July-August 2005

The Good News

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING



Marital Happiness:

The Choice Is Up to You!

Saving Marriage • A Message of Hope Following the Death of a Loved One
60 Years After World War II: What Have We Learned? • Why Isn't Sex Safe?

Right Choices and Happiness



Love between a husband and wife is the most powerful force in the world. An intimate marital relationship displays a beauty and wonder unique among all human relationships. There is no greater physical relationship on earth.

Some marriages endure a lifetime, filled with excitement and joy. Others *don't* last—for a myriad of reasons. But one thing remains constant: No matter how long a marriage lasts, the great synergistic power of an intimate love transforms a couple to the very depth of the partners' beings. Neither will ever be the same again.

What defines an intimate relationship? Sometimes it's revealed by a unique friendship, shared with no other. Sometimes it's experienced by what is not said, just felt. Sometimes it's welded together by obstacles shared and endured. And sometimes it's observed in the lives of their children, when a husband and wife's

Did a loving God, who invented marriage, deliberately design marriage to fail so often?

cup fills up and spills over into those little hearts and minds. All of these wonderful things transpire because of *making right choices.*

Psychologist, author and TV personality Dr. Phil McGraw advises couples and families to make right choices: "Starting right now, you can begin to make choices and take day-to-day actions that will create nothing short of a phenomenal family. Whatever its state, you and your family members collectively own it. You as the parent and leader of the family have particular ownership. Whatever is happening, good or bad, is happening on your watch. You can choose to have a phenomenal family if you just resolve to do it and know where to put your focus" (*Family First,* 2004, p. 30).

Every happy family begins with a happy marriage. Husbands and wives who unselfishly choose to follow biblical principles in sharing their lives with each other create a marriage relationship that grows increasingly stronger and deeper. On the other side of the coin, some couples mistakenly assume that when their marriage isn't working out, that must mean they should separate or divorce.

This is an emotional myth. An in-depth, groundbreaking study on marital relationships revealed that when a troubled couple stays together, the marriage usually turns out much better. Dr. Linda Waite, University of Chicago sociologist and head of the study, writes, "Two-thirds of unhappily married spouses *who stayed married* reported that their marriages were happy five years later." Such couples deliberately *chose* to remain married. They rolled up their sleeves and worked out their differences.

Regrettably, some couples simply allow their marriages to happen and attribute the negative results to God: "It just wasn't meant to be." This begs the question: Did a loving God, who invented marriage, deliberately design marriage to fail so often? Since God has designed our lives to be governed by right choices (Deuteronomy 30:19), why wouldn't this apply to the most intimate physical relationship possible?

A marital relationship remains the most powerful teacher in the world, teaching us compassion, understanding, patience, forgiveness, courage, loyalty and trust. The Bible remains the best guide for a happy marriage, offering the best marital choices possible (Ephesians 5:22-33). In this issue, we encourage you to make the best choices for your marriage—which will bring marital happiness.

—Jerold Aust, Senior writer

The Good News

July-August 2005 Volume 10, Number 4 Circulation: 456,000

The Good News (ISSN: 1086-9514) is published bimonthly by the United Church of God, *an International Association,* 555 Technecenter Dr., Milford, OH 45150. © 2005 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. Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., publishers) unless otherwise noted.

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Publisher: United Church of God, *an International Association Council of Elders:* Aaron Dean, Robert Dick (chairman), Jim Franks, Clyde Kilough, Victor Kubik, Les McCullough, Joel Meeker, Larry Salyer, Mario Seiglie, Richard Thompson, Leon Walker, Anthony Wasilkoff

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Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement Number 40026236.
Canada return address: *The Good News,* 2744 Edna Street, Windsor, ON N8Y 1V2.

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

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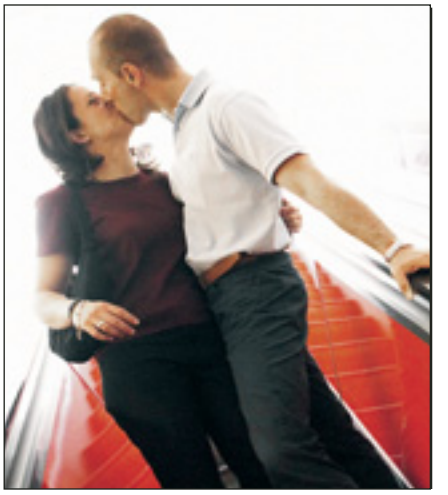

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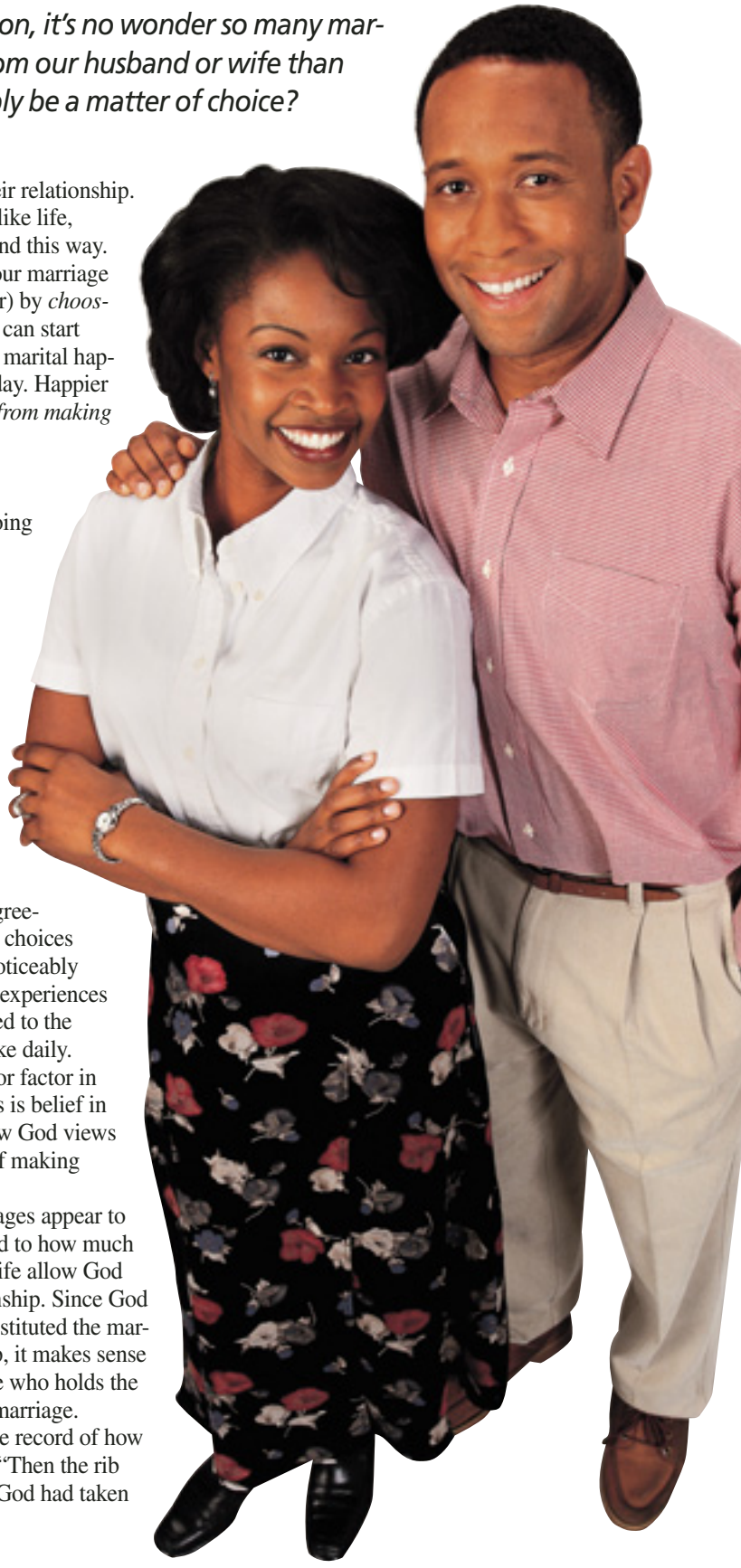
Marital Happiness: The Choice Is Up to You!

