self-direction (Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., New York, 1989). Mates must become responsible for their own actions, they say. Each mate should identify and recognize his or her inaccurate, exaggerated expectations.

Recognition precedes change. By recognizing exaggerated expectations, each mate creates room for maneuvering and motivation for change. This, then, is self-direction: directing the attention to our own unrealistic expecta-

greater control over his or her life. A positive, constructive effect begins to transform the marriage. Counselors know that, when one mate begins to change for the better, invariably the entire relationship improves.

Many couples are committed to marriage in spite of the self-centered, self-gratifying, self-oriented influences of the world around them. When a husband and wife, struggling to get their own way in marriage, begin to shift their frame of thinking from a demanding to a sustaining and supportive one, they can happily find themselves in a second honeymoon.

Specific steps must be taken to pave the way to a renewed and revitalized relationship. Marital happiness requires demythologizing marriage, fairly evaluating unrealistic expectations and replacing them with the healthy realities of a fulfilling relationship.

*Continued on page 16*

**The Good News:** To better familiarize our readers with you and your work, let's begin by asking how your television program, *Hidden Keys to Loving Relationships*, began.

**Gary Smalley:** It began in 1988. Our first guest was Dick Clark. Now we have people like Frank and Kathie Lee Gifford, John Tesh and Connie Sellica. Because of the impact of the program, the Air Force ordered a set for every base in the United States, and many of our naval fleet and other military branches also have them.

One aircraft carrier did a study on our marriage videos. On a return trip from a six-month tour, they required many of the 5,000 men aboard ship to watch all 18 videos. Normally they would hear of 60 divorces following a tour, but in that one study they had only 11 divorces. The military is testing this approach in different parts of the services now.

**GN:** How did you get interested in family and marital relationships?

**GS:** My parents argued a lot. My father was an angry man. I thought all families were like this, that all were having difficulties in their relationships. Some of them ended in divorce, and I didn't want that to happen to me. That's when I decided to learn about what it takes to have a lasting marriage.

**Couples should do things together. Go to the beach, enjoy fun nights out, or take a pleasant drive. Do things together that are fun to both of you. Fun things bond us emotionally.**

Later, after I got married, the first few years of my marriage were very frustrating for my wife, Norma. Many of our arguments went unresolved. We were losing the love we had for one another. That's when I began interviewing women and counselors and reading books on the subject. Over time I found that women had a built-in marriage manual: They seem able to explain what makes up a good relationship and how to arrive at that kind of relationship.

I began to pick up on this little by little. Early on I taught a college-aged marriage-preparation class. I had 500 students. I shared 10 things I had learned about helping a man get ready to get married and 10 things to help a woman prepare for marriage. I alternated those points and gave them material every week.

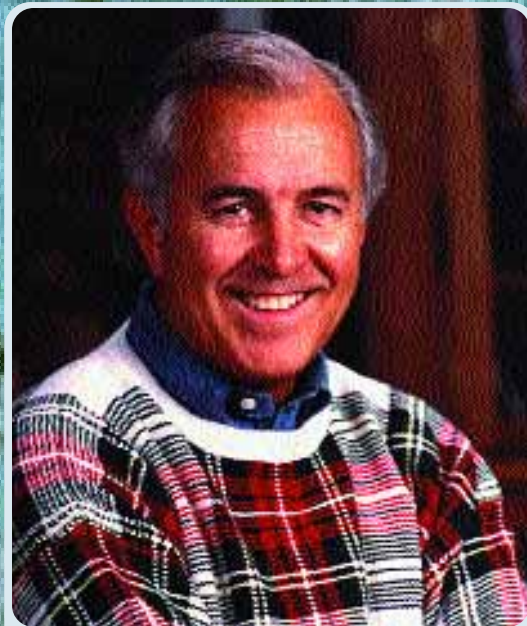
I repeated this procedure for three years, and the same people kept hearing the same points over and over again. But they never seemed to tire of them, so I put those lectures into a little booklet. That really started it all.

That booklet and those lectures were the basis of my first two books. I kept doing research, asking couples what they needed, what worked and what didn't work. About three years ago I discovered Dr. Howard Markman and Dr. Scott Stanley of Denver University. I found them to be professional and scientific in their approach to marriage and the family. They probably know more about divorce prevention than anyone else in the world. In fact, they can now predict

Good News Interview

# Gary Smalley on Love and Marriage

by Jerry Aust



Gary Smalley, who writes and speaks on marriage and family relationships, has authored or coauthored 14 books and produced several films and videotapes. Combined, his books have sold nearly four million copies and won numerous awards. In more than 30 years of studying, teaching and counseling, Dr. Smalley has interviewed and surveyed thousands of people to learn how best to strengthen relationships.

His latest book is *Making Love Last Forever*, in which he discusses ways husbands and wives can strengthen their marriage partnerships. Dr. Smalley and Norma, his wife of 32 years, live in Branson, Missouri.

with 90 percent accuracy whether a couple is going to divorce. This they base on a 32-question instrument which reveals whether an engaged couple will make it or not. They have figured out four reasons why couples divorce. These four reasons are the main reasons for the anger inside of us.

The basis of their findings became the heart of *Making Love Last Forever*. Their scientific evidence reinforced some of the things I had already learned. Today I can speak with tremendous confidence about what hurts a marriage and what keeps it alive. The greatest killer of marriage and love is anger stored away in the heart.

**GN:** Let's discuss unresolved anger. What constitutes unresolved anger? Does it evolve from minor unresolved disagreements or a couple of major ones or from both?

**GS:** All of the above. If they are minor ones left unresolved, they can build up like an ugly growth inside of us. It's like a cancer. They begin feeling deeply hurt, then fear, then frustration sets in.

If a person is continually frustrated, hurt and feeling unsafe, it's like developing cancer. They actually talk themselves into it; they *choose* anger. It is a choice. We all have a lot of choices to make, but people have a tendency to choose anger as their first reaction.

**GN:** Why do you think this is our first choice? Could you shed a little more light on this aspect of a relationship?

**GS:** It's just human nature; it's a primary, natural tendency we all have. It takes

eventually kill a husband's love for his wife or a wife's for her husband.

So I charge around the country saying: "Anger is coming! Anger is coming!" If we don't clear it up, we will suffer the consequences. We have all this racial anger, anger in the workplace, anger in many other areas of our lives. I'm just trying to expose it and trying to encourage people to admit it and get it resolved. We are, after all, responsible for our own anger. We can't continue to blame others for our own anger. We have to learn *how to forgive*.

**GN:** More and more, mates are coming to see that a husband and wife think differently. Would you give our readers what you consider to be the most important things each one needs in his or her relationship?

**GS:** I have noticed four things that every man and woman needs in a marriage.

First, women need to feel secure and know that they are highly treasured. Things like saying "I love you," giving her cards and flowers from time to time, reinforce this. The husband might unexpectedly say something like: "I was just thinking of you, because I'm committed to you for life, and no matter what we go through, good or bad, for better or for worse, I'm committed to you. I love you, I highly treasure you and am laying my life down for you."

If you say these words to her, that's like giving sunlight to a plant. She will blossom. She needs this from her husband.

Second, a wife needs meaningful communication. Meaningful communication

things bond us emotionally. Laughing together is important. If this one point were followed faithfully, it could revitalize a couple's marriage overnight. But do not mix your fun times with arguments. Under no circumstances do my wife and I ever argue during fun times.

The fourth thing a wife needs is regular touching, hugging, hand-holding. We are not talking about sexual contact—just touching, like I just mentioned. You can even touch with your eyes. This is also a meaningful way to communicate your love. Sex is a reflection of the fruit of security which comes from the loving, affectionate, caring touch and from these four things being practiced in marriage.

Men's needs are different. Men have a deep need to feel safe in their relationships. Men hate turmoil in their marriages, even though they sometimes provoke arguments. That's really the reason men withdraw from an argument, because they have this need to feel safe.

Another need for men is that they need rules to live by, so they often create rules in marriage. When a woman gets into an argument with a man, if no rules are present the man will tend to either close down or heat up, either become mean or withdraw. When a wife doesn't realize that, she can get her husband all worked up in an argument and do a lot of damage to their marriage.

So men need rules and need to feel safe, and a woman has to say to herself: What do I need to do to help him feel safe?

I have found that one of the best things for both mates is to develop some very simple rules to follow if they find themselves in a disagreement. Most couples really don't know how to argue an issue.

Women are usually more aware of things in a relationship than men are. They think we are as aware as they are of their needs, which is why it hurts their feelings so much when they find we are not. They begin to assume all kinds of things that aren't true or accurate. At the same time it's very important for men to feel safe in a relationship. We also want to be understood and not have our wives believe things about us that aren't true. We want our wives to be supportive of us, to listen to us and to treasure us. **GN**



### **Love cannot coexist with anger. Anger is a continual buildup of little embers of frustration, hurt and fear. If we don't resolve them they simply kill the love that was there.**

about five to seven years for this anger to grow in the average couple's hearts, then it kills the love they once had. Love cannot coexist with anger. And, remember, anger is a continual buildup of little embers of frustration, hurt and fear. If we don't resolve them they simply kill the love that was there.

Anger is like arterial plaque. It can do a lot of damage to the heart, and the love can fail. Then comes divorce.

Resentment is bad, but raging bitterness is much worse. You should realize that the anger doesn't just have to be against the wife; it can be resentment toward the boss or something else, and that resentment can

is primarily just listening to her feelings and needs, and valuing those feelings and needs which will help her build the faith she needs to express herself in the future.

The husband should not just try to fix what he sees as her problem; he must simply try to *understand* her needs and treasure those needs as unique to her. The husband should value her special feelings and needs. Just take the time to really listen to her; it's like water to a plant.

Third, a husband and wife should do things *together*: Go to the beach, take vacations, enjoy fun nights out, or take a pleasant drive on a Sunday afternoon. Do things together that are fun to both of you. Fun

# Hong Kong Handover: Symbol of a Global Transfer of Power

by Melvin Rhodes

**A** global power a century ago, once in control of a quarter of the world's land mass, Britain is losing yet another key possession: the thriving island of Hong Kong. Events in Hong Kong are set to dominate the news in 1997 as it passes from British to Chinese rule at midnight on June 30. As one of the most valuable pieces of real estate in the world changes hands, 156 years of British control will come to an end.

Media emphasis will be on the human rights of Hong Kong's 6.2 million residents and the future of the Hong Kong economy, one of the world's strongest. Little notice will be taken of a much deeper meaning and symbolism in this pivotal event as the 20th century draws to a close.

June 1997 marks the expiration of Britain's 99-year lease of Hong Kong's New Territories. Of special interest to both Britain and Hong Kong is that the same month marks the 100th anniversary of one

Victoria herself was a Queen-Empress of such aged majesty that some of her simpler subjects considered her divine, and slaughtered propitiatory goats before her image. The sixtieth anniversary of her accession to the throne was being celebrated as a festival of imperial strength, splendor and unity—a mammoth exhibition of power, in a capital that loved things to be colossal” (*Pax Britannica, the Climax of An Empire*, Faber & Faber, London, 1968, p. 21).

Morris continues: “The crowds . . . waited in proud excitement. They were citizens of a kingdom which, particularly in its own estimation, was of unique consequence in the world. The nineteenth century had been pre-eminently Britain's century, and the British saw themselves still as top dogs. Ever since the triumphant conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars they had seemed to be arbiters of the world's affairs . . .” (Morris, p. 21-22). Hence, the *Pax Britannica* (British peace), the title of the book.

“By June 1897 all this vigor and self-esteem, all this famous history, had been fused into an explosive emotional force . . . The Empire had been growing steadily throughout the century, generally without much public excitement, but since the 1870's it had expanded so violently that the statistics and reference books could scarcely keep up, and were full of addenda and hasty footnotes” (Morris, p. 22).

## Dismantling of an empire

Two world wars and 50 years later, almost to the month, the British began dismantling “the empire on which the sun never set,” granting the Indian subcontinent independence in August 1947. Another 50 years has passed, and now the British flag is to be lowered on the last major colonial possession. In the last 50 years the once mighty British Empire has given birth to more than 50 new nations.

In one century Britain has passed from being the undisputed leader of the world to a mere small island off the coast of Europe. Where it once wielded the might to subdue and even rule more populous and larger nations, and to demand of the huge land mass of China this small colony off the southern coast of Guangdong province, Britain now



**As one of Great Britain's few remaining possessions passes from British rule, are there lessons we can learn about the rise and fall of superpowers?**

of the greatest celebrations in world history, Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. It's no coincidence that the 99-year lease on the New Territories began a few months later. Few will reflect on the irony of the significance of the two events, separated by 100 years.

James Morris, in the second volume of his history of the British Empire, vividly describes the Diamond Jubilee: “It was the largest Empire in the history of the world, comprising nearly a quarter of the land mass of the earth, and a quarter of the population.

struggles to make ends meet. It's been a long, slow decline, reminiscent of ancient Rome.

Why? What lessons are there for other powerful nations today? What does it all mean?

The turn of the century coincided with the death of Queen Victoria. Although Britain was still the world's superpower, its former colonies in North America, the United States, rapidly advanced to greatness and preeminence in the new century. The two Anglo-Saxon powers between them have dominated the global economic and political system for 200 years, promoting their ideas of free trade, free enterprise, free speech and democracy, sometimes imposing them upon others against their will. No one alive can remember a world not led by one of these two powers.

But the last 50 years has seen a gradual slide in their influence and might. Observing this trend, Joel Kotkin, a writer on global economic issues for *The Los Angeles Times* and *Washington Post*, wrote in 1992 that "the gradual erosion of the Anglo-American hegemony over the past few decades stems largely from the erosion of many of the *core values* that previously drove its ascendance" (*The Tribes*, Random House, New York, 1993, p. 7, emphasis added throughout).

### Disappearance of core values

To which values is he referring?

"... This British ascendancy was propelled largely by the powerful moral and cultural influence of Calvinism. Much like the Jews, the British... were animated by a sense of *specialness* through the discipline of their faith. Calvinism... also fostered attitudes conducive both to trade and to an interest in the acquisition of technical knowledge" (Kotkin, p. 7).

Strong religious values of Judeo-Christian societies contributed greatly to the Anglo-Saxon ascendancy on both sides of the Atlantic and throughout the English-speaking diaspora. An ancient king recognized this principle some 3,000 years ago. "Righteousness exalts a nation," wrote Solomon (Proverbs 14:34).

Conversely, the absence of religious and family values hastens a nation's decline. That same Proverb concludes

that "sin is a reproach to any people."

This has been the case with both Britain and the United States, leaders in the dubious category of domestic disruptions. As British journalist Brian Appleyard wrote, "many now feel that our civilisation [the Western world], lacking a moral and spiritual centre, may be in terminal decline" (*The Sunday Times*, Aug. 11, 1996).

It becomes clear that some of those old Anglo-Saxon virtues are being emulated by the rising new nations of the Far East: the Chinese, for example, in China itself and in places such as Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan, where economic growth rates are the envy of the West.

The English-speaking nations still play a major role in the world's economic system. "A century has passed since the apogee of the British empire [Victoria's Jubilee], but the nations it spawned—the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand—still account for thirteen of the world's fifteen largest companies, over half the GDP [gross domestic product] of the world's seven leading industrialized countries, and by far the largest portion of overseas foreign investment stock, more than Japan and Germany combined.

"Similarly, the English-speaking countries also account for by far the vast preponderance of all inbound direct investment and the majority capitalization of the world's stock markets" (Kotkin, p. 70). The descendants of the ancient Israelite tribe of Joseph have been the prophesied "fruitful bough" (Genesis 49:22), surpassing in wealth and power all other nations.

### Shifting power on the world stage

Political, economic and military power, however, are never permanent. Hong Kong's transfer from British to Chinese rule is symbolic of the transfer of political, economic and military power away from the English-speaking powers in the latter half of the 20th century. Although under different circumstances, it is reminiscent of America's defeat in Vietnam—the transfer of power from the old world order to the new.

Hard work, individualism and entrepreneurial spirit, combined with strong family values, are all contributing to

Asian strength even as a lack of those values erodes Anglo-American dominance.

After 1945 a massive redirection of national resources into welfarism inevitably led to economic and military decline in Britain. Twenty years later,



*Hong Kong's bustling skyline at night exudes vitality and wealth. Its per-capita annual income, now \$25,000, surpassed Britain's in 1994. In comparison, China's per capita income is only \$650. At midnight, June 30, Hong Kong's 413 square miles and six million people will be turned over to Chinese rule.*

having failed to learn any lessons from British experience, the United States started down the same path with President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society.

One of America's founding fathers and greatest heroes, Thomas Jefferson, warned of the dire consequences of such policies when he spoke out against a universal franchise: "If the common people get their hands on the public purse, the republic won't last a generation."

A universal franchise inevitably led to

increasing demands on the public treasury; people want more money and more government-funded benefits. Politicians compete with each other to make the biggest and most generous promises. Is it a surprise that national debt and lessening competitiveness are the result?

### Lessons from new economic powerhouses

For all the media attention to the spread of democracy throughout the world, scant attention is given to the phenomenon that the fastest-growing economies are not democracies like the United States and Britain. They are free-market economies, but their people do not have the power to vote themselves increasing benefits. Nor is the perceived need so great, because of their stronger family structure.

Another factor contributes greatly to the rise of Asian economic power. Just as the migration of British peoples throughout the world led to Anglo-Saxon dominance, increased immigration of Asian communities into mostly English-speaking countries has led to the development of non-Anglo-Saxon mercantile empires composed of the Chinese and Indian diasporas.

Chinese and Indian communities thrive throughout the former colonies of the British Empire and the United States, boosting export sales back home, just as was the case with their British and American predecessors until recently. Proportionately more Indians live in the United Kingdom today than there were British people in India at the height of British imperial rule. These are part of growing international trading networks, successful because of strong family ties and traditional Asian values of thrift and hard work.

Economic power has been passing from Anglo-Saxons to Asians and Europeans for decades—not just in former British colonies but also in the British, American and Australian homelands. Now Hong Kong can be added to the list.

