



The
Good News

November-December 2003

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

What Are the Keys to a
**Happy
Marriage?**

What Is True Love? • The 'Road Map' to Peace—Doomed From the Start?
Why We Need a Weekly Rest Day • The Greatest Humanitarian Cause

Rekindle the Romance



At the marriage altar, the magnetic bond of love between husband and wife seems unassailable. But at some point those whose marriages endure recognize that lasting marital happiness consists of more than candlelit dinners and soft music. As romantic evenings give way to morning feedings, first days of school and high school graduations, those who succeed at marriage realize that “I love you” is only the *beginning* and not the end of an ever-enriching love.

If their marriage is to last, the couple eventually comes to grips with a deeper fundamental understanding of marriage. Although many books profess to have the answers for eliminating marital woes and maximizing wedded bliss, too often the foundation found in *the* most important text on this subject is overlooked. When properly understood, it provides the understanding that so many seek, but so few grasp.

What book is that? The Holy Bible. What often-overlooked understanding about marriage does it provide? *Make your husband or wife a priority.*

The Bible makes plain the importance of prioritizing our marriage partner: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” (Ephesians 5:25). “In the same way, you husbands must show understanding in your married life: treat your wives with respect, not only because they are physically weaker, but also because God’s gift of life is something you share together. Then your prayers will not be impeded” (1 Peter 3:7, Revised English Bible).

The apostle Peter highlights a fact of great significance here: God views both husband and wife as *equal inheritors* of eternal life.

A fundamental biblical principle of marital happiness focuses on husbands and wives making each other a top priority. When a couple honors each other in this way, they show respect and honor toward God’s institution of marriage and, more important, an understanding of godly love—which is outgoing concern for others.

True love hinges on deliberate, selfless serving of others. Second only to our relationship with God, giving priority to our spouse is a divine directive. All loving marital behavior originates at the spiritual, not the physical, level. It stems from a mutual love and respect for one another. There is no substitute for this mandate. For those who desire a happy marriage, this is not an option.

When the sinless Jesus Christ died for sinful humankind, He set the standard for the marriage covenant. Jesus made humanity the top priority in His life (Ephesians 5:22-33), second only to His relationship with God the Father. In like manner, husbands and wives must make their mates a top priority in their lives.

There is no greater love than sacrificing ourselves for others. Jesus stated: “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:12-13). This should especially be our attitude in marriage. Apart from an intimate relationship with God, there should be no closer relationship on earth than that between husband and wife.

The best way to breathe romance back into your marriage is by making your wife or your husband a top priority in your life. This unequivocally translates into time together—perhaps candlelit dinners, soft music and more.

Over time, candlelit dinners for two may blossom into exciting, memorable meals and school activities shared by a family that has been seeded by the mutual love of the parents. A couple’s love that’s fulfilled in a loving family inevitably sparks this heartfelt thought: “My cup truly runneth over.”

In your marriage, we hope that the articles in this issue of *The Good News* do what they are designed to do—help rekindle your romance!

—Jerold Aust

The Good News

November/December 2003 Volume 8, Number 6 Circulation: 425,000

The Good News (ISSN: 1086-9514) is published bimonthly by the United Church of God, an International Association, 555 Technecenter Dr., Milford, OH 45150. © 2003 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. Periodicals Postage paid at Milford, Ohio 45150, and at additional mailing offices.

Publisher: United Church of God, an International Association
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Scriptural references in *The Good News* are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., publishers) unless otherwise noted.

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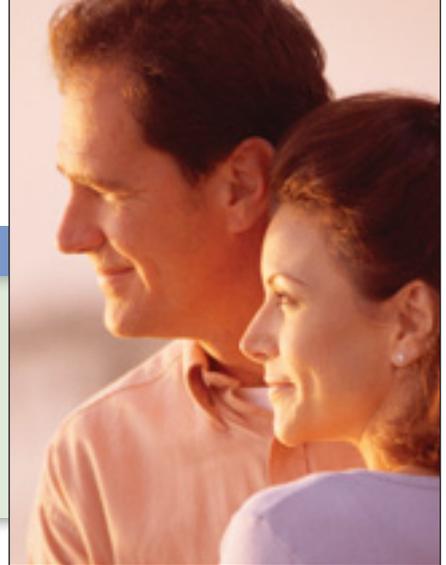
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Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement Number 1487140.

Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to *The Good News*, Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027.

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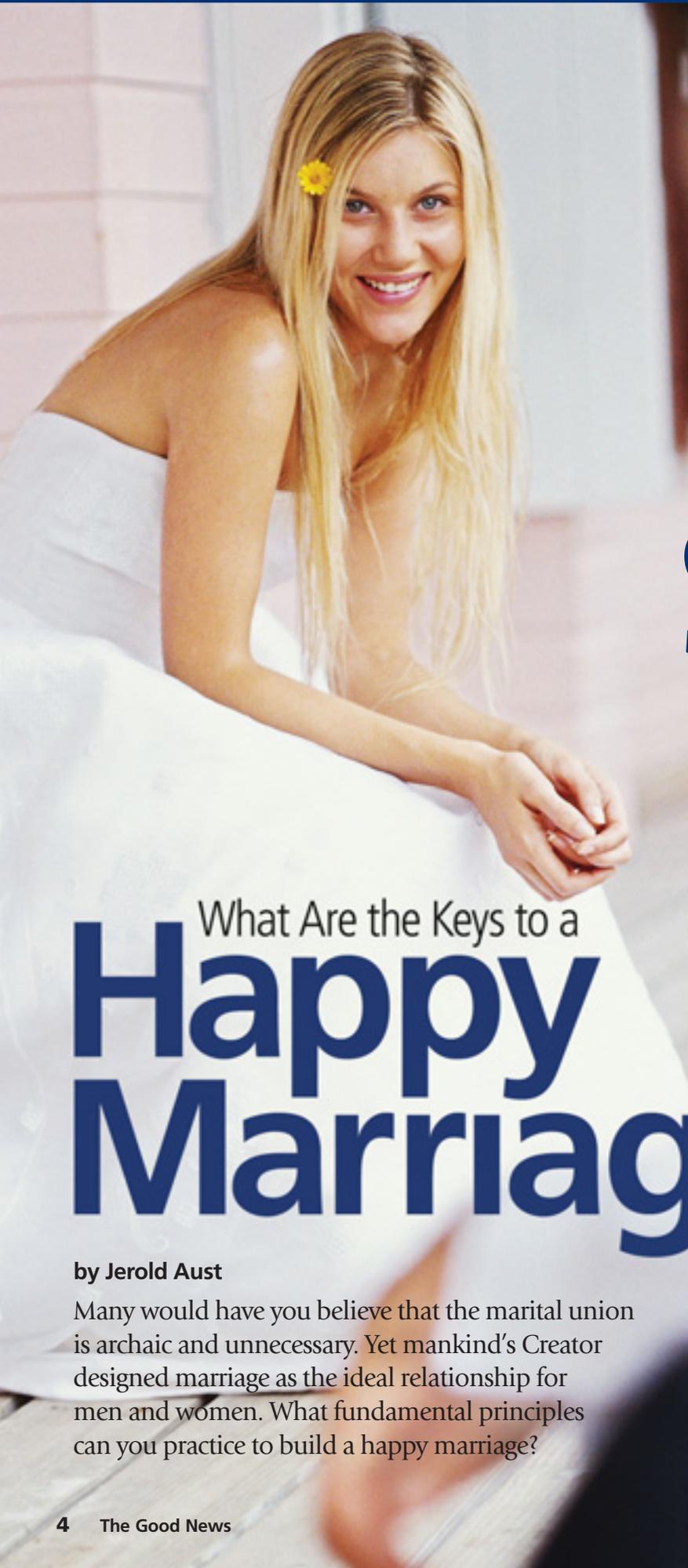


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What Are the Keys to a Happy Marriage?

by Jerold Aust

Many would have you believe that the marital union is archaic and unnecessary. Yet mankind's Creator designed marriage as the ideal relationship for men and women. What fundamental principles can you practice to build a happy marriage?

Shannon was a beautiful young woman whose striking good looks were surpassed only by her inner beauty and character. The first time Paul saw her was shortly after work one day, when fellow coworkers met to play volleyball.

Paul had played volleyball with the group for a few weeks, but he had never seen Shannon there until that particularly balmy evening. That day Paul was enjoying a more competitive game with the men. Unexpectedly, two young women walked up and asked if they might join in the next game. The men readily agreed.

When Paul saw Shannon he knew why the men had immediately agreed. His heart raced when she smiled at him. For a moment Paul couldn't think, though he instinctively smiled back. But his mind was no longer on the game of volleyball, as his unusual play indicated. Everyone except Paul seemed to know why he was making so many uncharacteristic mistakes.

But it was no mistake when Paul asked Shannon for a date. Soon they began wanting to spend more and more time together. So far it was an exciting storybook

romance. But as they began to think about life together, they each knew they wanted more than just a fleeting romance in a world of divorce and marital discontent.

Their shared belief in God led them to seek counsel from a minister about how to prepare for a lasting, happy marriage. They committed themselves to keeping God at the center of their marriage.

About a year after they met they were married. Shannon had an inner beauty that proved to be the dream of Paul's life. She was pleasant, thoughtful, supportive, encouraging and a good conversationalist who genuinely loved people.

Shannon proved to be a devoted wife and mother extraordinaire. They built a happy marriage and began to raise a loving family. And yet, as fairy-tale as this story

seems, it came to pass because of one important factor: They made God the deciding factor in their marriage. Because of that, in the good times and the bad, their love and commitment continued to grow.

God and marriage

“[The biblical term] one flesh vividly expresses a view of marriage as something much deeper than either human convenience or social convention . . .” (Richard France, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, 1985, Vol. 1, p. 280).

God is the ultimate and divine authority on marriage. After all, He instituted the marriage union between a husband and wife. As Genesis 2:22-24 tells us: “Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be

can help you rise above the petty differences so common to matrimony.

Is marriage treated too casually?

“ . . . *The LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce . . .*” (Malachi 2:16).

God established the marital union between a husband and wife, but just look at what humankind has done to it! In the United States today, nearly half of all marriages will end in divorce.

Modern societies have unknowingly redefined the institution of marriage through the media. In the name of entertainment and profits, media have encouraged the incremental dissolution of the marriage union with impunity. Movies encourage infidelity and amorality while television sitcoms bathe our children in the notion that marriage is irrelevant. What matters most, they are essentially taught, is instant gratification.

Isn't it about time human beings reestablished the integrity and sanctity of the marriage bond, the highest relationship that men and women can experience?

called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

Yet marriage is more than just a physical union. Going beyond that relationship, the apostle Paul revealed marriage as a type of an even greater spiritual relationship (see “The Ultimate Goal of the Marriage Union”).

God knew perfectly well that the union of a husband and wife requires a certain level of sacrifice and service for it to work well. Yet there is a *divine* purpose for building a happy or happier marriage. Knowing that purpose

Isn't it about time human beings reestablished the integrity and sanctity of the marriage bond, the highest relationship that men and women can experience?

A March 2003 PBS special titled *Marriage—Just a Piece of Paper?* questioned whether the integrity and sanctity of marriage should be reestablished. To answer it, the program presented a series of alarming facts.

John Witte Jr., professor of law and ethics and director of the Law and Religion Program at Emory University, insightfully analyzed marriage as a piece of paper, yes, but a crucially important one.

“Marriage, of course, is just a piece of paper,” he explained. “. . . But a lottery ticket is also just a piece of paper, and when it has a winning number on it that piece of paper is worth a lot. A little document that you sign, which is a mortgage contract that has thirty years of obligations that you have to discharge before you can own your home outright, is also just a piece of paper. It’s what the paper signifies.

“What that piece of paper represents . . . is a bundle of rights, responsibilities, privileges, and immunities that these two parties, this couple, have vis-à-vis each other and vis-à-vis the community. And the children that come from your union receive as a matter of course, by reason of being your children, constitutional rights of privacy, of due process, and of equal protection. They fall on you uniquely because of who you are in a marital unit.

“. . . Zoning, property, taxation, social security, and a variety of other laws are in place to turn upon the marital status of the party. What you’re buying into with that piece of parchment is a bundle of rights, a bundle of responsibilities, that are quite unique to the institution” (Katherine Anderson, Don Browning and Brian Boyer, editors, *Marriage—Just a Piece of Paper?*, 2002, p. 410).

In spite of this, how do many people look at marriage? Some couples live together before they take a chance on marriage. This has become a social norm. Some call their first marriage a “starter marriage” or an “icebreaker marriage.”

Fifty years ago anyone discussing “starter marriages” or “icebreakers” would’ve been ostracized. Not so today. Today’s couples choose cohabitation and “icebreakers” without batting an eye. Anyone who shows

The Ultimate Goal of the Marriage Union

The five points in this article for building a happy marriage deal with the relationship in a mental and emotional sense. But there is more to this physical union than what is commonly experienced. Whether one marries or remains single, God wants us to understand there are *spiritual implications* to the marriage relationship.

The marriage union has an ultimate purpose that few understand. The apostle Paul gave us a glimpse of this truth when he wrote: “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 5:31-32).

In the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ reveals that in the future, at His return to earth, He will marry the Church—the believers who have been faithful to Him and His Word. “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife [the Church] has made herself ready.’ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints . . . Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!” (Revelation 19:7-9).

Today’s physical marital union depicts tomorrow’s greater spiritual union—the marital union between Jesus and His Church. Some Christians are now preparing for and are actively a part of that future, permanent union. The spiritual growth of a Christian is the very *process of proving ourselves ready* for the ultimate goal of marriage to Christ, to be

one with Him, resurrected to spirit as He is spirit (1 Corinthians 15:49-53; 1 John 3:2-3).

This is one of the underlying reasons that God instructed husband and wife to “become one flesh”—to portray the fact that we are ultimately to become *spiritually* at one with Christ and God the Father. Jesus prayed to the Father regarding His followers, “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one . . .” (John 17:22-23).

For a man and woman, the marriage state is modeled on the Church’s relationship to Jesus Christ. Both relationships take sacrifice as both marriage partners work to become one with each other and with Christ.

The Church of God is now betrothed to Christ, which means the Church is promised to Him as a virgin bride (Revelation 19:7). Since human beings cannot make themselves pure, we are made clean by Jesus’ sacrifice and saved by His life (Romans 5:8-9; 1 Peter 1:18-19). However, with God’s assistance through His Holy Spirit, we are still required to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12-13).

The institution of marriage between a man and a woman is a tool to teach us of the Church’s eventual marriage to Jesus Christ. That marriage will be permanently and luxuriantly happy. Now is the time to begin modeling that eternal relationship with your husband or wife today, building a happy, fulfilling and productive marriage.

disapproval or questions the arrangement is viewed as out of touch or wanting to impose his or her values and standards on others.

Considering the casual disregard some place on marriage, together with the media influence on it, what can you do to build a happier marriage? Following are some pointers.

Recognize the stages of marriage

“People who are rigid in their personality and thinking—that is, highly resistant to change—were 42 percent more likely to report a high level of conflict in their relationship” (David Niven, 100 Simple Secrets of Great Relationships: What Scientists Have Learned and How You Can Use It, 2003, p. 179).

The first point in building a happy marriage is to recognize that every marriage evolves over time. Age, experience and family impact married life significantly over a lifetime.

enter elementary school, then the teen years, and finally they graduate from high school and either go to college or enter the workforce. All of these times are different marital stages and bring about an evolution of perspective.

But it doesn't stop there. The kids grow older and marry, and the cycle continues. All of the little birds have flown the nest. With an empty nest, the parents may become grandparents and enter the autumn of their lives.