With so many people wanting instant gratification, it's no wonder so many marriages end in divorce. Are we expecting more from our husband or wife than we're willing to give? Can happy marriages simply be a matter of choice?

by Jerold Aust



Anne and William were not looking for marriage. They thought they were happy living their lives as singles. Then one day they met—and although the month was a cool February, for them it might as well have been the Fourth of July! Suddenly they saw glittering stars and fireworks bursting in air accompanied by soaring strains of heavenly music. One year later they married.

Their honeymoon condition lasted six months. One day, William inadvertently asked Anne about something that would normally be of no consequence. But she burst into tears and said, "I am so sorry. I had no idea that bothered you." William felt so small he could have walked upright under the carpet. "I'm sorry too, and I never intended to ever make you cry."

Eventually every honeymoon ends and every couple must get down to the reality of making marriage work.

What makes a marriage?

In our supposedly advanced countries, about half of all marriages end in divorce. Think what this means: The husband and wife suffer immediate disappointment and perhaps long-term depression, and children, if there are any involved, are emotionally scarred for years.

When spouses divorce, each often blames the other for their breakup: "It's not my fault; it's her fault. She didn't want to do the things I liked to do." Or, "He's the one who wouldn't communicate. He's the one who was wrong." Often there is a "marital iceberg" of hidden differences residing below the surface of their relationship.

But marriage, like life, doesn't have to end this way. You can make your marriage happy (or happier) by *choosing* to do so. You can start down the road to marital happiness this very day. Happier marriages result *from making right choices.*

Life's a choice

Life is an ongoing series of choices. Some of the choices we make naturally create anxiety and disagreement while other choices make our lives noticeably happier. Our life experiences are directly related to the decisions we make daily.

Since one major factor in marital happiness is belief in God, let's see how God views the importance of making choices.

Happier marriages appear to be directly related to how much a husband and wife allow God into their relationship. Since God is the one who instituted the marriage relationship, it makes sense that He is the one who holds the keys to a happy marriage.

Here then is the record of how marriage began: "Then the rib which the LORD God had taken

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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 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" (Genesis 2:22-23).

God, not man, instituted marriage. Marital problems often develop when people assume that human beings invented marriage as a convenience.

Human nature, being shortsighted and always wanting to please itself, naturally opts for the quick fix. Many men and women short-circuit their marriages because of overly indulgent selfishness. Floundering marriages don't have to roil in selfish stalemates. By choosing *not* to be selfish, you can literally choose to make your marriage happier.



Corbis

Choices in marriage bring good or bad results

God intended that the marriage relationship and making right choices be synonymous. He gives us freedom of choice and reveals that He created us to make choices daily. He tells us, for example, "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore *choose life, that both you and your descendants may live"* (Deuteronomy 30:19, emphasis added throughout).

God gives us the opportunity and obligation to make choices throughout our lives. But the divorce record shows that we're not very good at making right choices.

God doesn't stop us from making wrong decisions. He knows that our flesh is weak and that our selfish nature makes us weaker. But He also knows that when we rise above our selfishness, we build good character. If we fail to understand that, we fail to understand a great deal about God and His plan and purpose for us.

Here's a key to understanding choices and their consequences: God has set in motion *spiritual laws* for human beings that lead to good or bad results, depending on the choices we make. Obey God's laws and *good results* automatically happen. Break God's immutable laws and *bad results* happen.

That's why it's important for marriage partners to make unselfish choices relative to each other. Selfishness brings bad results. *Un*selfishness brings *good* results. The choice is up to you.

So what choices can we make to improve our marriages? Let's examine several.

Choose mutual submission. The Bible is clear that the husband is the leader of the family, as we will soon see. However, Scripture also emphasizes mutual submission among all people, deferring to one another when possible, whether in marriage or in life.

God has set in motion ***spiritual laws*** for human beings that lead to good or bad results, depending on the choices we make. Obey God's laws and ***good results*** automatically happen. Break God's immutable laws and ***bad results*** happen.

The apostle Paul, in Ephesians 5:21, speaks of *"submitting to one another* in the fear of God." Peter advises husbands to "dwell with [their wives] with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being *heirs together of the grace of life . . ."* (1 Peter 3:7).

Modern religion and culture have generally refused this divine instruction. Is there something good to be said about mutual submission, especially in marriage? There certainly is. The opposite of *submitting* to one another is to *oppose* each other. When do two wrongs make one right? The way to peace in life and in marriage is to make peace.

Making peace requires humility. Human beings aren't accustomed to humility; this is a dog-eat-dog world. However, there are diminishing returns to always being right. If we happen to be right in a marital disagreement, it's counterproductive to gloat. If we are wrong and we come to realize we're wrong, we should quickly, and genuinely, admit it, apologize if warranted, and move on.

Those who enjoy a happy marriage also realize that humility rules. Good character is built and peace enters the relationship when one person humbles himself or herself to restore balance.

Based on the divorce rate, many couples give little thought to mutual submission. The very idea of humility in life and in marriage cuts across the grain of selfish human nature.

Humility is a gift from God; He is the author of mutual submission. The husband and wife who mutually submit do so with God as their guide. An improved relationship follows automatically.

In a happy marriage, both husband and wife mutually submit themselves to one another. None will do so perfectly, but the right intent and purpose needs to be there. Quite simply, when mutual submission is the prevailing attitude of both spouses, peace pervades and prevails in that marriage.

Choose not to change your spouse. When a man and woman decide to get married, they don't give much thought to changing their partners because they are so enraptured with each other. But time can and does change this amorous and intoxicating condition.

As the husband and wife come to see each other up close day and night, the honeymoon feelings gradually wear off and reality sets in. Suddenly they see traits and habits they weren't aware of or overlooked before, and those formerly inconsequential habits take on greater significance than they did in a forgiving honeymoon dreamland.

Husbands, have you ever hinted that your wife change a habit that has begun to annoy you only to find your wife in tears after the mere mention of it?

The proverbial toothpaste controversy is a case in point. One spouse squeezes the tube from the bottom up; the other squeezes it anywhere he or she grabs hold of it. Disagreements on seemingly insignificant acts suddenly turn into arguments. Arguments can precipitate cruel accusations, suddenly including unrelated nonissues. Before you know it, the honeymoon is over and both husband and wife begin to wonder if they married the right person.

If this situation is familiar, you've just come face-to-face with life and human nature. It is better to absorb the smaller differences and not try to change your spouse on minor issues if you want peace and continued love and respect to govern your marriage.