Midnight June 30 is only the formal handover of power. Real power, economic power, has been progressively transferring since World War II. Great powers seem to rise to towering heights only to inevitably decline. The 19th century belonged to Great Britain, the 20th to the United States. Perhaps century 21 is destined to be dominated by yet other superpowers. *GN*

# Romance

*Continued from page 11*

What positive steps can you take to rebuild your relationship, to put real romance and love in your marriage?

• **Face the facts.** The notion that if your mate really loves you he or she will automatically change for you is usually an illusion. Here is where self-direction can help. Rather than demanding that your mate change for you, why not ask your mate what he or she would like *you* to change?

This can bring immediate positive benefits. As one partner begins to change, renewed respect follows, and an example is set for the other to follow. It's never easy to admit to personal faults and shortcomings, but, when we ask for them to be pointed out and take concrete steps to change them, the situation improves for both partners.

Be honest, and face the facts, even if you're uncomfortable taking these steps. Realize that *you* need to grow. When you do your marital relationship will also grow.

• **Understanding your mate's needs.** Another myth is that if your mate really loved you he or she would always understand you. The story goes that an older couple sought marriage counseling, and the counselor asked the husband if he had ever told his wife of 35 years that he loved her. He responded: "Well, I don't think I need to do that over and over. After all, I told her I loved her when we got married."

This man—along with, perhaps, you and me—didn't realize that we all need reassurance now and then to allay our normal doubts and insecurities. Understanding of your mate requires a certain sensitivity to his or her needs. The two sexes are, after all, quite different.

• **Differences as strengths.** Well-meaning couples sometimes see differences as negotiable. But negotiation is too often motivated by a selfish want rather than by love or selflessness. No two human beings are exactly alike. On the surface we may appear similar in many ways. But beneath the surface many differences lie hidden.

Those differences become more pronounced under pressure. Rather than negotiating differences to fit one's selfish desires, try to view your mate's differ-

ences positively, as strengths.

Look around you. The earth's biological systems work independently and interdependently. The ecological systems are interdependent. Birds, insects, flowers and fruit trees all function independently within their species. Yet there is an interdependence when the fertilization of flowers and trees often depends on both birds and insects in search of food.

In a similar way, a husband and wife can benefit from their differences, thus making two much stronger than one. Women are usually more intuitive, while men are more analytical. Rather than negotiate away such differences, try *accepting your mate's strengths*. When key decisions are made by both husband and wife, the wife's intuition and the husband's analytical makeup can combine for a better decision. *Combining strengths*, rather than letting them be a potential source of conflict can be a powerful factor in building a successful marriage.

• **Work is a useful four-letter word.** Some mates assume that if they have to *work* on their marriage there must be something wrong with it. Perhaps this assumption comes from a naively romantic outlook toward marriage shaped by popular entertainment and culture. Most who plan to marry assume their marriage is different and therefore impervious to marital problems so common to the rest of us. What every married couple soon finds out is that, although marriage is wonderful, it is also sometimes quite difficult.

Difficult is not a ways bad. The human experience is fraught with difficulties and thus we can empathize with others in their hardships. As in life, so it is in marriage. Life in general and marriage specifically can be happy, but both can be filled with difficulties.

Good relationships don't just happen; they are cultivated. The good ones are sustained by good works. To bear the rich fruit of a happier marriage requires a personal investment of time, interest and diligence. One person put it this way: The only relationship that doesn't require work is the one that's not worth having.

Some assume that having to work on marriage after saying "I do" is proof that the relationship wasn't good enough in the beginning. This notion demonstrates a

*Continued on page 28*





# Society's Slide Into Sexual Immorality

*We are now some 30 years into the sexual revolution that began in the 1960s. What has been the impact on society? What are the implications for the future?*

by Noel Hornor

**S**ex is everywhere. It permeates the movies and the television programs we watch, the music we hear, the magazines and books we read, the talk shows we listen to. Society, it seems, is obsessed with sex.

Perhaps never has society had access to so much knowledge about sex but understood so little about it. Seldom have people suffered so much through sexual ignorance. Recently it was reported that the sexually transmissible diseases chlamydia, gonorrhea and AIDS were the three most commonly reported infectious disorders in the United States in 1995.

And now even herpes is back with a vengeance. The British newspaper *The Independent* recently reported that "genital herpes, the incurable sexually transmitted disease that was lost from sight in the shadow of AIDS, is infecting record numbers of people in Britain" (February 2). Experts estimate that "about one in ten women in London carry the virus," and in America "it is estimated that 500,000 people contract genital herpes each year." Nancy Herndon of the American Health Association commented that herpes is much more contagious than the HIV.

Of course, sexual behavior is only one measure of a nation's moral standards, but it is a crucial one.

## After the revolution

The sexual revolution has been with us for three decades. *Newsweek* magazine documented the sweeping change that began as far back as 1967: "The old taboos are dying. A new, more permissive society is taking shape . . . And, behind this expanding permissiveness is . . . a society that has lost its consensus on such



crucial issues as premarital sex, . . . marriage, birth control and sex education . . ." (November 13, 1967, p. 74).

After three decades of the sexual revolution society has lost sight of right and wrong when it comes to sex.

We need to understand what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior in the eyes of God. The Bible instructs that men and women should abstain from premarital sexual involvement and practice monogamy in marriage. Any sexual conduct apart from the marital union is biblically defined as immoral and sinful (1 John 3:4).

Clearly, many modern nations have fallen far short of this godly ideal.

Statistics show that adulterous behavior is out of control. The Kinsey Institute estimates that, during their married lives, 37 percent of American males will prove sexually unfaithful to their wives, and 29 percent of American wives will commit

adultery (June M. Reinisch, St. Martins Press, New York, 1990, p. 7, 73).

Adultery is family-obliterating behavior that destroys the very heart of society, with devastating consequences for children. According to social critic William Kirkpatrick, divorce is "up 700 percent in this century, with most of the rise occurring in recent decades" (*Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong*, Touchstone, New York, 1993, p. 249).

He also notes that "the pain of parental divorce is more difficult for child to overcome than the death of a parent" (Kirkpatrick, p. 250). An astonishing three in five American children born in 1986 will live with a single parent by age 18.

## Teen sexual behavior

Equally disturbing developments are the levels of premarital sexual activity and pregnancy in Western nations.

How many American teens are engaging in sex? "Data on teenage sexual activity are inexact . . . But most experts in the field agree that *somewhere over 60 percent* of American teenagers have had sexual intercourse by the time they finish high school" (Lillian B. Rubin, *Erotic Wars*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York, 1990, p. 61, emphasis added).

In Britain, "one in five [teenagers] report having intercourse before their 16th birthday." Also, in a 1996 poll, "31 percent of female respondents said they had been [pressured] to have sex before they were ready" (*The Independent*, September 16, 1996).

What does this mean in terms of premarital pregnancy? In the United States estimates are that "nationally 11 percent of unmarried teenage girls become pregnant

each year” (Rubin, p. 75). To put it another way, “every 64 seconds . . . a baby is born to a teenage mother . . .” (Children’s Defense Fund, *The Adolescent & Young Adult Fact Book*, Washington, 1991).

According to William J. Bennett, former U.S. secretary of education, illegiti-

### ***In 1997 almost 1 million American teenagers will become pregnant, nearly 75% of them out of wedlock. The problem costs the American taxpayer \$7 billion a year.***

mate births increased in the United States 400 percent from 1960 to 1990 (*The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators*, March 1993). Based on current trends, *U.S. News & World Report* reports that “early in the next century, unless we change, 1 out of every 2 American children will be born out of wedlock” (October 2, 1995, p. 88, emphasis added).

#### **Troubling trends, frightening future**

The costs and implications of these trends are truly alarming: “In 1997 almost 1 million American teenagers will become pregnant, nearly 75 percent of them out of wedlock. About 80 percent of these new mothers will end up in poverty, dependent on welfare payments. The problem costs the American taxpayer \$7 billion a year . . . Every day in America there are 1,300 teenage births and 1,100 teenage abortions. Last year 3 million teenagers had sexually transmitted diseases” (*The Sunday Times*, January 12, 1997, emphasis added).

This epidemic of illegitimacy has spread to other Western nations. Reports the January 20, 1997, European edition of *Newsweek*: “In Sweden, more than half of all babies are born to unmarried parents; in France and England, it’s about one in three.” As a result, “something frighteningly like the American underclass is beginning to develop in Britain’s inner cities: stubborn pockets of drugs, poverty and hopelessness, with teenage moms who drop out of high school and never get a job.”

In a recent British poll, finding showed that “first intercourse is often unplanned and therefore unprotected. Among the 16-24 group, only 37 percent had used contraception if they had sex on

the spur of the moment” (*The Independent*, September 16, 1996). This behavior no doubt contributed to the teenage statistics for pregnancy and abortion.

What do these trends portend? Not only have moral standards for many of the current youthful generation been deconstructed, but seeds have been

planted that threaten to sprout into a harvest of much greater evil and suffering.

One of the greatest concerns of law-enforcement officials in America is the rise of a new breed of criminals. They are generally males in their teens or early 20s and are violent far beyond the criminal classes of past decades. They are often driven by explosive anger and marked by callous indifference to human life. Such people, sociologists note, are almost always from single-parent homes.

Can any objective person doubt that permissiveness is engendering a problem of major proportions? The words of the



ancient Hebrew prophet Hosea aptly describe such cause and effect: “They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind” (Hosea 8:7, emphasis added throughout). The hurricane-force winds of violence, cruelty and crime batter modern society. When large portions of a nation behave irresponsibly, its social structure must deal with the inevitable serious—and sometimes catastrophic—consequences.

Many Americans are concerned about the future of their nation. In a *Newsweek* poll, 76 percent of Americans said that

they believe the United States is in a moral and spiritual decline (*Newsweek*, June 13, 1994, p. 31).

Will the United States do anything nationally to stop the slide? God’s counsel to all people is clear. He “commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). God’s Word shows that unchecked moral decline leads to eventual national destruction. Those familiar with the Bible realize that it predicts dire consequences for any person or country that persists in immoral behavior (Proverbs 29:1).

#### **An overlooked sex survey**

Other sources also warn of the devastating effects of moral turpitude. The record of history is clear. English anthropologist J.D. Unwin extensively studied 86 societies through 5,000 years of history. After his death in 1936 the results of his research were published under the title *Hopousia: The Sexual and Economic Foundations of a New Society*.

Unwin studied cultures and empires from the standpoint of their sexual behavior. In particular he was interested in their prenuptial and postnuptial behavior. He noticed a correlation between such behavior and what he termed a nation’s “expansive energy.” We might refer to this as the ability to remain productive and maintain a position of influence and leadership among other nations.

He stated that “expansive energy has never been displayed by a society that inherited a modified monogamy or a form of polygamy . . .” (J.D. Unwin, *Hopousia*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1940, p. 82, emphasis added throughout).

#### **Self-control or chaos**

Unwin discovered that “in human records there is no instance of a society retaining its energy after a complete new generation has inherited a tradition which does not insist on pre-nuptial and post-nuptial continence” (Unwin, p. 84-85).

He concluded that “the evidence is that in the past a class has risen to a position of political dominance because of its great energy and that at the period of its rising, its sexual regulations have always been strict. It has retained its energy and dominated the society so long as its sexual regulations have demanded both pre-nuptial and post-nuptial continence . . . I know of no

exception to these rules” (Unwin, p. 89).

Bluntly speaking, Unwin’s point was that nations gain prominence when they keep their sexual drives in check both before and after marriage. They remain



strong as long as societal and marital bonds are strong. When those barriers fall, a society’s days are numbered. As Unwin put it, he knew of “no exception to these rules.”

#### Awareness of God’s sovereignty

Can any permissive society successfully defy the record of history? Are any nations exempt from the same sins—and their consequences?

American culture has dominated the last 50 years. Many nations have wanted to follow America’s example of prosperity and progress. Tragically, too many of them follow the U.S. example of immorality as well.

The United States leads the world in many categories of sexual excess. In premarital pregnancies its pace is at “a figure that’s almost twice that of other Western countries” (Rubin, p. 75). But that difference does not necessarily reflect a higher standard of morality in the other countries. It reflects America’s ambivalence about contraception and abortion. In other Western countries, “their rates of sexual activity and the age at which it begins match our [America’s] own” (ibid.).

Does any nation truly live by a moral standard that pleases God? Consider the observation of Psalm 14:2-3: “The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. *They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none*

*that does good, no, not one.*”

History shows that wayward nations have suffered punishment for their conduct. God often allows the natural consequences of sin to overtake a people. “*Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will reprove you,*” He warns (Jeremiah 2:19).

Most people believe it anachronistic to think of God as intervening in world affairs and correcting nations. Yet the living God does at times intervene according to His purpose. Ultimately He alone determines the fate of nations. God has the power to deal with empires and emperors. The Roman governor Pontius Pilate spoke to Jesus of his power to crucify or release Him. But Christ informed Pilate: “You could have no power at all against Me *unless it had been given you from above*” (John 19:11).

In times past nations and their leaders were generally more aware of God’s sov-

Those same men were convicted that a nation’s laws and standards should be generally based upon the Bible. James Madison, the chief architect of the U.S. Constitution, said: “We have staked the whole future of the American civilization . . . upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves . . . according to the Ten Commandments of God” (Benjamin Hart, *Faith & Freedom: The Christian Roots of American Liberty*, Lewis and Stanley, Dallas, 1988, p. 18).

Abraham Lincoln, while calling for a national day of fasting and prayer during the American Civil War, said: “We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God . . . And we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own . . . It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness” (William J. Federer,

## THE GREATEST DESTROYER OF MARRIAGE

If increased divorce were one result of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, another ominous trend accelerated even more dramatically: the number of couples living together outside of marriage.

Of American men born between 1933 and 1942, 84.5 percent chose the traditional path of marriage before they set up homes. Of women born during the same period, the figure was 93.8 percent.

But, of men born between 1963 and 1974, only 33.9 percent chose marriage first. The figure for women born during that time was 35.3 percent. What at one time was called “living in sin” is now called “living together.”

An increasing number choose this way even though some have recognized this trend for what it really is, “the greatest destroyer of marriage in America” (The New York Times News Service). The *Times* article also cited census figures from 1970 indicating that 520,000 couples were then cohabiting in the United States. In 1994 the figure had soared to 3.7 million. The article said that “most unions between American men and women now begin with cohabitation, not marriage . . .” Such marriages “have 50 percent higher disruption rates than marriages without premarital cohabitation,” according to the same report.

In Britain “seven in 10 young couples live together for an average of two years before marrying . . . The number opting for trial marriages before formalising ties has increased [by a factor of] 14 times in 25 years” (*Daily Telegraph*, June 14, 1995).

—Noel Horner

ereignty over their affairs and freely acknowledged that truth. Often they viewed God as their benefactor. For instance, America’s founding fathers recognized God, mentioning Him four times in the Declaration of Independence.

*America’s God and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations*, Fame Publishing, Coppell, Texas, pp. 383-384.

That same American president mentioned in a personal letter to an elderly

*Continued on page 29*



# An Overview of Conditions

## Trouble in Anglicanism

Mainstream churchgoing has declined in England for two decades. Recent statistics belie the hope that the fall in Anglican attendance had finally bottomed out. Average annual figures for weekly worshipers are down by about 36,000. One possible reason could be member concern about the state of the clergy.

In a recent random poll of 200 members of the Anglican clergy, only about a third could name all of the Ten Commandments. Some could remember only two. A third do not consider sex outside marriage or homosexual practices to be a sin. About a third do not believe in the virgin birth. George Carey, the archbishop of Canterbury, has been calling for a return to moral basics—"setting forward the Ten Commandments as guidelines for families and individuals to live by." (Sources: *The Times*, *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The Sunday Times*.)

## Seventh-day confusion

Strict Sunday observance is deteriorating in Britain. One writer referred to "the sleepy Sabbath" of old "with a trip to church, family lunch and snooze in front of the fire." But she pointed out that "a slow secularisation of Sunday has been at work all century." She titled her article, "And on the Seventh Day . . ."

European news media confuse Sunday with the biblical seventh day. However, the Sabbath in both Old and New Testaments has always been just that: the seventh day of the week—never the first day. Readers who would like to see proof from the Bible should request our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*. (Source: *The Sunday Telegraph*.)

## Europeanizing nuclear weapons

Increasing evidence exists of a Franco-German push to Europeanize nuclear weapons. *Times* correspondent Roger

*"A single currency alone is not enough to give [a] united Europe international importance. European nuclear weapons are necessary for this."*

Boyes reported the following from Germany: "Typical of the mood in Bonn is an article yesterday, by Professor Werner Kaltefleiter, an influential political scientist at Kiel University. He said Germans would surrender the deutsche mark more readily if other countries such as France and Britain 'Euro-peanised' their nuclear weapons. A single currency alone is

not enough to give [a] united Europe international importance. European nuclear weapons are necessary for this."

More recently *The Observer's* Arnold Kemp wrote: "France and Germany have given new impetus to their controversial drive towards a European defence policy and have agreed to begin a dialogue on adding a nuclear dimension to it."

The British are understandably skeptical about this emphasis of the Franco-German role. Talk abounds of a secret paper signed by Messrs. Kohl and Chirac in Nuremberg on December 7, 1996, and apparently leaked to *Le Monde* in Paris.

"The French have been campaigning to give Europeans regional command within NATO while allowing the United States, which they regard as increasingly overweening and unpredictable, to retain strategic control." (Sources: *The Times*, *The Observer*.)

## Hebron only a beginning?

Some Arab states and the Palestinians regard the Hebron agreement as only a stepping-stone to more concessions on the part of Israel. *The Times's* Jessica Berry was on hand in Hebron to record the words of Yasser Arafat: "Hebron is a springboard to what comes after . . . We will continue to Jerusalem . . . [It] should be divided with East Jerusalem under Palestinian control. A city can be the capital of two states, like the example of Rome, the capital of Italy where there is a Vatican compound."

Christopher Walker reports from Jerusalem: "The Israeli Army has been conducting a detailed investigation into how northern parts of the country can be defended without continued possession of the Golan Heights," obtained from Syria in the 1967 war.

