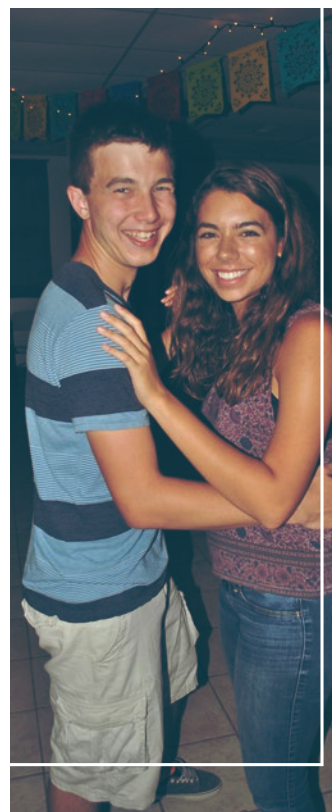




COMPASS CHECK

Helping you turn your spiritual compass toward God

Pre-Camp Issue



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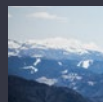
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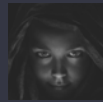
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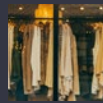
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COMPASS CHECK

Compass Check is a biblically based magazine for young people of the United Church of God, an International Association (UCGIA) aged 12-19. Our name, *Compass Check*, describes youth pointing their spiritual compass toward God.

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Publisher: UCGIA

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The goal of *Compass Check* is to inspire Church youth, ages 12-19, to respond to the gospel message.

Camp Is Coming!

We have another excellent issue—our pre-camp issue—for your reading pleasure. I hope you find all the articles practical and encouraging in your life as one of God's

young people. I plan on being at two of our teen camps this summer. I had the pleasure of visiting Winter Camp in Wisconsin last December. It is a joy to see you in this special camp environment that depicts God's way of life in action.

Please remember that the deadline for registering for camp is May 1—<http://uyc.ucg.org>. The 2016 Christian living theme is “Guided by God's Word.” See articles about this theme in the special *United News* UYC insert issue. Let's make this the best camp season ever, together!

Readers, check out our new regular feature called “Dear *Compass Check*.” This feature will provide practical Bible-based answers to questions and issues facing you as a teen. And as always, please e-mail me your questions that you'd like answered and topics you'd like covered in future issues at compasscheck@ucg.org. **CC**



Steve Nutzman
Managing editor
compasscheck@ucg.org

We want your articles!

If you want to write for this magazine, please e-mail your article to compasscheck@ucg.org.

We can't promise to print your article, but we would be happy to consider it. Please include your name, age, town and where you attend church. Contributors to this section must be ages 12-19, and articles should be 500 or fewer words.



This is a new, regular feature that aims to give practical, Bible-based answers to the questions and issues that you face. Have a question? Send it—with “Dear Compass Check” in the subject line—to compasscheck@ucg.org.



What should I do if kids make fun of me because of my religion?

Thank you for your question. You may have heard of the old adage “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” Actually, this is not true. Words can hurt, they do hurt and sometimes hurt very deeply. Any time someone makes fun of our beliefs or of us, we are hurt inside. Romans 13:10 says love does no harm to its neighbor, so those who are striving to live as God asks them need to watch their words carefully so as to not hurt others.

However, not everyone lives that way of life. Jesus Christ realized most humans would not follow God's instruction and would indeed ridicule true followers of God. In fact, in Matthew 5:10-11, Jesus said, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.”

Later, in Matthew 10:22, Jesus said, “And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.” He told us that since they treated Him badly, they would also treat us, His followers, badly. We also read in 2 Timothy 3:12, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

This is one of the hard parts of being a disciple of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. This is where the “rubber meets the road”. Quite honestly, this is where many people give up, throw in the towel, and turn back to their old life!

God promises us that if we'll remain faithful to Him, He will bless us and eventually make those who mistreat us recognize how wrong they were. Notice

Revelation 3:9: “Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.”

Yes, I realize that to know what will happen in the future does not always comfort us in the present, but in Mark 8:38 Jesus tells us not to be ashamed of what we believe: “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” When we really know what we believe and why we believe it, explaining our beliefs becomes easier. So we then have an incentive to study so we can clearly explain our beliefs.

There are times when we must also be careful not to promote our beliefs to others who may not desire to hear what we have to say. It really is a delicate balance. If someone doesn't really want to know what we believe and is only trying to stir up trouble for us, perhaps it would be better to simply avoid that person as much as possible.