True, differences of opinion are often subjective, but by any other name, arguments can and do surface at times. Again, such otherwise unexpected marital disruptions come from making choices,

usually poor or selfish ones.

Rest assured that you cannot avoid making choices in your marriage, whether you're newly married or you've been married for many years. Couples who understand that all human beings must make choices on a daily basis also realize that their marriage will enjoy greater security and happiness when built on *right* choices. If you want a happier marriage, there simply is no other choice.

A husband and wife who have remained happily married for many years have accepted each other's faults or differences and learned to work around the minor issues in their marriage. They have deliberately chosen to avoid making mountains out of molehills.

Choose to serve your marriage partner. We've discussed how to rise above the desire to change our spouse, so let's progress from not doing something detrimental *to* our mates to doing something productive *for* them. Any good action in marriage, as in life, likely has to do with a deliberate, outgoing service toward another person. You, the husband, can serve your wife, and you, the wife, can serve your husband.

God, through the apostle Paul, provides married couples the perfect formula to mutual submission and a happier relationship: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord . . . Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Ephesians 5:22, 25).

The Bible's instruction is clear: Wives should submit to their own husbands as they do to Jesus Christ.

Wives can submit to Jesus Christ since they know that Jesus is merciful, patient and loving. But what about wives submitting to husbands the same way? The thought would probably generate a response something like: *"But my husband is not like Jesus Christ. The more I submit to him, the more he takes advantage of me."* No argument so far. This is why Jesus Christ inspired the instruction quoted above for husbands. Notice it again carefully.

Husbands are told to love and serve the wife as Christ loves and serves the Church. How much and in what ways does Jesus love and serve the Church?

He loved and served the Church to His very death and continues that love to this day and forever. His love and service involved giving Himself unconditionally to the very same human beings who took His life. Therefore, husbands, we have the privilege and obligation to love and protect our wives with that same kind of mercy, patience and sensitivity. When a husband and a wife mutually submit to and serve each other, peace happens.

Again, we deliberately *choose* how we relate to our marriage partner, either to selfishly *demand* our way or to unselfishly *give up* our way to make our mate happy and secure.

Naturally, a spouse who takes advantage of the unselfish service of the other on an ongoing basis will create an unbalanced and unhappy marriage. And husbands, in the leading role, are more prone to do this than wives, which is why Paul explicitly instructs husbands to love their wives as Jesus loves the Church—with a wholehearted, outgoing, self-sacrificial love.

When a husband and a wife mutually submit to and serve each other, peace happens. We deliberately ***choose*** how we relate to our marriage partner, either to selfishly ***demand*** our way or to unselfishly ***give up*** our way to make our mate happy and secure.

However, a selfish spouse, whether husband or wife, is doing harm to himself or herself and to the marriage relationship when he or she selfishly demands his or her own way in a disagreement. Hopefully both husband and wife aren't simultaneously acting selfishly. When both spouses persist in such selfishness, divorce often looms ahead.

Happiness results when both husband and wife make up their minds to serve the other. That means choosing to do the right and considerate thing toward your marriage partner. When both spouses continually make the right choices toward each other, happiness and security bond their relationship, and their union will be blessed with many years of happiness.

Choose to place God first in your life. The most important choice any husband and wife can make in their marriage relationship is to place God first in their lives. Placing God first in your marriage, even above your spouse, is not a competitive act but a complementary one.

The marriage covenant is made with your spouse and with God, who instituted marriage. God expects married couples to remain dedicated to each other *through Him.* Indeed, the best way to maintain the marriage relationship beyond the public wedding is to remain privately committed in mind and heart to God and His spiritual laws and principles, including those that relate to marriage and personal relationships.

To see our relationship priorities, notice that Jesus Christ gave the two great commandments as, first, love for God and, second, love for neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40). These two commandments represent the whole of the Ten Commandments. The first four of the Ten Commandments show how we put God first in our lives. The last six commandments show how we love our neighbor, including our spouse, as ourselves.

Putting God first assures that a husband and wife will put each other ahead of themselves in their marital relationship. There is no competition between God and one's husband or wife. Both God and our partner are honored when God is the director of our lives—and no less so in our marriage relationship. When we look to God to guide us in all areas of our lives and especially as our lives affect our spouses, happiness and security reign.

Notice how highly God regards the marriage union: "For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:30-33).

Here is a great key to understanding why

Recommended Reading



The Bible contains a treasure trove of practical, helpful ways husbands and wives can build a closer, stronger, more fulfilling marriage. Beyond that, it also offers many crucial principles for proper parenting to help couples bring up happy, healthy, well-adjusted and successful children. You'll find much of this timeless guidance in our new booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension.* It's yours free for the asking!

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

www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

people get married in the first place. The marriage institution was designed by God from the very beginning for the purpose of procreating and populating the earth (Genesis 1:28), learning to live in peace and harmony through mutual submission and service (James 3:18) and learning the mutual love and respect shown between Jesus Christ and His Church.

Jesus even tells us that at His return He will marry His Church, after which the two will spend all eternity in a loving, divine relationship:

"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 [i.e., the members of the Church]. Then he said to me, 'Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' And he said to me, 'These are the true sayings of God'" (Revelation 19:7-9).

As Paul told the Ephesians, the marriage union is designed to teach us about the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:32). This great key alone can open the door of understanding to a strong and happier marriage.

When both marriage partners deliberately choose to put God first, through reading the Bible, praying together and discussing how they can improve their service to each other based on God's instructions, then happiness comes about automatically.

Choose marital happiness

Although much more could be added to the list of choices a couple can make in marriage, we suggest that you and your spouse sit down together and make your own list of ways that each of you can choose to help and serve the other.

William and Anne, the couple mentioned at the beginning, did just that. When both partners bring new ways of service to the table and discuss them humbly and openly, the chances of securing a happy or happier marriage go through the roof.

God has given every married couple the opportunity to choose marital happiness. He has given us instructions on how to do that. He tells us to choose the way to eternal life, and when we do, we will be blessed, both in this life and in the next.

Choose this day to serve your spouse as never before, and you will find a joy and peace that passes all human understanding. Choose marital happiness! ***GN***

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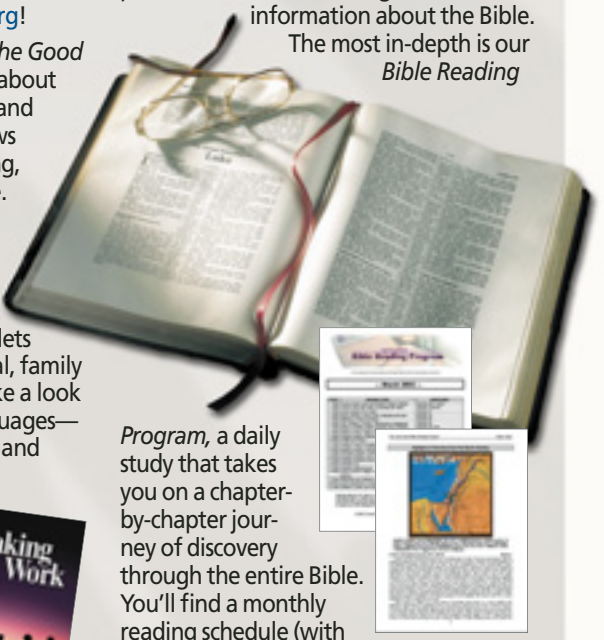

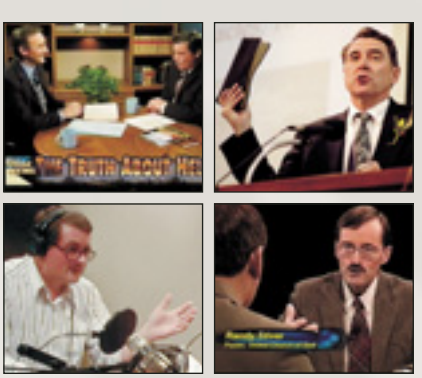

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Saving Marriage: Beyond Constitutional Amendments

In response to same-sex marriages in some states, many are pushing constitutional amendments to preserve the traditional marriage relationship. But it will take much more if marriage is to be saved.

by John Miller

"And I now pronounce you husband and wife!" These or similar words have long marked the union between a man and a woman in marriage, the time-honored institution that has been the bedrock of stability for society.