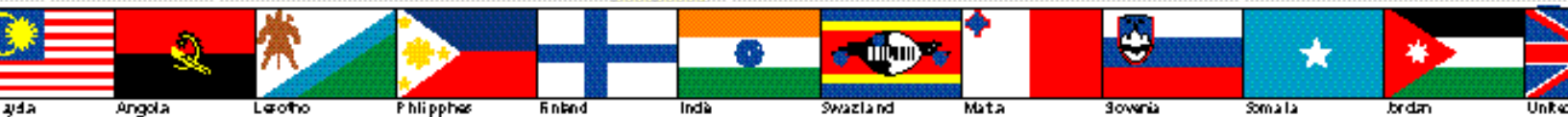
Some have taken this news to mean that the Golan plateau may soon become negotiable as a prelude to an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement. But will trading territory for peace really work in the long run? What about Chamberlain waving a "white paper" from Hitler in 1938? (Sources: *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*.)

## U.S. concern over Mideast threats

The U.S. State Department has tried to draw the world's attention to developments in both Iran and Libya. It is clear that "Tehran's military chiefs are intensifying their drive to acquire nuclear technology." At the current rate estimates are that an atomic arsenal could be a reality within five years.

But nuclear weapons are only part of the problem. Iran is also building a biological arsenal. Said *The Sunday Times*: "Both the CIA and the Israelis believe that military scientists working for the Islamic regime in Tehran have developed a deadly [biological warfare] aerosol that can be carried by a terrorist." This is in addition to known stocks of anthrax and botulism northwest of Tehran.

Libya has also given sufficient grounds for anxious concern. According to another *Sunday Times* article, "Libya is stepping up construction work on the largest chemical weapons plant in the world in defiance of American threats to bomb the facility to prevent its completion." Washington





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is reported to be engaged in urgent dialogue with its allies about how to deal with the Libyan threat.

Events in the Middle East are not at all promising. Biblical prophecy, particularly in the 11th chapter of Daniel, indi-

*Events in the Middle East are not at all promising. Biblical prophecy indicates this critical part of the world will be the focal point of crucial happenings.*

cates this critical part of the world will be the focal point of crucial happenings. (Sources: *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The Sunday Times*.)

## Germany faces jobs crisis

Unemployment in Germany has risen to the highest level since World War II, according to figures released by the government, triggering warnings of possible strikes and other social upheavals from opposition leaders and economists. According to some, the job crisis in Europe is the worst since the 1930s.

The German government's report offered scant optimism that the situation will improve soon. Germany's high labor costs and expensive social programs, some of the most costly in the world, have hindered the country's competitiveness against other nations in a global economy.

Much of the country's economic turmoil can be traced to the unification of East and West Germany. In the former West Germany, burdensome taxes have slowed investments, hindering the introduction of technological advances. In the east the \$700 billion transferred from the west has helped rebuild a crumbling infrastructure but hasn't generated jobs. In some regions up to half of the workforce is idle.

Further souring the public mood are austerity measures intended to cut state deficits and satisfy requirements for a common European currency by 1999. Germans increasingly dislike the notion of surrendering the deutsche mark to embrace an untested European currency. Recent surveys show that only 31 percent favor the new currency, and most fear an erosion of their living standard under the new economic system.

The head of the federal labor office, Bernhard Jagoda, sees no signs of imminent improvement ahead. Recent statistics show the number of unemployed workers at 4.66 million and growing—some 12.2 percent of the workforce. (Sources: *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*.)

## Soviet fall hits population hard

The collapse of the U.S.S.R. has led to major social changes and a potentially major population decline, according to observers. Noting declining birth rates and rising death rates, some demographers estimate that the Russian population may shrink by 15 million over the next few decades.

Before, government policy—through cash allowances,

larger apartments, supplemental food and other benefits—encouraged citizens to have more children. However, with the downfall of that system many of those incentives evaporated. As a result, the birth rate has plunged to nine births per 1,000 citizens, among the lowest in the world.

Meanwhile, deaths among working-age men from coronary and cardiovascular disease, along with deaths from unnatural causes, have doubled since 1990. As a result, the average lifespan of a male has dropped to 57.4 years, compared to 72 for women.

Health officials attribute these changes to factors stemming from the country's widespread economic, social and political upheaval, including a growing disparity in income, pervasive crime and corruption, crumbling social services, plunging living standards and apprehension about the future. Consequently, some demographers and health officials foresee a 21st century in which children and men in Russia are relatively scarce and aging widows will make up much of the population. (Source: *The Boston Globe*.)

## Thou shalt not steal (usually)

Church of England priest John Papworth raised a furor when he suggested that shoplifting is acceptable if the victim is a large supermarket or corporation. "Jesus said 'Love your neighbor'; he didn't say 'Love Marks and Spencers,'" he said, referring to the British retailer.

Mr. Papworth distinguished between robbing small merchants and individuals—which he thinks is wrong—and stealing from large retail corporations, whose "boardroom barons" plot "how to take the maximum amount of money

*"How can we inculcate in our children the difference between right and wrong . . . when those in positions of authority in the church make remarks of this kind?"*

out of people's pockets for the minimum in return." Such companies, he says, drive smaller stores out of business and harm communities.

Although Mr. Papworth denied he was encouraging shoplifting, he did say that, "if people wander in and wander out without paying for the stuff, I think it is a perfectly comprehensible action."

Other Church of England officials distanced themselves from the priest's remarks. "The commandment 'Thou shalt not steal' is an absolute one," said Pete Broadbent, who serves the church as deacon of Northolt in London.

Home Secretary Michael Howard characterized priest Papworth's comments as "disgraceful." He asked, "How can we inculcate in our children the difference between right and wrong, how can we hope to teach them moral principles when those in positions of authority in the church make remarks of this kind?" (Source: *The Associated Press*.)

—John Ross Schroeder and Scott Ashley



# Archaeology and the Book of Exodus: Exit From Egypt

by Mario Seiglie

In earlier issues, *The Good News* examined archaeological finds that illuminate portions of the books of Genesis and Exodus. In this issue we continue our exploration of discoveries that help us understand other aspects of the Exodus account, beginning with the incident of the Israelites' worship of the golden calf.

## The golden calf

After crossing the Red Sea (see "The Red Sea or the Reed Sea?," p. 24), the Israelites made their way to Mount Sinai. The account of Israel's appropriation of a golden calf to worship was



*This silver statue of a calf, excavated from the site of ancient Ashkelon, dates to more than a century before the Exodus. This find proved that calf-worship was practiced at the time of the Exodus, contrary to the opinions of some critics.*

long questioned by secular scholars. They noted that bull-worship was common in both Egypt and Canaan, but not calf-worship. However, in 1991 a silver statue of a calf was found in an excavation of ancient Ashkelon on Israel's coast. Authorities dated this calf to more than 100 years before the Exodus.

When Aaron shouted to the people, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" (Exodus 32:4), he knew well how popular calf-worship was. Four centuries later, almost the same words were uttered by King Jeroboam when he made two golden

calves and told the people, "Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" (1 Kings 12:28). In *Biblical Archaeology Review*, an extensive article on the discovery of the silver calf notes: "The Golden Calf worshipped at the foot of Mt. Sinai by impatient Israelites (Exodus 32) may have resembled this statuette" (March-April 1991, p. 1).

## The eating of quail

During their wilderness years the Israelites complained to God that they had only manna to eat: "Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: 'Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!'" (Numbers 11:4-6).

This list represents one of the 10 major murmurings of the Israelites against God and Moses (Numbers 14:22). God decided to give the people what they asked for: "Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you shall eat. You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have despised the LORD who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, 'Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?'" (Numbers 11:18-20).

The next day, quail descended on the Israelite camp to a depth of 12 inches. These fowl were common in biblical times and remain so in the Middle East. They are migratory birds that fly at the end of the European summer to the Sinai peninsula, where they remain for six months.

"The old world quail . . . a small, mottled brown game bird about 18 cm. (7 in.) long is the only member of the [pheasant] subfamily . . . that is migratory. The routes of migration run from southern Europe, along the eastern Mediterranean coast,

through the Sinai Peninsula, to Arabia or West Africa. The quails travel southward in the late summer and northward in early spring (the time of the Israelite exodus from Egypt) . . . As recently as the early decades of the 20th cent[ury], migrating quails were killed by Egyptians at the rate of two million annually; in 1920 a kill of three million was recorded” (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1988, Vol. 4, pp. 4-5).

The miracle of God was to bring these quail to the Israelite camp and deposit them in huge numbers in that precise location.

### Evidence of the prophet Balaam

When the Israelites began their final journey to the Promised Land, they passed through the land of the Ammonites close to Moabite territory. They needed passage

through this area to enter Canaan by way of Jericho. But King Balak of the Moabites refused to let the Israelites enter peacefully. He resorted to a known pagan prophet of the times, Balaam, to prevent them from entering his land.

“Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River [Euphrates] in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying: ‘Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me! Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me’” (Numbers 22:5).

Apparently, Balaam’s renown was such that a Moabite king would pay a considerable sum for his services. In 1967 archaeologists digging up the remains of Deir Alla, an ancient Ammonite city on the east bank of the Jordan, found an inscription

that mentioned Balaam, the son of Beor. The 16 lines of an incomplete inscription on a wall turned out to be part of one of Balaam’s prophecies, in language similar to that is recorded in Numbers.

The Bible describes God’s censure of Balaam. One night God forbade him to curse the Israelites. Disappointed, he told Moabite messengers he could not help them. “So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, ‘Go back to your land, for the LORD has refused to give me permission to go with you’” (verse 13).

Later God forced Balaam to prophesy of Israel’s blessings and victories. “Then he took up his oracle and said: ‘The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor . . . who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down, with eyes wide open: How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! . . . God brings him out of Egypt; he has strength like a wild ox; he shall consume the nations, his enemies; he shall break their bones and pierce them with arrows’” (Numbers 24:3-8).

Shortly after these events Balaam, greedy for money (2 Peter 2:15), helped the Moabites induce Israel to sin. Not surprisingly, he perished after the defeat of the Moabites and Midianites (Numbers 31:8).

The restored text discovered in Deir Alla reads: “Inscription of Balaam, son of Beor, the man who was a seer of the gods. Lo, the gods came to him at night and spoke to him. According to these words, and they said to Balaam, son of Beor thus: ‘There has appeared the last flame a fire of chastisement has appeared!’ And Balaam arose the next day and he could not eat and he wept intensely. And his people came to him and said to Balaam, son of Beor: ‘Why do you fast and why do you weep?’ And he said to them: ‘Sit down! I shall show you how great is the calamity! And come, see the deeds of the gods! . . .’”

These words are strikingly similar in detail to the biblical account. Apparently the memory of what happened to this seer remained in the memory of the Ammonites and was recorded in their version.

Archaeologist Andre Lemaire, who pieced together the incomplete script, wrote: “. . . The inscription from Deir Alla,

*Scholars advocate various routes for the Exodus and offer different interpretations of the biblical account of the parting of the Red Sea. Regardless of their views, the Red Sea miracle was so astounding that it left a permanent mark on Israel's history.*



## THE RED SEA OR THE REED SEA?

**F**or many years scholars have disagreed over the identity of the sea the Israelites crossed and thus the site of the drowning of Pharaoh's army. Three routes for the Exodus have been proposed and continue to be debated.

Some believe that the Israelites' path took them north to the coast and that the "sea" they crossed was part of Lake Sirbonis, an arm or bay of the Mediterranean, after the crossing of which they turned south into the Sinai Peninsula.

Others have adopted the idea that the Israelites took a central route and crossed a shallow lake north of the Red Sea called the Reed Sea. The term in Hebrew is *yam suph*. *Yam* means "sea," and *suph* is generally thought to mean "reeds," "rushes" or possibly "sea-weed." That is why some versions of the Bible call it "the Sea of Reeds" or "Reed Sea" instead of the Red Sea. (See Exodus 15:4 in the Revised Standard Version, New American Bible and Jerusalem Bible.)

Some scholars prefer the translation "Reed Sea," noting that lakes north of the Red Sea are abundant with reeds. They usually designate one of these shallow bodies of water as the site of the Israelite crossing but say that the Egyptians, with their heavy chariots, got bogged down and somehow drowned.

Other scholars prefer a southern route, pointing to evidence that they feel demonstrates that *yam suph* may mean "sea at the end of the world," as some conceive it to have been. Says theology professor Bernard F. Batto: "What we call the Red Sea . . . was regarded by the ancients as the sea at the end of the world. Interestingly enough, the Greeks applied the name Red Sea not only to our Red Sea but also to the Indian Ocean and, later when they discovered it, even to the Persian Gulf . . . *Yam sup* came to refer to the Red Sea because like other ancient peoples, the Israelites did not distinguish the Red Sea from

oceans further to the south. To their way of thinking, the Red Sea—the *yam sup*—was the sea at the end of the earth" (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, July-August 1984, p. 59).

In other biblical references, *yam suph* means Red Sea or its arms, the Gulf of Suez and Gulf of Aqaba. In 1 Kings 9:26 we read: "King Solomon also built a fleet of ships at Ezion Geber, which is near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea [*yam suph*], in the land of Edom." If this were a marshy lake close to Egypt, this would certainly be a strange place for Solomon to build his great fleet. But geographers know Elath is a port at the northernmost end of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Notice also Numbers 33, which mentions the stops the Israelites made in the wilderness of the Sinai. After crossing "the sea," they camped in Marah, then Elim. And "they moved from Elim and camped by the Red Sea [*yam suph*]" (verse 10). How could they have crossed a "sea of reeds" and, after many days of travel, still camped by that same "sea of reeds"? No body of water in the region except the Red Sea would have been large enough for the Israelites to have traveled so long and still be close to its coast. Other references that support the Red Sea are Numbers 21:4 and Jeremiah 49:21.

Which route did the Israelites take, and at what point did they cross the sea? We cannot know for sure. However, one author of several works on biblical history offers this perspective: "The crossing of Israel . . . cannot be explained as a wading through a swamp. It required a mighty act of God, an act so significant both in scope and meaning that forever after in Israel's history it was the paradigm against which all of his redemptive and saving work was measured" (Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1987, p. 66). *GN*

—Mario Seiglie

dated to about the middle of the eighth century B.C. and written on the wall of what may have been some kind of religious teaching center, is very likely the earliest extant example of a prophetic text. The principal personage in the Deir Alla text is the seer Balaam, son of Beor, well known to us from the stories in Numbers" (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, September-October 1985, p. 39).

Here we have another biblical figure who cannot be dismissed as myth.

### The route from Egypt

Another source of scholarly controversy concerns the route the Israelites took to enter the Promised Land. "The Bible is very specific in its list of place along the final stage of the Exodus route taken by the Israelites on their way to the

Promised Land. Yet it is this very specificity that has made it vulnerable to criticism from some scholars. Many of the places in question, they say, did not exist when the Exodus is said to have occurred" (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, September-October 1994, p. 5).

Yet three lists showing the very route the Israelites took to enter Canaan have been found in Egyptian monuments.

Numbers 33:45-49 describes the Israelites passing through Ijim, Dibon Gad, Almon Diblathaim, Nebo, Abel and finally the Jordan. The route the Egyptians took to supervise this area, which they ruled for many centuries, includes eight places, of which six appear in the same

COMBINED EGYPTIAN ROUTE	BIBLICAL ROUTE
(Yamm) ha-Melach	Melach (means "salt," or the Dead Sea)
Iyyin	Yyyim
Heres/Hareseth	Heres/Hareseth
Aqrabat	
Dibon-Qarho	Dibon
lktanu	
Abel	Abel-shittim
Jordan	Jordan

(Source: *Biblical Archaeology Review*, September-October 1994, pp. 57-59).

sequence mentioned primarily in Numbers 33: Melach, Ijim, Heres-Hareseth (mentioned only in Judges 8:13), Dibon, Abel and the Jordan.

Charles Krahmalkov, a professor of ancient Near Eastern languages, speaks of the accuracy of the biblical account: "In short, the Biblical story of the invasion of Transjordan that set the stage for the conquest of all Palestine is told against a background that is historically accurate. The Israelite invasion route described in Numbers 33:45b-50 was in fact an official heavily trafficked Egyptian road . . ." (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, September-October 1994, p. 58).

Thus, archaeology, notwithstanding scholarly criticism, confirms another part of biblical history. *GN*





# Miriam

## *A Lifetime of Faith*

by Jerold Aust

**W**ith cautious optimism and hope, Miriam crouched on the bank of the Nile River, watching intently as her baby brother Moses, lying in a waterproofed basket, floated among the reeds at river's edge.

She was anxious, and with good reason. Her mother, whom she loved and trusted, had instructed her to place the baby in this vulnerable position. Their hope was to save the infant, for the leader of mighty Egypt had just decreed that all Israelite baby boys be thrown into the river to drown.

Miriam and her mother knew that Pharaoh's daughter, accompanied by her maidens, came to the river to bathe. Will she come to the river today? she wondered.

Miriam, the 7-year-old sister of Moses, realized that what she was doing was risky, because the tiny basket might break free from the protection of the reeds and get swept away in the river's forceful current. If caught, she might die herself for defying the ruler's order.

Then she heard muffled voices nearby. Women were walking toward the river, talking and laughing as they approached. One of them, Pharaoh's daughter, noticed the basket among the reeds.

Miriam's heart raced as the princess directed an assistant to retrieve the little ark and brought the baby boy to her. When the child began to cry, her heart was over-

whelmed with compassion. She recognized him as a Hebrew child. It was at that moment that Miriam spontaneously hurried to the princess and offered to help. "I know of a Hebrew woman who could take care of this baby for you. Would you like her to nurse and care for him?"

The princess replied that she would, and Miriam rushed away to reunite her mother with her infant brother.

This rest is history, the remarkable story of a young girl, the older sister of Moses, who became a prophetess of God. Little could she imagine that some 80

arrived in Egypt as refugees. The patriarch of the family was Jacob, also named Israel. His estranged son Joseph had become chief assistant to the Pharaoh of that time. Under these circumstances the Hebrews were well treated and prospered as shepherds in the Nile delta. After the death of Israel and subsequently his son Joseph, "there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph" (Exodus 1:8).