Please talk to your parents and your minister to get more tips and suggestions to help you with the specific situations you face. **CC**



Edited by Len Martin, who pastors the Cambridge, Columbus, and Mansfield, Ohio, congregations and is the camp director for Camp Cotubic and pre-teen Camp Buckeye. Mr. Martin grew up in the Church and had to stand up to the very same pressures when he was young. len_martin@ucg.org

Campers: No Deposit, No Return!

The Pepsi-Cola Company led the soda industry in the use of disposable bottles decades ago. The earlier bottles were made from thicker glass. In addition to the price of the drink, consumers paid a returnable “deposit” of a few cents on each bottle. When the empty bottle was returned, the retail store returned the deposit to the consumer. Each bottle was used numerous times.

The new throwaway bottles were constructed of thinner glass but in a similar shape to the old returnable bottles. Sometimes it was difficult at first glance to tell one type of bottle from the other. To make the difference obvious, disposable bottles were manufactured with four words in raised glass letters that read, “No Deposit, No Return.” These bottles could not be returned for a deposit.

Some have used the words “no deposit, no return” as a metaphor for life. In other words, if we want to reap rewards in life, we have to pay for it. If you are reading this issue of *Compass Check*, you are probably thinking seriously about applying for camp. Let’s consider: What deposits are you willing to put down? What returns can you expect to take home with you?

Deposits—what you put in

Applications—remember the May 1 deadline! Each camp director will need your complete camper application, photograph, health history and your tuition payment. It is important that you send in the paperwork by the stated deadline.

Preparation. The time leading up to camp involves a lot of preparation. Clothing, gear and other items on packing lists need to be gathered. Money for tuition has to be earned.

Commitment. Make a commitment to come to camp, to have a good camp and to make as many friends as possible.

Happiness is largely a choice that each of us makes, so determine to be happy at camp!

Giving. Consider what you can bring to camp to give to others. Set your mind to give others the gift of a wonderful camp experience. If you want to have a miserable camp, think only of yourself. So think of others—this will pay big dividends back to you.

A positive attitude. Prepare your attitude for camp. Come with a positive “I can do it” attitude. Determine that you are going to fully participate in the camp program.

Returns—what you can expect

Memories. Good memories are worth their weight in gold. Few things are as enjoyable as looking back and reminiscing about good times with friends. Imagine how much fun it will be years later to laugh and tell old stories from camp with one of your fellow campers.

Encouragement. Having just one other person who believes in you and supports you can have a tremendous impact upon anyone. Encouragement is highly contagious, and it stays with you as you go through life.

Friendships. Camp offers you the return of making friends who will be your friends through life.

God’s way. Christian living classes, Bible studies, Sabbath messages, compass checks, dorm meetings and late night dorm chats will further define God’s way for your life. God’s way always works. The more we learn of it, the better we can live it. The way of God leads us in a fulfilling and challenging life.

Vision. Camp offers the chance to gain a greater vision of God’s Kingdom. Camp is like a secluded oasis in the middle of a harsh world. Imagine a world that starts and ends each day with prayer, filled with fun activities, fellowship, and people getting along with each other because they are living God’s special way of life.

You will receive from camp in proportion to what you put into camp. We hope that you will choose to apply to one or more of our United Youth Camps. As you do, please remember the words— “no deposit, no return!” **CC**



David Dobson served as the Camp Woodmen director for many years. david_dobson@ucg.org



— The Zone — A Gathering of Friends



unforgettable and the friendships that are built within the walls of the Zone are unbreakable. To be in such an environment where God's will and Word are both present and active is an extremely moving sensation. It's one that I would most certainly wish on everyone I have ever known.