Throughout the marital stages—as newlyweds, parents and then grandparents—couples mature and find that struggling over cultural and gender differences is not worth the time and effort. They settle together, serve and love one another, smell the flowers along the way and enjoy the more important things in life: each other, their families and God.

Used wisely, these marital stages teach us to appreciate one another, our children,

When a man and woman give themselves to each other, *they are necessarily from two entirely different families*. Often opposites will attract, which means that a couple may experience more surface differences than compatibility. Although it is good for unmarried people to seek a compatible mate, it's not possible to find someone with no differences. And that's not bad.

Consider your background and your marriage partner's. Even if you married someone who lived in the same city, chances are good that your family cultures are different in many ways. Each has various talents, food preferences, music differences and activities that family members enjoy. Acceptance and compromise help alleviate these differences. The differences should be celebrated, appreciated and used for the benefit of the couple.

If couples don't realize at first that men and women think differently, they'll soon find out. Books abound addressing those differences.

Some marriage counselors say that women are more intuitive while men are more focused on the depth of an issue. Marriages can falter if couples don't understand that the way men and women think is necessarily different. God made us this way so we can capitalize on our differences, making of two separate individuals one united couple—with much more strength.

Some couples catch on early that their various differences can blend and become great strengths. They use their differences wisely. Instead of fighting and struggling to make each other over in their own image, they take full advantage of their combined talents and abilities.

The good results in such marriages can be exponential and may play out in successful business and social opportunities. Embracing the differences between a husband and wife—indeed celebrating them rather than competing with one another—is a wise strategy.

Seek fulfillment in your spouse and you will find it. Seek *utopia* and you will be looking forever!

Where does friendship fit?

“For three out of five people, best friends were thought to be more supportive, more open in communication, and the source of stronger feelings of affection than [other] relationship partners” (Niven, p. 70).

The third point in building a happy or happier marriage is *friendship*. You love your partner, but do you *like* him or her?

Two of life's closest relationships are married couples and best friends. Some married people assume they can share more things with a friend than with their spouse. An outside friendship might look easier on the



Throughout the marital stages couples mature. They settle together, serve and love one another, smell the flowers along the way and enjoy the important things in life.

Automatic and unavoidable stages of change occur within the marriage union. When a young couple first weds, they enjoy a honeymoon period. Different couples experience marital bliss differently. Inevitably the honeymoon wears off. Then reality sets in.

After the honeymoon wears off and children begin to enter the family unit, fathers and mothers begin to adjust to a new and different set of responsibilities. Some husbands disclose that they were afraid of marriage, worried about the responsibility of taking care of a wife. Later, the new father and mother realize another, even greater, responsibility of taking care of a new baby.

Time passes, and the couple's children

our grandchildren and life itself. Rather than resist these changes life brings, savor the stages God gives in a marriage and take good advantage of them.

Celebrate your differences

“Constant attention to the weaknesses of any relationship will weaken it. Constant attention to the strengths of any relationship will strengthen it” (Niven, p. 3).

The second point important to a happy marriage is to learn to *celebrate* gender differences, not compete with them. When a man and woman come together as husband and wife, there might not appear to be great differences to deal with. At first, love is blind. Later the couple discovers that life isn't.

surface, but when does it have to deal with the struggles that inevitably arise in a marriage? If a couple can negotiate together the struggles they'll experience in marriage, then they can also grow to appreciate their spouse as best friend.

Enjoying your spouse as both friend and marriage partner will help override many marital disagreements, whether financial or social. Couples who remain in love almost inevitably must also be good friends. They will share the ups and downs that are common within the marriage relationship.

Sharing compliments and blame

"If we can learn . . . to graciously accept some of the blame and generously share the credit, we will be contributing to a happier relationship" (Niven, p. 121).

Point four in building a happy marriage has to do with sacrifice—personal sacrifice that

humility for each marriage partner to realistically accept personal blame in an appropriate manner for his or her shortcomings and offenses. Both husband and wife should learn to show not only a supportive but also a sacrificing and healing attitude toward the other over the course of the marriage.

Personally I have found that the two most important phrases in a marriage relationship are "I'm sorry" and "Thank you." When I use these phrases easily, legitimately and realistically, things naturally go more smoothly.

You and I make our own marriage history. Try this: Share, realistically, the praise as well as the blame and watch your marriage prosper.

Remember the romance

"Satisfaction in a relationship is eight times more reliant on recent feelings and the ability to perceive improvements than it is based on the history of the relationship" (Niven, p. 86).

The fifth point is the fact that we don't outgrow the need for human companionship or the desire to enjoy a husband-wife relationship. Do you remember when you were first married? Bells rang, stars fell from heaven and hearts melted at the sight of each other. That kind of romance should be cultivated through the years. Those who cultivate romance in their marriage will surely reap a happier marriage.

Shirley weathered a strained relationship for more than 30 years. Early in her married life, she faced a tragedy. Shortly after their wedding, her husband broke his neck. For three decades she served him as a full-time nurse. They had no satisfying relationship. She was widowed at age 60. Bravely she

is the greatest gift in this life. And it can happen to you anytime" (Niven, pp. 173-174).

Age need not be a factor when it comes to romancing a husband or wife. Of course, health can restrict the romance. All the little things of life that we take for granted are exactly the kinds of things that keep romance alive—visiting, walking together, enjoying entertainment activities with one another, taking trips together, dining out. You can add your own host of other healthy activities that can either put romance back into your marriage or keep it going.

As social creatures, we need companionship—and no less so in a union between a husband and a wife. A good marriage takes sacrifice and service from both partners. These lead to the security and peace both need and desire.

Marital happiness and you

Shannon and Paul built a happy marriage. They knew that God instituted the union of husband and wife. Both understood the importance of marital stages. They celebrated their differences, turning them into relational strengths.

They not only loved one another, they *liked* each other too. They were friends and lovers. Compliments and blame were realistically shared, for they knew how easy it was to take all the credit and accept no blame. Paul and Shannon put effort into keeping their romance alive, understanding how easy it might be to take each other for granted.

If you already have a happy marriage, you likely are already doing some or all of these things. If you don't, you *can* have a happy, fulfilling marriage if you and your spouse are willing to work at it, sacrifice for it and truly serve each other.

The time to begin building a happy marriage is *now*. May your marriage be filled with perpetual bliss. May God bless you with a happy family and may you share marital happiness with many others! **GN**



All the little things of life that we take for granted are exactly the kinds of things that keep romance alive—walking together, enjoying activities with one another . . .

involves sharing compliments and blame, realistically and appropriately. *Realistically* here means to see things as they are, as objectively as possible. *Appropriately* here means fitting for the occasion.

At first these might seem contradictory, as sharing one (compliments) is positive and sharing the other (blame) is negative. But the idea here is that both are done in an attitude of true—not feigned or contrived—humility. Each must acknowledge having both strengths and weaknesses without feeling either superior or demeaned.

When you compliment your spouse, you are shining the spotlight on him or her. Giving honor that is deserved helps build a good relationship. It also takes courage and real

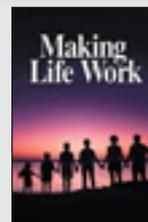
considered dating and drafted a list of requirements: The man had to be energetic, spiritual and younger than 71. He could not smoke, had to avoid facial hair, and would drink only on social occasions.

She found Jeff, a recent widower. They discovered each other at a roller-skating rink and spoke briefly. Before going home, Shirley said to Jeff that she was glad he came to the activity and hoped he'd return.

To make a long story short, the two have just celebrated their fifth anniversary together. They walk, dance, swim, travel and roller-skate. "My darling husband prepares breakfast daily and does so many thoughtful things like bringing me flowers often," says Shirley. "Loving and being loved

Recommended Reading

The Bible reveals many timeless principles for success in your marriage, friendships, career, finances and parenting—in short, in every aspect of life. Are you aware of them, and how they have led millions to experience happier, more productive lives? We've gathered much of the Bible's best advice in these and other areas of life into a free booklet titled, appropriately, *Making Life Work*—and we'd like to share a copy with you. Request or download your free copy today!



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What Is True Love?

Many young couples would say their feelings are true love. But are they? Does the Bible offer guidance to understand what true love really is?

by Jerold Aust

Imagine you were the guest on a talk show and the topic was love and marriage. How would you answer the question, “What is true love?”

Love and marriage can seem to be a complicated and sometimes iffy pursuit. About half of all modern marriages end in divorce, and many couples ignore marriage altogether in favor of living together—at least until somebody better comes along.

A job description for a husband and wife, written by the other partner, might include the following: The husband must be a sensitive lover, lawn specialist, master mechanic, carpenter, electrician, plumber and all-around handyman with the body of a professional athlete and the face of a movie star. The wife is expected to be a gourmet cook, domestic superwoman and fellow sports fan and to dress and look like a supermodel.

No marriage license comes with a descriptive set of instructions, yet because of our media addiction, modern marital expectations demand more while delivering less.

With this as starters, how in the world can

none of these statements is true.

Each of these statements represents an area many men and women assume must be met to experience marital happiness. But this is far from the truth. Studies conducted in the last few years about true love and lasting, satisfying relationships have helped us understand what works in marriage and what doesn't.

Although it isn't clear what the result would be if a couple did indeed meet all these



No marriage license comes with a descriptive set of instructions, yet because of our media addiction, modern marital expectations demand more while delivering less. With this as starters, how in the world can any potential couple know what true love is, let alone find it?

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Misconceptions about marriage

Misconceptions about marriage can create a destructive approach toward a good relationship. Let's test your marital mindset with a true-or-false quiz. Consider the following actions as they relate to a happy marriage.

Couples who seem to have happy marriages:

T-F. Never argue.

T-F. Do not depend on each other.

T-F. Both want sex equally.

T-F. Always have their needs met.

T-F. Share all responsibilities equally.

T-F. Are never lonely.

T-F. Always agree.

T-F. Think alike on most things.

T-F. Always perceive the other's needs.

T-F. Always resolve their problems.

Think you knew the answers? The fact is,

criteria perfectly, research indicates that *differences* are important for marriage. They allow for individual uniqueness and present areas for relational growth, which is a necessity for bonding in marriage.

Put more succinctly, variety can be the spice of life, as the old adage goes.

Unrealistic media models

Life as we know it is not perfect. We don't get everything we want when—or how—we want it.

This is a little-known key to understanding true love. Generally, first love is often infatuation—and if it *remains* infatuation, it doesn't last. Standing at the altar, supercharged with infatuation, doesn't qualify as mature true love, though it may be a beginning. In most cases, true love has predictable cycles.

Consider the models of love and marriage that novels, television and movies provide us.

The best-selling book (and later popular movie) *Bridges of Madison County* was hailed as the love story of the century. But since when did a brief encounter that ended with the participants separating and pining for one another qualify as the love story of the century? The author and movie producers were plainly pandering to human passions.

Movies like *Titanic*, *The English Patient*, *Casablanca*, *Message in a Bottle* and *Dr. Zhivago*—all acclaimed love stories—depict couples who never married and lived together as husband and wife. In these films not one of the couples gets past the sexual or infatuation stages.

What do such movies (and books) tell us about ourselves? They tell us that we are far more interested in *falling in love* than remaining there or understanding what true love is really all about!

What are some of our common misconceptions about love? They include the following:

- A deep longing for someone and great desire to be with that person is true love.
- If love dies, you can't get it back.
- There is one and only one “soul mate” for each and every person.
- Love is all about emotional chemistry.
- If a relationship is rocky, it means you picked the wrong mate.
- If you happen to meet the right person, you will automatically live happily ever after.

All of these are dangerously misguided concepts, yet they are promoted incessantly in popular movies, music, books and television. It's no wonder so many marriages and relationships run into trouble!

Where in all these misconceptions do you find that a good marriage requires sacrifice and service on the part of both partners? Why is the truth about marriages based on true love so distorted?

Although in many cases it may serve as a beginning, infatuation is *not* true mature love. A relationship that has been neglected can be restored, as many couples can affirm. When one loses a loving mate in death, he or she might well find another and enjoy another truly loving relationship.

The chemistry that fires infatuation between two people does not always endure in marriage. And it's a myth that there is a “one and only” person in the world just right for you and that finding him or her is simply a matter of luck. When a relationship goes on the rocks, it's rarely because the husband and wife picked the wrong mate. This is adolescent thinking, taught and fostered by the media.

Infatuation versus true love

Accidentally “falling” in love is often characterized as the pinnacle of human

existence and experience. Authors, actors, scriptwriters, painters, sculptors and poets have all contributed to this mythic oxymoron.

Falling is an *accident*, not a mature choice. Perhaps that's why the root meaning of *infatuation* is "to be foolish or stupid." There's a vast difference between infatuation's temporary chemistry and the mature, true love that should develop over time between a couple. While infatuation may be a first step, it must grow through constant, sensitive, outgoing attention to become lasting true love.

Falling in love can be described in the

There's a vast difference between infatuation's temporary chemistry and the mature, true love that should develop over time between a couple. While infatuation may be a first step, it must grow through constant, sensitive, outgoing attention to become lasting true love.



vernacular as "puppy love" rather than true love. And regrettably, age is no stranger to this type of infatuation.

As much as one might wish to think that his or her infatuation is the real thing, we should understand that infatuation is not unique to any one person or experience. It has happened to people the world over and from time immemorial (see "Infatuation and the Human Body," page 10).

After infatuation, then what?

Infatuation is but a beginning. The pleasurable feelings it creates are the Creator's way to stimulate a man and woman to grow interested in one another, which can then lead them to marry, procreate and build secure and happy families. At this early stage couples make their relationship a priority; later they learn to accept differences and show each other appreciation.

When infatuation ends and when the honeymoon is over, often couples will face a crossroads. The journey to ever-deepening love can either really pick up or start to end. Those couples who *continue* to give careful attention to each other will enjoy and appreciate their marriage trip to ongoing happiness. Those who don't will find they have little motivation to maintain their relationship once the infatuation wears off.

A number of good books contribute immensely to accurately identifying true love. They delineate the stages of marriage,

the differences between sexual attraction, infatuation, connectedness and the mechanics that provide for true love. However, they do not fully define true love as it is presented by God in the Bible.

True love comes from God. His Word describes Him as love personified. "God is love," we are told in 1 John 4:8, 16 (emphasis added throughout).

The Greek word used for that divine, godly love is *agape*. It refers to an outgoing, *selfless* love, as opposed to a *selfish* feeling or craving. (*Agape* love should not be confused with the two other Greek words translated "love" in the Bible—*eros*, which means sexual love, and *phileo*, which means to have fondness for or endearment).

While God wants us to extend His divine love to all human beings, we should apply that kind of selfless, outgoing love most of all in the closest of all human relationships—the marriage union.

Learning the meaning of godly love

Jesus Christ demonstrated how to show true love. He exemplified God's love for mankind. He showed true love through His focus on self-sacrifice, the seeking of the well-being and benefit of others at one's own expense. *That* is true love!

Christianity has long taught love, as have various other religions. However, generally people have thought that they should love only those they considered *worthy* of being loved. But this is not true godly love.

Romans 5:8 describes godly love in action: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that *while we were still sinners*, Christ died for us." God loved *all* mankind—you and me included—so much that He gave up what He loved most, His Son Jesus Christ, for our sakes (John 3:16).

He loved us not because we were lovable or worthy of that love, but because He is the personification of true love. So the greatness of godly love, true love, has been demonstrated by God Himself.

And that love is based on standards of behavior that show concern for the well-being of others over our own selfish wants and desires. God even gives us His Spirit to enable us to exhibit true godly love toward others. Through His commands and laws He defines the kind of behavior that shows love for others.