Recognizing how prolifically the Israelites had multiplied, this ruler began to fear the loss of Egyptian control of his own country. He knew too that the

*Moses, the author of the book of Exodus, identified his older sister as a prophetess, the first recorded in the Bible.*

years later she and her Israelite sisters would joyously proclaim their freedom from years of Egyptian bondage as she led them in praising God for His deliverance.

### **Life in Miriam's day**

Let's get a glimpse of the setting, the backdrop of Miriam's day. Seven years Moses' senior, Miriam grew up a slave, the daughter of slaves. Assuming Moses was born around 1520 B.C. (Merrill Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1988, p. 886), then Miriam was born around 1527.

Some 160 years earlier, a Hebrew family had fled drought in its homeland and

Israelites could ally with an enemy against the Egyptians. In an attempt to curb the Hebrew slaves, he pressed them into labor on major construction projects.

For years the Israelites toiled away in service to the Egyptians. But, in spite of the backbreaking work, the Hebrews continued to multiply—so much so that by Miriam's day the Pharaoh took the drastic step of decreeing that all newborn Hebrew boys be thrown into the Nile to drown.

It's at this juncture that we find Miriam risking her life to save her little brother. Undoubtedly as Miriam lived and worked



events that lay ahead for the children of Israel.

### Faithful from childhood

Miriam helped save Moses from a sure death. She courageously defied the Egyptian ruler by placing Moses among the reeds by the river's edge (Exodus 2:3). Knowing she could face death for her actions, she cautiously watched over him. Waiting for the Egyptian princess, she seized the opportunity when it presented itself.

The princess could easily have rejected Miriam's offer of Moses' own mother to nurse the infant. But, in fulfilling God's plan for Moses, the Egyptian princess welcomed Miriam's suggestion.

In all this Miriam showed faithfulness, loyalty and poise. Such character would have been commendable if she had been in her 20s or 30s. But she was *only 7*. Her courage in such trying times, when Hebrew babies were being slaughtered for merely being boys, gives us a glimpse into the kind of woman she was to become. Little wonder she is referred to in Scripture as a faithful servant and prophetess of God!

Accounts of loyalty and faithfulness like Miriam's were recorded for our sake (Romans 15:4). Her godly characteristics were much in evidence at the moment of Israel's triumph, on the other shore of the Red Sea. After Israel was delivered from the jaws of death through the parting and closing of the Red Sea, Miriam took her timbrel and, after Moses' own song, led the women of Israel in musical praise of God for His deliverance (Exodus 15:20-21). It is in the recording of this incident that Moses, the author of the book of Exodus, identified his older sister as a prophetess the first recorded in the Bible.

Although the Bible shows Miriam did not hold a position equal to that of Moses, she seems to have been viewed as a near equal to Aaron in importance. Exodus 15:20 refers to her as "Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron." In other scriptures she is mentioned along with Moses, the nation's leader, and Aaron, its high priest. Although her exact position isn't known, she was clearly held in high regard by Moses, Aaron and her people.



*Miriam courageously defied the Egyptian ruler by placing Moses among the reeds by the river's edge.*

ever lost her attitude of loyalty and faithfulness. However, God in His Word records not only the strengths of His faithful servants, but their flaws, including their errors in judgment. One of Miriam's actions—specifically her criticism of Moses' marriage to a woman of whom she disapproved—disclosed what seems to have been hidden resentment. God inspired Moses himself to record the details of her error, which was a serious issue to God.

### Envy and excuse

Numbers 12:1 sets the scene for Miriam's open judgment of Moses: "Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. So they said, 'Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?' And the LORD heard it. (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.) Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, 'Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!' So the three came out. Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward" (verses 1-5).

"Then He said, 'Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision, and I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the LORD. *Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?*' So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed" (verses 5-9, emphasis added throughout).

Miriam and Aaron (who was also older than Moses; Exodus 7:7) apparently chafed at Moses' preeminent calling and position. Since her name is mentioned first in their speaking against Moses (verse 1), perhaps Miriam initiated the criticism.

Their indignation over Moses taking a wife outside of Israel provided them the protection and credibility they sought—or so they thought. Miriam was searching for greater credibility; instead, she received the curse of leprosy. She and Aaron failed to acknowledge that it is God who sets up and removes leaders (Daniel 2:21).

God does not take rebellion lightly, especially when it comes from among His people and is directed against His authority. "So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed. And when

## A FORERUNNER OF MIGHTIER WORKS

A remarkable parallel to Moses' and Miriam's songs is found in the book of Revelation, immediately preceding the seven last plagues. These afflictions are part of God's intervention to save mankind from total destruction, just as He delivered Israel in the days of Moses and Miriam.

A song is heard praising God for His imminent victory over Satan, the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4). John records these awesome events: "And they sing *the song of Moses, the servant of God*, and the song of the Lamb, saying: 'Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are your ways . . . Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You . . .'" (Revelation 15:3-4).

The mighty works that Moses and Miriam referred to after their deliverance through the Red Sea (Exodus 15) prefigure the much mightier works for which the redeemed will sing praises to Christ, the Lamb of God. Their words of praise and thanksgiving recall the joyous words sung by Moses and Miriam long ago.

This physical and spiritual circle is brought to completion. God can—and still does—deliver His people. These words of praise echo immediately before Jesus Christ dispatches the wicked of the earth (Revelation 15:1-7), delivering His people once again, leading them to the Promised Land of His great Kingdom.

We should learn a vital lesson in all of this: God has the ultimate control over what takes place in human history. As shown repeatedly throughout Israel's history, He brings good, but also allows evil, all in accordance with His purpose. We have the privilege to honor and praise Him once we understand His sovereignty or stand against Him and suffer the consequences as did the ancient Egyptians and as many will at the end of this age.

When human beings come to recognize God's sovereignty—and that, although He is supreme in power and authority He is deeply interested in our welfare—then we can enjoy an intimate relationship with Him.

Miriam, singing her response to Moses' song (Exodus 15:20-21), told of God's sovereignty, His triumph over evil. When evil is removed from humanity, peace will fill the void. These are major themes of the gospel taught by Jesus Christ and the apostles (Acts 3:17-26). *GN*

—Jerold Aust

the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow . . ." (Numbers 12:9-10).

Since indications are that she had been the instigator of this criticism leveled at Moses, she apparently was the one singled out for punishment.

Living a lie is bad enough. Teaching wrong ways to God's people is worse. For example, Jeremiah warned the prophet Hananiah: "This year you shall die, *because you have taught rebellion against the LORD*" (Jeremiah 28:16). In that case, as with Miriam, God acted decisively against attempts to rebel against Him.

### God's anger and forgiveness

God's anger was swift but not capricious. Consider this event's significance against the backdrop of some incredible miracles: God heard Israel's cries for deliverance. He remembered His promise to Abraham, and He delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 3:7-9). He granted them freedom to worship and obey Him. God performed mighty miracles to free Israel: After the 10 plagues He poured on Egypt, He parted the Red Sea and allowed His people to escape over the dry sea bed. When Pharaoh's armies attempted to follow Israel, God dramatically buried them under tons of water.

Later God fed, clothed and protected the Israelites during their wilderness travels for 40 long years, mercifully tolerating their human weaknesses. A careful study of those events can help us better understand Israel's trying nature and God's patient mercy for His people.

When Miriam set her hand against Moses, God reacted with justifiable anger. If her rebellious spirit were allowed to spread, rebellious attitudes and actions could affect others among the Israelites, they who were chosen to be a model nation to countries around them (Deuteronomy 4:5-8; 2 Samuel 7:23-24). God immediately inflicted Miriam with the dread disease of leprosy. Miriam was recognized as cursed, rebellious to God. She was exiled for a while from the Israelites' wilderness camp, a fate worse than death for some.

Aaron immediately cried out for Moses to help Miriam, begging him to ask God for forgiveness and the healing of their sister. All self-importance and presumption quickly vanished when they saw where their unwise actions had led them.

Moses responded quickly to Aaron's

cry. He asked God to heal Miriam; God did. But He would not let the rebellion go unpunished: There was a penalty to be paid, lest others follow in her footsteps.

Even though He healed Miriam, God expressed His displeasure with Miriam's actions: "If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and after that she may be received again" (Numbers 12:14).

The laws of health, hygiene and quarantine God had instituted for the well-being of the people directed that lepers live outside the camp (Leviticus 13:46). God wanted everyone to know that He didn't take Miriam's rebellion lightly. Israel remained camped for one week, time enough for this spiritual lesson for Miriam and Israel to sink in (Numbers 12:15). God was as quick to forgive as He was to anger.

### The work of a prophetess

Although God inspired Moses to identify Miriam as a prophetess while she lived, she was still highly regarded in Scripture some 700 years after she died. God, speaking through the prophet Micah, reasoned with and chastised the backsliding Israelites, reminding them how He had delivered them from Egyptian slavery. The three leaders mentioned who helped in this great deliverance included Miriam.

Micah, knowing how carnal Israel had become, attempted to persuade the Israelites by reminding them of these three courageous national heroes: "And I sent before you *Moses, Aaron, and Miriam*" (Micah 6:4). God honored Miriam by acknowledging that He chose her—along with Aaron—to assist Moses in serving His nation Israel. God listed her in such select company because she had set a faithful example for all Israelites in her time and all mankind forever.

Earlier, when Moses identified Miriam as a prophetess, he wrote how she had led the Israelite women in singing that served as a wholehearted answer to Moses' and Israel's praise to God. The context of her song (Exodus 15:21) shows that she clearly understood that God and God alone delivered Israel from the Egyptian army.

Miriam led the women in singing and dancing with joy, for God had not just vanquished their enemy, He had done so gloriously! God vindicated Himself (Romans 12:19), delivering His people by drowning their enemies in the Red Sea. *GN*

# Romance

Continued from page 16



lack of understanding. The truth is that *all marriages*, and especially those we consider the happiest, are marriages that both partners have worked on. It's no accident that "for better or for worse" is part of many marriage ceremonies.

*Work* correctly implies sacrifice; work or sacrifice in marriage helps make romantic lovers into inseparable friends.

• **Friends and lovers.** In the most fruitful and productive marriages, mates share the relationship of friendship as well as romantic love. Many psychological and emotional differences come into play in these relationships, of course. Friendship brings a significantly different array of experiences and feelings to a marriage from those brought by romance.

In terms of its effect, the friendship relationship within marriage can be the most significant because of the amount of time marriage partners spend together, especially as the marriage matures and grows. Still, romance in marriage should be rekindled. It *will* be by those who are working at having happier marriages.

## The basics of restoring romance

What are some of the steps you can take to stir up romance in your marriage? Let's notice a few common-sense, practical requirements any marriage must have to be romantic, happy and secure.

Telling your mate you love her or him—and doing this often—is essential toward rekindling romance in your marriage. Complimenting your mate infuses your marriage with romance, something you experienced early in your relationship.

Spending time talking with and listening to your mate is vital to restoring romance. Wives especially enjoy and need communication with their husbands. Marriages are more romantic when the husband understands this need and gives himself to fulfilling it. Husband and wife can experience a richer relationship in proportion to the time they spend sincerely communicating with one another.

Presenting yourself to your mate in a desirable way likewise helps put romance

back into your marriage. Cleanliness and grooming are basic ways of showing respect and love for your partner. Affection is essential to a romantic marriage. Saying "I love you" is good, but showing "I love you" is better. Lovers will hug and kiss each other often. This, perhaps more than any other ingredient, is the greatest single factor in putting romance back into marriage. The more couples do these things, the more romantic and loving their marriages become.

Dining by candlelight can help create

***Saying "I love you" is good, but showing "I love you" is better. This, perhaps more than any other ingredient, is the greatest single factor in putting romance back into marriage.***

an atmosphere of romance. The thoughtful husband will occasionally but regularly take his wife out on a date away from home. Laying careful plans for such romantic interludes, which might even include a weekend away from the home and its routines, will help stir romance and love in a marriage. The effects of soft music, candlelight and intimate conversation can restore the deeper feelings both have had for one another and can be well worth the effort and expense.

## The joy of love

The basic principles involved in building a loving, romantic relationship are found in Scripture. The Bible is an eminently practical book, especially in the area of human relationships.

Scripture tells us to look on the needs of others (Philippians 2:2-4), helping them to be happy. Unselfishly providing for another person brings one of the ultimate joys in life and in marriage lays the foundation for a more romantic and fulfilling relationship.

The basis of any successful human relationship is to give of oneself unselfishly to another (1 John 3:17; 4:20-21). The Bible describes this as being our brother's keeper (Genesis 4:7). This especially applies to the marriage union. God informs us that a good marriage is based on genuine outgoing concern for our spouse (Ephesians 5). This kind of love looks out for the benefit of one's mate.

The author of marriage is God, who instituted it shortly after creation (Genesis 2:24). God, the maker of humanity,

offers His creation—every current and future husband and wife—instructions on how to experience a happy and romantic marriage. Jesus Christ inspired the apostle Paul to give mankind some foundational instructions on marriage in Ephesians 5. The basis for a happy, romantic marriage is simple: "*submitting to one another in the fear of God*" (verse 21). Husbands and wives are to recognize who our true Master is and treat our mate accordingly.

Scripture shows both husband and

wife the importance Jesus Christ places on the marriage union. The wife is to submit to her husband (verses 22-23); the husband should love his wife as he loves himself (verse 28). When both husband and wife submit themselves to one another's needs, and, yes, even sometimes to their wishes, such a union will blossom with romance, respect and abiding love. The ultimate joy in marriage is both living for and loving one another, totally submitting to one another.

## Make your marriage blossom

You *can* put romance back into your marriage, if you aspire to it strongly enough. Doing so requires that you commit yourself to self-direction, evaluating whether you are laboring under two enemies of marriage: *marital myths* and *unreasonable expectations*.

Aspiring for a romantic marriage also necessitates submission to your mate, as Jesus Christ, through Paul's instruction, advises (Ephesians 5:21-32). This can be God's gift to you and your mate. It is yours for the asking. If you do step up to take advantage of it, you can expect to enjoy a renewed, revitalized relationship.

Remember Bill and Ann? They agreed to do something good for their marriage. Bill began dating a new Ann, his lovely wife of 25 years, and they successfully put romance back into their marriage. You can too.

You are in charge of restoring romance to your marriage. With God's help you can do it. May your marriage blossom as never before! **GN**

# Immorality

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lady in September of 1862: "Yet we cannot but believe that he who made the world still governs it" (*The Life and Writings of Abraham Lincoln*, Random House, New York, 1940, pp. 727-728).

Lincoln's words ring true today. God is the great giver of national blessings (James 1:17). Lincoln also said in 1838 that "if destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author . . ." (David Barton, *The Myth of Separation*, WallBuilder Press, Aledo, Texas, 1989, p. 70). He knew that nations can self-destruct.

## God and morality

The paths of history are strewn with the ruins of empires and nations that ignored God's principles, especially in the areas of sex, marriage and family.

Historians Will and Ariel Durant quoted Joseph de Maistre in their book *The Lessons of History*: "There is no significant example in history, before our time, of a society *successfully maintaining moral life without the aid of religion*" (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1968, p. 51, emphasis added).

Syndicated columnist and author Georgie Ann Geyer wrote: "I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to have a moral community or nation without faith in God, because without it everything comes down to 'me,' and 'me' alone is meaningless."

She further warned: "Today Americans have stopped acting in terms of their own moral, ethical, religious beliefs and principles. They stopped acting on what they knew was right—and the 'me' has become the measure of everything. However, moral societies are the only ones that work. If anyone thinks there is not a direct and inviolable relationship between personal integrity in a society and that society's prosperity, that person has simply not studied history . . . Great moral societies, built upon faith in God, honor, trust and the law, blossom . . ."

Some 160 years ago the French historian Alexis de Tocqueville wrote that "America is great because America is good. If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great" (Federer, p. 205).

De Tocqueville saw strengths in the United States of the early 19th century. But

what would he say about the America of today? Could he single out any nation on earth today for its goodness?

Is there any country on the globe that God could commend? "Those who honor Me I will honor," God said, "and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30). Which modern nation has a way of living that honors God? Do not our mounting troubles testify to our dishonor of the God who made us?

## The message of the prophets

The message of the biblical prophets was similar to the warnings of more recent social critics: Societies that cast aside their moral underpinnings will ultimately end up on the scrap heap of history. This is true of any and every nation, even of a powerful country with enormous national resilience like the United States.

We need only look at the collapse of such great powers as Assyria and Babylon to see that a nation's preeminence can vanish into history.

The prophets of old warned the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, along with many other nations of their period, that oblivion would befall those countries that sought their own agenda rather than God's and that refused to allow their Creator to fashion and shape their national life. A national obsession with sex, leading to a searing of moral consciousness, would lead to decline and fall.

God told Jeremiah the prophet to "go down to the potter's house" (Jeremiah 18:2). He wanted him to learn a lesson that he was to pass on. "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter? says the LORD. Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel" (verse 6).

Nations are like clay in the hands of God. He calls on people everywhere in all countries to repent (Acts 17:30-31), to radically alter their conduct.

God's message to the young, still virtuous King Solomon of Israel, before his appetites led him away from God, remains the greatest hope of nations in need of mending their ways of life:

"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). *GN*

# Tough Times

Continued from page 9

time in your schedule, several times a week, to be alone with your mate and get away from whatever is causing you stress. Walk around the block. Go to dinner at a quiet restaurant. Share a pot of tea after the kids are in bed.

"No matter how terrible the stress is, you should give yourselves a respite now and then," Dr. Boss says. "You need time to talk with each other, without the tragedy facing you, so that you can regroup your thoughts and say to your mate, 'Yes, I'm tired,' or I need a hug.' When couples are under a lot of stress, they often have so much to say to each other but no time to say it."

• *Show your affection.* Make it a point to tell each other "I love you," and say it often. "When you are in the middle of something awful, that is the worst time to just assume your mate knows how you feel," says Dr. Boss. "It's during the tough times that your partner needs the reassurance of your love even more."