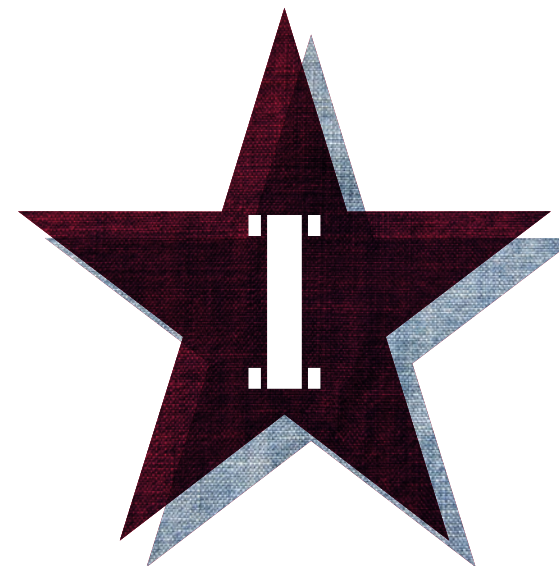
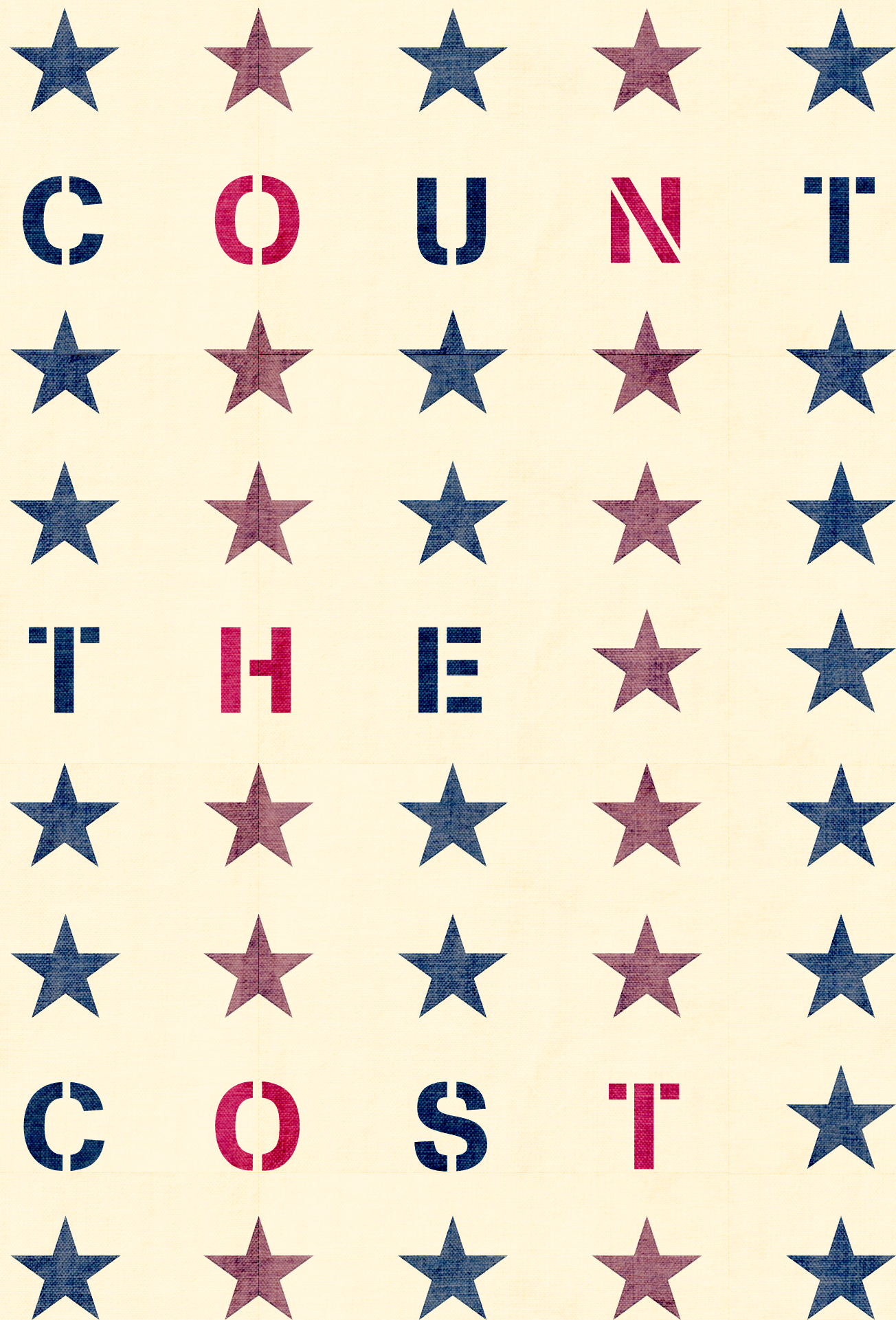
Camp is for those who want life more abundantly. It is for those who live by the ideal that there is more to life than just our present condition. The utter inspiration that overcomes me each year when I return is unlike anything else I have ever experienced. I relish the feeling I get as I get my first glance at my various friends and family whom I have not seen in months or even years. Camp is a place where campers and staff are not just tolerant of each other—they are loving and full of affection for one another. This is such a special place!