As the apostle Paul explained: "For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:9-10).

It requires humility before Almighty God to accept His definition and conditions of love: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3).

God's commandments and true love

Authors of books about love rarely understand the principle that true love translates into keeping God's commandments. Consider biblical commentator John Stott's keen analysis of 1 John 5:3: "Love for God has a second inescapable consequence, namely obedience. If we truly love God, we not only love his children, but also find ourselves *carrying out his commands* . . .

"Love for God is not an emotional experience so much as a moral commitment. Indeed, whether shown to God or human beings, *agape* is always practical and active. Love for our brothers and sisters expresses itself 'with actions and in truth,' and especially in sacrificial service (3:17-18); love for God in carrying out His commands. Jesus said the same thing about the meaning of love for Himself (Jn. 14:15, 21)" (*The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, 2000, Vol. 19, p. 175-176, emphasis in original).

Regrettably, few Bible instructors teach the seamless connection between God's commandments and true love because they've been taught and influenced to believe that God's commandments are largely arbitrary or outdated in our modern world.

Satan the destroyer, the avowed enemy of humanity and of marital happiness, is the primary opponent of God's true love (1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Revelation 9:11; 12:9). One of his purposes is to destroy the family unit, and in so doing to wreak havoc

on human relationships and societies.

Symptomatic of this are increasing rates of divorce and couples foregoing marriage altogether in favor of simply living together. But without true love in a marriage (based on keeping God's commandments, 1 John 5:3), family happiness has at best a shallow and fragile root system.

However, there is hope. God's Spirit can enlighten our minds and warm our hearts toward Him and toward other human beings.

Realistically, those who experience true love also experience occasional disagreements, occasionally don't have their needs met, are sometimes lonely, may disagree on important issues and don't always resolve their problems. That's part of life between two imperfect human beings.



And it certainly can improve our marriage relationships. Through His Spirit, God conveys His true love to a husband and wife. (If you would like to learn more about the transforming power of God's Spirit, request our free booklet *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* or contact our

office nearest you. Also, we offer free ministerial counsel if you so desire.)

You can enjoy true love

True love, like life itself, experiences normal, predictable stages. The attraction between a man and a woman which God put within us can lead to the start of a strong emotional bond between husband and wife. Beyond this stage lies the joy of sacrificing, serving and sharing life and a spiritual

bond together. Ultimately, true love leads to developing a lifelong friendship with our mate.

Realistically, those who experience true love also experience occasional disagreements, will desire romance at different times, occasionally don't have their needs met, are sometimes lonely, may disagree on important issues,

sometimes misperceive their partner's needs and don't always resolve their problems. That's part of life between two imperfect human beings. That's marriage. That's reality. And resolving these differences successfully is part of what makes up true, lasting love.

True love grows through caring for each other in a selfless, and sometimes self-sacrificing, manner where each spouse freely gives of himself or herself. When we are on our deathbeds, will we wish that we had spent more time trying to make money rather than having spent more time with our mates and families? Far more often, the regret is for not having placed enough emphasis on our family relationships.

Husbands and wives, tell your beloved that you love him or her—*daily*. And in other ways communicate your love to each another. Cultivate your relationship with your mate. Then thank God for giving you a loving partner to share your life.

Remember that God is the author of true, unselfish love. If you want true love, go to God for it, for He can give you the power and desire to put into practice the little things in marriage that constitute true love. He can help you develop more outgoing concern for the needs of your husband or wife rather than concentrating solely on your own feelings and desires.

If you do, you *can* enjoy true love. True love comes to those who are willing to make their personal wants and desires secondary in giving of themselves to their beloved, lifelong marriage partner.

Don't expect the fullness of true love overnight. True love grows as a husband and wife learn how to better meet the needs and desires of the other. True love matures through living experiences.

May your marriage reap the lasting benefits of true love! **GN**

Infatuation and the Human Body

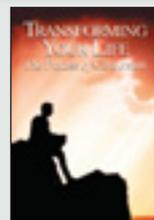
Infatuation is an obsessive focus on one particular person. How does it work from a scientific point of view? The neurobiological effects of infatuation have been researched and identified. Dr. Pat Love writes:

"The infatuation syndrome is truly an example of Mother Nature at her finest. All the predictable behaviors that accompany that falling-in-love experience are brought on by a naturally orchestrated, drastic change in brain chemistry. When you meet a strong candidate for love, your limbic system is flooded with a powerful chemical concoction—so powerful that scientists now believe that the euphoria of infatuation is a bona fide, altered state of consciousness. It is induced by the action of phenylethylamine (PEA), which is a naturally occurring, amphetamine-like neurotransmitter. When we come into contact with a person who highly attracts us, our brain becomes saturated with a love cocktail comprised of PEA and several other excitatory neurotransmitters, including dopamine and norepinephrine.

"PEA, known as the 'love molecule,' works in concert with dopamine and norepinephrine and triggers incredible side effects. Symptoms include a delightfully positive attitude, increased energy, decreased need for sleep, and loss of appetite. Increased concentrations of dopamine in the brain are associated with euphoria. Norepinephrine, which is chemically derived from dopamine, is generally associated with exhilaration, excessive energy, and other excitatory responses" (*The Truth About Love: The Highs, the Lows, and How You Can Make It Last Forever*, 2001, pp. 28-29).

Recommended Reading

What is love all about? How can you better understand love and how to show true love in your life? Request or download our free booklet *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* to learn how God defines love and how He empowers us to learn to love others as He loves us. And to learn how to put His love into practice in many aspects of life, request your free copy of the booklet *The Ten Commandments*, God's guiding principles for showing love toward Him and toward our fellow man. The time is coming when all humanity will learn to live by those divine laws. Why not get a head start now?



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'Mr. Smith' Takes on Washington

Perception is reality, at least in the minds of many people. In the developing world the common perception of America's foreign policy often is tragically contorted. The problem is compounded by refusal to consider the real source of many nations' problems.

by Melvin Rhodes

His name was Smith, an unusual name for an African. The young man was just 18 years of age. We were talking outside the royal palace in Kumasi, ancient capital of the Ashanti kingdom in what is now the Republic of Ghana.

I had taken a group of North American visitors to see the palace. As I had seen it a number of times before, I suggested they go inside for a tour, while I stayed in the van. Young Mr. Smith approached the car and asked me to buy some of his artwork—greeting cards that he had made himself, each with its own Ghanaian design. Each card was 2,000 cedis, Ghana's national currency—or four cards for less than one U.S. dollar at the current rate of exchange. I bought a few from him.

I remarked that one of the students who had gone into the palace was also called Smith—Logan Smith, a 22-year-old United Youth Corps volunteer from Washington state. I asked "Smith" how he got his name.

"My father was a goldsmith, so he called me Smith. Smith is my first name."

Africa's postcolonial leaders betrayed their own people. The men universally revered as the liberators of the continent were, in fact, the ones who enslaved their own peoples to serve their own selfish ends.

He told me that he was a student in a remote village not far from Elmina, a coastal town famous for its Portuguese-built slave castle, a major tourist attraction. I commented on the fact that Kumasi is a long way from Elmina.

He said his father had died and his mother was a market woman in Kumasi. Smith came to Ghana's second city every summer to try to sell cards to raise money for another year of education. "They won't even allow you to enter school unless you have one and a quarter million cedis to give them," he told me. That's less than 150 U.S. dollars, but it's a few months' wages



Uganda's Idi Amin, left, and Charles Taylor of Liberia proved to be two of Africa's worst postcolonial despots. Both were forced from office after terrible abuses of power.

for the average Ghanaian—even more for somebody selling cards for a pittance.

"Americans are trying to take over the whole world"

He asked me where I was from. "From America," I said. He then asked me a few questions about America. Finally, having gained my confidence, he asked me: "What

do you think of the Bush administration?"

Cautiously, I responded with: "Well, there are many facets of the administration. Which aspect of the Bush administration are you asking me about?"

He leaned forward and told me. "I've been reading this paper from Iraq," he said. "The Americans, they are trying to take over the whole world. They want Iraq for its oil. Just today, Charles Taylor said that America wants Liberia for its diamonds." (Charles Taylor was president of Liberia until mid-August when he left for exile in Nigeria under U.S. pressure. Western press sources reported that he



indeed made this accusation.)

Smith expressed the opinion that America would not stop until it had taken over the whole world.

I asked him if he was a Muslim. "No, I'm a Christian," he responded.

I tried to defend the United States, but his mind was made up. To him, America is an evil power determined to take over the world, conquering all in its wake.

Losing the propaganda war

Later I recounted this conversation to a United Church of God pastor in Ghana. The pastor, a former Muslim, related that he had recently surveyed some friends to ask them for their opinions on the continuing situation in Iraq. Five were Muslims, five were Methodists and five were Pentecostals.

The Muslims all said the United States was trying to conquer Iraq for its oil and to spread Western decadence in the Middle East. The Methodists thought that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's government was a good thing, but that the country should now be handed over to the United Nations. The Pentecostals, members of U.S.-based churches, were all supportive of the U.S. stance in Iraq.

You can draw your own conclusions

from this survey. The results were no surprise to me—clearly, Ghanaians are just as divided on the issue as are many people elsewhere, including the Iraqis, the Americans, the British and the Australians, the latter two countries the only nations that gave substantial military support to the United

would go a long way toward improving America’s reputation around the globe. Proverbs 14:34 says, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” The same entertainment industry portrays a very violent culture, creating the perception abroad that Americans are inherently violent.

(AFRC) to power. I remember it well—I was there through the revolution and the chaos that followed.

George Ayittey is a Ghanaian-born author who now resides in Virginia and works as an associate professor in the Department of Economics at American University. In his book *Africa Betrayed*, Ayittey shows how Africa’s postcolonial leaders betrayed their own people. The men universally revered as the liberators of the continent were, in fact, the ones who enslaved their own peoples to serve their own selfish ends.

He wrote a second book, *Africa in Chaos*, “to examine why Africa has been imploding and remains intractably mired in poverty” (1998, p. 24).

Note the following observations from this African writer: “Writing a book on Africa is always an extremely difficult undertaking. Not that the issues and problems defy solutions; quite often the solutions are simple and as clear as daylight. But so many extraneous factors intrude that rational and dispassionate discussions are scuttled. A book on Africa must cross racial, cultural, ideological, geographical, ethnic, religious and class lines.

“Leftist radicals tend to see a ‘racist conspiracy plot’ in every African misfortune. The colonial bogeyman has been the favorite of African governments and intellectuals. ‘Political correctness’ prevents whites from criticizing inane policies of African leaders, while black Africans often blindly defend these leaders in the name of ‘racial solidarity.’ As a result, there is much confusion about what Africa must do to overcome its woes” (ibid.).



“Leftist radicals tend to see a ‘racist conspiracy plot’ in every African misfortune. The colonial bogeyman has been the favorite of African governments and intellectuals.”

States during the recent war.

What is clear is that the United States is not winning the propaganda war. Pictures of Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein can be seen everywhere throughout West Africa—but I’ve yet to find one of either President Bush or Prime Minister Tony Blair, a reflection of popular sentiment. The same pastor explained to me some months ago that “Muslims believe the Americans are trying to take over the whole world and that Osama bin Laden will stop them.”

Perception is reality

However, I do not believe that the primary cause of the problem is America’s fault.

Certainly the United States is imperfect and could improve its reputation around the world. Popular perceptions of America come largely from its entertainment industry. Its movies, television programs and music portray and promote decadent values, giving peoples around the world the impression that all Americans are irreligious and hedonistic.

Cleaning up the entertainment industry

In the minds of many, this means that the American government therefore is violent.

And movie and TV “Westerns,” portraying Texans as they do, give outsiders the view that people from Texas are the most violent, which translates into what Smith said to me on the streets of Kumasi: The Bush administration is an aggressive, warmongering, violent administration bent on taking over the world. For its oil, mainly, since the press often mentions President Bush and Vice President Cheney’s past association with the oil industry.

Though far from accurate, these are the commonly held perceptions about America in the developing world.

Africa in chaos

But these perceptions are still not the biggest factor influencing young men like Smith.

To illustrate, I’ll quote from another Ghanaian, a man brought up in the West African nation who fled the country during the 1979 June 4th Revolution that brought the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council

Colonialism not the source of Africa’s woes

Consider his statement, “The colonial bogeyman has been the favorite of African governments and intellectuals.”

Simply put, Africa’s leaders since the end of the colonial era around 1960 have blamed all of their problems on “colonialism.” *Africa in Chaos* shows that the real problem is the modern leaders themselves. They have taken the wealth of their own countries for themselves, while their people suffered a dramatic fall in their standard of living. While Africans fed themselves adequately in the colonial era, most African nations today need food handouts to keep their people fed.

As with all propaganda, “repeat a lie often enough and everybody will believe it.” So said the father of modern propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, a leading Nazi in World War II. Blame everything on the Jews and the people will go along with the Holocaust. Blame everything on the colonialists and nobody will look at us—this is the thinking of today’s

African rulers and many Western intellectuals.

Citing David Lamb's 1983 book *The Africans*, Ayittey's introduction catalogs Africa's enormous wealth and potential: "Africa is four times the geographical size of the United States and, with its approximately 700 million people, has more than thrice that of the United States. It is a continent with immense untapped mineral wealth.

"Africa has 40% of the world's potential hydroelectric power supply; the bulk of the world's diamonds and chromium; 30% of the uranium in the non-communist world; 50% of the world's gold; 90% of its cobalt; 50% of its phosphates; 40% of its platinum; 7.5% of its coal; 8% of its known petroleum reserves; 12% of its natural gas; 3% of its iron ore; and millions upon millions of acres of untilled farmland. There is not another continent blessed with such abundance and diversity."

At independence in 1957, Ghana was Britain's richest colony in Africa, with a per capita income higher than that of some European countries. It was the world's biggest producer of cocoa and had the third largest gold deposits. Additionally, it was blessed with thriving agricultural, bauxite and timber industries. Four years later, it was bankrupt and has never recovered.

Singapore likewise gained its independence from Great Britain in 1957. The small Asian island state went from strength to strength, while its independent African sister went backwards. Why? Ayittey states the painful truth in ringing clarity. His analysis of the causes of Africa's problems is a must-read for all those interested in the future of Africa.

If I could find Smith again, I would give him a copy.

Understandable wrong conclusions

It's not entirely Smith's fault that he thinks the way he does. On film he sees Americans living a lavish, comfortable lifestyle while he is poor and cannot even afford to continue his

schooling. The reason for this disparity of income, in his mind, is that America exploits the world's poor. His view is that America steals the oil and diamonds from other countries, making Americans rich while the majority of people in the Third World live on less than one U.S. dollar a day.

To Smith this appears to be true, as many African leaders keep on saying it's true (though, I should add, not the present government of Ghana). Making matters worse is the fact that liberal intellectuals and academics in the West, seemingly motivated by embarrassment at or hostility toward their own countries' success, express the same sentiments.

Writing about the leaders, the "liberators," of independent Africa, Ayittey describes them as "crocodile liberators, Swiss bank socialists, quack revolutionaries, and grasping kleptocrats. After independence true freedom never came to much of Africa. Nor did development" (p. 7).

The second generation of leaders is even worse in Ayittey's estimation: "The second generation of military rulers, who assumed control in the 1970s, emerged from the dregs: They were more corrupt, incompetent, and brutal than the civilian administrations they replaced" (ibid.).

Their actions are reminiscent of a 3,000-year-old observation made by Israel's King Solomon: "Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning!" (Ecclesiastes 10:16). Frequently, Africa's revolutionaries in the 1970s were young men from the junior ranks of the military—often uneducated, even illiterate. They had one purpose in mind—to feed themselves, literally and figuratively.