Express your devotion through small acts of kindness. Put a note in his briefcase to say how much you appreciate him. Take the baby's 4 a.m. feeding so she can get some extra sleep. Tell him you know things will work out and that you're behind him 100 percent. Acknowledge that she has had a rough day and offer to finish her chores. Small gestures like these can go a long way when times get rough.

• *Don't wait for a crisis to build relationship skills.* Of course, you shouldn't wait until times get tough to learn how to work as a team. "Look for opportunities when you're not under stress to solve problems together so that when something terrible does happen you're not suddenly trying to invent skills you don't have," Dr. Boss says. "Even when you're trying to decide something as simple as what movie to go to, these are the same skills you are going to use when you have to figure out what to do after your house burns down."

You need communication and problem-solving abilities such as openness, acceptance, understanding, flexibility, cooperation and kindness—in good times and bad. Use the carefree times in your life to build these skills so that you can draw on them when you need them most. *GN*

# When Friends Disagree

by Becky Sweat

Friendships have their ups and downs, and disagreements can degenerate into misunderstanding, conflict and animosity. What can you do to keep from fracturing your friendships?



**N**icole hasn't spoken to her best friend, Emily, in nearly a month. "It's beginning to feel like we were never friends at all," claims Nicole. "But it's not my fault. She's upset with me because I got the lead role in the school play, the same part she was trying for. But I can't help it if the director thought I would be better for the part than Emily."

When Jason and Ryan started a lawn-mowing business, everything was fine at first. "But then Jason started insisting that everything be done his way, and he wouldn't listen to any of my ideas," Ryan says. "Finally one day I couldn't take it anymore, and I told him exactly what I thought. It turned into a huge blowup. That was three weeks ago. We folded up the business and have had nothing to do with each other since then."

Sooner or later friends are bound to misunderstand each other. A pal may forget to return your phone call, fail to write, ignore an important event, refuse to listen, pass along thoughtless comments or spitefully compete. These things happen to the best of friends, and they happen throughout our lives. But, no matter why or how you and your friend disagree, the important thing is to make sure to resolve your differences before they scar your friendship.

Here are some suggestions to help you work out your differences and reconcile with your friend before it's too late.

## Anger begets anger

- Talk about it.

The most important thing you can do after a disagreement with a friend is to talk out the problem. This will give your friend a chance to tell his side of the story and you a chance to get your feelings off your chest.

The right kind of communication can strengthen a friendship, taking it to a new level. Conflict can be constructive when those involved want to work things out because they care about the friendship. But conflict is destructive when it becomes a means to gratify oneself by saying hurtful things to get back at the other person.

In a destructive conflict the main outcome is that it becomes easier to fight again in the future. Each fight becomes a practice for the next. Each time you get angry, you're more likely to get angry again.

But, when two people discuss their differences constructively, their goal shifts from attacking each other to attacking a mutual problem. There is no fighting, yelling and name-calling. The solution is to politely and respectfully open the lines of communication, refraining from attacking or criticizing the other person. Let your friend know that you value his friendship and because of that you want to discuss your differences.

## Don't hang up

- Choose an appropriate time and place.

If you have a problem with a friend and want to talk about it, don't just scream at him over the telephone. He may have people over, be in the middle of dinner or be studying for a big test. Try to arrange a time to talk when neither you nor your friend is upset. Ask your friend when the best time would be. Plan to talk somewhere in private, not in public where one or both of you may feel self-conscious.

Frame your conversation by saying something like, "I need to talk about something important, and I'm uncomfortable," or "This is hard to say, but I really need to tell you how I feel," suggests Kathleen Galvin, Ph.D., a professor of communication studies at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

"This lets the other person sit back for a minute and think, Oh, this is important, so I should really pay attention," she says. "But, if you just charge in without any warning and start yelling, then the other person often just matches what you do."

### Don't insert foot

- Choose your words wisely.

Before you open your mouth to speak, give yourself some time to think about how your words will come across. If you speak in anger, you're bound to say something you'll regret later. Comments such as "You're the most selfish person I've ever met!" will stick in your friend's mind for a long time.

Fight the urge to read off a list of your friend's annoying traits. Instead, start with something positive, such as, "Melinda, you've always been a good friend, and I know you'd never purposely hurt me, but I really felt bad the other day when you embarrassed me in front of Kyle."

Imagine the response that line would get compared with this approach: "Melinda, I can't believe how rude you were. Don't ever pull that sneaky trick again."

Talk from your own point of view: "I don't think you realize how much this is bothering me," or "I felt really terrible when you canceled plans at the last minute." Be specific. Don't make broad generalizations. Say, "I felt bad when you made that comment about me in class yesterday," rather than, "You're always insulting me in front of other people."

### Wait your turn

- Listen to understand.

Good communication means also listening to how the other person feels. It means concentrating on what your friend is saying and hearing with an open mind. He may have a whole different perspective on the situation. Be prepared to listen and learn.

Take turns speaking. You can reverse roles in the course of the discussion. The speaker should not be interrupted. Every few minutes the listener should summarize what the speaker has said; this shows that he is listening and that he accepts what the other person feels or that he is at least trying to understand.

Chances are that you and your friend will not agree on everything. Allow him to hold a different opinion from your own. In few disagreements is one party completely right and the other all wrong. In most cases both parties are at least partly to blame. Be willing to admit your mistakes. Even if you don't think you started the fight you can say you're sorry for getting upset or for hurting your friend's feelings.

### Walk a mile

- Give the benefit of the doubt

Don't assume you know why your friend did what he did. We have different reasons for the things we do. Put yourself in your friend's shoes. He may be under a lot of pressure at school or have problems at home and may not stop to think how his actions have come across.

Sometimes what seems to be a major character flaw is simply a reflection of a different personality, upbringing or cultural background. Realize that others may not always mean what you thought you heard them say.

Choose your battles carefully. Not every problem is worth bringing up. Your friend's idiosyncrasies—such as tardiness, playing the radio too loud, forgetting to return phone calls—are rarely worth challenging the friendship over. Often you will just have to learn to live and let live. Sometimes, though, you may be able to help a friend change by talking about a problem with him.

Even good friends act rudely on occasion. When a friend makes a mistake, don't blow it out of proportion. Try not to judge your friend any more harshly than you would want to be judged. Realize that you may be the offender someday. Try to approach your friend about a problem in the same manner you would want to be confronted.

### Even this will pass

- Give the friendship time.

Even if your talk goes well, it may take weeks or even months for your friendship to get back to normal. Usually both parties feel somewhat aggrieved, so it's usually best to just leave things alone for a while. Bruised feelings are much like bruises to the body: You can't instantly make it feel better, and it takes some time before it's all healed.

"Both sides do better if there is some kind of acknowledgment that this was really tough and you don't feel real good about what happened," Dr. Galvin adds. "Talk about how you might handle the situation differently in the future so you don't have the same fight over and over again."

Keep in mind that it's normal for friends to clash now and then. What matters most is that you don't let misunderstandings destroy your friendship. True friends don't give up on each other when they see a few faults.

Remember these wise words from Proverbs 18:24 (New International Version): "... There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." **GN**

Melinda,  
I can't  
believe how  
rude you  
were. Don't  
ever pull  
that sneaky  
trick  
again!

# Who Are We?

Who is behind *The Good News* magazine?

Many readers have wondered who we are and why we provide *The Good News* free to anyone who requests it. Simply put, *The Good News* is provided by people—people from all walks of life, from all over the world.

But those people share a common goal: to proclaim the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all the world as a witness and to teach all nations to observe what Christ commanded (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).

We are dedicated to proclaiming the same message Jesus Christ brought: the wonderful *good news* of the coming Kingdom of God

(Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43, 8:1).

*Gospel* means “good news,” and from this *The Good News* gets its name.

The message Jesus brought truly is good news: the answer to all mankind’s problems. Through the pages of *The Good News* and various booklets we show the biblical answers to the dilemmas that have defied human solution and threaten the very survival of humankind.

We are committed to taking that message to the entire world, teaching the truth of God’s purpose and plan

for mankind as taught by Jesus Christ.

Jesus also told His followers, “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). He freely shared this message with us; we freely share it with all who ask.



Jesus also commanded His followers to feed His sheep (John 21:15-17). To fulfill this command, the United Church of God has congregations and ministers around the world. In these congregations believers assemble to be instructed from the Scriptures and to fellowship. For locations and times of services in your area, write or call the addresses listed inside. Visitors are always welcome.

Using an ordinary fax machine, you can dial (818) 294-0818 and get instant information on a wide range of topics. A complete menu of

choices guides you through how to receive by fax information such as Bible-study and sermon summaries, news releases, details on our audio- and videotape service, location of ministers and congregations near you, and more. Simply use the keypad on your fax machine to dial the number, then follow the voice instructions.

For additional information, you can use your computer to access our World Wide Web site on the Internet. The address



<http://www.ucg.org/> gives you access to general information, back issues of *The Good News*, booklets and more.



# United Church of God

*an International Association*



# Lessons From the First Marriage

*God is the designer of marriage, instituting it with our first human parents, Adam and Eve. What can we learn from their marriage?*

by David Treybig

**T**he first I ve story is recorded for us in Genesis 2. There we read about God creating Adam as, initially, the only human being. In mankind’s earliest beginning, no Eve was to be found. “But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him,” we read in Genesis 2:20. We do not know how long Adam remained alone, but at this time he was single, isolated, the only human being anywhere.

The Bible reveals that something was wrong with this scene.

After God created Adam, according to Genesis 2:15, “then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.” So Adam had a responsibility, a job that surely proved to be fascinating for him. Adam explored and learned all about the world—animals, plants, the beautiful and intricate variations of God’s creation. Not only was he learning, but God gave him the privilege of naming all the birds and animals and other living creatures (verse 19).

### A helper for the first man

Whether Adam knew it or not, God knew something was not right. “And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him’” (Genesis 2:18). Let’s think for a moment about why it was not good for Adam to be alone. He, of all the physical creation, was without a helper on his own level (verse 20).

If Adam were by himself for any significant amount of time, imagine how he must have felt when he observed that even animals had their mates. Through Adam’s observations of the animal kingdom, in its maleness and femaleness, he would have been constantly reminded that he was the lone human being on the planet. He was a male with no corresponding female.

Single people often find themselves in lonely circumstances. They want friendships and feel the isolation of being alone. Because of situations all too

common in our world, even married people can experience loneliness.

God recognized that Adam had a problem and provided him the perfect solution—a woman to be his wife. God, as the source of every perfect gift, knew just how to form the woman (James 1:17).

God had made Adam from the ground. *Adam* is



*God creates Eve, the first woman, as a perfect complement and companion for Adam.*

simply a shortened form of the Hebrew word *adamah*, which means “ground.” But, instead of using more soil to make Eve, God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep and made Eve out of one of his ribs (Genesis 2:21-22). The Hebrew word for “made” is *banah* and is translated “build.” God literally built Eve. Ever loving, kind and merciful, God took great delight in forming Eve, physically and mentally, to be the perfect complement for Adam.

Scripture emphasizes another aspect of the first

Woodcut by Gustave Doré

*Because God made Eve from one of Adam’s ribs, an undeniable bond existed between Adam and Eve. Adam recognized his link to this creature named Eve. She was part of him, and he was part of her.*

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marital relationship. Because God made Eve from one of Adam's ribs, an undeniable bond existed between Adam and Eve. This point was undoubtedly significant to Adam. His first recorded words regarding Eve were, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23). Adam recognized his link to this creature named Eve. She was part of him, and he was part of her.

### The first marriage

The simple, historical account does not tell us what Adam and Eve were thinking or how they felt while they got to know each other. But in the next two verses we learn the outline of the basis of marriage as established by God. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:24-25).

An important aspect of marriage is leaving "father and mother," establishing a new family unit. Adam and Eve did not have physical parents to leave, but future genera-

tions would need to apply this instruction.

Honoring parents and seeking their advice is advisable, but newlyweds need to remember they are a new family unit. Just because things were done a particular way

*Two people must learn to work together in marriage. Such an approach follows the biblical principles of wives submitting to their husbands and husbands loving and honoring their wives.*

in your family does not mean your mate will want to do things the same way.

Two people must learn to work together in marriage, showing respect and love to each other. Such an approach follows the biblical principles of wives submitting to their husbands and husbands loving and honoring their wives (Ephesians 5:22, 25; 1 Peter 3:1, 7). Establishing family guidelines and traditions in an atmosphere of love and respect gives the newly married a foundation upon which to build their lives together.

### Be joined

Genesis 2:24 says a husband should be "joined" to his wife. Other translations say

he should cling or cleave to her. Today we would say he should bond with her. Besides God, she should be his highest commitment.

The biblical text is clear that a man should build this special, close relationship with his

wife. The idea of clinging to multiple wives is foreign to these verses in Genesis. Even though God allowed some men in the Old Testament to have several wives at the same time, such arrangements were not God's intent from the beginning. In listing the qualifications of bishops or overseers, of the Church, 1 Timothy 3:2 makes clear that such a man must follow God's instructions and "be blameless, the husband of one wife."

How can husbands and wives bind with each other and make their relationships loving and lasting? Simple actions like hugs, kisses and pledges of love build and strengthen the bond God intended for marital partners. When husbands and wives constantly work at building their relationship, they find it easier to agree on workable options in settling family disagreements.

Some people think love is a magical, mysterious emotion that two people fall into or out of for no apparent reason. The truth is different: Loving relationships must be *nurtured*. They take work. Love is care and consideration directed toward another person, not just an ethereal emotion.

The work involved in building and preserving the marital bond is well worth the time and effort. Husbands and wives who are committed to this positive process often describe their mates as their best friends. This is simply another way of describing the kind of bond God desires for every marriage.

A marriage built around this godly bond includes two people who are willing to listen and talk about their problems in a spirit of humility. If they cannot solve their problems on their own, they seek counsel because they value their relationship and don't want to lose it.

Recent studies confirm that measuring the level of conflict in a relationship can accurately predict whether a marriage will survive (see "Will Your Marriage Survive?," this page).

People whose marriages are failing often say they have lost the desire for a special relationship with their mate. Some marriage partners have rekindled this desire by asking God for a loving, humble attitude and

## WILL YOUR MARRIAGE SURVIVE?

Some marriage counselors claim that couples should learn to fight fairly and not worry about their tendency to argue. This conventional wisdom is now proving to be not so wise after all. A recent study of 691 couples indicated that the more partners argue, regardless of their style of quarreling, the more likely they will eventually divorce ("What's Fair in Love and Fights?," Richard Morin, *Washington Post Weekly*, June 7, 1993, p. 37). Conflicts beget distress, and eventually an argument can prove to be the straw that breaks the camel's back.

Marriage researchers have found objective ways to measure the strength of the marital bond. One simple method is said to predict with 90 percent accuracy which couples will divorce and which will enjoy lasting marriages. In an experiment among newlyweds, the couples who would end up staying together made five or fewer critical comments (out of 100 comments) about each other. Newlyweds who later divorced had made 10 or more critical comments about each other.

Married couples are more sensitive to each other's nonverbal signals than many have supposed. Husbands and wives are often keenly aware of the implications of their spouses' presence and feelings. Even if couples are not consciously aware of certain signals, physiological changes (heart rate, blood pressure, etc.) provide confirmation that these signals are picked up by the opposite partner.

Several studies agree that the arousal of the husband's nervous system is an accurate indicator of unhappiness for both partners. Happily married couples should work at preserving their relationships by maintaining a five-to-one ratio of positive to negative incidents in their lives ("A Lens on Matrimony," Joanni Schrof, *U.S. News & World Report*, Feb. 21, 1994, p. 66-69).

—David Treybig

doing things to show love to their mate, even when they don't feel like it.

Many married people have found that the feelings they longed for returned when they decided to do the things that bind two people together (see "Building Bonds in Marriage," this page).

### Becoming one flesh

The next principle from Genesis 2 says that a husband and wife shall become one flesh; that is, enjoy an intimate sexual relationship (verse 24; 1 Corinthians 6:16).

The steps that lead to a loving and proper sexual relationship are vital to a successful marriage. God reveals that candidates for marriage should develop a deep and lasting friendship but should not indulge in a sexual relationship until after the marriage ceremony. Most people fail miserably to follow God's instructions in this matter. "Dating" someone often means "sleeping" with someone. In Western societies the overwhelming majority of young adults of both sexes engage in sexual intercourse before marriage. They take the supposedly enlightened view that sex is not part of a sacred, loving relationship but simply a biological function to be indulged in without restraint.

God intended sex to be part of the marriage relationship and not take place outside of marriage. Only in the married state does God permit sexual relations (Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 7:2). His instruction for us to refrain from fornication (sex before marriage) and adultery (sex when one or both sex partners is married to someone else) is a safeguard for our marriages (1 Corinthians 6:9, 18).

God intended sex to be an intimate, binding experience for a man and woman and

*Some people think love is a magical, mysterious emotion that two people fall into or out of for no apparent reason. The truth is different: Loving relationships must be nurtured. They take work.*

meant for it to help marriages survive and flourish. Since one in three married male and one in four married females in the United States now admits to having indulged in adulterous affairs, we should not be surprised that half of American marriages end in divorce. An admirable way to reverse the trend of broken marriages and safeguard one's own relationship is to accept and practice God's instruction to restrict sex to marriage.

Modern research verifies that God's instructions, given thousands of years ago to Adam and Eve, are still the best recipe

for success in marriage. Couples who do not live together before marriage handle conflict more easily, communicate better and are less likely to divorce. A majority of men and women (60 percent) believe that the sexual relationship is more satisfying within the marriage union. Considering that one of every four Americans will contract a sexually transmitted disease, a disorder preventable by practicing godly guidelines, it

becomes obvious that God's teachings are superior to anything devised by man.

### Not ashamed

The last principle from God's inspired guideline for marriage reveals that Adam and Eve were naked but not embarrassed by their nakedness (Genesis 2:25). Since they were the only two humans on the planet, privacy was not an issue. Sexuality was not and is not intrinsically dirty or shameful.