When several judges and other government officials in some American states broadened the definition of marriage to include same-sex unions last year, thousands of couples took vows to legitimize their relationships. Conservative Christians and others cried foul. The traditional meaning of marriage, they insisted, must be preserved. The consequences of changing marriage would be dire, they warned, including the destruction of the traditional family, staggering health-care costs, impairment of religious freedom and suffering of children.

Their opponents called them hypocrites. Could both have been right? Let's examine what the Bible teaches and compare that to the current efforts of professing Christians to save marriage. You may be surprised by what we find.

Same-sex relationships: What does the Bible say?

The biblical position on same-sex marriage is not difficult to understand. Moses, under God's inspiration, wrote: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination" (Leviticus 18:22).

The apostle Paul reaffirms the unacceptable nature of this lifestyle in his letter to the Corinthian church: "Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders . . . will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, New International Version). Unless there is real repentance, the ultimate penalty remains the same: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Some Corinthian church members had repented of and forsaken these unacceptable lifestyles. *"And that is what some of you were.* But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11, NIV, emphasis added).

The Bible clearly states that "marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled" (Hebrews 13:4). There is permanence and social stability in the exhortation, "Man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Ephesians 5:31). This family unit has been the basis of social and economic stability for millennia.

That is in serious danger of changing if proponents of same-sex marriage have their way. Still, the matter is far from settled. The conservative political base in America is actively pursuing legislation and constitutional amendments at the state and federal levels to preserve the traditional meaning of marriage.

However, recent studies, even within the ranks of this conservative base, indicate that marriage is in much deeper trouble than one might first expect. The advent of same-sex marriage may be more symptomatic of the moral mind-set of the nation than merely a legal issue. Stated bluntly: Marriage is under assault from many sides, and it will take more than a constitutional amendment—*much more*—to save it.

Declining support for biblical standards

Consider these statistics: 52 percent of those who profess to be "born-again" Christians do not believe divorce for reasons other than adultery is a sin. They are just as likely to divorce as non-Christians. And 49 percent of born-again Christians believe cohabitation—men and women living together outside of marriage—is morally acceptable. Only half of Protestant pastors have a biblical worldview. Only 1 in 10 born-again teenagers believes in absolute moral truth.

These statistics, compiled by respected religious pollster George Barna, are quite an indictment against today's religious establishment. Clearly, the larger Christian community has failed to integrate basic tenets into daily lives. A profession of Christian belief does not ensure the practice of Christian principles and standards. Sadly, marriage has little chance of surviving in such an environment.

Interestingly, Paul's letter to the Romans, which describes homosexual relationships as "vile passions" (Romans 1:26), has equally strong words for those who deliberately oppose the behavioral standards revealed in God's Word. "For the wrath of God," Paul declares, "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them . . ." (verses 18-19).

To suppress the truth, Paul maintains, is deliberate "unrighteousness" that blinds their thinking and reasoning. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting" (verse 28).

Paul lists a number of "unfitting" behaviors that debased minds produce, including sexual immorality, pride, lack of spiritual understanding and deceit (verses 29-31). What is worse, according to Paul, these individuals "not only continue to do these evil things, they applaud others who do them" (verse 32, New Century Version).

What can be done?

Clearly, society at large and a huge number of professing Christians have lost their way. What then can be done?

If marriage is to survive, the undiluted Word of God with respect to marriage must be taught today with the same force it was given in the first century by the apostle Paul and others. Mincing the Scriptures to fit contemporary and ungodly perspectives will not save marriage.

Neither will preaching "old-time damnation" that evokes only fear and emotion but produces little or no sustainable change.

What society needs is a clear delineation between right and wrong—plain and simple so people can make informed moral choices.

The uncensored Word of God has an amazing capacity and authority to give clear direction. It becomes, as King David said, a "lamp" to our feet that guides us down a safe path in our journey through life (Psalm 119:105).





What is the greatest threat to the institution of marriage? *Many view same-sex marriage as a grave threat to marriage and the stability of society. Yet surveys show that "born-again" Christians are just as likely to divorce as non-Christians, and half of them believe that men and women living together outside of marriage is morally acceptable. This shouldn't be surprising when surveys also show that half of pastors don't have a biblical worldview.*

The supreme authority

God is the supreme authority. His authoritative instructions are written down for us in the Bible. Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Son, acknowledged, recognized and submitted to this authority.

The prophet Isaiah, in a widely recognized messianic prophecy, foretold the Messiah's attitude on this matter. "His delight is in the fear of the LORD," the prophet explained (Isaiah 11:3)—centuries before Jesus Christ so eloquently expressed the prophecy's fulfillment: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34).

Jesus consistently acknowledged the supremacy of God in everything He did: "I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" (John 5:30). His life's work demonstrates His unwavering commitment to yield to the will of the Father in word and deed.

The yielded mind or attitude of Christ, which Paul exhorts us to emulate, is at the foundation of what it will take to save marriage. This attitude cannot be constitutionally legislated; it must be sincerely embraced by each individual.

Jesus Christ recognized God as the only supreme authority and source for universal truth. "Your word is truth," He declared (John 17:17). This universal truth provides timeless principles to direct our lives. Jesus taught His followers that "you shall know the truth**,** and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Recognizing, yielding to and ordering our lives according to universal truth revealed by a higher authority is clearly being out of step in our self-determined society. The notion that yielding one's will to God is a delight and that embracing and living within the restrictions of God's law brings freedom is scoffed at by today's freethinkers.

Sadly, this attitude of self-determination, standing in stark contrast to the teachings and example of Christ, has infiltrated the professing Christian community. When half of pastors surveyed lack a biblical worldview, is it any wonder that their constituents fail to recognize that divorce "for just any reason" (Matthew 19:3-6) is not biblically justifiable? Or that they don't see unmarried cohabitation as morally unacceptable? Or that teenagers don't believe in absolute truth?

Without a biblical worldview based firmly in the Scriptures, even pastors unwittingly suppress the truth. And their parishioners reap the predictable consequence described by Paul.

Clearly, if marriage is to be saved, a lot of work must be done on the home front—among professing Christians. It must begin by moving beyond simply professing Christ to actually practicing what He taught—delighting, as *He* did, in the laws of God, which are an expression of love.