Solomon added: "Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles, and your princes feast at the proper time—for strength and not for drunkenness!" (verse 17).

Sadly, Africa's postcolonial history has been one of repeated political instability, a seemingly never-ending power struggle with different factions constantly fighting each other for power and control. As George Ayittey points out, political correctness makes it impossible to state the obvious, even in the supposedly free nations of the West. Yet unless the truth is told, America and Britain will continue to lose the propaganda war.

I have no doubt that the next time I visit Kumasi there will be more "Smiths" standing outside the royal palace—as indeed there are outside other royal and presidential palaces around the world. The "colonial bogeyman" today is the United States. It's far easier to point the finger of blame at Washington than to look in the mirror and recognize that the problem is much closer to home. **GN**

Who's Behind The Good News?



Who's behind *The Good News* magazine? Many readers have wondered who we are and how we are able to provide *The Good News* free to all who request it. Simply put, *The Good News* is provided by people—people from all walks of life, from all over the world.

But those people have 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). That message truly is good news—the answer to all the problems that have long plagued humankind. Through the pages of *The Good News* and various booklets (also free) we show the biblical answers to the dilemmas that have defied human solution and threaten our very survival.

We are committed to taking that message to the entire world, sharing the truth of God's purpose and plan for us as taught by Jesus Christ.

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 us at the appropriate address on page 2. Visitors are always welcome.

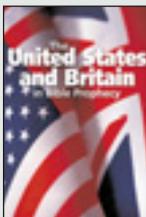


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Recommended Reading

For the last two centuries the United States and Britain have dominated the world scene with their great economic, political and military power. What's behind their meteoric rise from obscurity? And what lies ahead for them? The incredible story was spelled out in the pages of the Bible thousands of years ago! Request or download *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* to discover the astounding facts.



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World News and Trends

An Overview of Conditions Around the World

by John Ross Schroeder and Jerold Aust

Germany's new wave of anti-Americanism

Although German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder recently met with President George W. Bush and duly extended an olive branch, he first unleashed Germany's latent anti-Americanism when his position in government was seriously threatened before a national election. The disturbing factor is, however, not so much the politics of Herr Schroeder as it is much of the population's distorted view of America.

“ . . . Forsa, one of Germany's major polling organisations, found that every fifth German believes that 'the U.S. government ordered the [9/11] attacks itself.' ”

Normally conspiracy theories remain in the realm of fringe minorities. Nonetheless, the popular “Column One” feature in *The Wall Street Journal Europe* recently reported: “In Germany, however, the [conspiracy] theories have legs, and over the past few months, wave after wave of improbable and outrageous assertions have received serious hearings. A recent public-opinion poll by Forsa, one of Germany's major polling organisations, found that every fifth German believes that ‘the U.S. government ordered the [9/11] attacks itself’” (Sept. 29, emphasis added throughout).

One wonders if the effects in Germany of seeing conspiracy-theme, fictional movies made in America somehow play a role in this badly misguided thinking.

Many in Germany apparently “further believe that

the American government is in turn controlled by a Jewish world conspiracy and that Mossad [Israel's CIA] is behind the suicide bombers in Israel” (*The Spectator*, Sept. 13).

Bear in mind that these trends are not being reported by sleazy and sensational tabloids, but by veteran journalists on the scene in Berlin for highly respected newspapers and magazines. *The Spectator* in particular has made it clear that “a venomous stream of anti-American and anti-Semitic resentment has burst forth in Germany during the Iraqi crisis.”

To its credit the German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* has recently contributed 16 pages of a recent issue to debunking these preposterous conspiracy theories. Also, Germany and America recently pledged to cooperate in rebuilding Iraq. But as *The Wall Street Journal Europe* related in its feature column, “Lurking beneath the diplomatic bonhomie [or friendliness] is a suspicion that the U.S. is no longer the indispensable diplomatic partner it has been for the past half century.”

Where will this disturbing trend ultimately lead? *The Spectator* article proposed an ominous conclusion: “The German opinion polls show rapidly increasing support for the idea of a European superpower to act as a check on American ambitions. 70 per cent of Germans now favour that idea, compared with only 48 per cent a year ago.”

As late as March 30 of this year, Walter Russell Mead, a longtime American writer and commentator on international affairs, wrote: “U.S.-German relations remain today what they have been for 50 years—the cornerstone of the Western Alliance. Fix that relationship and the rest falls into place. Neglect it and the

battle of Europe gets worse” (*Los Angeles Times*).

You need to understand the vital long-term, biblical significance of crucial events now occurring in Central Europe. Those who would like to know more should write for our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. (Sources: *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Spectator*, *The Wall Street Journal Europe*.)

Significance of 31 new Roman Catholic cardinals

Pope John Paul II is 83, now with seriously failing health. He has recently appointed 31 new cardinals, mostly with clearly declared conservative views—particularly on those principles that he holds dear. Only one cardinal resides in the United States.

Some observers think one of these newly appointed cardinals could be the first black pope. Apparently Cardinal Francis Arinze of Nigeria is being seriously considered for the top papal role. According to *Times* correspondent Richard Owen, reporting from Rome, some in the college of cardinals are leaning to an African in preference to a Latin American candidate.

Pope John Paul II has certainly been a very active Polish pope, putting his personal stamp on the Vatican. The world waits to see who his successor will be. And those with insight into biblical prophecy wonder if his coming reign will impact European and Middle Eastern events in a way that would propel us into the period heralding the second coming of Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation indicates that religion will play as important a role in fulfilling end-time Bible prophecies as world politics. (Sources: *The Times* [London], *USA Today*, Atlantic edition.)

Relentless push for a European superpower

Noted feature writer Ambrose Evans-Pritchard recently raised the alarm again about the new European draft constitution. He wrote: “Valery Giscard d'Estaing bills his 263-page draft constitution as a ‘great leap forward’ in European integration” (*The Daily Telegraph*, Sept. 10).

And if adopted, indeed it will be! The article continues: “It effectively doubles the power of the European Parliament, puts the European Commission in charge of vast fields of justice and home affairs, and turns the European Court into a fully fledged supreme court with powers to rule in most areas of national life. It creates a full time EU president . . . It whittles down the national veto in roughly 40 new areas . . . It creates an EU justice department, Eurojust, with powers to launch cross-border investigations into a wide range of crimes.”

European Commission President Romano Prodi predicts that this new constitution “will catapult the EU into the global arena as a full superpower.” Apparently under its terms, the European Union will have sole authority to negotiate most treaties. What is going to happen to national sovereignty in Europe?

David Hughes, political editor of *The Daily Mail*, recently reported that “the

European Commission demanded even more powers—and one key member even spoke of the body becoming a ‘veritable government for Europe’” (Sept. 18). According to Walter Russell Mead, “France hopes that the European Union will grow into a superpower that, under French leadership, will challenge the U.S. for world leadership” (*Los Angeles Times*, March 30).

As the Scriptures clearly indicate, lust for power is a universal weakness

European Commission President Romano Prodi predicts that this new constitution “will catapult the EU into the global arena as a full superpower.”

that has dogged mankind almost since our first parents left the Garden of Eden. It is one of the chief ingredients of the downside of our human nature. And when it is expressed through the medium of dictators of powerful nations, it often leads to disastrous results—sometimes with many millions of lives lost. Witness Hitler, Stalin and Tojo in the 20th century.

You cannot afford to be unaware of where these European trends and events are surely taking humankind. For further biblical information, please request our free booklet *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* [both London], *The Los Angeles Times*.)



What brings Jacques Chirac back?

France—that is to say, French president Jacques Chirac—vehemently opposed U.S. President George W. Bush’s decision to remove Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq. Before the Iraqi war, France attempted to use its vote to block the U.S. coalition from fulfilling what the Security Council (including France) had already unanimously agreed to (Resolution 1441). President Bush chose to ignore the United Nations and did what he thought he had to do for American security. The American-led coalition quickly drove a dangerous madman from power.

Chirac attempted to garner favorable world public opinion by standing resolutely against the United States’ bid to overcome the Iraqi threat. His miscalculation backfired. France became a negative byword on U.S. television, and American consumers avoided French products.

Now the French president is back, this time

without a lot of flak. Late September headlines suggested that France could back a gradual power shift in Iraq, but on its terms. France said that it was willing to support a new UN resolution on Iraq if it calls for the actual transfer of sovereignty to the U.S.-appointed provisional government. Why is Jacques Chirac now more conciliatory?

France is one of the leaders of the European Union, a potential economic behemoth. As with any burgeoning confederation of nations, power shifts as time passes, and politicians want to be noticed and felt among equals.

Historically, France and Germany have been two of the most dominant powers on the European continent over the past few hundred years. Germany defeated France twice in the last century. Now they are brothers in an expanding European brotherhood.

Could France desire hegemony over the European Union? Could Jacques Chirac want the European nations to view him as the natural, gutsy leader of Europe? And could Mr. Chirac want the rest of the world to respect him for standing against America,

then alternately appeasing the mightiest nation on earth? Psychologically, this good-cop, bad-cop technique could help position the French president as contender for leader of the free world.

Yet even Mr. Chirac probably has no idea where his efforts to position Europe as a world competitor to the United States could ultimately lead. The Bible clearly prophesies the rise of a new European-centered superpower supported by a great religious body (Revelation 13 and 17). One already exists; the other is in the process of forming. Out of that coalition will come a charismatic leader who will govern what will amount to a final revival of the Holy Roman Empire.

If you watch world news and compare it to Bible prophecy, you’ll be able to read the handwriting on the wall when the time comes for that political superman to emerge. While Jacques Chirac seems an unlikely choice, this coming leader may follow in his footsteps. To learn more, request our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. (Source: *USA Today*.)

Cursing more prevalent on American TV

In a study of U.S. television programming between 1998 and 2002, cursing had risen 95 percent during the television family hour (from 8 to 9 p.m. Eastern and Pacific Time) each evening. The very next hour, from 9 to 10 p.m., showed a 109 percent increase in cursing.

Television mirrors life, but it also helps to shape it. In this case, a coarse stratum of American life has broken out of barrooms and settled into our living rooms. Should television be used to spread cursing into our homes while indoctrinating our children?

Psychologist Timothy Jay has written a book on the subject of swearing in public, *Cursing in America* (2000). He claims that women and children are swearing more in public because the culture is changing and that it’s more pervasive. Television actors, celebrities, sports figures and even cartoons show people cursing the air blue.

Modern societies and their cultures are indeed changing for the worse, and a good part of the blame can be laid at the doors of media. The more families watch evening television sitcoms—filled with sexual innuendos, four-letter words and religious expletives—the easier it becomes for everyone to curse more in public. The ever-ubiquitous television industry becomes our moral standard. Regrettably, the amoral standards of media typically set an entire nation’s social norms.

Have you noticed how easy it is for people on television game shows to use the religious expletive “Oh my God!”? If you watch TV game shows, notice how many times this phrase is used. Does this expletive have any real meaning?

The point is that human beings have strayed so far from God that just about any kind of epithet is acceptable. Your Bible says that we should not take God’s name in vain and that He pronounces a sentence of guilt on anyone who does (Exodus 20:7). Yet people have long used God’s name loosely and profanely.

This is symptomatic of a greater problem: People who call themselves Christians are unwittingly following a new kind of religious secularism. If the majority of society curses freely, does that make it all right? Not according to your Bible. God says He will not always ignore how people talk and think about Him with callous disregard: “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

Anyone who curses to make a point is either willingly ignorant or too lazy to expand his or her vocabulary to more articulately address important issues. Cursing also suggests a willing slavishness to peer pressure. Don’t fall into the social trap of making your point with cursing just because others do.

Don’t be fooled into following the foul-mouthed foolish. Cursing the air blue comes from the wickedness of the human heart (Jeremiah 17:9). It is a sin that must be repented of and overcome (Romans 12:21). (Source: Associated Press.)

No substitute for proper parenting

Children are starting school less well prepared than ever because parents are failing to raise their youngsters properly, according to the [British] government’s Chief Inspector of Schools” (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Aug. 31). David Bell further charged that children entering school have been subjected to a “disrupted and disheveled” upbringing.

The result? Verbal and behavioral skills are at an all-time low, leaving teachers to act as substitute parents. National Curriculum test results show that “one in four primary pupils fails tests for reading and math” (*The Independent*, Aug. 20). David Hart, general secretary of the National Association for Head Teachers, stated that “too many are starting school without basic social skills and simply do not know how to communicate. This puts enormous pressure on the teachers” (*The Sunday Telegraph* article).

Even persuading children to sit still for just a little while is proving to be a very difficult challenge for many teachers.

Longtime British journalist Mary Kenny pointed out that the parents are not always entirely to blame for children who cannot talk properly, fasten buttons or even hold a knife and fork. She wrote: “The government is constantly skewing the tax and benefits system to pressure [both] parents into going to work and leaving their pre-school children with minders who may or may not do a good job. (It is not politically correct or fashionable to look after your own children, it seems)” (*Daily Mail*, Sept. 1). (Sources: *The Sunday Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *The Independent* [all London].)



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Also, to get a biblical perspective on major events, visit www.ucg.org/commentary for a weekly commentary on the trends shaping our world—and what they mean for you.

The 'Road Map' to Peace: Doomed From the Start?

Few observers want peace in the Middle East more than the staff and publishers of *The Good News*. But we know that there is only one true path to peace—and the key players aren't on it. Yet the Bible does guarantee that peace will finally come to the Middle East.

by John Ross Schroeder

Few people—except for a few hopeful diplomats—now dispute the sad fact that the much-touted Mideast road map has been shredded and currently lies in tatters. Phase one of this path, more or less calling for an immediate end to terror and violence, is already way behind schedule. The transition phase (June 2003–December 2003) has never made it off the ground and the final phase—ending the conflict altogether (2004–2005)—remains totally out of sight.

If, as Mideast analyst Daniel Pipes maintains, “the year 2002 will be remembered as a low point in the long conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, when diplomacy came to a standstill, emotion boiled over, blood ran in the streets, and the prospects for all-out war drew closer”—how will we remember the events of 2003?

In the early 1990s I was asked to travel to Israel and write an on-the-spot cover article about the prospects for peace in the Middle East. Sadly, events soon sabotaged the project. Conditions became so violent that I was not allowed to enter Israel.

All through the 90s violence ebbed and flowed until we reached the time of the present bloody intifada, begun more than 2½ years ago. The last year has been marked by the ever-increasing use of the suicide bomber, a gruesome terror tool that has enabled a handful of Palestinians to inflict enormous psychological as well as physical damage on Israelis.

As *Foreign Affairs* (July–August 2002) puts it, “Both Islamists and secular Palestinians have come to see suicide bombing as a weapon against which Israel has no comprehensive defense.” And indeed, how can people defend themselves against a young man (or woman) who believes he will be rewarded in the afterlife if he blows himself to pieces while trying to take with him as many Israeli bystanders as possible?

Yasser Arafat and the present crisis

The grim news of the latest round of suicide bombings indicates that current conditions will

be made even worse by the recent resignation of the Palestinian prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, after only four months in office.

Also known as Abu Mazen, upon assuming office he had strongly indicated that he would “seek to disarm terrorist groups attacking Israeli targets,” saying that “there is no room for weapons except in the hands of the government” (*The Daily Telegraph*, April 30).

of attempting a “road map to peace” with Arafat still exercising enormous power over Palestinian security policy, however covertly.

From the outset of the plan, Washington’s peace strategy was based on the hoped-for success of Mr. Abbas in standing up to Arafat and persuading extremist groups to cease terror operations. But events have proven that excessive dependence on any one player



A Palestinian youth shouts in front of a burning mock Israeli bus at a rally in the West Bank city of Ramallah, near Jerusalem. The rally celebrated a suicide attack at an Israeli bus station earlier that day. Ongoing Palestinian suicide attacks have torpedoed hopes for peace.