Within marriage a husband and wife should feel comfortable with each other's masculinity or femininity. But revealing too

much of one's body to other members of the opposite sex can invite the breaking of God's commands against lust and unlawful sexual relations. Jesus warned that "whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). Males and females alike need to control their minds and dress modestly to discourage sexual arousal outside of marriage.

Paul told the early Church to remember that God calls Christians to holiness and not to defraud or mistreat others in marriage or the relationships leading up to it (1 Thessalonians 4:6-7). "For this is the will of God, your sanctification that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel [spouse] in sanctification and honor" (verses 3-4).

Marriage is one of God's wonderful gifts to mankind. It is something to treasure and sustain. The guidelines He gives in Genesis 2 are as valid as ever. To follow them is to make the honorable, godly choice. No shame comes from following God's instructions. Only rewards result from godly behavior in marriage. Why not make God's ways your ways? **GN**

## BUILDING BONDS IN MARRIAGE

Several societal forces move marriage partners toward isolation and loneliness. But practical means are available to build the bonds that make a marriage grow stronger. Make good use of these guidelines:

- *Spoil your spouse.* Little things mean a lot. A husband opening the door for his wife or a wife cooking her husband's favorite dish are simple ways to say "I love you" and "You are important to me." Do some of your mate's chores. But don't keep score by trying to split responsibilities and favors 50-50. Give 100 percent of yourself to your spouse.
- *Offer sincere praise and verbally express your love.* Say "I love you" and "Thank you" every day. Acknowledge and make use of each other's strengths and abilities.
- *Keep disagreements private.* Do not fight with or criticize your mate in front of others, especially children.
- *Be a peacemaker.* Here's an appropriate paraphrase of Matthew 5:9 to apply especially to marriage: "Blessed are those marriages that have peacemakers." Don't worry about who makes the first move to restore a relationship when a conflict remains unresolved. Just do it.
- *Spend time together.* Whether a weekend away from work or a walk around the block, time together is an investment in your marriage.
- *Appreciate your partner's admirable qualities.* Pay more attention to positive than negative traits in your mate.
- *Give.* Gifts do not have to be expensive. Handwritten notes or hand-picked wildflowers are as valuable in showing appreciation as any purchased gift.
- *Remember romance.* Partners can take turns planning intimate evenings and other special occasions.

—David Treybig

# Why Is the New Covenant Better?

*How does that covenant differ from God's previous covenant with ancient Israel?*

by Gary Smith

**T**he New Covenant is “*a better covenant, which was established on better promises,*” claims Hebrews 8:6 (emphasis added throughout). Why is the covenant that governs Christians better than the covenant God made with the nation of Israel? What are the “better promises” in the New Covenant, and what makes them better than those in the covenant made at Sinai, called “old” in verse 13?

Verse 7 notes that there was a fault with the Old Covenant, otherwise there wouldn't have been a need for the New. What was the fault?

Much is at stake on this determination because many believe that the fault with the Old Covenant was with the law, the commandments of God.

So, when verse 13 states that the New Covenant made the first “old” (King James Version, New English Bible, Phillips Modern English, Today's English Version) or “obsolete” (New King James Version, New International Version, New Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Bible), many believe the New Covenant *replaced or supplanted* the law with grace and faith. This line of reasoning leads many to conclude that observing the weekly Sabbath and annual Holy Days and tithing and distinguishing between clean and unclean meats have been rendered obsolete by the New Covenant and therefore are not necessary for Christians.

But is this true? What is the truth about the covenants, which may well be the pivotal issue that determines where and when you worship? Setting aside all assumptions, we can see that the Bible clearly shows what was the fault with the Old Covenant, what has been changed from the Old to the New and why the New is better.

## What was the fault?

The Old Covenant was an extension of earlier promises God made to Israel's forefathers: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (see Genesis 15:13-14; Exodus 2:24-25; 6:4-8). God determined, in light of these promises, to bring Abraham's descendants out of Egypt and make them His model nation (Exodus 19:5-6). Because of God's deliverance (Exodus 20:2), the nation was now expected to uphold God's way of life. After all the stipulations of the law, commandments, statutes and judgments had been given in Exodus 19-24, the Israelites responded to God's promises with a commitment to obey all that God had laid before them. The covenant was then ratified or sealed, with blood (Exodus 24:7-8).

That covenant was broken. Of course, it wasn't God who broke it. After all, God's covenant

involves a unilateral promise, sealed by His oath, which He will never break (Hebrews 6:13-18). Rather, although Israel made a commitment to be obedient to God, the nation was, in fact, unwilling to fulfill its commitment to all that God offered to its inhabitants and the responsibilities this placed on them. The history of Israel is characterized by a rejection of the covenant through a way of life contrary to God's laws.

Hebrews 8:7-8 helps us understand why Israel failed and what was the fault of the Old Covenant. “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because *finding fault with them,* God determined to make a new covenant. In this crucial indictment, God says plainly where He found fault: not with the law, not with the Ten Commandments, not with the statutes and judgments, but *with the people themselves.*”

## Paul's support of the law

Contrary to what many believe and teach, the apostle Paul—more than 25 years after the death of Jesus Christ—believed and wrote that “*the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good*” (Romans 7:12). The law is the expression of *God's character*; which is *holy, just and good*. In verse 22 he wrote, “For *I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.*”

Many assume that, once we have faith in Jesus Christ, the New Covenant means there is no more need to keep the law. Paul himself addressed this concept in Romans 3:31: “Do we then make void [Greek *katargeo*, meaning ‘destroy’ or ‘abolish’] the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, *we establish* [Greek *histemi*, meaning ‘erect’ or ‘make to stand’] *the law.*” Faith does not *abolish* the law, said Paul; it *establishes and upholds it*. No wonder Abraham is called the father of the faithful, praised both for keeping God's laws, commandments and statutes (Genesis 26:5) and for his superb example of faith.

Some 25 to 30 years after Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, Paul said he believed “all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets” (terms used for the Old Testament) and had done nothing against the law! (Acts 24:14; 25:8).

The book of Hebrews notes that God found fault “*with them,*” the nation of Israel. However, Paul readily recognized the problem was not with just the nation of Israel. Sin, he saw, was a universal problem for *all humanity*: Jews and gentiles are all under sin (Romans 3:9; Galatians 3:22).

*The Bible clearly shows what was the fault with the Old Covenant, what has been changed from the Old to the New and why the New is better.*

In Romans 7:7 Paul says that man would not recognize sin if it were not for the law. Could the fault possibly be with the law? “*Certainly not!*” he answers.

Paul knew where the fault lies. He explains that once we are given the law, which defines godly behavior, our human nature begins to rebel against God’s standards (verses 8-11). God’s law convicts man of his sinfulness (Romans 5:20), leading to our much-needed forgiveness and reconciliation through Jesus Christ (verses 6-12).

The fault is not with the law, but with human nature. Although we may *recognize* what is right and good, on our own we are incapable of fulfilling the commandment. We may know what we *should do* in our minds, but we all too easily succumb to the selfish pulls to gratify the flesh.

This was Israel’s dilemma under the Old Covenant, and it is the dilemma of all human beings. Sin is easy. It is a way of life that comes naturally to us (Romans 7:13-23).

Paul asks the universal question: “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (verse 24).

### The problem of sin solved

Back when the prophet Jeremiah had the responsibility of going to the kingdom of Judah and urging national repentance, his warnings caused the people to despise him. Again, the problem was the people.

The solution God revealed to Jeremiah for the problem of sin was the same one proclaimed hundreds of years later in the book of Hebrews: “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which *they broke*, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD” (Jeremiah 31:31-32).

Again, the problem with the Old Covenant was not the laws, commandments or terms but the fact that *the people broke it!*

God inspired Jeremiah to proclaim that a New Covenant would be established that would have a better outcome than the Old Covenant established at Mount Sinai. “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: *I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’

*for they all shall know Me* from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. *For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more*” (verses 33-34). This New Covenant would have an additional dimension, an extra ingredient. The Holy Spirit would make the difference.

The New Covenant is a continuation of the earlier promises to Abraham (Galatians 3:7, 14-16). Because Israel despised God’s covenant, He establishes it anew, or renews

## *Rather than God’s law being the problem with the Old Covenant, Jeremiah described it as the central feature of the New Covenant. The law of God would actually become a part of man.*

it (Ezekiel 16:59-60). It is a *better covenant* because it addresses the problem, or fault, of the covenant at Sinai and is based on better promises.

Notice that, rather than God’s law being the *problem* with the Old Covenant, here it is described as the *central feature* of the New Covenant. The law of God would actually *become a part of man*. God’s law being written upon the hearts and minds of man would enable him to conquer sin.

How would the law of God be written in the hearts and minds of mankind? Certainly not by man’s penmanship. Israel had already shown its inability to live up to God’s standard. In Romans 7:25 Paul gave the answer for how man, in spite of the weakness of flesh, can please God and keep a covenant with Him: “I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

The success of the New Covenant hinges on the work of Jesus Christ. Chapter 7 of Hebrews proclaims that His priesthood after the order of Melchizedek is better than the Levitical priesthood (verse 7).

How does Jesus Christ work with His people in writing God’s law on their hearts? We know that Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, *but Christ lives in me*; and the life which I now live in the flesh *I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20).

The importance of God’s Spirit cannot be overstated. It gives us the ability to keep God’s law through Christ working in our lives.

Paul brings out how Christ works in us in 2 Corinthians 3:3: “Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink *but by the Spirit of the living God*, not on tablets of stone *but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart*. Through God’s

Spirit the law of God is written upon the hearts of Christians.

The contrast between the covenants, made possible through God’s Spirit, is further brought out in 2 Corinthians 3:6: “[God] also made us sufficient as minister of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, *but the Spirit gives life*.” The “new” is an altogether better and more glorious administration of the same law of God (verses 8-9).

The letter of God’s law was written on tablets of stone at Mount Sinai as the first covenant was established. Sadly, that law, which reflects the very character of God, remained on the tablets of stone and did not become a part of the lives of God’s people Israel. The same thing occurs today if the Bible gathers dust on the shelf and we do not let it change our lives.

But, if we allow God’s Spirit to work in our minds and lives, God’s law—the same law written on the tablets of stone—becomes a permanent part of our lives as Christians. It manifests itself in thoughts, words, deeds and character that reflect God

### Forgiveness under the New Covenant

Romans 8:1-4 summarizes our status before God under the New Covenant: “There is therefore now *no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus*, who do not walk according to the flesh *but according to the Spirit*. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh *that the righteous requirement of the law* might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh *but according to the Spirit*.”

Through Jesus Christ we are forgiven of our sins. Our past sins are removed. We are justified (made righteous or forgiven) by grace through faith. Christ’s work does not stop there, however. Through the indwelling power of God’s Spirit our nature can be changed so we can now be subject to God’s law and uphold it.

Jesus works in us through the Holy Spirit to help us conquer sin. His New Covenant work will create a “new man” out of us,

*Continued on page E16*

# Jacob: A Third-Generation Man of God

*If Jacob, grandson of Abraham and son of Isaac, were alive today, we might call him a “third-generation Christian.” What lessons does his story hold for young people today?*

by Bruce Gore

**N**one of us gets to choose our parents before birth, nor our siblings, nor the time we are to be born, nor the land we are born into. Some are born into small families, some into large. Some are born in one country, some in another. Some were born anciently, some were born in our time.

And some are born into families that the great Creator God is working with! No one asked us about our preferences beforehand. It all just happened without our knowledge or consent.

It was the same with Jacob, father of the children of Israel. We could say that by an accident of birth he was born into a family that God had chosen and was working with—perhaps like some of us. His father, Isaac, was the son of Abraham and Sarah. God chose to work with Abraham and his descendants. Through them He would manifest His greatness and power to the rest of the world.

Isaac, Jacob’s father, was a righteous man, a servant of God. As a result Jacob’s life was blessed. His family was prosperous and always had plenty to eat and good clothes to wear. But as he grew up Jacob probably didn’t give his blessings a lot of thought. Apparently, in his younger years he was not deeply interested in the family religion. That was his father’s religion and not something he seemed to care that much about.

Jacob and his brother Esau were never very close. His dad, Isaac, spent a lot of time with Esau, and Jacob felt closer to his mother, Rebekah. His brother, being the firstborn was in line to receive the best of the family inheritance.

That concerned Jacob. One day when his brother came to him hungry and asked him for something to eat, Jacob saw a chance to barter with him for the birthright to the family inheritance.

The result was a tragic example of not-so-brotherly love. Esau’s most immediate need was to take care of his hunger, and his response was to trade away his inheritance, thinking he was about to starve anyway (see Genesis 25:27-34).

Jacob’s mother later contrived a plan to legitimize his receiving of the inheritance by instructing Jacob to ask for his aged father’s blessing while he was disguised as and pretending to be his brother Esau.

As could be expected, this caused Esau to bitterly resent Jacob—so deeply that Esau swore to kill him. Young Jacob had to flee his home and family to save his life!

## Facing an uncertain future

Put yourself in Jacob’s sandals. One day you are a young man with all your needs taken care of, the next you are hiking across a strange, barren wilderness toward an uncertain future. It quickly changes your perspective! As he lay sleeping with a rock for his pillow, Jacob heard God speak to him in a dream.

“So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: ‘I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac’” (Genesis 28:11-13). God introduced Himself to Jacob by saying He was the God of Jacob’s father and grandfather.

No doubt this young man wondered if he would ever see his home and family again. Notice what God promised him: “The land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you” (verses 13-15).

## Making a pivotal choice

God promised Jacob land, children, blessings and protection and that He would provide for Jacob and bring him back home safely someday. But He did not say that He would be Jacob’s God. That was a choice Jacob would have to make himself.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7:14 that, if even one parent of a family is converted, the children

*Jacob was born into a family God had chosen and was working with.*

*His father, Isaac, was the son of Abraham and Sarah. God chose Abraham and his descendants to work with and through to manifest His greatness and power to the rest of the world!*

of that union *are holy*. This doesn't mean that those children are born righteous or will be given salvation just because a family member is converted. The word *holy* can mean to be set apart or be different. God is saying that the children of the converted can grow into a relationship with God *just as their parents have grown*.

In the sense spoken of here, such children are set apart and different from most people. Most people in the world have been spiritually blinded by Satan and will have to wait on their calling. But not so the children of the converted. They can have their calling now!

However, God has given us all freedom of choice. He will not force His will on our life. Instead, we have to let Him know that is what we want.

### Beginning a lifelong relationship

Let's go back to Jacob's adventure. Among God's promises to Jacob was one of the most fantastic of all: "*I will be with you*" (Genesis 28:15, New English Bible). What does it mean to have God "with you"? How would it affect your life to have God with you when you are hungry, when you are job-hunting, when you are sick, when you are discouraged, when you are taking a test, when you are looking for a mate? It had a tremendous impact on Jacob's life to have God with him.

Jacob awakened from his dream with a startling realization: God was no longer just someone his father talked with; He now had come *personally* to Jacob!

Notice Jacob's reaction: "Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You'" (verses 20-22).

The newness of the relationship is evident here; Jacob does some bargaining with God. People do that sometimes when they're just learning. Only later do we learn we are in no position to bargain. After all, what can we offer God that He needs from us? We have little to offer Him; He has *everything* to offer us.

Also notice from the account the things that Jacob is concerned about at this point

in his life: something to eat, something to wear and a desire to someday return home safely. Later in life his focus would shift to things far more important.

Years later in the land of Haran, Jacob experienced a turn for the worse in his relationship with his in-laws and felt that the time had come to return home. But what kind of welcome would he receive from his brother Esau?

Once again God reassured him, "Then the LORD said to Jacob, 'Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you'" (Genesis 31:3). God



*In a dramatic vision Jacob dreams of a stairway to heaven. God told Jacob He would work with him as He had done with his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac.*

reminded Jacob of His promise: "I will be with you." God was teaching this grandson of Abraham what it meant to be told "I will be with you." That promise would make all the difference in the world.

### God works with another generation

Jacob eventually became the father of 12 sons. Joseph was one of the younger. He went through some difficult times in his life and as a young teenager was taken into Egypt as a slave. This was not a great prospect for a wonderful future, but God was with him as He had been with his father, Jacob.

"Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him

and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority" (Genesis 39:1-4).

Joseph had learned to conduct himself in a godly manner. Even when he was later falsely accused, arrested and thrown into prison, God continued with him. "But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison . . . The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the

LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper" (verses 21-23).

God continued to bless Joseph, to the point that he was appointed second in command over the powerful nation of Egypt, second only in power to the Pharaoh himself.

### God is with another descendant of Jacob

God wants us to learn from the experiences of those who go before us. Many generations later, Moses, another descendant of Jacob, had learned the significance of God's protection so well that, when God told the Israelites that He might not continue with them on their journey to the Promised Land, Moses pleaded: "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known

that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth" (Exodus 33:15-16).

Moses had said, in essence, "If You don't go with us, I don't want to go!" God responded to Moses' attitude of humility, respect and love: "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name" (verses 15-17).

From these examples perhaps you can see the importance of God being with you. If you walk with Him, He will walk with you and guide and bless your path. Proverbs 3:6 tells us, "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

If you are a second- or third-generation Christian or a young person in the Church, God says you are special to Him. As He did to Jacob, He holds out to you an offer and a promise: "I will be with you!" **GN**

# God's Color Guard

*Being a member of the color guard, bearing the standard for a group, is a position of honor, courage and responsibility. You are called to help bear a standard.*

by Gary Petty

**T**he headlines besiege us with news of deteriorating national scholastic performance, a never-ending battle against crime, and political platforms that constantly bend to the whims of the newest poll. The confusion can so overwhelm that we become callous to the latest story of a child killed in a drive-by shooting, a terrorist attack or news about a sports hero arrested for taking illegal drugs.

It seems we can't read the editorial page of a newspaper or magazine without someone pointing out that society's problems stem from a lack of values and standards. Christians are quick to agree that this country needs higher standards of behavior.

Of course, ask someone to describe what he means by higher standards and the real battle begins. The quickest way to classify yourself as fanatical, inflexible or harsh is to claim that a standard of conduct should be adhered to by everybody.