God is the author of marriage

Make no mistake. Marriage derives its definition and authority from God rather than from contemporary cultural ideas. Jesus Christ explained the original intent of marriage: "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:4-6).

These words of Christ, spoken nearly 2,000 years ago, should give us encouragement because His perspective remains unchanged. In a society with ever-changing values, Christ's definition of appropriate moral conduct, including that relating to marriage, remains the same. From the beginning, marriage was intended by God as a union between a man and a woman.

Continued on page 26

Photos (from left): Scott Ashley, Photos.com

World News and Trends

An Overview of Conditions Around the World

by John Ross Schroeder and Jerold Aust

The disturbing fruits of premarital sex

Premarital sex is increasingly becoming a real problem in Britain. One very troubling manifestation is the fact that 4 in 10 babies are now born to unmarried parents. The *Daily Mail's* social affairs correspondent Steve Doughty wrote: "The number of children born to unmarried mothers has risen by a third in 10 years . . . More than 42 of every 100 babies were born outside of marriage last year . . . In the early 1970s, it was less than 10 per cent" (May 13).

Although not exclusively a teenage problem, the growth in abortions is another disturbing aspect of premarital sex. A recent feature article reported that "a dramatic rise in repeat abortions has reinforced fears that women are increasingly having terminations for lifestyle reasons. One in three abortions is now carried out on women who have had at least one before."

Abortion is increasingly called "the new birth control." This year the number will most probably reach a record high in England and Wales.

Sexually transmitted diseases are out of control among teenagers, with enormous increases reported in various types. Little that really works is being done to discourage these society-destroying trends. In fact, the reverse is true in some quarters.

The core of the difficulty is that true biblical standards are no longer being taught with conviction either in schools or at home.

According to *Daily Mail* media editor Matt Born: "Television viewers face a dramatic rise in sex, swearing and violence as restrictions on what can now be shown were swept away yesterday. The broadcasting regulator OFCOM signaled the dawn of a new permissive era by stating 'freedom of expression' was the principle at the heart of its new broadcasting code . . . Broadcasters will be able to show much more graphic sex and violence—as long as there's sufficient warning for viewers" (May 26).

The standards are gradually falling. So it is no surprise that a report from the Royal College of Nursing stated that "increasing numbers of teenagers are indulging in pre-marital sex." Free access to contraception (without the knowledge of parents) is a contributing factor. Also young people feel pressured into having sex by their peer groups and by the negative influences of the media as a whole.

The core of the difficulty is that true biblical standards are no longer being taught with conviction either in schools or at home. The resultant fruits are inevitable. Noted columnist Melanie Phillips remarked: "There is another type of family where all standards or restraint and civilised behaviour have broken down: a pattern of recklessness which is increasingly being repeated throughout Britain" (May 25).

If you would like to understand the background to some of these societal problems and how to better cope with them, please request our free booklets *Making Life Work* and *The Ten Commandments.* (Source: *Daily Mail* [London].)

The Bible under attack in Britain and Europe

The Bible has been under severe attack in secular Europe for a very long time. The latest public outbreak is reflected in headlines in British newspapers such as "Hospitals Ban the Bible," "Christian Hostel Faces Shutdown for Having Bibles and Saying Grace" and "Christian Symbols Disappear."

The first headline is a bit overstated as a final decision on banning Bibles from hospitals has not been reached as of this writing. But these news reports are nonetheless only the latest symptoms of a long-running, debilitating trend.

The hostility to God and the Bible in some quarters is becoming almost unbelievable. It has even been said that the attacks on religion by noted atheist and professor Richard Dawkins "are so bad-tempered they give atheism a bad name" (*The Guardian*).

According to a feature article in *The Times*, "God is being edited out of education lessons in schools for fear that His presence might bore children." The stories of biblical heroes are being told without any reference to God. For instance, the account of the patriarch Joseph in Genesis is related without any mention of the 50 references to God in the actual text. How pathetically lame!

This general trend of thought is also reflected in Scandinavia. For instance, "In the Gallup Millennium Survey of religious attitudes (conducted in 1999), 49 percent of Danes, 52 percent of Norwegians and 55 percent of Swedes said that 'God did not matter to them at all'" (Niall Ferguson, *Colossus*, 2004, pp. 236-237).

Would that every child in Europe could read the late Christian scholar G. Ernest Wright's opening words in *The Book of the Acts of God:*

"Christianity has always held that the Bible is a very special book, unlike any other book in the world. It is the most important of all books because in it, and in it alone, the true God has made Himself known to man with clarity. The world is full of sacred literature and it is full of gods. But in the vast confusion the one source that can be relied upon for truth is the Bible.

"There we are told about events which brought the church into being, and the purpose for its being. There we encounter *the answer to the meaning of our lives* and of the history in which we live. There the frightening gulf between our weak, ignorant and mortal lives and the infinity of power and space is really bridged. *There we discover our duty defined and our God revealed"* (1957, p. 13, emphasis added).

How well stated! But Mr. Wright wrote almost five decades ago and things have radically changed for the worst since then. No wonder our young people today have trouble coping with the anxieties of modern life. They are for the most part not being taught the true biblical fundamentals—in neither religious education classes nor in the home.

God has warned us through the Hebrew prophet Hosea, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). Please request our free booklets *Is the Bible True?* and *How to Understand the Bible* to better see why the Bible is a sure foundation for everyday life. (Sources: *Daily Mail, Daily Express, The Times, The Guardian* [all London].)

The French disconnection

Recently the French voted down the new EU charter, already approved by nine EU members. Opposition to Muslim inclusion to the EU appears to be part of France's disconnect as well as its antipathy toward anything that smacks of the United States' political framework. Perhaps unwittingly, this catapults Germany to the head of the line of the EU, ending a long Franco-German coleadership of the EU.

This might appear to scuttle the EU's future plans as a single-minded, economic, political and military colossus. Not so. Giscard d'Estaing of France and Helmut Schmidt of Germany have already proposed a "two-tiered Europe" with a more united inner core of nations.

Remarkably, an inner-core tier could shed light on the seeming enigma of Revelation 17 and Daniel 2, the final dominant superpower in Bible prophecy consisting of 10 leaders who give their power to a single leader the Bible calls "the beast" (Revelation 17:12-13). What currently appears on the surface to be an EU accident might well precipitate an inner core of 10 national leaders who will surrender to and support a final supreme leader in Europe.

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Ecumenism bridges a major gap: The Virgin Mary

Some Anglicans are now beginning to accept the Roman Catholic devotion to the Virgin Mary. Wrote Stephen Bates, the religious affairs correspondent of *The Times:* "After nearly 500 years of intense division, Anglicans and Roman Catholic theologians yesterday decided that one of the two faiths' most fundamental differences—the position of Mary, the mother of Christ—should no longer divide them."

A new document titled "Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ" was recently published in Seattle. It says: "We don't consider the practice of asking Mary and the saints to pray for us as communion dividing . . . We believe that there is no continuing theological reason for ecclesiastical division on these matters." The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission produced this document.

Historically, Protestants have normally had difficulty with the Catholic belief embodied in the idea of an Immaculate Conception, in essence meaning Mary was free from the stain of what theologians call original sin. Another stumbling block has been the Roman Catholic belief of her assumption into heaven, body and soul. Most Protestants have generally contended that there is no biblical basis for this religious belief.