But apparently Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat so effectively undermined the efforts of Mahmoud Abbas that he felt unable to carry on. (This is not to say that Mr. Abbas would have taken appropriate and right steps if he had been free to. The point is that he was never given a chance.)

In May, political analyst and columnist Charles Krauthammer was blunt in his assessment of President Arafat: “As long as Yasser Arafat wields power, there can and will be no peace between Israel and the Palestinians” (*Wall Street Journal Europe*, May 12).

The veteran columnist wrote of the folly

in the Mideast is a formula for severe disappointment if not disaster.

In an analysis in the *London Times*, Richard Beeston observed that “the only person who seems to thrive in this environment [of terrorism and violence] is the Palestinian leader. Those close to Arafat report that he lives off adversity” (Sept. 8).

The United States and Israel refuse to negotiate directly with Yasser Arafat. And the new prime minister, Ahmed Qureia—although apparently somewhat acceptable personally—is still under the thumb of Mr. Arafat. Within weeks of assuming office he,

too, threatened to resign, chafing at Arafat's interference, especially in disputes over Palestinian military forces.

One of the most intractable Western problems in dealing with the Mideast conflict is the lack of a united front. The EU has made it abundantly clear that it will maintain European links with Arafat.

According to the *International Herald Tribune* (Sept. 1), "Javier Solana, the European Union foreign policy chief, rejected Israeli demands . . . to sever contacts with Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, and criticized the path of a wall being built along the West Bank." His terse comment was: "We will continue contacts with . . . the Palestinian President."

Although some prominent Israeli politicians would like to kill Arafat or see him exiled from the Middle East, the United States currently sees no point in making him a martyr and maintains that he might be able to exercise even more influence if he were exiled abroad.

As commentator Mark Almond wrote in the *Daily Mail* (Sept. 8), "America's repeated attempts to sideline Arafat have merely restored his tarnished credibility as a national champion among the long-suffering Palestinians." Sadly, *boomerang* and *backfire* have become the figurative watchwords describing failed attempts to influence events in the Mideast conflict.

No way out?

This region of the world has a long history of biting back. The biblical prophet Zechariah, foretelling Jerusalem's place in world affairs in the end time, describes the city as "a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples"—capable of making them lose all reason and rationality in dealing with it.

He also described Jerusalem as "a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces . . ." (Zechariah 12:2-3). His descriptions aptly apply to today's grim situation.

The road map ahead appears bleak and bloody. What are the responsible parties among the Israelis and Palestinians to do? At times under virtual occupation due to severe warlike conditions instituted in response to terrorist attacks, the average Palestinian citizen has suffered enormously since Palestinian leaders launched the present bloody intifada. Unemployment, malnutrition and poverty have mushroomed. Regrettably, most Palestinians stand fully behind the Palestinian leadership. Indeed, the vast majority support suicide bombing operations against Israeli civilians.

Meanwhile, Israelis live in fear of such simple activities as going to a cafe for an evening meal, shopping or taking a bus ride. Their economy, too, is in terrible shape,

taking a beating from loss of tourist income and regular terrorist assaults.

Israeli sufferings penetrate far back into history. During the time of the biblical judges, one of the bloodiest and most violent times in Israel's long experience, periods of peace were measured in fairly long respites between periodic oppressions by other national groups like the Philistines.

For instance, "The land had peace for eighty years" (Judges 3:30, New International Version); "Then the land had peace forty years" (Judges 5:31, NIV); "During Gideon's lifetime, the land enjoyed peace forty years" (Judges 8:28, NIV). Viewing those ancient



Palestinians rally in support of Yasser Arafat in Ramallah after the Israeli government announced its support for Arafat's removal.

times from our present perspective, Israel sometimes had peace for fairly long periods.

By contrast, in today's climate even a long weekend of relative peace counts as a welcome respite in the land of Israel. There is virtually no rest from the present war of nerves.

The historic lesson of Judges

During the time of the biblical judges, ancient Israel's frequent bad behavior got them into serious trouble with God. Nonetheless, it is written that, when they cried out to their Creator, "the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them" (Judges 2:18, NIV).

Over a period of a few hundred years God responded to their national plight again and again by raising up various judges like Jephthah, Deborah, Ehud and Samson. God enabled these deliverers to rescue the Israelites from their various oppressors.

Is there a historical parallel today? Yes. Only this time God is going to send the true

Messiah—Jesus Christ of Nazareth—to deliver not only the Middle East, but ultimately *all nations*, from their many and multifaceted mega-problems engendered by their own Satan-influenced human nature.

Obligations of Israel—and all nations

Notwithstanding the appalling conduct of Palestinian leaders and terrorist groups, American playwright Arthur Miller notes that Israel "has betrayed its biblical ideals" (*The Times*, July 15). I have made substantial journalistic visits to Israel three times in the last 27 years, and each time I found considerable evidence to confirm Miller's broad conclusion—primarily in the arena of individual conduct.

Anciently God used the Jewish peoples to preserve the Hebrew Bible and in the process to proclaim the Ten Commandments to mankind (Romans 3:1-2). Therefore citizens of the state of Israel have an ongoing obligation to live by God's great spiritual law, as the apostle Paul pointed out to the Jewish community in the second chapter of the book of Romans. And the Palestinians must come to recognize that murder, terrorism and corrupt leadership are building blocks only for disaster, not for a nation that will be accepted by the world community.

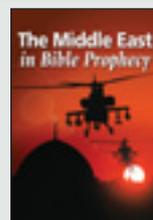
Ultimately national repentance is the only way out both for Israel and the Palestinians—and for that matter all nations on the face of the earth.

But whatever their national choices, God is still going to send Jesus Christ back to earth. And this time He will come with a real and workable road map to peace, one described by the biblical prophets thousands of years ago, and the means to enforce it.

He will bring to the world a thousand years of peace and prosperity—truly utopian conditions that continue to prove impossible for men and women to achieve during this present age. **GN**

Recommended Reading

If you would like a much better understanding of the Middle East, both in terms of history and biblical predictions, request or download our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. You need to know what God's Word says about the very region where Jesus Christ will make His world headquarters—specifically in a restored and rejuvenated city of Jerusalem. Request your free copy today! Also, to learn how the peace promised long ago in the Bible will come about, request *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, also yours free for the asking.



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Why We Need a Weekly Rest Day

Why the seven-day week and the continual cycle of day and night? Is there a message for modern men and women in the way our planet was designed to operate?

by John Ross Schroeder

“Hurry sickness” is the malaise of the modern world. We rush from one appointment to another, and from one task to the next. Many of us in the West are perpetually in search of materialism and money as we charge up the ladder of success.

London *Times* writer Celia Brayfield commented that “thirty years of greed have given us luxuries undreamt of by previous generations and no free time to enjoy them.”

In her feature article she frequently mentioned “time poverty.” In her conclusion she warned readers that “if we don’t change our time poverty consciousness soon, we will reach a point where that change is no longer possible. We are already miserable, lonely, stressed and sick . . .”

An overstatement? Probably yes, but some of the present symptoms are highly distressing indeed!

No rest for this modern age

Many executives are routinely expected to put in at least 14 hours at the office or on the road. One man recently said that he was in the office by 6 a.m. and worked weekends, and he’s certainly not alone.

It seems that the pace of modern life is taking its toll. A recent study suggests that long hours at work are harming our mental health—psychologically and emotionally. Jonathan Scales, a research lecturer at the Health and Social Services Institute in Britain, observed that “there is evidence that working long hours over a long period of time is raising stress levels and reducing emotional well being.”

Closely related to the perpetual hurry syndrome is increasing evidence of our monumental impatience. We do not easily come to terms with the discipline of deferred gratification. We want everything *now*.

We live in an age of almost perpetual impatience. One symptom is road rage. If irritated or delayed even for a few moments by another driver, some few totally lose their tempers and fly into a rage.

Some of these symptoms of modern life

are increasingly reflected in the behavior of our children. According to Britain-based author and journalist Minette Martin, “Their infant minds . . . have been so grossly overstimulated by the easy fixes of television and computer games, and of low-grade, heavy-beat surround sound, that they are largely

moving into a 24-hour society. Some of us work, eat, drink, dance and shop around the clock. Like New York and other cities that never sleep, we are very reluctant to turn in and go to bed. The evidence is becoming clearer that our collective exhaustion threatens national health and well-being.



Once in a while we all need to **come to a complete halt**—to totally stop what we are doing, take time to rest and reflect, and take stock of our lives.

unable to concentrate for more than a few seconds” (*Daily Telegraph*).

We all need to sit down, breathe easily, relax and take time to think rationally and constructively.

Regrettably, in this past century we’ve even cut down on our sleep time. An article in *The Times* reported that we now average 90 minutes less sleep at night than people did a century ago. Also a recent survey found that we now average 7 hours and 12 minutes of sleep a night, down 25 minutes from only a decade ago. Many average much less than that.

The 24-hour society

Clearly human beings were designed to rest at appropriate times. Yet increasingly we are

Many services and shops are open around the clock in major American cities. The Internet is available anytime. One person described this growing practice as “colonizing the night,” expanding our control over time to do things whenever it is convenient for us, regardless of what the clock tells us.

Societal habits have changed significantly over the last generation. It wasn’t that long ago that the typical husband came home after a hard day’s work and the whole family sat down to a meal and family conversation at 6 p.m. or thereabouts. Today both husband and wife are likely to arrive home—often at different times—to the start of a second shift of domestic chores and mutual responsibilities.

For those who have some time for leisure

pursuits, many TV stations and cable channels are on the air around the clock. Supposedly we can be entertained at any time of our choosing. But the net result of the 24-hour society is that schedules start to blur in our minds and we begin to lose the significance of natural time patterns. Even our awareness of the seven-day week starts to wane.

Many today are in a state of perpetual confusion and weighed down with various problems and anxieties. What's the solution? Jesus Christ tells us that if we will adapt to His way of life, He will give us rest from our burdens

The Sabbath is an integral part of the Ten Commandments. It is one of the vital first four that help us to please our Creator and worship Him in a proper manner.

(Matthew 11:28). On one occasion He encouraged His disciples to “come aside by yourselves . . . and rest a while” (Mark 6:31).

Once in a while we all need to come to a complete halt—to totally stop what we are doing, take time to rest and reflect, and take stock of our lives.

Precious time to think

The late author Norman Cousins observed: “We in America have everything we need except the most important thing of all, *time to think and the habit of thought*” (*Human Options*, 1981, p. 28, emphasis added).

“Our own age is not likely to be distinguished for the large numbers of people who insisted on finding time to think,” he wrote. “Plainly this is not the age of meditative man. It is a sprinting, squinting, shoving age” (p. 69).

There are so many movers and shakers in our society, there is little room left for thinkers. Yet the capacity for disciplined, sequential thought is one of the greatest gifts our Creator has given mankind. We have the God-given ability to exercise our moral imaginations. Like God, in whose image we were made, we can bring order out of chaos through the process of developing proper thinking habits.

Clearly we do live in a chaotic, confused age. To cope successfully, we need valuable time for sustained thought—periods in which we really have time to think things over and prioritize our commitments. Also we need time to truly appreciate the wonders of the creation. Solomon said that God “has made everything beautiful in its time” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

The Bible does tell us that we are to be “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16). How are we to accomplish this task? A key lies in a God-given

pattern that has been with us since creation.

The seven-day week

It's interesting to note that God's Word is full of patterns of seven. Check any sizable Bible concordance and you will see. In fact, the biblical record tells us God fashioned the present world in six days and chose to rest on the seventh—thus setting apart the Sabbath day for all of mankind to follow His example.

Each 24-hour period was divided into night and day for special purposes. Generally speaking, the nighttime is for rest and sleep.

But we also need rest from our general labors. So the Creator commands us to rest every seventh day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). This 24-hour period of time is holy to God, and He tells us to cease from carrying on with our normal working lives and devote this time to rest and reflection on His ways. It is also a time for assembling with others for collective worship (Leviticus 23:1-3; Hebrews 10:24-25).

Spiritual fellowship with others of like mind is one of the most beneficial tonics to the human psyche. We all need it! Of course, this can only succeed in and through our fellowship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3).

Successful relationships all require time—quality time with God in prayer and Bible study; quality time with our husbands and wives; quality time with family, friends and fellow churchgoers. Of course not all quality time is spent at weekly church services, but it's a good and important beginning.

A weekly day of rest enables us to use the other six days much more profitably. It also gives us sufficient time to meditate and think about those things that can bring special meaning and divine purpose to our busy lives. It provides time and space for families and couples to draw closer together. It provides precious time to read and study the Bible, the book that tells us how to live in a way that is infinitely rewarding, purposeful and fulfilling.

The Sabbath is an integral part of the Ten Commandments. It is no less important a commandment than those six specifically designed to govern our relationships with other human beings. It is one of the vital first four that help us to please our Creator and worship Him in a proper and respectful manner.

Isn't it about time you looked into the Bible's solution for all the stress and anxiety permeating your life? **GN**

The Sabbath Day in Summary

Jesus Christ kept the seventh day and worshiped God on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). Indeed Christ Himself is the “Lord of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27-28)—directly linking our Savior with this period of holy time.

The book of Acts records that the New Testament Church, including the apostle Paul, continued to keep the Sabbath (Acts 13:14-44; 17:1-3; 18:4). The Sabbath is a special 24-hour period designed to deepen and broaden our devotion to God—enabling us to learn more of the real purpose of human life.

On the Sabbath day, when men and women turn from their own thoughts, they have sufficient time to think about the true values—and find real pleasure in seeking those things that please God (Isaiah 58:13-14). We are freed from the bondage of this world's ways that are contrary to God's, just as the ancient Israelites were emancipated from their slavery in Egypt nearly 3,500 years ago.

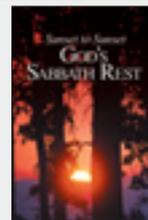
Moreover, obedience to the commandment in Exodus to “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” causes human beings to hallow the seventh day by resting and worshipping God.

Further, Exodus 31:13-17 points out that the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people, constituting a perpetual covenant. This day is to be kept holy as a reminder that He sets His people apart as His children.

The seventh-day Sabbath looks back to creation and reminds men and women of their Creator. It also looks forward to the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God, when all the world will finally experience that true promised rest (see Hebrews 4:4-10).

Recommended Reading

Knowing the vital importance of the weekly Sabbath, the publishers of *The Good News* have produced a free booklet on the subject. *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest* shows from the Bible which day is the real Christian Sabbath. This booklet also discusses how to observe this weekly holy day in a balanced and practical manner. This free booklet will open up fresh vistas of knowledge that can bring peace and order to your personal life.



At the same time, don't forget the other nine Commandments. We also publish a free booklet, appropriately titled *The Ten Commandments*, which expounds and explains each of these 10 points of God's law. Be sure to download or request both of these free booklets. They have the awesome potential of revolutionizing your life!

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ch. 11, Mondays 8 p.m.

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Pennsylvania

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Tennessee

Memphis 600 AM, Sundays 9 a.m.

West Virginia

Wheeling 1170 AM, Mondays 12:30 a.m.

4,000 Years of Christmas?

'Tis the season for mistletoe and decorating the tree. But the origins of Christmas may surprise you. Did you know one of the American colonies outlawed observance of this holiday in 1659?

by Gary Petty

It's called the spirit of Christmas—the ringing of sleigh bells on a snowy night, Tiny Tim turning the heart of Scrooge in Charles Dickens' famous novel *A Christmas Carol*, Santa Claus and flying reindeer.