If I had never experienced seven years of the UYC program, I'm sure I wouldn't be nearly as fulfilled in life today as I am. I have made multiple lifelong relationships at Hye Sierra, and I feel connected to the very campground itself. This annual gathering is so special to both campers and staff alike. I hope you will be able to attend at one of the summer camps to experience this special time for yourself! **CC**



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am writing this article in the same manner that a grandfather might write a letter to his grandchildren. It is with the most heartfelt desire that I urge you to reconsider what some of you may be contemplating—the promotion and engagement of military service.

Not long ago I was visiting with a young man who attends services and, frankly, I was saddened to hear him convey that there are a number of young men throughout the Church who have no problem in expressing their desire to join the military and even go to war.

Patriotism and love for their country seemed to be the primary foundation of their desire, but I was still quite taken aback by his statement.

It was my destiny—or was it?

It has been 47 years since I volunteered for the United States Army at the height of the Vietnam War.

Yes, I volunteered for the U.S. Army. Why? Because I was raised with the belief that one becomes a man by standing up to protect his country. I volunteered for the U.S. Army because I believed that a man becomes *more* of a man when he defends those weaker than himself from the oppression and influence of evil men.

All the men within my family that I knew personally had served in a war—either in WWI or WWII, and even during the Civil War in the 1860s. It was ingrained in my mind and heart to stand up and be counted when the time came.

Just like Lieutenant Dan in the movie

Forrest Gump, I believed military service was my destiny. At this point in time, God had not yet called me to His true way of life, and I had not been reared in a strong religious household. The Ten Commandments meant nothing to me, so I had no problem with my decision at all. Furthermore, I did not fully comprehend the meaning of the Sixth Commandment in Exodus 20:13: “You shall not murder” (“kill” is the broader Hebrew meaning).

Seduction: Satan’s way

For years I had been fascinated with the appearance of a man in uniform. I read many books about heroes of war, and the majority of my thoughts were focused on becoming just like them. Unfortunately, I was quite ignorant of the severe consequences that lay under the surface of many of these men who had experienced the military life, especially during times of war.

This would include post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD. It is most commonly experienced by men and women that have directly served in war. It is a most challenging trial in the life of any human who has experienced combat.

A surprising fact about one of America’s greatest war heroes in WWII, Audie Murphy, was revealed following his tragic death in an airplane crash. A dear friend of his shared that Murphy slept with a loaded pistol under his pillow every night from the time he returned home from the war to the very day of his death.

Satan is deeply involved in the affairs of mankind—he is the master of deception and seduction. He makes very dangerous activities appear glorious and even honorable (2 Corinthians 11:3, 12-15). In fact, this is what he did to Adam and Eve, and it is *the very same approach* he directed toward our Savior when he tempted Jesus Christ in the wilderness



Ralph Redline is a veteran of the Vietnam War. He is an elder and serves with his wife Pam, in the Oklahoma City, Oklahoma congregation.

ESTHER

AN INCREDIBLE STORY OF FAITH

This remarkable young woman in the Bible was an orphan, became a queen, saved her people from mass murder, and had a book in the Bible named after her!

by Cal Bone and Jennifer Gosse



developed lady-like, demure behavior. She became a beautiful young woman.

Esther becomes queen

The book of Esther introduces us to a great king of Persia known as Ahasuerus or Xerxes (pronounced “zerk-zeez”). He was very strict and demanded obedience to his commands. When his Queen Vashti refused to appear at a feast where he wanted to display her beauty, he took her crown. He ordered that beautiful ladies be brought to the castle and judged for the Queen’s crown. Esther was one of them.

Mordecai warned her not to tell she was a Jew. She obeyed, while she and the other young women went through 12 months of grooming before being presented to the king. She became a favorite of Hagai, the chief custodian of the young women. He advised her in cosmetic preparations, and she was given seven maidservants and special living quarters. When Esther was presented to the king, he favored her above all the other women. The king chose Esther to be queen and gave a big banquet in celebration.

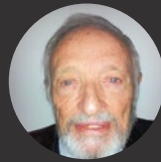
Mordecai’s courage

It was Mordecai’s habit to sit inside the gate of the courtyard. In doing so, he overheard a plot against the king by two of the king’s men. He told Esther, and she told the king, naming Mordecai as the source. The king had the conspiring men hanged and made Haman (a high official, in effect the prime minister of the king) his main helper, ruling that everyone bow to him.

Subsequently, when Mordecai refused to bow to him, Haman became angry. Upon learning he was a Jew, convinced the king that all Jews in the land should die. The king ruled that it should happen at the end of 12 months across the entire realm. Orders written by Haman were sent out by horseback.