Now at least one or two branches of Protestanism appear to be putting the goal of ecumenism before these and other differences—and perhaps gradually coming around to the Catholic way of thinking. To understand whether or not Mary is really in heaven, please request our free booklet *Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (Source: *The Guardian* [London].)

How Hollywood's war movies have changed

Those of you who have been moviegoers for many years may have noticed a basic shift in the emphasis of war films in recent decades. Consider the 1992 movie *A Few Good Men.*

The villain was a high-ranking army officer (played by Jack Nicholson) stationed at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, so often in the news lately. The movie was basically about how army lawyers uncovered the big mistake that he had sought to cover up. His deeds were exposed in a military court and his closing remarks on the stand were not unlike the disgraced Captain Queeg's in the 1954 film *The Caine Mutiny.*

Other more recently released titles are *The Jacket* (2005), *Courage Under Fire* (1996) and *Three Kings* (1999). All portray the American military

Why has Hollywood decided to depict the American military as a malignant force in the world?

negatively. They feature such themes as U.S. troops committing atrocities during the first Gulf War, a friendly-fire tragedy, mistreatment of a female officer, the corruption of the American military establishment and the betrayal of allied nations.

Revolution (1985), about the American war for independence, apparently showed national hero George Washington in a negative light. Even *Dances With Wolves* (1990) compared the American military unfavorably with Sioux warriors. Notwithstanding *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), the general run of war films in recent decades has been mostly unpatriotic and derogatory toward the U.S. military.

Media author and commentator Michael Medved summed up this sad situation in a fairly recent speech. He said: "The truth of the matter is that war movies have changed in a fundamental way, and I would submit to you, a dangerous way for the health of our culture and for the strength of the [American] dream."

Mr. Medved further asked: "Why has Hollywood decided seemingly illogically to make movies in the United States that depict the American military as unrepresentative and twisted, America as a malignant force in the world and all wars as fruitless?"

Those who remember viewing war movies with patriotic themes during World War II can easily see the sharp contrast between the way the U.S. military was depicted then and now. Our popular culture is in serious need of redemption. (Source: *Imprimis.*)

Why bad news in *The Good News?*

Speaking of conditions before His return, Jesus Christ said our planet will experience "a time of great distress, such as there has never been before since the beginning of the world, and will never be again" (Matthew 24:21, Revised English Bible).

The United Church of God, whose members and supporters provide the financial backing for *The Good News* and other publications, proclaims the good news of the imminent return of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet we often report on the negative consequences of human behavior leading to the very conditions Jesus described.

Following Jesus' example, part of our purpose is to highlight the lessons mankind is writing in its self-centered way of living and to warn of where this way is leading. But more than that, our intention is to illustrate the need for an alternative way of life—the godly way of life Jesus revealed and personified. Beyond the bad news, we present this way of living that would eliminate all of man's problems. We also explain from Scripture that under the coming rule of Christ, God's way will become universal—and humanity will at last know true and lasting peace.

The world of today is indeed filled with bad news. Yet the future holds incredible promise—Christ's return to establish the Kingdom of God (Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 11:15), ushering in a wonderful world of peace, prosperity and plenty during which all people will at last learn to live God's way of life. This truly is good news!

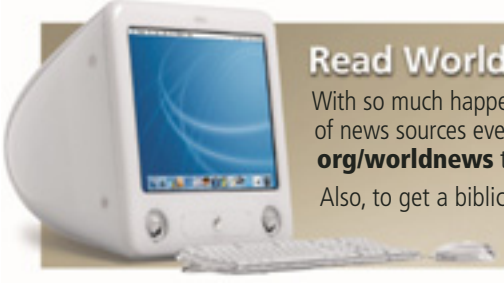
Overweight in the spotlight again

Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control, recently acknowledged potential flaws in a study that indicated people slightly overweight might be healthier than people who weren't. "It is not OK to be overweight. People need to be fit, they need to have a healthy diet, they need to exercise," she said. "I'm very sorry for the confusion that these scientific discussions have had" (Associated Press report, March 2).



For decades millions of Americans have steadily put on unhealthy weight. Back in 2002, *The Guardian* reported that 1 in 4 American adults are obese, doubling the rate from 1980.

More young people and working adults have turned to foodless nutrition to accommodate their living in the fast-food lane. To help make fast foods more enjoyable, fast-food chains have added fats, salts and sugars to make them tastier. Their windfall ultimately costs their customers millions in medical bills. The answer remains the same: Eat healthy food, exercise regularly and get enough rest. (Sources: Associated Press, *The Guardian* [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.

Will EU Constitution Rejections Halt the Drive for European Unity?

The citizens of both France and the Netherlands soundly rebuffed the new European constitution through recent national referendums. So where are EU politics going from here? Does Bible prophecy have any say in the matter?

by John Ross Schroeder

Reaction to what was not expected even six months ago—rejection of the new European Union (EU) constitution by the voters of France and the Netherlands—has been mixed. Conservative newspapers in Britain regard the popular rejections as a grave crisis for the EU.

For example, *Daily Mail* commentator Simon Heffer wrote: "There is no point in understatement. The crisis in which the European Union—or, more specifically, the European Commission that so ineptly runs it—finds itself after the French referendum is, quite simply, *the gravest in its entire history"* (May 31, emphasis added throughout).

Yet Luxembourg's Jean-Claude Juncker stated, "If the French said 'oui,' European integration would proceed, and if they said 'non,' European integration would proceed." Many EU elites remain in denial and are determined to push things forward as future opportunities allow. It is difficult for them to accept the fact that the democratic process could halt or even delay their plans for European unification.



No-vote supporters celebrate *in Paris' Place de la Bastille after French citizens voted decisively against the ratification of the European constitution May 29.*

An American assessment just prior to the vote

A recent article in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* summarized Europe's status in this headline: "Renewed Clout: From the Ashes of a World War, the EU Rises as a Counterweight to American Ascendancy" (May 8).

This particular piece assessed Europe as "every bit a superpower" and noted that America statistically trails the 25-nation EU combine in a number of important measurements, including population and gross national product. It also stated, accurately, that "Europe has significant political influence, which can sometimes limit American options in the world and which U.S. policymakers and voters must take into account."

So the question must now be asked: Do these two referendum results change all that? The answer is no.

Until a few years ago, noted author, historian and journalist Paul Johnson's weekly column in the *Daily Mail* provided Europe watchers and observers with an incisive analysis of current affairs always buttressed by a keen knowledge of British, European and American history. However, in the last couple of years or so Melanie Phillips has stepped into the gap and fulfilled Mr. Johnson's role in an admirable manner.

Although an American by birth, I have been a correspondent in Britain for nearly 30 years and often share her views as I did Mr. Johnson's. Ms. Phillips is a realist about Europe. She wrote in her column of May 30:

"For regardless of the constitution, *the reality is that countries of the EU are already the helpless captives of an all-encompassing, anti-democratic bureaucracy with a life of its own.* Much of the [new] constitution was always going to be imposed upon us anyway through the seemingly endless wrinkles in existing treaties. Indeed the creation of an EU diplomatic service and the harmonisation of criminal justice are already well under way. In other words nothing so trivial as the will of the people would ever be allowed to derail the EU project."

This insightful writer does not mince words. She concludes: "Whatever the final fate of that particular treaty [the constitution], that fanatical and corrupt elite that drives the EU onwards will not give up . . . They will continue to deprive us of our ancient liberties, slice by salami slice."