For many, it seems, the birth of Jesus takes a backseat to mythology, packed shopping malls and greed. Every year, signs in front of neighborhood churches remind people to put Christ back into Christmas—or proclaim “Jesus is the reason for the season.”

But is He?

In his book *4,000 Years of Christmas: A Gift From the Ages* (1997), Episcopal priest Earl Count enthusiastically relates historical connections between the exchanging of gifts on the 12 days of Christmas and customs originating in ancient, pagan Babylon. He shows that mistletoe was adopted from Druid mystery rituals and that Dec. 25 has more to do with the ancient Roman Saturnalia celebration than with Jesus.

Early Church celebration?

Nowhere in the New Testament do we see Jesus' disciples observing His birthday. In fact, as late as the third century the early Catholic theologian Origen declared that it was a sin to celebrate Christmas, viewing it as pagan.

First-century Corinth was a Greek city filled with polytheistic religions. Its customs included temple prostitution and priests who performed sacrifices to the pantheon of Greek and Roman gods.

The apostle Paul writes to the Church members there in 1 Corinthians 10:19-21: “What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's

table and of the table of demons.”

Paul clearly warns people to avoid having anything to do with pagan religious customs,



Most Christmas customs—decorating the evergreen tree, use of mistletoe, exchanging of gifts, Santa Claus—come not from the Bible but from ancient pagan religions.

labeling such actions “fellowship with demons”!

Familiar to early Christians was the Saturnalia, an ancient Roman festival celebrated during the last days of December in honor of Saturn, the god of agriculture. Many ancient religions conducted festivals at that time of year, the time of the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere, when days are the shortest, to appease the various gods to restore the sun and bring an end to winter.

The Roman Saturnalia included drunkenness, debauchery and other practices diametrically opposed to the teachings of Christ. Yet this holiday would eventually develop into Christmas. What happened to change many Christians from Paul's practice of abhorring

and resisting pagan forms of worship to accepting and participating in such practices in the name of Jesus Christ?

Tremendous forces pressured early Christians away from the apostles' original instruction to avoid mixing idolatry with the worship of the true God. Thousands of pagans, while outwardly converting to Christianity, refused to give up the rituals and ceremonies of their former religious experiences.

Dr. Count sums up this historical struggle: “To the pagans, the Saturnalia were fun. To the Christians, the Saturnalia were an abomination in homage to a disreputable god who had no existence anyway. The Christians, moreover, were dedicated to the slow, uphill task of converting these roistering pagan Romans.

“There were many immigrants into the ranks of the Christians by this time, but the Church Fathers discovered to their alarm that they were also facing an invasion of pagan

customs. The habit of the Saturnalia was too strong to be left behind. At first the church forbade it, but in vain. When a river meets a boulder that will not be moved, the river flows around it. If the Saturnalia would not be forbidden, let it be tamed” (p. 36).

Why a Dec. 25 celebration?

The church adopted Dec. 25—the date of the Roman Brumalia, immediately after Saturnalia—as the date of Christ's birth (even though biblical evidence shows this cannot be the right time of this event).

This date also marked a great festival in Mithraism, the Persian religion of the sun god. In A.D. 274 Emperor Aurelian of Rome declared Dec. 25 to be the “birthday of the

invincible sun.” In time the Son of God, Jesus Christ, became indistinguishable from the pagan sun god in the minds of hundreds of thousands of converts throughout the Roman Empire.

Instead of standing as Christ’s force for change in the world, nominal Christianity was changed by the pagan world it was supposed to transform!

Dr. Count relates: “There exists a letter from the year 742 AD, in which Saint Boniface . . . complains to Pope Zacharias that his labors to convert the heathen Franks and Alemans—Germanic tribes—were being handicapped by the escapades of the Christian Romans back home. The Franks and the Alemans were on the threshold of becoming Christians, but their conversion was retarded by their enjoyment of lurid carnivals.

“When Boniface tried to turn them away from such customs, they argued that they had seen them celebrated under the very shadow of Saint Peter’s in Rome. Embarrassed and sorry, Pope Zacharias replied . . . admitting that the people in the city of Rome behaved very badly at Christmas time” (p. 53).

Over the centuries

Over the subsequent centuries, Christmas absorbed customs from German, Scandinavian and Celtic paganism—such as the yule log, the decorating of evergreen trees and the hanging of mistletoe.

In the Middle Ages, Christmas observances in Europe continued the excesses of Saturnalia. Dr. Penne Restad, in *Christmas in America: A History*, writes of the moral debate that raged during that era:

“Some clergy stressed that fallen humankind needed a season of abandonment and excess, as long as it was carried on under the umbrella of Christian supervision. Others argued that all vestiges of paganism must be removed from the holiday. Less fervent Christians complained about the unreasonableness of Church law and its attempts to change custom. Yet the Church sustained the hope that sacred would eventually overtake profane as pagans gave up their revels and turned to Christianity” (1996, p. 6).

Sadly, it didn’t happen. Following the Middle Ages, some Protestants tried reforming Christmas but created little real change. The English Puritans waged a war on Christmas observance as unchristian behavior. In 1659 the holiday was outlawed in Massachusetts, but proved so popular that it gained official approval again in 1681.

A *U.S. News & World Report* cover story, “In Search of Christmas,” states: “When Christmas landed on American shores, it fared little better. In colonial times, Christ’s

birth was celebrated as a wildly social event—if it was celebrated at all . . . Puritans in New England flatly refused to observe the holiday” (Dec. 23, 1996, p. 60).

In more modern times many Christians have become concerned about the commercialization of the day that is supposed to celebrate the birth of the Son of God. With parades featuring Santa Claus sponsored by department stores, half-price sales, and incessant TV and radio commercials, Christmas obviously has become more about the accountant’s bottom line than about worshipping God.

Many people approach the yuletide season



Christmas absorbed customs from German, Scandinavian and Celtic paganism—such as the yule log, the decorating of evergreen trees and the hanging of mistletoe.

with a vague longing for a Christmas that is more spiritual and less commercial. But is our fast-paced, greed-filled rendition of Christmas the real problem, or is there something wrong with Christmas itself?

Put Christ back in Christmas?

Christmas has become such a central holiday of American culture that it’s difficult to get anyone to step back and evaluate its Christian validity. You be the judge.

Here are the facts: Jesus wasn’t born on Dec. 25. Christ’s apostles rejected pagan ceremonies and rituals in their worship and told other Christians to likewise avoid them. The early Church didn’t observe Jesus’ birthday. The selection of Dec. 25 as Christ’s supposed date of birth was based on the dates of the Roman Saturnalia and Brumalia—a time for worshipping the god Saturn.

Most Christmas customs—decorating the evergreen tree, use of mistletoe, exchanging

of gifts, Santa Claus—come not from the Bible but from ancient pagan religions. For centuries Christianity tried unsuccessfully to rid itself of the paganism of Christmas. Throughout its history Christmas has inspired drunken parties, and the modern holiday is more about convincing children to harass their parents to buy toys than worshipping Christ.

What is your verdict? Some say, “But we can’t take Christmas away from the children.” Others: “As long as it brings people to Jesus, what does it matter?”

Earlier we saw Paul’s instructions to Christians in pagan Corinth. He continues his instructions in his next letter to the Corinthians:

“For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? . . . Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? . . .

“Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you . . .’ Therefore . . . let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 7:1).

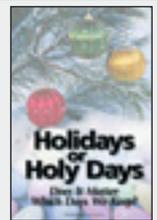
Paul’s point is very pertinent to Christmas. How can we claim to be honoring God with pagan customs and traditions that He forbids in His Word?

The crucial question is: How can we put

Jesus back into the season when He was never part of it to begin with? It’s a difficult question, isn’t it? But it’s one that’s vitally important for you to answer. **GN**

Recommended Reading

Many people are shocked to discover the origins of our most popular religious holidays. They’re also surprised to find that the days God commands us to observe in the Bible—the same days Jesus Christ and the apostles kept—are almost universally ignored. Why? Also, why are today’s supposedly Christian holidays observed with so many rituals and customs that are not sanctioned anywhere in the Bible? For detailed answers, be sure to request your free copy of the booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?*



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The Feast of Hanukkah: Testimony to Bible Prophecy

The Jewish community worldwide lights candles in celebration of the Hanukkah festival. The dramatic story behind this festival not only shows us God's faithfulness, but also the certain reliability of prophecy!

by James Capó

In the year 167 B.C., the worship of God in Judea was on the edge of extinction, ready to be wholly swallowed up by pagan Greek worship being forced on the people by the powerful ruler of Syria and Judea, Antiochus IV, also known as Antiochus Epiphanes. This title meant "Illustrious," but his rule was more gruesome than glorious, as he inflicted intensely cruel punishments and death on any Jew who remained faithful to the worship of God.

But God would prove faithful to those among His people who remained loyal to Him. He had foretold through the prophet Daniel that great troubles would come on the people of Judah, but He also foretold their deliverance in one of the most detailed and astonishing prophecies recorded in the Bible!

The story begins

In preparation for an attack against Egypt, King Antiochus had to unify and strengthen his vast territory, especially his southern border of Judea, which would be the staging area for a push into Egypt.

Part of his plan involved a Jew named Menelaus, who had bribed his way into the office of high priest of the Jews with the promise of high tribute payments and the assurance that he would assist the king in "hellenizing" the Jews; that is, encouraging them to adopt the Greek (Hellenistic) culture.

Though the Jewish leaders at first thought they could hellenize their community while still retaining their unique form of worship, the people perceived pagan Hellenism as a threat. While many in leadership positions within the Jewish community were quick to adopt the trappings of Greek culture, the general populace was slow to follow.

The king grew frustrated, needing to act quickly against Egypt and having been misled by this corrupt high priest to think the people would accept hellenization.

Trampling on God's laws

The apocryphal book of 1 Maccabees, a helpful historical resource even though not part of the Hebrew canon of the Old

Testament, records events of this tumultuous period. It tells us that Antiochus "wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, and that all should give up their particular customs. All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king.

Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath" (1 Maccabees 1:41-43, New Revised Standard Version).

Antiochus' edict prohibited observing the weekly Sabbath day and the other biblical feast days. Reading

the law of Moses was outlawed, and all copies of it were ordered to be burned. Temple sacrifices were forbidden; circumcision was outlawed. The penalty for disobedience was death.

Many Jews chose to die rather than comply with Antiochus' unholy commands. Angered by resistance to his odious laws, and misled into thinking it was just a small group of radicals creating trouble, the king intensified his persecution and cruelty. If an infant were found circumcised, Antiochus decreed that his family and the person who did the circumcision would be put to death and the infant would be hung from the neck of his dead mother (verses 60-61).

Then, on the 25th day of the month Kislev, 167 B.C. (corresponding to late November or early December of our modern calendar), Antiochus profaned the temple of God in Jerusalem. Ordering an end to the morning and evening sacrifices offered to the true God, he rededicated the temple to the pagan Greek god Zeus and apparently set up an altar bearing the image of this

pagan god over the temple altar. Then, in spiteful sacrilege to the Jews, he had swine sacrificed on the altar.

Revolt against Antiochus' rule

Meanwhile, in the mountains 17 miles to the northwest of Jerusalem, a popular revolt was brewing. In the town of Modin, the aged priest Mattathias had refused to offer the pagan sacrifice that was being required of him. He slew an apostate Jew who was about to do so in his stead, killed the king's commissioner, pulled down the altar and fled into the hills with his five sons.

Faithful Jews began rallying to this family of priests. They soon began to wage a guerilla war against their oppressors—a David-and-Goliath battle with the small band of faithful loyalists taking on the military might of the Syrian army and their traitorous Jewish collaborators. The Jewish historian Josephus records in his *Wars of the Jews* that Antiochus sent an army of horsemen, elephants and 50,000 foot soldiers against them.

During the war, Mattathias died. Leadership fell to his third son, Judah or Judas, who was called "Maccabeus"—from the Hebrew word for "hammer." A cunning military strategist, Judah led his followers in bold, hard-hitting attacks that routinely routed the larger and better-equipped Syrian forces. Judas' title of "Hammer" was soon transferred to the entire family of priest-warriors, and the war came to be known as the Maccabean Revolt. (These "Maccabees" were also known as the Hasmoneans, after Mattathias' great-great-grandfather Hasmoneus.)

After three years of battle, and against seemingly impossible military odds, the Maccabees succeeded in recapturing the temple and most of Jerusalem in December 164 B.C. Anxious to reestablish the worship of God, Judah ordered the loyal priests who had not collaborated with Antiochus to cleanse the temple and erect a new altar.

The date was 25 Kislev, 164 B.C., three years after Antiochus had defiled the temple



Antiochus Epiphanes, shown here on a coin of his reign, outlawed many of the Jews' religious practices and desecrated the Jerusalem temple by sacrificing swine on the altar.

and made it an abomination. Now they were free to again worship God in peace! The Maccabees fought on until they drove the Syrians from Judea and finally gained political independence from Syria, as well as religious freedom.

With their victory, the stage was set for the prophesied first coming of Jesus Christ



The Jewish priest Mattathias triggered a rebellion against Antiochus Epiphanes when he violently resisted the king's enforced idolatry.

to His people. God blessed the efforts of the faithful few and preserved the Jewish nation, the temple and the people for Christ to come to—as prophecy required. God proved faithful to His Word, and to those who put their trust in Him.

The Hanukkah celebration

According to Jewish tradition, at the rededication of the temple only one undefiled container of oil could be found to use in the golden lampstand in the temple—enough to burn for only one day. Miraculously, though, the flame in the lampstand continued for eight days—long enough for a new supply of oil to be prepared for this holy use!

In commemoration of these events, many Jews today celebrate Hanukkah (which means “dedication”), also known as the Festival of Lights.

While it is not a festival commanded in the Bible or one that God expects Christians to observe, since the days of the Maccabees many Jews have observed the Feast of Dedication as a national celebration of deliverance from the oppression of the tyrant King Antiochus. As July 4 is the day Americans celebrate the independence of their nation, Hanukkah is a time when many Jews celebrate their independence and deliverance.

By the time of Christ, the Jews were again a subject people—this time to the Romans—and they were again looking

for a leader, the Messiah, to deliver them. And it was during this very festival that the Jewish leaders asked Jesus if *He* was that promised Deliverer!

Notice John 10:22-28: “Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon’s porch. Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, ‘How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.’ Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.’”

Jesus pointed them toward a much greater deliverance than that of Judas Maccabeus! It wasn’t the answer the people wanted to hear, but it was the answer they *needed* to hear. Jesus Christ would deliver His sheep, those who would listen to Him and obey Him, not from Rome, but from *the slavery of sin and death*. He would lead them to eternal life in the Kingdom of God!

What Judas Maccabeus did for the Jews, Jesus Christ will do for the whole world when He returns a second time, delivering humanity from an evil ruler and from sin itself.

Daniel foretells the future

Can we believe prophecy? Can we have confidence in the Bible’s promises of Christ’s second coming and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth?

We can have great confidence in those prophecies of God that are yet to be fulfilled when we see so clearly that prophecies *have already come to pass* exactly as God said they would. The deliverance from King Antiochus, celebrated by the Feast of

Dedication, was dramatically foretold with amazing accuracy hundreds of years before it occurred!

In Daniel 8, God gave Daniel a vision about the kingdoms that would arise to dominate the Holy Land after his time. Though given in symbols, we don’t have to wonder about their meaning because God also gave



Daniel foretold the coming of Alexander the Great, depicted here in a mosaic from the Roman city of Pompeii, twice in his prophetic book, written centuries before Alexander was born.

Daniel the interpretation of the symbols through the angel Gabriel (verses 16-26).