Jennifer Gosse lives in Las Vegas with her husband, David, where they attend services and run their software companies.



Cal Bone is a long-time member who attends the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, congregation and is a retired teacher.

For such a time as this

When Mordecai heard of this terrible news, he and the local Jews put on sackcloth and ashes and fasted. Esther sent a servant to learn the whole story. She was told and urged to go to the king. She replied that if she went to him without being called, she could die, unless the king held out his scepter to spare her. Esther 4:13-14 states: “And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: ‘Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?’”

Reality check: Esther was willing to listen to sound advice, take personal responsibility and do her part—in faith. She took note of Mordecai’s faith that God would send deliverance for the Jews from somewhere. And he felt strongly that Esther was to be part of that—if she was willing to act. Her thinking matured rapidly. In a moment of incredible pressure, she made Mordecai’s faith her own faith in the God who delivers, as we see in Esther 4:15-16: “Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai: ‘Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!’”

Esther’s courageous decision

On the third day, Esther put on her royal robes and went to stand in front of the king. He was glad to see her, held out his scepter and asked what she wished. She said she wanted the king and Haman to come to a banquet she had prepared.

Reality check: Imagine fasting for three days without food or water and walking into a potential death sentence. She had little strength left, but she had faith. Without God’s intervention, her life could end within minutes. But because she was walking in faith, she knew that her life was in God’s hands, not the king’s.

The king and Haman came to the banquet. Again, the king asked Esther what she wanted. She said she would like the two to come back the next day for another banquet. They both agreed,

and Haman went out joyfully. Then began a whirlwind of events.

Miraculous turn of events

Haman had built gallows for hanging Mordecai and the Jews. Meanwhile, the king learned that Mordecai had not been rewarded for uncovering the plot against the king. (Esther 6:1-4). Haman came wanting to ask the king to hang Mordecai. Instead, the king asked what should be done to honor a man? Thinking it would be himself, Haman described a fancy event (Esther 6:5-9).

The king said, “Do so for Mordecai” (Esther 6:10). Haman did so and went home. Later, the

Esther was willing to listen to sound advice, take personal responsibility and do her part—in faith.

king’s men came to bring Haman to the banquet. During the banquet, Esther revealed the plot to have all the Jews killed, including her. The king then had Haman hanged on those gallows (Esther 7:1-19).

Esther asked that letters be sent out allowing Jews everywhere to band together to protect themselves. The king ordered Mordecai to write them and use his signet ring to make it official. As a result, groups of Jews resisted, killing many. Esther and Mordecai named the day Purim. Mordecai became the king’s main advisor and became very powerful. God blessed Esther for her great faithfulness and her love for her people. She put her life on the line for them.

Reality check: When all looks bleak and we are weak, never lose hope in God’s power and mercy to turn events and people around. Proverbs 21:2 states, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.”

Life is by nature challenging, and God allows us to be tested so that we can grow. But no matter how big or small the challenges, like Esther you also can walk toward, not run from, life’s difficulties by believing in God and seeking His will for your life. Trust in Him to work out the best outcomes and He will—for He is your guide and your deliverer, just like He was for Esther. **CC**

Esther’s story can be especially encouraging and instructive to young women as a role model for their own lives. While there are faith-testing elements of her story, she is an example of how to respond in trials, how God uses a person (young or older) who is obedient to Him and who looks to Him in faith.

No matter what a person is going through, know that God certainly does work in your life as a teen or preteen.

Background

Esther’s story takes place near the end of the events described in the Old Testament. Both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah had fallen and been taken into captivity in Assyria and Babylon, respectively. Esther was born into a group of Jews of the tribe of Benjamin who had been brought as captives to the ancient land of Persia years before. Her parents died when she was a child, and her cousin, Mordecai, cared for her as if she were his daughter. She respected him as an adopted father, honoring him and obeying him.

Reality check: Esther’s life had some very difficult situations. She was an orphan, living as a captive in an enemy land, and then taken from her cousin’s care to essentially become part of a king’s harem. These are not things that we generally like to think about happening, but they do happen. The key is not how difficult our situations may be, but how we respond to the challenges we’re faced with. When life didn’t turn out as she had hoped, what did Esther choose to believe about herself, her people and her God? Read on to find out.

Esther learned from her adopted father Mordecai the customs of their people. She observed the dietary and clothing laws and



Modesty: RESPECT

for Yourself, Others and Your Creator

Your appearance matters. It should not define you, but it will determine how others treat you and what they think of you, whether you like it or not. Please look up the hundreds of YouTube videos comparing how individuals are treated based on their dress—as a businessman, football fanatic or homeless person. As their dress diminishes, so does the way they are treated, even to the point of being kicked and spat upon while in homeless attire. It's disturbing to watch, but a stark reminder that how we appear does matter. I would argue that this is even truer for women.