A United States of Europe?

William Rees-Mogg is another author and astute observer of the European scene. He is a former editor of *The Times* and now

Newscom

the newspaper's premier columnist. In his view, "the treaty [the new constitution] took us a long stride closer to the United States of Europe run by bureaucrats for the benefit of the European political class . . . *The United States of Europe has been the real objective of the European project from the beginning,* admitted by some leading figures, concealed by others" (June 6).

The mutual trade aspects of the EU should never be underrated. Yet the ideals of the elites have always been the unseen driving force behind the European Union. The early pioneers were much wiser than the current crop of EU leaders. Jean Monnet, an early architect, wisely advised: "Avoid bureaucracy. Guide, do not dictate. [Have] minimal rules"—advice which the EU has not followed.

Paul Johnson, who did comment later in *The Wall Street Journal,* stated that "Europe's founding fathers—Monnet himself, Robert Schumann in France, Alcide de Gasperi in Italy and Konrad Adenauer in Germany—were all fervently pro-American and anxious to make it possible for European populations to enjoy U.S.-style living standards."

Mr. Rees-Mogg said: "Most supporters of the European project have hoped to lure the people to accept the United States of Europe by gradual stages." He generally shares Melanie Phillips' views about the sovereignty Britain and other countries have already lost. He added, "Unfortunately the European Union has already gone beyond the common market concept."

Where does Europe go from here?

A *Time* magazine article reacting to the referendum results contained intriguing reflections on the European integration process. Perhaps the most important one is this: *"People want to know where the journey ends.* Trouble is, if anyone knows that destination, they aren't telling" (June 13).

In the wake of such a benchmark occurrence as the rejection of the new European constitution by voters in two countries, the print and broadcast media are replete with speculations of all types—expressing all shades of political opinion as to where Europe is headed. In the short term your guess may be as good as mine or any other journalist.

But in the long run we can be sure of where events will eventually take Europe. A correct understanding of biblical prophecy is the key.

Bible prophecy reveals the origins of the human race and its ethnic divisions (Genesis 1:26-27; Deuteronomy 32:7-8; Acts 17:24-26). Scripture also tells us how certain key nations—and blocs of nations—will typically behave in the future based on the way they have conducted themselves in the past. Prophetically speaking, the Bible even identifies specific modern nations and empires. (To learn more, request our free booklets *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

Historically and prophetically, Scripture speaks of the great power of the Roman Empire and how it exceeded all previous empires in power and might. As foretold, it has even been able to "resurrect" itself several times after the original empire fell into complete disarray.

These various restorations to power and great influence are not finished. The Bible tells us that one more final resurrection of this empire will occur just before this age of human misrule passes into history and the pervasive and benevolent reign of Jesus Christ begins on earth following His return.

A coming "beast" power in Europe

Before Christ comes, the book of Revelation pictures what will eventually happen in Europe as "a beast rising out of the sea" (Revelation 13:1)—"sea" in Bible prophecy meaning a great number of people. The apostle John portrayed the power of Rome "as being mortally wounded, and *his deadly wound was healed"* (verse 3).

This final restoration of the Roman Empire will comprise 10 kings or heads of government who give their power and authority to this "beast" power "for one hour"—meaning a very short time in terms of biblical prophecy (Revelation 17:12-14). Notice that "God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose" (verse 17).

It is at the critical time of these kings when God Himself "will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:34, 42-45). This crucial event occurs at the time of Christ's second coming when He will establish His rule over all nations for the 1,000-year Millennium and finally bring the world its long-sought-for peace and prosperity.

In the meantime

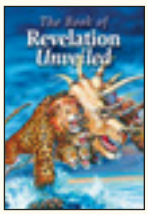
In the meantime, which way will the European Union go? We can only watch events unfold there and in the Middle East and see how they fit in with what is described in Bible prophecy.

Remember that a large number of all biblical prophecies will be fulfilled during the "days of vengeance" described by the Gospel writer Luke. Jesus Christ said: "For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written [in many Old Testament prophecies] may be fulfilled" (Luke 21:22). This particular period of time will bring a time of world troubles never before equaled in history nor ever again equaled in the future (see Matthew 24:21-22; Daniel 12:1-3; Jeremiah 30:7).

The Bible says these events will happen during the "end time" or the "latter days." During this time the earth will experience what the apostle Paul likens to the pangs of childbirth before the great happiness that follows (Romans 8:22-23). Afterward Europe will finally find a millennial rest from all its many troubles of the past. The true 1,000-year rule envisioned by past European tyrants will be presided over by Jesus Christ and His true saints—not by a ruthless human dictator.

Today the EU seeks to bring its brand of utopia to Europe even if it has to override the democratic will of its peoples. But the Bible shows that ultimately these efforts will prove futile. They will establish a new and short-lived superpower, but only the coming Kingdom of God will bring us the earthly paradise that the biblical prophets so confidently foretold. ***GN***

Recommended Reading



To understand more about where developments in Europe are headed, please request our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled.* It coordinates the relevant prophecies of both Old and New Testaments and makes sense of a book that has long mystified readers of the Bible. Also be sure to request *Are We Living in the Time of the End?,* which will help you understand the events that must take place before Jesus Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Both booklets are yours free for the asking!

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God, Science and the Bible

News from the world of science about God and the Bible

by Mario Seiglie, Tom Robinson and Scott Ashley

Archaeology establishes existence of biblical kingdom of Edom

Many scholars believe that the Old Testament is simply a mixture of folklore and bad theology assembled long after the events supposedly took place. Thus, they assume, biblical history bears little resemblance to actual events.

This assumption took another serious hit in recent months when archaeologists from three countries announced evidence that points to the existence of the biblical kingdom of Edom—precisely when and where the Bible says it was, and contradicting the common belief that this kingdom didn't exist until two centuries later.

The kingdom of Edom, mentioned throughout the Old Testament, is described as existing in what today is southern Jordan. The Edomites and Israelites were enemies, almost constantly in conflict.

The Bible shows Israel interacting with Edom after the Exodus in the 15th century B.C. The Edomites were descendants of Jacob's brother Edom or Esau, who lived a few centuries earlier. Yet many scholars have not accepted Edom as coming on the scene until the eighth century B.C. at the earliest.

In recent years, however, a team of archaeologists led by Russell Adams of Canada's McMaster University, Thomas Levy of the University of California at San Diego and Mohammad Najjar of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities excavated at Khirbat en-Nahas in Jordan, in what would have been Edomite territory in biblical times.

When they dated their finds using high-precision radiocarbon-dating methods, the results, as they described them in the British journal *Antiquities,* "were spectacular" (quoted by Michael Valpy, "Archeologist Unearths Biblical Controversy," *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto], Jan. 25).

The dating showed that the copper mining and smelting site was first occupied in the 11th century B.C. and a protective fortress was built in the 10th century B.C. The evidence clearly supported the existence of an Edomite kingdom 200 years earlier than Bible critics assumed it came into being.

The dates also provide powerful evidence for the existence of the Edomite kingdom precisely at the time King David and his son Solomon reigned over Israel. Bible scholars have long believed David ruled ca. 1010-970 B.C. The dates from the Khirbat en-Nahas fortress correspond nicely to David's reign, a time during which he conquered the Edomites and "put garrisons in Edom . . . and all the Edomites became David's servants" (2 Samuel 8:14).