In verses 5-8, Daniel sees a male goat with a “notable horn” that attacks and swiftly destroys the ram that had preceded it. In verse 21 we are told what this goat and horn symbolize: “And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king.”

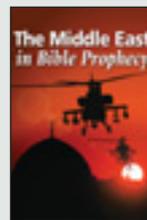
The “first king” of this Greek Empire was Alexander the Great. He died young, at the peak of his power. Having no adult heirs—only an infant son who was later murdered—his kingdom was divided between four of his generals.

Daniel 8:8-9 continues the story: “Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken [Alexander died], and in place of it four notable ones [four of Alexander’s generals] came up toward the four winds of heaven.

“And out of one of them [Alexander’s general Seleucus, who ruled from Antioch in Syria after receiving his part of Alexander’s kingdom] came a *little horn* which grew exceedingly great *toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land.*” This little horn was Antiochus IV, whose kingdom by this time consisted of the vast eastern section of Alexander’s empire, extending both north and east from Judea. Antiochus’ army marched toward the south

Recommended Reading

To learn more about Daniel’s astoundingly accurate prophecies of the Middle East—prophecies that continue to our day and beyond—be sure to request or download our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. You’ll discover more about the ancient evil king Antiochus IV and how he is a forerunner of another tyrant to arise and play a major role in end-time events. And to see how Jesus Christ will ultimately deliver His people and establish His Kingdom on earth, read *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, also free for the asking.



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through the “Glorious Land,” Judea, as it advanced against Egypt.

Daniel 8:10-12 tells us more about this King Antiochus IV, whose coming was still several centuries in the future from the time Daniel wrote these words: “And it [the little horn, Antiochus IV] grew up to the host of heaven [the people of God, the children of Israel (compare Exodus 12:41)]; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars [leaders] to the ground, and trampled them.

“He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and *by him the daily sacrifices were taken away*, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered.”

This describes the persecution Antiochus brought on the people of Judea, and how he ended the daily sacrifices and desecrated the temple and the altar.

Deliverance—past and future

This prophecy of Antiochus Epiphanes’ actions, and the resulting Jewish revolt, is so clear and accurate that it has caused some scholars to question the dating of the book of Daniel! They claim Daniel had to be written *centuries later*, during or after the time of the Maccabees, for it to be so accurate.

However, other scholars point to evidence that clearly demonstrates Daniel wrote his book hundreds of years *before* the time of the Maccabees, showing it was indeed prophetic and not written after the events had already taken place.

Of course, with man it would be impossible to foretell future events with such accuracy. But God is capable of “declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure’” (Isaiah 46:10). God is able to bring about the fulfillment of His own prophecies!

God is faithful and true, and He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). As He promised deliverance for the people of Judea from the tyrannical King Antiochus, He also promises that Jesus Christ will come again, in great power and glory, to deliver mankind from destruction and to set up His Kingdom on the earth.

Consider the events the Feast of Hanukkah commemorates and the lessons from Daniel’s amazing prophecy. Remember the story of how God blessed those who were faithful to Him—just as He continues to do today for any who will turn to Him.

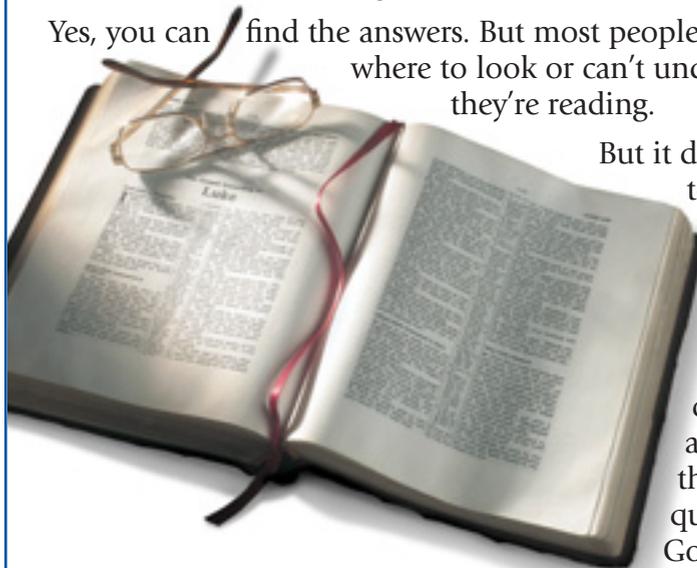
And remember, too, the certainty of prophecy. God is faithful to His Word. **GN**

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A Woman's View of the Lord's Prayer

Do you have trouble with prayer? How should we pray? For what should we pray? What lessons should we learn from prayer? Let's consider Christ's lesson on the subject.

by LeeAnn Luker

One passage of Scripture familiar to many of us is the Lord's Prayer. As a child, you may have memorized it. You've probably read it over the years. It has been immortalized in beautiful, moving hymns and other musical works. But how often do we consider the many shades and levels of meaning given to us in these few verses?

In reviewing this section of Scripture recently, I was again inspired by Christ's instruction. In Luke's account, the Gospel writer tells us that Christ had been off by Himself praying. When He finished, one of the disciples came to Him and said, "Lord, teach us to pray . . ." (Luke 11:1).

This disciple was not a man who was unfamiliar with prayer, yet he recognized that learning to pray is a growth process, and he wanted to improve his understanding of prayer and the effectiveness of his entreaties to God.

In the related account in Matthew 6, Christ began by explaining that personal prayer is just that: It's private. It shouldn't be used to compete, to see who can sound the loftiest. It is personal communication with God.

"Our Father in heaven"

Jesus explained that prayer should be meaningful; a profusion of words is not what is important. Then He said: "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (verse 9).

The brief outline Jesus gave His disciples starts with "our Father"—not just *my* Father, but *our* Father. God, residing in heaven, is the Father of *humankind*—of all races, peoples and nations, of everyone who has ever lived.

It is impossible for me to begin a prayer with "our Father" and be entirely focused on myself. In praying, "our Father," we acknowledge that He is the progenitor of our families and friends and that He is the Father of anyone with whom we may have conflict. We are all children before God.

What do we envision when we think of God as our Father? My own father was a simple man from Missouri who never

accomplished a great deal in this life as far as status or wealth is concerned. But he taught me through example the principles Christ taught in revealing the great God as our Father.

My dad demonstrated that a father is someone who loves, cares, helps, plays, laughs, sings, supports, teaches and, yes, reprimands when needed. Whether I succeeded or failed, my father was always there for me.

Sadly, some may have had a different experience. Perhaps you had an abusive or neglectful father. Maybe you were abandoned. A woman I know could not pray "Our Father" without breaking down in tears because her father had been so abusive. What a tragedy!

In time she came to realize that Christ

time, distance or death. My own father has been dead for more than 30 years. Although I am now a grandmother, I still need the love and comfort of a father, and God always provides it. We're never too old to need a dad.

"Hallowed be Your name"

God's name stands for His character. The name of God is hallowed, or holy, as Jesus acknowledged in His model prayer, because God Himself is holy. We hallow His name by recognizing His holy character and allowing Him to recreate that character in us.

This Father has never besmirched His name, which is worthy of infinite respect, honor and praise. God's name is to be borne with pride, not shame.

We can all hold our heads up high while

Christ proclaimed a Father who dwells on high, whose perspective is eternal and whose fatherhood is untainted by human weakness or selfishness.

didn't intend for our vision of God as our Father to be a negative one, so she asked Him to help her find a way to break through her painful emotional barrier.

She then remembered there had been one man in her childhood who had loved her and treated her with honor—an uncle. When she thought of the word *uncle*, she felt loved and cherished. "Uncle God" became a concept that helped her come to know the loving God Christ was introducing to her.

Though Christ acquaints us with and defines God as our Father, in the Lord's Prayer He spoke of His heavenly Father in different terms from those He would have used for an earthly parent. He made it clear that God is not a man, with the shortcomings of a human father. Christ proclaimed a Father who dwells on high, whose perspective is eternal and whose fatherhood is untainted by human weakness or selfishness.

He proclaimed a Father who is always there for us, never separated from us by

bearing the name of this Father. We are the sons and daughters of God, and His name is now our own. Bearing that name is a privilege as well as a tremendous responsibility, and we should bear it well.

"Your kingdom come"

All around us is the evidence that human beings are unable to rule themselves. Problems exist at every level—among nations and cultures, even among families. Life can be discouraging. But, with these few words in the model prayer, Christ instructed us to focus on the reality of the coming time spoken of in Revelation 11:15, when "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever."

The coming of God's Kingdom is as good as done. Jesus Christ encouraged us to focus on the reality of that event. No matter what conditions have existed in any Christian's life at any point in history, there has always been the hope and promise in

these words that there is coming a greater future, the Kingdom of God, for that follower of God.

Yet Christ didn't state it only as something to nebulously wish for. He left us the instruction to *pray* for it, *yearn* for it and realize its reality as a future event by focusing on it often in prayer.

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"

As a Christian woman, I have come to realize that nothing touches my life unless it is allowed by God the Father.

That all things work for the good of those who obey God (Romans 8:28) is sometimes hard for us to accept. The difficult part for us is in yielding to God's perfect will in our lives and not demanding that our own will be done.

All too often, I see the actions and hear the words of mankind and forget that my life is in the hands of One far greater than I. A much greater power and purpose is at work—one that we, in our limited understanding, sometimes fail to comprehend.

Some years have been very painful, with trials and situations I never remotely expected. At times it has been difficult to say, "Your will be done." I didn't want things to be the way they were. But by asking that His will be done, I was always reminded that I also had to yield to it and accept the things I could not change.

"Give us this day our daily bread"

After focusing our hearts and minds on the much greater view, Christ instructs us to pray for ourselves—and *others*. He didn't say, "Give *me* my bread." In Christ's instructions to us about prayer, we're reminded to think *beyond* ourselves. In asking that our own needs be met, we should also be reminded of the needs of others and what we can do to help satisfy them.

Many of us are limited in our financial resources to help meet the needs of others, but we are never limited in our ability to pray for them. By praying for and about others and their needs, we place them in the hands of the One whose power is boundless, whose wisdom is infinite and whose wealth is endless. I am reminded of Paul's confidence and trust reflected in Philippians 4:19: "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

God doesn't always meet what I think my needs are—nor those of others—in the manner or time I think they should be

met, but I have learned that I can trust Him completely to take care of all my real needs.

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"

There is perhaps no verse in the Word of God that I've struggled with more than "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Yet, even in life's struggle, I've continued to learn. The parallel version of the model prayer in Luke 11 says, "Forgive us our *sins* . . ." (verse 4). So it is interesting that the term *debt* is used here, because it is profoundly appropriate. We have all harmed others, in some way, by our words or actions—and thus *owe* them justice or restitution.

Yet all too often I find myself carrying around a ledger filled with the debts *others owe me* and fail to remember the ledgers that have *my name* in them. Before I can ask God to forgive the debts I owe to others, including to *Him*, I must erase the names in the ledger I carry. This doesn't mean God has erased those people's name from His ledger; that is a matter between Him and them. But I must let go of the debt and let it be solely between the other person and God.

Again, by instructing us to ask for forgiveness from "our debts," Christ reminds us to think bigger than ourselves, which is an enormous challenge for most people doing their best to obey God. The person I may struggle to forgive may be struggling with the same problem. By praying for him, I find it much easier to erase his name from my ledger.

"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one"

The Bible assures us that God does not tempt us (James 1:13). So why should we pray, "Do not lead us into temptation"? The concept here is one of being led into a time of *testing*—of extreme difficulty—to determine where our allegiance and priorities ultimately lie.

When we drift from God, He may allow circumstances or our enemy, Satan the devil, to afflict us as a way to remind us of our need for Him. By praying, "Do not lead us into temptation"—or, as it could also be rendered, "into sore trial"—we are saying to God, "Help us to learn our lessons *now* so that we don't need to go through great distress and difficulty to learn them."

Of course, this requires that we be freed from the power and influence of Satan. He constantly strives to prevent us from changing and conforming to God's ways.

So we pray to be delivered from him—from his deceptions and powerful urgings, which have shaped too much of our thinking in the past. And thankfully, through the power of God and remaining close to Him, we can break free. We are also reminded that we can experience now what will eventually be a gift to all humanity—deliverance from Satan's bondage.

"For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever"

At times I get weary, and thinking about the power and glory of God seems almost like a fairy tale, something too good to be true. In the wretchedness and degradation of Satan's world, we experience times when we struggle to see God's power and glory.

Yet every now and then something happens to give us a brief glimpse of it. It's like looking into a kaleidoscope and seeing something for an instant that is so beautiful it almost takes your breath away.

By instructing us to realize the power and glory of God, Christ reminds us to look into that kaleidoscope each day to see beyond the wretchedness of the here and now. He wants us to retain that vision, to see beyond this world, to live that vision of the future now and have faith in it. A better day is definitely coming!

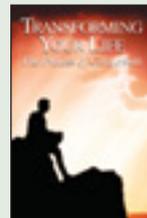
"Amen"

So be it! Jesus ended this example prayer with a word that we so easily say and so seldom really think about. It is a formal ending, a completion. We have been privileged to appear before the throne of the great Creator of the universe, expressing what is in our hearts. We are able to say to our heavenly Father, "Let it be so."

Amen. **GN**

Recommended Reading

What kind of relationship does your Creator want with you? How can you strengthen that relationship? What steps should you take to improve it? What guidance can you find in the Bible? We've prepared an encouraging booklet to help you discover the answers. Request your free copy of *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* today!



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our Web site at

www.gnmagazine.org



Letters From Our Readers

“Coming: Heaven on Earth”

Thank you for the marvelous good news in the Sept.-Oct. issue. All the articles were so moving and inspiring! I was reading the article “Coming: Heaven on Earth.” There is nothing as encouraging as knowing that real peace and happiness will overtake and surpass the evil deeds in this wayward world. Please keep *The Good News* going by writing and encouraging believers with such interesting and inspiring articles.

Mrs. E.I.I., Nigeria

Same-sex marriage

I loved reading your articles and have attended Church all my life. But the basis of religion is *love* and *truth*, and your magazine does *not* give either. After reading your articles in the Sept.-Oct. issue, I was shocked at the lack of intelligence that you sent out. How bad to try to tell people so many untruths with *nothing* to back it up. God/Jesus teaches us *not* to judge and to *love* all. Your magazine does not do this to me any longer since those horrible articles were so *wrong*.

Take me off your list and I am passing this along to all I know, *The Washington Post* and all the churches in the area.

From the Internet

When I first saw the headline of your article about homosexuality, I thought at first “Oh no, not another gay bashing, hateful attack on homosexuals.” But I was pleasantly surprised to see that you dealt with the issue in a very sensitive and caring manner. I am 20 years old and still struggling with being a homosexual and trying to be a Christian. So I have to say that the author was very accurate. My dad never had much to do with me while I was growing up and my mom overcompensated with smothering love. In every “relationship” I’ve had with a guy so far I am always looking for love and affection, but it always gets twisted into something sexual. Thanks for the very informative article.

Reader from a southwestern state

I want to respond to your article on same-sex marriage. I am a heterosexual Christian woman who agrees that marriage is between a man and a woman. In your article you focused more on homosexual men than lesbians. Before I was saved I had experienced same-sex attraction and engaged in same-sex

behavior. When I was five years old, I was molested a few times by a female neighbor.

I was having problems with normal relationships with other women because of my childhood. Praise God that I never became a lesbian. I have always been attracted to men, but had this same-sex tendency in the past. I have been saved and healed from my childhood by the love and grace of God. I hope this letter will help other women who may be experiencing the same thing. Thank you, *The Good News*, for your articles.