Just like you, I've been judged incorrectly many times. As a kid, I was a serious tomboy, shopping in the boys section and playing soccer and football at recess with the guys. I remember once being mistaken for a boy (which was devastating!) and liking boys at school, even though they didn't see me as feminine. In the intervening years, I accepted that I was a girl, lost my dislike of dresses, and embraced my femininity more.

In high school and college, I continued athletics, including track. During track practice, most of my teammates chose to run in just

sports bras and small shorts. They all knew that the guys on the track team and adjacent practicing football team were watching. I did not dress like them. As a result, I had many guy friends on both teams who were likely interested in me, but knew that I had boundaries and respected myself. Because of that, they respected me too.

If you want a guy, or anyone else to respect you, you have to respect yourself first. You can show respect for yourself through your dress, your speech, and your actions. Initially, if you show more skin, act more flirtatious, and maybe even use some shocking language, you will get more attention, but in the long run, it will backfire. Most women want friends who spend less time competing and more time supporting. Most men want a girlfriend or a wife they can be proud of, who they can trust, who will honor them.

As a young adult, I've watched the lives of many acquaintances who chose attention over self-respect fall apart or swirl into a mess. I've comforted friends who were date raped, listened to others deal with a boyfriend who would never commit, have had children out of wedlock with a deadbeat dad, and some even lost their jobs, all because they wanted the initial physical attention, versus the long-term reward of getting married and honoring the body that God gave them.

In the environment of God's Church, it's even more important that you exercise modesty, as a sign of respect for God and your Christian brothers. It might be flattering that some guy can't stop staring at your low cut top at camp, but later on, that same guy might just end up marrying your friend (how embarrassing!), who was more modest. In the meantime, you're making it easier for the guy to have lustful thoughts and therefore to sin, and to look at you as an object, rather than a person. It's not respecting him or loving him as your brother in Christ, and most importantly, it doesn't honor God. And yes, it is also true and very important that guys accept their responsibility in controlling their own thoughts, no matter what they see around them. It is the responsibility of both genders to do their part in respecting each other.

Honoring God is the goal of everything we do. I'm sure you're all familiar with the scripture where God calls our bodies a temple, a temple where God's Spirit can abide. Notice this in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV): "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy



Spirit, who [which] is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

In the Old Testament, God spends chapter after chapter describing every inch of Solomon's Temple, from the type of wood to the color of the fabric to the ornate floors of gold. And just like the physical temples described in 1 Kings 5-8., God has poured time, energy and planning into you—creating someone beautiful, unique, and full of potential. We should display our temples with the same love and care that God did, with modesty, with consideration for the interpretation of our dress by others, and with heartfelt worship of our Creator. So that the sincerity of our faith does not come into question and we use the Holy Spirit in us in a way more pleasing to God.

The foundation of modesty isn't about your parents asking you to change a skirt that's too short, or the momentary attention of a guy passing by, it's about respecting yourself, loving your brother (and possible future husband), and ultimately worshipping your Creator with the temple He so carefully and wonderfully made. **CC**

The author is a past counselor at Northwest Camp and Camp Hye Sierra.

IS BEING YOUNG EVER AN EXCUSE?

by Anthony Smith

I

t is not uncommon for people to say “Oh, it’s okay, you’re young, and you’re supposed to make mistakes.” But is being young really an excuse for inappropriate behavior? Does being young excuse someone from making wise decisions? And how do you want adults and your friends in the Church and in school to view you? It is true that

through words and action we all are teaching people how they should see us and treat us.

I did not grow up in God’s Church. But I wish I had. Why? Because I have done many wrong things in my life. For example, I have been in prison, spending almost six years there. I hope that does not shock you. Believe me when I say that being young will never be an excuse for making poor decisions!

I have experienced many bad things in my young life. And it was all in the name of youthful pride, lust and experimentation. I thought I was untouchable!

*“I did not grow up in God’s Church.
But I wish I had.”*

I once truly lived like the consequences didn’t matter. Skipping class, drinking, smoking—you name it and I probably did it. All of these things in one way or another led me down the path that eventually got me almost six years in prison and a strike on my record.

But now to the positive

I was reading my Bible in my cell one day and came across some extremely interesting words in 1 Timothy 4:12. I remember it clear as day. At that very moment something immediately changed in my thinking towards myself. Paul told Timothy, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (New International Version).