Who determines acceptable Christian standards of behavior, talk and appearance? What is a standard? Is the answer simply a matter of developing a Christian dictionary of dos and don'ts and recruiting morality police to enforce them?

## What are standards?

*Standard* comes from an Anglo-Norman word that referred to a flag or banner carried into battle to supply a place for soldiers to rally. In the 15th century it took on the meaning of a "criterion" or "norm" because a person would visit the royal standard to take an authoritative measurement of weight for bartering purposes.

The person who carried the standard—the flag or banner—was called the standard-bearer. Possibly the most honored, and dangerous, position for a soldier during war was as a member of the color guard. Regiments today still have national and unit flags which they called "standards" or "colors." In days gone by the color guard was responsible for bearing and defending the standards at all cost. In battle if the colors were captured the regiment had no point of reference, and panic and disintegration could ensue.

We can apply this same concept to Christianity. A standard is a measurement of behavior, set by God, that serves as a rallying point for citizens of His Kingdom.

Isaiah was inspired to write that Christ, when He comes to establish God's Kingdom on earth,

will be the standard—the ensign, banner or sign—for nations to rally around. Isaiah encouraged those who rally around that standard now to "wait"—to expectantly look—for God (Isaiah 49:22-23).

Christians are to rally around Jesus Christ in times of crisis. He sets the standards of conduct and morality for all people.

What are some standards of conduct God has established for His people, the color guard of His Kingdom?

## Standards of sexual conduct

The sexual relationship between a husband and wife is holy and no less than a gift from God. That gift can be one of the greatest blessings, but when misused it can become one of our greatest curses.

Statistics on AIDS and other sexually transmissible diseases, abortions and pregnancies out of wedlock are staggering, but one of the worst tragedies of sexual misconduct is the cost in human unhappiness, guilt and heartache.

It isn't always easy to be a standard-bearer. You can be considered a religious fanatic for simply espousing virginity (male and female) until marriage. You can be called a bigot for claiming homosexual practices are condemned by God as sin.

Biblical instructions actually go beyond declaring some sexual practices as forbidden. God gives us instructions concerning our approach to maleness and femaleness.

This means that Christian women should maintain godly standards of modesty. As the apostle Paul admonishes, "in like manner also, [see] that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works" (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

Peter writes to Christian women, "Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God" (1 Peter 3:3-4).

These scriptures don't imply that a woman shouldn't care about her appearance or that jewelry or cosmetics are sin. But Paul and Peter teach that women should first be concerned with *godly character* and *a right relationship with God*. This

*In days gone by the color guard was responsible for bearing and defending the standards at all cost. In battle if the colors were captured, panic and disintegration could ensue. We can apply this same concept to Christianity. A standard is a measurement of behavior, set by God, that serves as a rallying point for citizens of His Kingdom.*





*During the American Civil War, being a member of the color guard—those charged with bearing the regimental flags—was a dangerous task.*

forms the basis for how she dresses and adorns herself.

The same principles apply to Christian men. They are to be standard-bearers of masculinity as created by God. This doesn't mean adopting the exaggerated masculinity of machismo, but that they should be strong and courageous as well as caring and sensitive in their support of others and following Jesus Christ's example in their treatment of their wives and children. Christian men are to uphold this standard: "Husbands, love your wives, *just as Christ also loved the church* and gave Himself for it . . ." (Ephesians 5:25, emphasis added throughout).

Christian men should guard their minds against any sexual thoughts except for the one special woman God gave him as a lifetime partner. Jesus claimed that "whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). Christian men need to be careful about sexual jokes and innuendo that show disrespect to women as the daughters of God.

It is also important that Christians understand that the sexual relationship in marriage isn't to be neglected, but sustained as a divinely established aspect of love between husband and wife (1 Corinthians 7:3-5).

### **Standards of honesty and integrity**

Old movies were sprinkled with phrases that used to mean something:

"A man is as good as his word."

"A man's word is his bond."

Unfortunately, all too often high standards have become nothing more than clichés.

What happened to the standard of giving a full day's work for a full day's pay? Or the standard of respecting another's property? Or the standard of giving full value for

money received in business transactions?

It's a paradox that we live in a world in which people cheat on their taxes, make crooked business deals and call in sick (even though they're not sick) to get a day off work, but at the same time demand higher standards.

William Bennett in his best-seller *The Book of Virtues* astutely comments: "To be honest is to be real, genuine, authentic, and bona fide. To be dishonest is to be partly feigned, forged, fake, or fictitious. Honest expresses both self-respect and respect for others. Dishonesty fully respects neither oneself nor others. Honesty imbues lives with openness, reliability, and candor; it expresses a disposition to live in the light. Dishonesty seeks shade, cover, or concealment. It is a disposition to live partly in the dark" (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1993, p. 599).

Mr. Bennett's writing brings to mind the words of Jesus in John 3:20-21: "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and

*We can either fight against Satan by teaching our children, or we can unintentionally collaborate with him by not teaching our children.*

does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they may have been done in God."

Unscrupulous people will try to take advantage of honest people, but we must rally around God's standards. We must stand in the light of Jesus Christ, repent and come out of darkness. Only the Creator of life knows the way to happy, abundant lives and gives us the standards to attain them.

Sadly, some parents have the mistaken notion that they should not teach standards

of religious belief to their children until they are old enough to make their own decisions. As a result all too many children grow up with no moral bearings, no sense of standards.

### **Family religious standards**

Regarding His ways, God commands His people to "teach them diligently to your children" and "talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). As a parent, you can be sure that Satan isn't waiting until your children are adults to teach them his ways. We can either fight against Satan by teaching our children, or we can unintentionally collaborate with him by *not* teaching our children.

Parents must establish standards of dress, music and television that are acceptable in their home. It is important that parents understand the difference between their own *tastes* and God's *standards* of right

and wrong. We should help our children develop their own personalities while ensuring that they keep within God's boundaries of morality.

This isn't easy because it means daily involvement in the lives of our children. We must listen to the music they listen to and point out what are acceptable and unacceptable standards of lyrics. It's not enough simply to condemn all their music or way of dress. We must educate them to discern between acceptable cultural fad and unacceptable evil and make

*Continued on page E11*

# The Role of the Holy Spirit

*How do we receive God's Spirit? And how does it work in the life of a Christian?*

by Ed Smith

**E**xactly what is a Christian? How does the Bible define a Christian in the most accurate sense?

The Scriptures clearly identify who belongs to Christ—that is, who we might term a true Christian. Notice the apostle Paul's teaching in Romans 8:9: "Now if anyone does not have *the Spirit of Christ, he is not His*" (emphasis added throughout). The Holy Spirit, then, is an essential aspect of the biblical definition of a Christian. Further, only those who are led by God's Spirit have access to eternal life.

Paul continues in verse 11, "But if the *Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you*, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies *through His Spirit [which] dwells in you.*"

It becomes abundantly clear that the Holy Spirit plays a major role in the lives of Christians. In verse 14 Paul clearly defines the Christian "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*" The Holy Spirit identifies us with Christ (verse 9), it makes immortality possible to human, mortal beings (verse 11), it makes possible an obedient, overcoming Christian life (verse 13), and it truly leads (guides, empowers and motivates) the sons of God. In short, God's Spirit—also called the Spirit of Christ—is what makes one a Christian, a Spirit-led follower of Jesus Christ.

If the Holy Spirit is what defines a Christian and makes one a child of God, it is most vital that we learn and understand more about that Spirit and its role.

## **A force for change**

The Holy Spirit is described in the Bible as a *power* at work in the lives of people, dealing with them and revealing more fully God and His will for mankind.

In Galatians 5:22-23 we have a description of the fruit the Holy Spirit produces in a person's life—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." The Holy Spirit is associated with God's character. It serves in the capacity of a "Comforter" or "Helper" to a Christian (John 16:7)—assisting in helping us to develop the righteousness of God.

In Romans 5:5 we read, "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit [which] was given to us." Here the Spirit is described as God's gift to us, God's love flowing to us and through us

toward others. The overwhelming and majestic truth is that God promises this to us, and we can have access to this matchless and priceless gift.

How do we receive the Holy Spirit? What will the Spirit do in our lives?

## **How to receive God's Spirit**

In Luke 24:45 Jesus "opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures." He had just explained that the Law, the Prophets and the Writings prophesied of Him, and the disciples had just witnessed the fulfillment of many of those prophecies. He explained His death and resurrection and told them that they were witnesses to these things and that repentance and remission of sins would be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (verse 46-47).

But to be able to play their part they needed something they didn't have. After all, just a few days earlier they all had forsaken Him and fled in fear for their lives. Jesus knew this and reassured them: "Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are *endued with power from on high*" (verse 49). The same writer, Luke, again picks up that admonition in Acts 1:4-5, where Christ told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2 records the miraculous giving of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost after Christ's death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit was given with mighty power to inspire and motivate the 120 disciples assembled in Jerusalem—and later that day thousands more. As Peter's first inspired sermon drew to a close, the people hearing him were "cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'" (verse 37). They wanted to be forgiven of their sins and to receive the Holy Spirit, which they witnessed at work in the lives of Christ's followers!

The same condition applies today. We all need forgiveness. We all need God's Spirit. Peter's answer to the people's question was: "*Repent*, and let every one of you *be baptized* in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; *and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (verses 38-39).

Could any instructions be clearer? To receive His Spirit God calls on us to *repent*—to change our

*If the Holy Spirit is what defines a Christian and makes one a child of God, it is most vital that we learn and understand more about that Spirit and its role.*

frame of mind, our entire outlook on life, surrendering our wills to Him. Then He tells us to *be baptized*. In Acts 8:12-22 we find that, once one repents in faith and is baptized, he receives the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands.

Notice what Paul instructs Timothy, an evangelist and Paul's "son in the faith," in 2 Timothy 1:6-7: "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." To have that sound mind—the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5; 1 Corinthians 2:16)—we must have God's Spirit.

### Christ's instruction about the Holy Spirit

We have briefly covered how God's Spirit comes into our life. But what will the Spirit do in our life? What is its role?

The apostle John was inspired to record much of Jesus Christ's description of the role of the Holy Spirit. Knowing that He would soon die and thereby leave them, Jesus instructed the disciples about the power soon to come on them. "If you love me, keep My commandments," He told them, "and I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper [the Holy Spirit is to help, strengthen, nurture us], that He may abide with you forever" (John 14:15-16).

Verses 17-18 explain that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth that would dwell in them and be with them. In verse 26 Christ said of this Spirit, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, [which] the Father will send in My name, [it] will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." The Spirit, then, would make the writing of the Gospels possible and guide Christ's followers in spiritual understanding.

John 16 records more of Christ's instruction about the role of the Holy Spirit. "It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send [it] to you" (verse 7).

### How the Holy Spirit functions

Christ showed three distinct workings of the Holy Spirit. "And when [it] has come, [it] will convict the world of sin . . ." (verse 8). When some were "cut to the heart" on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37), how had they come to be in that condition, recognizing their true spiritual state and knowing they needed help? It was through the con-

victing power of God's Spirit.

This same Spirit prompted the Ethiopian eunuch to beg of Phillip, "What hinders me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36). It brought Paul to his knees, crying out, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6). It caused the Philippian jailer, who had earlier beaten and chained Paul and Silas, to fall down trembling before them, pleading, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

Paul tells us that "the goodness of God leads you to repentance" (Romans 2:4). Through His Spirit, God helps us to see our true spiritual condition and recognize our need for repentance—to change and begin living God's way. Then we must act on that conviction: repent, be baptized and receive God's Spirit through the laying on of hands of God's ministry, as discussed earlier.

A second function of God's Spirit, as recorded in John 16:8, is to "convict the world of sin, and of righteousness." After we are forgiven of our sins, can we just go back into sin? Paul clearly explains that we must not. In Romans 6 Paul describes the transformed life of a Christian being truly led by God's Spirit. Having once served sin, we now serve a new master: God's righteousness.

"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin [until the Holy Spirit convicted us to repent and come out of sin], yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin [forgiven and paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ], you became slaves of righteousness [right doing and adherence to God's laws]" (Romans 6:17-18).

Leaving a life of sin and beginning a new life of humble obedience to God's laws marks the life of those led by God's Spirit (Psalm 119:172; 1 John 3:7-10; 5:17).

The third function of God's Spirit mentioned in John 16 is that it would "convict the world . . . of judgment." The Holy Spirit keeps us aware that "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" and that "every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Romans 14:10-11). It regularly reminds us that "each of us shall give account of himself to God" (verse 12).

How great is our loving God and Father who has made all things possible through His Son Jesus Christ! (Matthew 19:26). His work within us is accomplished through the greatest gift that could ever be made available for human beings: the power, love and mind of Christ through the Spirit of God at work in our lives. *GN*

# Color Guard

*Continued from page E9*

wise decisions on their own.

Attending weekly church services should be a family activity. Church services provide fellowship with a community of believers who can reinforce family values. Parents should teach younger children how to pray, not in nursery-rhyme prayer, but in heartfelt speaking and communicating with God. Teach them to take their worries to God in faith and that He will take care of them.

### Standard-bearers in the Bible

The story of Lot and his family, recorded in Genesis 19, is an example of a standard-bearer who allowed his judgment to be clouded by society. His family members grew so complacent with the evil around them that God had to force them to leave their environs even when they knew their destruction was imminent.

In the face of overwhelming injustice and sin, our judgment, like Lot's, can become clouded. We can begin to convince ourselves that abortion may be a viable option if you're poor, or cheating on the time card really isn't all that dishonest, or indulging in sex before marriage is okay if you really love each other. After all, we know that God will always forgive us.

Jesus showed abundant mercy to the dispossessed and disliked in society: lepers, tax collectors and prostitutes. But He had little patience with self-righteous hypocrites, people who lived an outward show of religiosity, but were not true guards of God's standards.

Christians are to be God's color guard, gathering around the royal banners of Christ as Lord and Master. Ours isn't an easy calling, but it is a great privilege. Ultimately, humanity's problems will be solved, but only when all mankind adheres to the standard of God's law when Christ reigns on earth.

It's time for God's people to take up those standards and stand by them so that the many who are lost and searching will find a rallying point and come to the knowledge of their King. Be proud to carry the banner of integrity as a good soldier of Jesus Christ! (2 Timothy 2:3).

"We will rejoice in your salvation," wrote King David many years ago, "and in the name of our God we will set up our banners!" (Psalm 20:5). *GN*

# The Holy Spirit: God's Power at Work

*Most people don't understand the working of the Holy Spirit.  
As a result, they don't recognize its power to transform our lives.*

by Scott Ashley

**A**t this time of year almost 2,000 years ago, a miraculous, momentous event occurred—the New Testament Church was founded on the Feast of Pentecost. What made this occurrence so astounding—and Acts 2 records that the circumstances of that day were truly dramatic—was the giving of God's Spirit to the followers of Jesus Christ as He had promised (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:4-5, 8).

What is this Holy Spirit that came on Christ's followers that day? Why did these things happen? What should we learn from those strange occurrences?

To understand the events, we must first understand what the Holy Spirit is and what it is not. To grasp that, we must understand what the Holy Spirit *does*.

What, then, does the Bible teach about the Holy Spirit?

## Concepts of 'spirit'

We must first consider the word *spirit* as it is used in the Bible. Just what is spirit, and what does that word mean?

Four words—two Hebrew and two Greek—are translated “spirit” in the Bible. Of these four, two are used only twice: the Hebrew word *neshamah*, which means “breath,” and the Greek word *phantasma*, which means “phantom” or “apparition.” The other two words are the Hebrew *ruach* and the Greek *pneuma*, each used several hundred times. Understanding these words is crucial to understanding the Holy Spirit.

*Ruach* means “breath, air; strength; wind; breeze; spirit; courage; temper; Spirit” (W.E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1985, p. 240). Of the 378 times it is used in the King James Version, it is translated “Spirit” or “spirit” 272 times, “wind” 92 times, “breath” 27 times and in other ways 27 times. *Ruach* is used similarly in most other Bible versions.

The concepts of “wind,” “breath” and “spirit” were all related in biblical thought and language. We see these intertwined in the use of *ruach* in Ezekiel 37, which describes a great multitude of people being resurrected and restored to physical

life to understand God's truth. In this fascinating account, what is even more extraordinary is the way *ruach* expresses the connection of these ideas. To illustrate, *ruach* is inserted below wherever it appears in this passage.

“The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit [*ruach*] of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones . . . He said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: ‘Surely I will cause breath [*ruach*] to enter into you, and you shall live.’” . . .

“So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath [*ruach*] in them. Also He said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath [*ruach*], prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath [*ruach*], ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Come from the four winds [*ruach*], O breath [*ruach*], and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’” So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath [*ruach*] came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

“Then He said to me, . . . ‘Prophesy and say to them, . . . ‘I will put My Spirit [*ruach*] in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it,’ says the LORD” (Ezekiel 37:1, 4-5, 7-11, 14).

Here we see *ruach* translated three ways in one chapter: Spirit (referring to God's Spirit), breath and wind.

## 'Spirit' in Greek

What is the meaning of *pneuma*? This word “primarily denotes ‘the wind’ (akin to *pneo*, ‘to breathe, blow’); also ‘breath’; then, especially ‘the spirit,’ which, like the wind, is invisible, immaterial and powerful” (Vine, p. 593). It is used 385 times in the King James Version and is usually translated “Spirit” or “spirit.”

Look at *pneuma*. We can see that Greek root in several modern English words such as *pneumonia*,

*What is this Holy Spirit that came on Christ's followers that day? Why did these things happen? What should we learn from those strange occurrences? To understand the events, we must first understand what the Holy Spirit is and what it is not.*

which is an acute infection of the respiratory system; *pneumatic*, referring to something powered by air pressure; and the science of *pneumatics*, which studies the properties of air and other gases. All of these have to do with air, breathing, wind or being powered by air. When you breathe, what is your body doing? It is creating wind going into and out of the body; breathing is simply creating wind on a small scale.