Anonymous, Phoenix, Arizona

Thankful for *The Good News*

“Can You Believe Bible Prophecy?” in the July-August issue was the article I’ve been searching for. *The Good News* is fortunate to have so many good writers.

N.T., Forsyth, Missouri

Recently I picked up your magazine at a local restaurant and, in reading it from cover to cover, found biblical truths. Your writers are fantastic—to the point, honest and writing the truth, unlike media writers who tell us only what they want us to know.

L.S., Kannapolis, North Carolina

I was walking down the street when I saw your magazine on a rack. At first I thought it was from some wacky religious group, but I was wrong. I’m so glad I came across it. I have read it and it was very encouraging. I would like to receive all the booklets you offered in *The Good News*. The more truth, the better. I really enjoyed the article about virginity. I’m happy to say that I am saying no to sex and yes to God. I’m much happier now.

S.D., Los Angeles, California

Teen study of the Seventh Commandment

I was looking over your Seventh Commandment Bible Study (all of the teen studies have been great, by the way!) to see how it compares with other studies on the subject. It seemed to cover all the bases except one.

I think one of the biggest misconceptions among today’s teens (even Christian ones) is that you haven’t committed adultery unless you’ve actually had sex out of wedlock. I have a number of Christian friends who believe it is okay to do everything but have sex. A lot of confusion tends to arise on the question of “how far can you go?” I haven’t

been able to find much in the Bible that specifically addresses sexual activity that doesn’t constitute sex itself. I would love to find a Bible study that discusses this.

R.U., Internet

Part of the difficulty is the common definition for “sex” today. Many see it exclusively as the act of sexual intercourse itself, yet “sex” between a husband and wife first includes intimate kissing, touching, caressing and cuddling that is vital foreplay to the final act of godly marital love (Hebrews 13:4). Unmarried couples who share this behavior commit fornication whether or not they actually engage in full sexual intercourse (Matthew 5:27-28; 1 Corinthians 6:18). We published an article addressing some of these issues in the Youth United e-magazine titled “Sex, Dating and You.” Please check our website at www.youthmagazine.org/yu/archive.asp. You should also read the chapter on the Seventh Commandment in our booklet The Ten Commandments.

The United Church of God

You provide such easily understood information supporting the Bible and Christian belief. This is very good in today’s world because it uplifts my spirit. It is really good to learn about the goodness of God, and to know that there is a better life to look forward to. The United Church of God has helped me to find what I was searching for. Thank you very much for your well-researched material. I would like to better understand the scriptural instruction about tithing. Please mail me a copy of *What Does the Bible Teach About Tithing?*

R.D., Trinidad & Tobago

I can’t thank you enough for your ministry of truth and publications. I am also so excited to have recently learned that there is a local church that I can attend with other similar followers and seekers of the truth. I truly respect your dedication and commitment, and hope to soon be a part of it more fully.

D.P., Spring Lake, Michigan

Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to The Good News, Box 541027, Cincinnati, Ohio 45254, U.S.A., or e-mail gninfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).



Questions & Answers

Q: Reading the publication *How to Understand the Bible*, I would like to know if the King James Version is the best version I can refer to. If not, which one is? I am a bit disturbed by misinterpretations or missing words and quotes in some translations.

L.T., Nigeria

In our publications we quote primarily from the New King James Version (NKJV) because of its overall accuracy and the fact that the wording used in this modern translation is up to date and easy to understand. The NKJV also remains faithful to the spirit of the original King James Version (also known as the Authorized Version) of 1611, a translation of unquestionable historic value that is still very popular and profitably read by millions to this day.

Other useful translations in modern English include the New International Version, the New Revised Standard Version, the Revised English Bible and the New American Standard Bible. But no translation is 100 percent correct. The “missing words” you refer to can occur in most any version. If feasible, it is very helpful to have more than one translation on hand to double-check any confusing passages.

You can find more helpful information in our reprint article *Which Bible Translation Should I Use?* We also invite our readers to request or download the free booklet the questioner mentioned, *How to Understand the Bible*. Information helpful for choosing a proper Bible translation appears on pages 12 through 14 of that publication.

Q: Is it true that one does not help the homeless, the destitute and the poor by giving them something? They are helped by giving them a job with remuneration. Right?

C.N., Yucca Valley, California

A: The Bible contains many observations about the poor plus positive instructions on how they can best be helped. When ancient Israel came out of Egypt, God warned His people not to oppress the poor or take advantage of them (see Deuteronomy 15:1-15). And, remarkably, the Creator even instituted a periodic year of release in which debtors were forgiven their debts. All creditors were

to have an attitude of concern for the poor (verse 9).

Nonetheless, God knows the realities of human nature. He understands our weaknesses and problems. He knew that “the poor will never cease from the land” (verse 11). Some simply would choose not to work, or would be unable to, or wouldn’t or couldn’t effectively manage their financial affairs. In any case, even our modern affluent societies still have large numbers of poor people. In spite of massive transfers of money over several decades, government programs and concerned citizens have not really stemmed the tide of poverty. Money alone does not solve the problem.

God’s instruction to ancient Israel required them to care for the poor by various means, both national and personal. For example, farmers were told to leave the corners of their fields unharvested and not to glean all the grapes so that the poor could gather food for themselves through this source of sustenance (Deuteronomy 24:19-21). The principle applies even today. And at least to some small degree, our current welfare programs are loosely based on these ancient biblical laws.

Yet many today still fall through the cracks and need personal assistance. God requires a generous spirit that responds to genuine needs as we discern them, but which also guards against being duped by hucksters.

Two New Testament scriptures in particular speak to this issue. The apostle Paul wrote, “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). But he was not referring to those who were seriously disabled or could not work through no fault of their own. And we have long had unemployment problems, even in the prosperous West.

Paul also wrote: “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give to him who has need” (Ephesians 4:28).

So while your proposition is certainly correct, that it is better to give someone in need a paying job, the imperfections of our present society render this option as only a partial solution. In this present age of man, there will always be those who are genuinely prevented from working or otherwise unable to help themselves. To those we must open our hands generously as we are able.

Finally, God included help for the poor in His basic monetary laws. To understand this in detail, please request our free booklet *What Does the Bible Teach About Tithing?*

Q: I am altogether disillusioned with human nature and the structure of human society. What should I do?

D.O., Cardiff, South Wales

A: One of the chief defenders of the Christian faith, the apostle Paul, expressed a similar view of human nature and this world’s systems and power structures. He viewed them as characterizing “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4). Jesus Christ, interceding for His apostles in His prayer to God the Father on the eve before His death, specifically stated: “I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given Me, for they are yours” (John 17:9, New International Version).

A little later in the same prayer Christ said: “. . . *They are not of the world* any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one [Satan the devil]” (verses 14-15, NIV, emphasis added).

Christ’s message is clear. True discipleship has little in common with society’s structures, which are based on the vagaries of human nature influenced by an unseen evil spirit, Satan (to learn more, please request our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*).

The biblical message to Christ’s true followers is to “come out of her My people, lest you share in her sins” (Revelation 18:4; compare 1 John 2:15-17). But where does a person wishing to seek the Creator go from here?

Our responsibility is to ask God for help in changing our lives to meet the standards of the Kingdom of God. Acts 2:37-39 sums up the actions that we must take: real repentance and water baptism followed by the receiving of God’s Holy Spirit.

Our free booklets *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* and *The Church Jesus Built* explain this whole spiritual process in detail and reveal the role of God’s Church in it. Jesus Christ said He would build His Church and that it would endure throughout this age of man (Matthew 16:18). Searching for and becoming an active part of that Church becomes the task of men and women whom God is calling into the knowledge of the truth.

The Greatest Humanitarian Cause

Do you want to make a real difference in this troubled world? Where can you start?

by Doug Horchak

In increasing numbers, young adults are expressing a desire to “make a difference” in a world that is torn by disease, poverty, terror and the ravages of war. An article in *The Washington Times* noted that among teens and young adults, volunteerism and a desire to serve by helping others in the community and the world is at its highest level in more than 50 years (“Youth Volunteerism at 50 Year High, Study Finds,” Nov. 20, 2002).

Chances are that you may also have a desire to do your part to bring desperately needed humanitarian aid to a strife-torn world.

A world in need

In recent travels to West Africa, I came to see just how much in need so many people are in this part of the world. Infectious disease and poverty kill more people than die in the continuing bloody conflicts that plague many countries in the region.

This is just one example of a world where human suffering is rampant. While the global economy has grown sevenfold since 1950, the disparity in per capita income between the 20 richest and 20 poorest nations has more than doubled between 1960 and 1995. (To understand the underlying reasons behind humanity’s troubles and why God permits them to continue, send for our free booklet *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*)

We live in a world filled with conditions that cry out for others to simply help. Yet the problems and sheer numbers of people in need are so great that the goal of making a true, lasting difference is daunting. Conditions such as these have moved some people, particularly the younger generation, to want to make a difference. However, the idea of serving the world in the interest of solving human suffering is not new.

The Peace Corps: The power of an idea

Forty years ago, while campaigning for the presidency in October of 1960, John F. Kennedy (who was soon to become the 35th president of the United States) arrived at the University of Michigan to speak to the students. It was there on the steps of the Michigan Union that the Peace Corps was launched.

The assembled students heard the future

president issue a challenge: “How many of you,” he asked, “would be willing to serve your country and the cause of peace by living and working in the developing world?” That question bears asking again.

The reaction to the presidential candidate’s idea was enthusiastic, and since 1961, more than 168,000 men and women have responded to that challenge and have served in 136 countries around the world. From that

God’s Word teaches us that Christians should do good for others. Paul stated in Galatians 6:10, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all . . .” Serving and volunteering—whether in your community or in a developing country overseas—is a wonderful way for a person to fill real human needs. Being involved in serving others and true humanitarian causes can offer you experience and contact with others that



Serving and volunteering—whether in your community or in a developing country overseas—is a wonderful way for a person to fill real human needs.

time, the Peace Corps has demonstrated how the power of an idea can capture the imagination of an entire nation—particularly those of the younger generation.

Forty years after the beginning of the Peace Corps, international humanitarian efforts have mushroomed. Today thousands of organizations around the world send volunteers to fill the desperate needs in education, health care and comfort in many of the developing and war-torn nations of this world. These organizations include Care International, the Red Cross, Feed the Children and the United Nations Children’s Fund, to name a few.

What about you? What can you do to make a difference in a world that sorely needs such help?

will help you through the rest of your life. The biggest benefit is that you have a direct impact on helping other human beings.

Man does not have the answer

Many young Americans were introduced to patriotism and a desire to defend freedom after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The desire to “make a difference” through service in the military grew strong after those historic events. Appreciation and respect for those who have recently served in the military overseas is at an all-time high.

Yet, when we consider God’s Word, His understanding of human nature and what will bring harmony and peace to this planet, we realize war will not accomplish that! Mankind’s history over the millennia is

proof that war, strife and killing are not going to ultimately solve the problems that exist on this planet!

If war is not the way to true peace, can the humanitarian efforts to diminish human suffering today make a lasting change in man's future? Jesus Christ told His students (disciples) that *He* was the true way to peace. And while the Bible tells us that Christ's Kingdom is not of this world or present age of man (John 18:36), it also reveals that the true, lasting peace and harmony that Jesus Christ spoke of simply cannot be brought about in the world as we presently know it!

That statement is sobering, and can cause one to ask, "What good is it to volunteer today if civilization is all but doomed in this age?" Christ told His disciples that man's present civilization will continue to get worse. In Matthew 24, He said of the world we live in, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved . . ." (verses 21-22).

These are pretty bleak words! Yet, despite these dire predictions of the future, we should not forget that serving the needs of the despondent of this world is a very worthy cause. Whether it be in our neighborhood or a remote developing country, doing good, one act at a time, one person at a time, is an important part of being a light in a world of darkness and preparing for a greater cause in the future.

Making a permanent difference

Help as we may, we won't be able to implement a permanent solution to the massive humanitarian needs of today—starvation, homelessness, war, poverty and disease. In fact, not even all the efforts of all nations combined could provide the lasting answer to the daunting plight of humanity.

God, however, does have plans to perma-

nently answer these needs. And unlike man's most noble efforts that are limited to food, clothing, medical supplies and education, God's plan is different. It not only includes meeting the physical needs of people, but more importantly involves a fundamental change in the human heart and mind that these other humanitarian institutions are just not able to accomplish.

While getting involved in serving the needs of others is an important part of our lives as Christians, the "ultimate humanitarian cause" is the work of God, not men. God is working through human beings now—those whom He has called. And through His spiritual Body, the Church, He is preparing a people who will display the kind of humble, serving leadership that Christ taught and exemplified in His life.

God's Word speaks of a new government that will have an impact on this entire world through the leadership of Jesus Christ and those who are His students. This "peace corps" of God, made up of converted members of His family, will be able to bring changes to this world that will ultimately eliminate the causes of human tears and suffering (Revelation 21:4).

What should you do now?

So should you now join the Peace Corps, or a similar humanitarian organization? Or crawl into a cave or mountain retreat and wait for Jesus Christ to return?

God tells us—young and old alike—to live in this world and to be a light (Matthew 5:14-16). He desires us to experience productive lives of learning, giving and accomplishing. In Matthew 25:14-25, Jesus Christ told His parable of the talents. In it He showed that we should do something profitable with what we have been given.

Yet the most precious commodity any of us can have, regardless of our age, is the spiritual knowledge of God's plan and purpose for mankind—a plan that involves revamping civilization in a way that will bring about true happiness and peace for eternity.

The "greatest humanitarian cause" has already started. It began with Jesus Christ sacrificing His life for mankind and continues in the work of His Church—a work that is about teaching and preparing a people. Use the knowledge God has given you. Study God's Word; draw close to Him.

Get involved in His Church in preparation for God's Kingdom. Start planting seeds of peace. Participate now in preparing for God's "peace corps" of the future—the ultimate answer to human suffering. **GN**



Want to Learn More?

If you like reading our youth articles in *The Good News*, take a look at our new magazine, *Vertical Thought*, at www.verticalthought.org.

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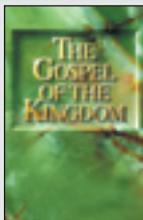
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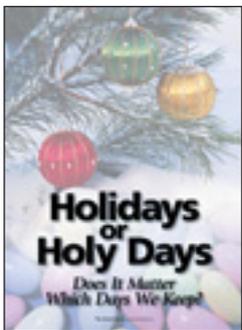
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Do You Know the *Real* Christmas Story?

With the Christmas season fast approaching, do you know the origin of modern Christmas customs and this celebration's connection to Christianity? Take the following short quiz to assess your knowledge.



1 True or False? The first Christmas was observed at the birth of Jesus Christ.

2 True or False? The custom of giving gifts for Christmas originated with the exchange of gifts among the wise men.

3 True or False? The growth of Christmas around the world is one of the best indicators that the world is becoming more Christian in its outlook.

4 True or False? The Christmas tree and mistletoe come from Christian tradition.

5 True or False? The Bible gives us permission to adopt any holiday customs we choose so long as they are done to honor Christ.

6 True or False? Putting Christ back in Christmas is the best way to honor God at this time of year.

7 True or False? Christmas is God's favorite celebration.

So how did you do? Brace yourself: The correct answer to all of these questions is *false*. If you missed some, you need to understand the real Christmas story as explained by history and the Bible in our free booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?*

Too many people go through life thinking they are honoring their Creator through Christmas celebrations. For many it is the most joyous time of the year. But, before you celebrate another Christmas season, why not consider what God thinks about this holiday? As a serious Christian, don't you think it's time you considered His view?

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