At that moment I realized that being young (I

was 20 at the time, now 27) is never an excuse for being rebellious and behaving irresponsibly.

Paul told Timothy to be an example to the brethren in specific ways. That hit home with me—what about you? Are you consciously trying to be an example to those in God’s Church, as well to others, in your speech, by the life you live, by your faith, love and purity?

Paul was teaching Timothy how to be a good, responsible and respected young leader. Our pastors, elders and deacons are older men. Do you think you possess the necessary character to lead your peers in your local congregation? Why or why not? That’s something to ponder.

This passage showed me that being young or old doesn’t qualify or disqualify us from being a part of the leadership in

the Church, school or work; your personal conduct determines being used further by God. Our spiritual maturity counts with God.

Reading this verse in prison filled me with a sense of excitement! But more importantly, as a young man, it filled me with a sense of duty. I was inspired to truly live a godly life and knew that in order to do that I had to take 1 Timothy 4:12 both personally and literally. And to my surprise, doing that radically changed my life.

Being a Christian in prison and beginning to live by this verse not only gave me favor among those who held other beliefs (both younger and older men), but God even gave me great favor with the people who didn’t believe in Him. I was able to prevent people from being physically harmed by others and even had a positive effect upon some staff.

I can honestly say that on a very small level I can relate to the great favor and mercy that God gave to Joseph and Daniel. But despite this favor I was still constantly in emotional pain and physical discomfort because I was still incarcerated. I was still a prisoner being held against my will. No, being young is never a good excuse for living a sinful life.

You reap what you sow. Yet it is human nature to think you’ll be able to control the outcome. I’m sharing with you my experience so that you won’t have to make the same mistakes I did. What you and I can control is our own actions. Then ask God to take care of us each day of our lives.

Be bold, courageous and the ambassadors of God He wants us all to be. And do it every day. Take joy in the very privilege that God has given us to be able to know and grow in relationship with Him and to be called into His Church at such a young age. Set good patterns for your life now. Be wise and make intelligent decisions based on God’s laws. You will never regret it.

Really seek God in your youth and your latter days will be even more blessed. Ecclesiastes 12:1 reminds us to “remember your Creator in the days of your youth . . .” (NIV).

What you can learn now, took me years of pain and brought me literally to tears. Don’t make being young an excuse for getting involved with people and things that you know you should not. I promise you, you’ll always regret it. It might not happen today or tomorrow, but I’m still dealing with the consequences of decisions I made when I was a teen and young adult.

God says to honor your parents in the Fifth Commandment (Exodus 20:5). As you do, you will begin to be an example to the brethren just as Timothy wrote. And by the way, when was the last time you thanked God for your parents taking care of you all of these years?

I have learned Galatians 6:7 is a living law, including when we are young: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”

I spent most of my youth living the opposite direction of God’s way of life. I learned the hard way. Remember your Creator now in the days of your youth and you will be richly blessed! **CC**

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(Matthew 4:1-11). One of Satan’s greatest deceptions is when we consider engaging ourselves in a dangerous or controversial situation, and having the mindset of, “That won’t ever happen to me.”

Prepare to become a different person

Prior to my admission into the United States Army I was excited but terribly naïve about what lay ahead. From the beginning of basic training I was suddenly immersed into the world of being told to do everything *the Army way*.

I surrendered my sovereignty to military authority. In the military you either follow the orders you are given or suffer the consequences. For example, you likely will not be able to observe the weekly Sabbath or the annual Holy Days while in the military. You will be told to do things that will conflict with the spiritual beliefs you have believed in.

God is quite clear about the number one priority that must be in a person’s life—it must be God (First Commandment) and not man or the military. Notice this in Matthew 6:24: “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [money].”

When a person pulls the trigger of a weapon with the intention of ending the life of another human, the targeted person may die, but so does the person who pulled the trigger. This is because the shooter is really never the same person inside again.

The conduct and behavior of others within the military will wear off on the young believer, and it will wear that person down to the point that he or she will compromise God’s standards.



Part of the purpose of the military is the preparation and desensitization of taking the life of another human being. It is impossible to live a *true* Christian life in the military. You will be surrounded by people that do not know what you know about God, nor will they know about His plan for all of humanity.

Although you may not be baptized, you are still responsible for the knowledge of God’s way of life that you possess.

Three faces I will never forget

One face was that of my mother when I left home to go to war. She looked horrified and very sad as I said goodbye. Another face was that of a young Viet Cong soldier killed in an ambush. The third face was the face of my mother when I returned from Vietnam. Try to imagine how much my mother had suffered while I was away.