*Pneuma* is the equivalent of the Hebrew *ruach*. In Luke 4:18, where Christ read from Isaiah 61:1, the account substitutes *pneuma* for the Hebrew *ruach* in referring to “the Spirit [*ruach/pneuma*] of the Lord.” The Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (known commonly as the Old Testament) prepared in the third and second century B.C. and used in the time of the early Church, translated *ruach* as *pneuma* (Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, 1992, p. 1185).

#### Connected concepts

We see the same connection between spirit, breath and wind continued in the New Testament. Although the Greek (unlike the Hebrew) has a different word for wind (*anemos*), *pneuma* and its related verb *pneo* are translated “breath” (2 Thessaloni-

ans 2:8; Revelation 11:11), “wind” (John 3:8; Acts 27:40) and “blow” (Luke 12:55).

Jesus Christ made this connection Himself. Without the understanding of this background, details of the incident in which Jesus appeared to His followers after His resurrection are puzzling. After

***The Holy Spirit and power are synonymous. That holy power enabled Christ to perform His mighty miracles. The Holy Spirit is the very presence of God’s power actively working in His servants.***

Jesus showed them the wounds in His hands and side, verifying that He had indeed been raised from the dead, John records that Jesus said: “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, *He breathed on them*, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit [*pneuma*]’” (John 20:21-22).

Earlier Christ had told them He would send them a “helper” and a “comforter,” the Holy Spirit. Here He repeats that promise. He also demonstrates *the nature of the Spirit* that He would send: It would be *like a breath, like a wind*, something they couldn’t see, but they would be influenced by its power.

And this is indeed what happened.

#### Dramatic evidence of God’s Spirit

In Acts 2 we read of the fulfillment of th

promise that the Holy Spirit would come to them. “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a *sound* from heaven, *as of a rushing mighty wind*, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to

them divided tongues, as of fire and one sat upon each of them. *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit* and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).

The *sound* that accompanied the giving of the Holy Spirit was that of a *rushing, mighty wind*—not the sound of a trumpet or a shout, sounds used elsewhere in the Bible in describing miraculous events (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16). The sound was of *wind*, again demonstrating the connection between wind and spirit.

Why does this account describe the *sound* of wind, but not the wind itself? Apparently they *heard* a powerful sound akin to a tornado, typhoon or hurricane but didn’t experience the *force* of the wind; there was no debris flying through the air, no roofs being blown off. Why wasn’t there

## CONFUSION ABOUT THE TRINITY TEACHING

Many assume that the Holy Spirit, along with God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son, form what is commonly known as the Trinity. This traditional doctrine expresses a belief in one God who exists in three distinct but equal persons.

Did this doctrine originate in the Bible or in the early Church? The *New Bible Dictionary* answers: “The term ‘Trinity’ is not itself found in the Bible. It was first used by Tertullian at the close of the 2nd century, but received wide currency and formal elucidation *only in the 4th and 5th centuries*” (Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., 1996, p. 1209, emphasis added). The word *Trinity* didn’t come into common use until several centuries after the last books of the Bible were completed.

But do people understand what the Trinity means or what it is? Obviously not.

A.W. Tozer, in his book *The Knowledge of the Holy*, writes that the Trinity is an “incomprehensible mystery” and that attempts to understand it “must remain forever futile.” He even states, “The fact that it [the Trinity] cannot be satisfactorily explained, instead of being against it, is in its favor” (Harper & Row, New York, 1961, pp. 17, 23).

*Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, in its article on the Trinity,

concedes that the Trinitarian concept is humanly inexplicable: “It is admitted by all who thoughtfully deal with this subject that the Scripture revelation here leads us into the presence of a deep mystery; and that all human attempts at expression are of necessity imperfect” (Moody Press, Chicago, 1966, p. 1118).

Charles Hodge, a Protestant thinker who trained thousands of ministers in the 1800s, described the Trinity as “mysterious” and “out of analogy with all other objects of human knowledge.” In other words, the doctrine of the Trinity is totally unlike anything else God created or unlike anything else we humans can understand. While promoting belief in the Trinity, Hodge admits that “no such doctrine as that of the Trinity can be adequately proved by any citation of Scriptural passages” (*Systematic Theology*, abridged edition, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1988, pp. 166, 168).

Why is the concept of the Holy Spirit as a third person of a supposedly triune Godhead so difficult to grasp or explain? Because the Bible does not teach it! One cannot prove something from the Bible that is not biblical.

—Scott Ashley

an actual wind? Because the wind needed to make that sound would have been *incredibly destructive*, demolishing buildings and injuring people. God's Spirit isn't destructive. That would have distracted from or overshadowed the positive miracles that took place there that day. Thus there was sound loud enough to be heard throughout Jerusalem (verses 5-6), but not a wind of corresponding force in the house in which they had gathered.

These are some of the concepts involved in the words translated "spirit" in the Bible. They do revolve around wind, breath and spirit, but not around the Holy Spirit as a *specific person*. This becomes more clear as we examine what this Spirit would do in the lives of those who received it.

What did Jesus Christ say about this Spirit? What would it do or give to those who received it?

In Acts 1 we read of another of Christ's appearances to His followers after His resurrection. A vital question burned in their minds: "Lord, will You at this time restore

the kingdom to Israel?" (verse 6). Jesus then refocused their thinking from when He would return to the mission He had in store for them: "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. *But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come*

***Jesus Christ said His followers would "receive power" when the Holy Spirit came upon them, and directly connected with that power would be their work of being witnesses of Him.***

*upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"* (verses 7-8).

Jesus Christ said His followers would "receive power" when the Holy Spirit came upon them, and *directly connected with that power* would be their work of being witnesses of Him, starting in Jerusalem, then spreading throughout Judea and Samaria and ultimately to the ends of the earth. The book of Acts records the beginning of that mighty work with Christ's followers receiving the Holy Spirit

on the Feast of Pentecost. Then, empowered by that Spirit, they went out proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom.

Christ made it clear that the Holy Spirit is connected with *power*. The Greek word translated "power" is *dunamis*. It is translated "power," "mighty work," "strength,"

"miracle," "might," "virtue" and "mighty." It is the same Greek root from which we get modern English words like *dynamic*, which means active, forceful and energetic; *dynamo*, which is a device for generating electric power; and *dynamite*, which is an explosive of great power, energy and force. These give us a sense of the power that would result from the Holy Spirit being given to the early Church.

Writing to his fellow minister Timothy, Paul describes the Spirit given to the Church: "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God [His Spirit] which is in

## WHY IS THE HOLY SPIRIT CALLED 'HE' AND 'HIM'?

Many people assume that the Holy Spirit is a personal being based on references to that Spirit as "he," "him" and "himself" in the Bible. This confusion arises because of the use of gender pronouns in the Greek language in which the New Testament was written.

Greek, like the Romance languages (Spanish, French, Italian and others), uses a specific gender for every noun. Every object, animate or inanimate, is referred to as either masculine, feminine or neuter. The gender is often arbitrary and unrelated to whether the item is indeed masculine or feminine. For example, in French *livre*, meaning "book," is referred to in the masculine sense, as a "he." In German *mädchen*, a maid or young girl, is referred to by neuter articles, as though she were an "it."

In the English language, nouns that aren't specifically masculine or feminine are referred to in the neuter sense, as "it."

In Greek both masculine and neuter words are used in reference to the Holy Spirit. The Greek word translated "Helper," "Comforter" or "Counselor" in John 14, 15 and 16 is *parakletos*, a masculine word, and thus is referred to by the pronouns "he," "him," "his" and "himself" in those chapters. Because of the masculine gender of *parakletos*, those pronouns are technically correct in Greek, albeit misleading when translated word for word into English. But the supposition that the Holy Spirit is a person to be referred to as

"he" or "him" is incorrect.

The word *pneuma*, usually translated "spirit" but sometimes "wind" and "breath," is a grammatically neuter word and in Greek is referred to by such neuter terms as "it," "its" or "itself."

When the King James Version was translated, the doctrine of the Trinity, the source of the popular lay perception that the Holy Spirit is a being, had been in place for more than 1,000 years. The translators of that version almost always changed the pronouns when referring to the Holy Spirit (*pneuma*) to "he," "his" and "himself" from the original Greek pronouns "it," "its" and "itself" (see John 16:13-14; Romans 8:26).

In a few passages the King James Version handles these pronouns as they should have been translated. Romans 8:16, for example, reads: "The Spirit *itself* beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Some other places in the KJV where *pneuma* is correctly referred to by the neuter terms "it" or "which" are Matthew 10:20; Luke 8:29; 9:39; John 1:32; and 1 Peter 1:11.

Later English translations of the Bible generally followed the lead of the King James Version in referring to the Holy Spirit as masculine rather than neuter. Thus the Holy Spirit is almost always referred to as "he" or "him" in modern versions. This reflects not linguistic accuracy but the use of gender in the Greek language and the doctrinal bias of Bible translators.

—Scott Ashley

you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a *spirit of fear*; but of *power [dunamis] and of love and of a sound mind*" (2 Timothy 1:6-7).

God's Spirit is not a spirit of wanting to hide, to pull back, to cower in fear and shame. It is the opposite: a spirit of *power*—of activity, energy, dynamism—and a spirit of deep, godly love and a sound, rational, self-controlled mind.

### The Spirit of power at work

That Spirit enables us to be like Jesus Christ, to have the same power available to us that Jesus Christ had in Him. Luke 4:14-15 describes that power at work in His ministry: "Then Jesus returned in the *power [dunamis] of the Spirit* to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all"

In Acts 10:38 Peter sums up Jesus Christ's ministry, showing that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth *with the Holy Spirit and with power*; who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, *for God was with Him.*"

We see here that the Holy Spirit and power from God are synonymous. That holy power enabled Christ to perform His mighty miracles of doing good and healing during His earthly ministry. The Holy Spirit is the very *presence* of God's power *actively working* in His servants (Ephesians 2:22; Philippians 2:13).

The power of the Spirit wasn't exclusive to Jesus Christ or the apostles. This power was available to *all* members of the Church, and they were to use it. Paul wrote to the church in Rome: "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope *by the power of the Holy Spirit*" (Romans 15:13). He goes on to describe what this power of the Holy Spirit would enable them to do and become: "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are *full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another*" (verse 14).

Paul said that this same power enabled him to preach the gospel. In verse 19 he writes of the things Christ had accomplished in him "in mighty signs and wonders, *by the power of the Spirit of God*, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."

In 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 Paul writes that his "speech and . . . preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, *but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*

[*dunamis*], that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men *but in the power [dunamis] of God.*" Other verses, such as Luke 1:17, 35, Romans 1:4 and 1 Thessalonians 1:5, similarly discuss the connection between the Spirit and power.

### The Spirit of revelation

God also provides another kind of power through the Holy Spirit. "But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed them to us *through His Spirit* . . . No one knows the things of God except [by] the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit [which] is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-12).

Paul tells us here that God, through His Spirit, is the source of divine revelation. That Spirit is the power by which humans can understand and grasp spiritual concepts and principles revealed in God's Word.

Not everyone can fully or accurately grasp spiritual things without God's help. First God must call us (John 6:44; 1 Thessalonians 2:12), then He gives us spiritual comprehension through the Holy Spirit

## *God's Spirit is the source of divine revelation, the power by which humans can understand and grasp spiritual concepts and principles mentioned in God's Word.*

working within our minds to help us understand.

Not only does God's Spirit help us to understand His Word, but it inspired the original writers of the Bible. Referring to the prophecies and teachings recorded in the Hebrew scriptures, the apostle Peter wrote that "prophecy [inspired teaching] never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Peter 1:21).

### Continued understanding through the Spirit

Before His death Jesus told His disciples that this process would continue, that God's Spirit would help them see and understand things they had never seen or understood before. Christ told them that He would leave, "but the Helper, the Holy Spirit, [which] the Father will send in My name, [it] *will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you*" (John 14:26).

God's Spirit did exactly what Christ said it would. The disciples grew in spiritual understanding, and with that understanding the four Gospels were written. The disciples did not take copious notes as they followed Jesus, writing down everything He said. Nor did they begin writing immediately; apparently the four Gospels were written over several decades beginning about 20 years after Christ's death.

Two of the Gospel writers, Mark and Luke, weren't even among the original 12 disciples chosen by Christ. They apparently wrote their accounts based on the eyewitness testimony of the disciples and others who saw the events recorded in the Gospels. God's Spirit "brought to remembrance" the things Jesus Christ had said and done, guiding the disciples to later understand their significance and record these things for us.

It is evident to the reader of those accounts that the disciples lacked spiritual understanding *while these events were taking place*. It wouldn't have been useful for them to write the Gospels then. It wasn't until years later, after they had received God's Spirit and been converted, that they came to understand the significance of Christ's teachings and wrote down that understanding. Just as God inspired the

writers of the "Holy Scriptures" (2 Timothy 3:15-17), so He inspired the apostles, through His Spirit, in their writings.

The example of Peter's powerful sermon in Acts 2 compared with his earlier denial of Christ shows how effectively the Holy Spirit worked in the life of this apostle—not to mention the other disciples who equally lacked conviction and understanding before the coming of God's Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

"Bring to remembrance" also has to do with the work of God's Spirit in the individual; there is still need for its work in our minds. We are exhorted to read and study the Scriptures for knowledge of God's truths and way of life. Then, as we go about our lives, God's Spirit dwelling in us leads and guides us, bringing to remembrance the principles and laws from God's Word we need so we can make right choices.

### Growth in understanding over time

Jesus Christ said that the Holy Spirit

would “teach [His disciples] all things.” That process wasn’t instantaneous; it took place over years. Just as we do, they learned as they went, gradually beginning to see and understand things they had never comprehended before.

But it took time. It was years before they realized that gentiles, too, could be saved and take part in God’s Kingdom. Then it took several more years before they understood that gentiles didn’t have to be circumcised to be saved. More years passed before they realized that Jesus Christ wasn’t going

### *God’s Spirit leads to transformation. Added spiritual understanding, revelation and power lead to something else in the lives of those given God’s Spirit: change.*

to return in their lifetimes. They never did understand *when* Christ would return—just that He *would* come back, and that they needed to be spiritually ready.

God’s Spirit taught them all these things. It gave them understanding that they had never had—understanding that would be revealed to them supernaturally from God through the power of the Spirit.

That process continues with us. At conversion, when we receive the Holy Spirit, God doesn’t teach us everything at once. We start out on the milk of the Word. When we can handle that, we move on to stronger and stronger meat, with progressively more understanding possible through God’s Spirit (Hebrews 5:12-14).

#### **God’s Spirit leads to change**

God’s Spirit leads to transformation. Additional spiritual understanding, revelation and power lead to something else in the lives of those given God’s Spirit: *change*.

Paul graphically describes the lives of those who live apart from God’s Spirit: “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21, New International Version).

Then Paul contrasts this with another way of life: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (verses 22-23).

What do these words mean? *Love* is concern for the well-being of others. *Joy*

is “a feeling or state of great delight or happiness, as caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying . . .” *Peace* is a condition of harmony and tranquillity with others, free from anxiety. *Longsuffering* is patience, which means bearing provocation, pain or annoyance without complaint. *Kindness* is showing considerate, benevolent or compassionate behavior toward others. *Goodness* is exhibiting generosity, moral excellence and virtue. *Faithfulness* is to be reliable, loyal, trusted and believed. *Gentleness* is to be kind,

polite and courteous. *Self-control* is to stay in charge of one’s own thoughts, actions and feelings.

God’s Spirit plays a vital role in our lives. It dwells within Christians, allowing a miraculous transformation to take place.

#### **The ultimate transformation**

Paul talks about this transformation in Romans 8, again emphasizing the two ways to live: “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh *but those who live according to the Spirit, [set their minds on] the things of the Spirit*. For to be carnally minded is death, *but to be spiritually minded is life and peace . . .* But you are not in the flesh *but in the Spirit*, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His . . . *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit [which] dwells in you*” (verses 5-6, 9, 11).

God’s Spirit enables the *ultimate change* to take place: for carnal, selfish humans to become converted in this life—and ultimately be transformed into God’s very children, changed into immortal, glorified sons of God! **GN**

In the March-April issue, six words were omitted from the end of the article “What Is True Sincerity?” on pages E14-E16. The final paragraph should read: “Let’s do our part to remove the wax of insincerity from our character and life, and our praise will come from God.” *The Good News* regrets the error.

# Covenant

*Continued from page E5*

enabling us to “put off the old man,” our previous self-oriented way of life (Colossians 3:5-10).

Some people hold to the misperception that Jesus Christ does everything for us. Can we sit back in our spiritual easy chair and prop up our feet? Chapter 3 of Colossians makes it plain that we are *in partnership* with Christ. Notice some of the imperative commands given to us: “Set your mind on things above . . . Put to death your members . . . Put off all these . . . Put off the old man with his deeds” (verses 2-9).

This is a tall order. To depend on *our* physical and mental abilities to do this would be hopeless. While we most assuredly cannot earn anything by our righteousness or by anything we can do, we must be in partnership with Jesus Christ our Savior—and He is the senior partner. Yielding ourselves to Christ working in us, “the righteous requirement of the law” (Romans 8:4) is fulfilled

#### **The creation’s expectation**

The New Covenant is a better covenant because God’s way of life, reflected in the Ten Commandments, *becomes a part of our very being*. People in whose lives the work of writing the law upon their hearts and minds is completed are given a promise—not just physical blessings as with the Old Covenant, but *eternal life*. Then, throughout eternity, they will reflect God’s way of life, summarized by love, in everything they think, say and do.

Paul says, “The earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God” (Romans 8:19). In this statement Paul reveals the ultimate outcome of the New Covenant. Vast numbers of sons and daughters will have yielded to Christ working in them through the Holy Spirit and will be revealed at His return.

The Ten Commandments, anciently written on two tablets of stone, will have become a permanent part of the character of those people, and ultimately they will be given the gift of eternal life. They will not sin against God, against each other or against any aspect of God’s creation. Many sons and daughters will have been brought to glory (Hebrews 2:10).

Truly the New Covenant is greater, offering a better priesthood (Hebrews 7:7), better promises (Hebrews 8:6) and a better hope (Hebrews 7:19)—that of eternal life. **GN**