So why mention these memories? Your decision will impact many people, some very close and dear to you or some very close and dear to someone else. You will never be able to fully forget those faces. Choose which memories you will experience in your life; every decision creates a consequence.

In this regard, think about Galatians 6:7-10 which states: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap



U.S. army troops taking a break while on patrol during the Vietnam War.



corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Choose life

King David wrote about his desire for God to prevent him from making mistakes that would seriously affect him. Notice this in Psalm 19:12-13: “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression.”

I write like a “grandfather” in that I strongly recommend a young person to follow the loving instructions that God reveals in Deuteronomy 30:15-20. Here, God instructs us to choose life and not death.

As a combat veteran and as a person who learned about God’s truth later in my life, I have come to understand the truth about military service and war. Instead of the military, it is my advice for young people to “join” God, and benefit from a life of positive experiences and blessings that He is offering to them. God wants you to part of *His Kingdom* not the kingdoms of this world.

I conclude with a question: Why would a young person engage in the destructive and senseless causes of man that are promoted by Satan the adversary, whose whole desire is to turn us against God and His way, when that young person is being given the most priceless invitation to engage in the sure and eternal cause of the Almighty God? **CC**

ESTHER

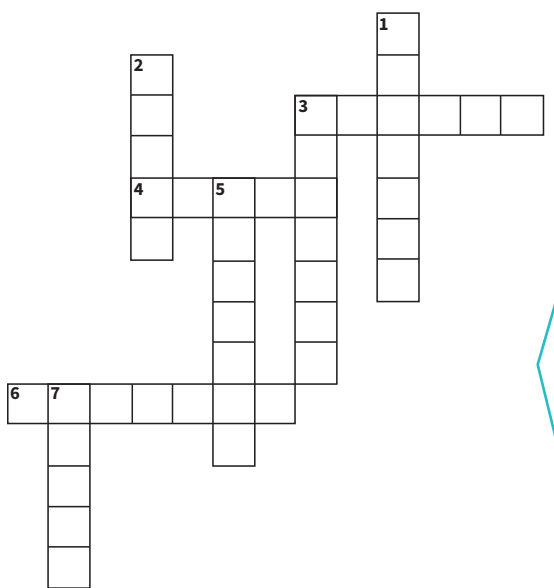
Match the answers from the answer key:

(Read article on page 8 for clues)

- | | | |
|--------|---|--------------|
| ___ 1 | Who was Esther’s cousin? | A. Persia |
| ___ 2 | Who tried to have the Jews killed? | B. bow |
| ___ 3 | Who was queen before Esther? | C. hanging |
| ___ 4 | What was King Ahasuerus’ other name? | D. wife |
| ___ 5 | What did Mordecai refuse to do? | E. record |
| ___ 6 | Where did Esther live? | F. Xerxes |
| ___ 7 | What did Esther ask the Jews to do? | G. convinced |
| ___ 8 | What did Esther prepare for the king? | H. Haman |
| ___ 9 | How did Haman die? | I. Vashti |
| ___ 10 | Who convinced Haman to build the gallows? | J. furious |
| | | K. fast |
| | | L. banquet |
| | | M. Mordecai |

Crossword Puzzle

Refer to the “word list” to fill in the crossword—see “hints” about the words in the crossword puzzle.



Hints

- Across**
- 3. die
 - 4. mount
 - 6. feast

Down

- 1. angry
- 2. evening
- 3. happy
- 5. answered
- 7. inquired

Word List

- pleased
- replied
- asked
- furious
- night
- banquet
- perish
- horse

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United Youth Magazine

United Church of God

P.O. Box 541027

Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

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Camp Dates 2016

Camper and Staff Application deadline is May 1.

Apply at: <http://uyc.ucg.org>

Camp Pinecrest, Missouri, June 24-July 1 (staff arrives June 23)

Camp Cotubic, Ohio, June 26-July 3 (staff arrives June 25)

Camp Woodmen, Alabama, June 26-July 3 (staff arrives June 25)

Camp Hye Sierra, California, June 26-July 3 (staff arrives June 24)

*Northwest Camp, Oregon, July 24-July 31 (staff arrives July 23,
counseling staff July 22)*

Winter Camp, Wisconsin, December 25, 2016-January 1, 2017

*We apologize for overlaps this summer, but with a late Pentecost
we moved Camp Cotubic forward a week. Other overlaps were
created by the host camps offering these dates to us.*