Referring to this conflict, Professor Adams observes: "This battle between the Israelites and the Edomites, although not possible to document, is typical of the sort of border conflicts between Iron Age states. And the evidence of our new dates at least proves that it may, in fact, be possible to place the Edomites in the 10th century or earlier, which now supports the chronology of the biblical accounts.

"It is intriguing that at Khirbat en-Nahas, our large Iron Age fort is dated to just this period, suggesting conflict as a central concern even at a remote copper-production site" (quoted by Valpy, *The Globe and Mail*).

Many scholars who reject the Bible argue that the emergence of the regional kingdoms mentioned in the Bible didn't take place until much later, and David and Solomon, if they existed at all, were nothing more than minor tribal chieftains.

Yet again, the archaeological evidence dug from the ground is proving those critics wrong.





***Excavations at Khirbat en-Nahas in Jordan** verify the existence of the biblical kingdom of Edom mentioned in the Old Testament. Two Egyptian scarabs found at the site, right, confirm its dating around the time of the biblical King David.*

Survey: Majority of medical doctors reject strict Darwinism

In a surprising result, a majority of 1,482 physicians polled by HCD Research and the Louis Finkelstein Institute for Religious and Social Studies rejected strict Darwinism.

Strict Darwinism in the survey was given the following definition: "Humans evolved naturally with no supernatural involvement—no divinity played any role." Only 38 percent of the physicians polled accepted that belief. Other types of evolutionary explanations that can take into consideration a Creator received more support by a margin of 42 percent to 38 percent.

The same poll revealed 65 percent of doctors, or almost two thirds of those surveyed, believed intelligent design should be allowed or required to be taught in schools alongside the teaching of evolution. In fact, although the intelligent design explanation is quite recent, a third of the doctors polled favored it over evolution.



"Of course most doctors are skeptical of Darwinism," said Dr. Robert Cihak, M.D., former president of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons and a medical columnist for JewishWorldReview.com. "An eye surgeon knows the astonishing intricacies of human vision intimately, so the vague, just-so stories about eye evolution don't fool him. And the eye is just one of the countless organs and interdependent systems in the body that defy Darwinian explanation" (Discovery Institute, "Nearly Two-Thirds of Doctors Skeptical of Darwin's Theory of Evolution," May 31).

In another survey of 1,100 physicians taken by the same research firm and institute in December 2004, it was found that 74 percent of doctors believed miracles occurred in the past and 73 percent believe that miracles occur today. Further, almost half (46 percent) indicated belief that prayer is very important in their own lives and two-thirds encourage their patients to pray.

Photos (from left): UCSD Levantine Archaeology Lab (2), Photos.com, Purdue University, Photos.com

Plant defies laws of genetic inheritance

Plant scientists at Purdue University have made a surprising discovery—a plant containing a template, or a master genetic blueprint, that can correct defective genes inherited from its parents.

What is shocking is that the discovery violates traditional laws of genetic inheritance by somehow acquiring not just the chance arrangement of DNA through the standard combination of parental genes but also a copy of earlier uncombined DNA sequences from its ancestors—something deemed impossible by biologists. Equally surprising is the fact that the correcting template or agent, whatever it is, is hidden and not represented in the plant's current DNA pattern.

"The finding implies that some organisms may contain a cryptic backup copy of their genome that bypasses the usual mechanisms of heredity," says *New York Times* science reporter Nicholas Wade. ". . . The discovery also raises interesting biological questions—including whether it gets in the way of evolution, which depends on mutations changing an organism rather than being put right by a backup system." He continues: "The finding poses a puzzle for evolutionary theory because it corrects mutations, which evolution depends on as generators of novelty [new features]" ("Startling Scientists, Plant Fixes Its Flawed Genes," March 23).

"If you take this mutant [plant] Arabidopsis, which has two copies of the altered gene," says Robert Pruitt, the discoverer of the phenomenon, "let it seed and then plant the seeds, 90 percent of the offspring will look like the parent, but 10 percent will look like the normal grandparents. Our genetic training tells us that's just not possible. This challenges everything we believe . . .

"It seems that these [mutant gene]-containing plants keep a cryptic copy of everything that was in the previous generation, even though it doesn't show up in the DNA, it's not in the chromosome. Some other type of gene sequence information that we don't really understand yet is modifying the inherited traits" (as quoted by Susan Steeves, "Plants Defy Mendel's Inheritance Laws, May Prompt Textbook Changes," Purdue News Services).

Scientists do not yet know how many living organisms contain this master backup copy, but the search is now on. Evolutionists will be hard pressed to explain how such a mechanism could have been created in a Darwinian step-by-step fashion and inherited not from parents, but from grandparents or distant ancestors.



***This mutant plant** has a malfunctioning gene that prevents its flowers from opening. Purdue University scientists found that 10 percent of the offspring of two such mutant plants don't have this malformation, but rather are like the normal grandparents. This chain of inheritance defies accepted scientific beliefs.*

Weighty evidence for the Bible's accuracy

What is a *pim?* That is what translators asked themselves when they were finishing the King James Version of the Bible back in the 17th century. They had never heard of the term outside of the Bible and had to guess as to its meaning—which turned out to be wrong.

In 1 Samuel 13:20-21, they translated the Hebrew term *pim* as "file." It seemed to make sense at the time. The text reads: "But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock. Yet they had a *file* for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads."

It was only when archaeology came to the rescue in the last century that the term was finally understood. Archaeologists digging at various sites in Israel—such as Gezer, Timnah, Ashdod and Ekron—found small stone weights inscribed with the word *pim.* They realized the word *pim* referred to a weight used in monetary transactions—about 8 grams of silver, or two thirds of a shekel.

The New King James Bible, utilizing the new discovery, corrected the verse in question. In this version 1 Samuel 13:21 reads, "and the charge for a sharpening was a pim for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to set the points of the goads."

This discovery authenticated the Bible's historical validity, since these weights were only found in the strata from the ninth to the seventh centuries B.C., after which new sets of weights were adopted. It tells us that the account of 1 Samuel was written close to the time of the actual events, as the term *pim* fell out of use not long after that.

Archaeologist William Dever mentions the discovery of the pim weight as evidence of the historical accuracy of the Bible. "Archaeology still provides an invaluable service. Countless hitherto enigmatic passages have been clarified . . . The translation of 1 Samuel 13:19-21 was pure guesswork until archaeologists brought to light small stone balance weights inscribed in paleo-Hebrew with the word *pim,* which we now know designates a silver shekel fraction of about 7.8 grams (.28 ounces)" (*Biblical Archaeology Review,* May/June 1990, p. 55).

So thanks to archaeology, we again have confirmation of the accuracy of the Bible!

Research project proves biblical proverb

A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones." These words, recorded in the biblical book of Proverbs (17:22) almost 3,000 years ago, have now been confirmed by medical science as a result of two recent studies reported by the Reuters news service.

In one study, Dr. Michael Miller and colleagues at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore tested the function of blood vessels of 20 healthy volunteers as they were shown two movies—one humorous, the other stressful. They focused particularly on the endothelium, the lining of the blood vessels, where atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) begins.

They found that blood flow diminished in 14 of the 20 subjects after they watched stressful movie clips. Their blood flow decreased an average of 35 percent during those stressful periods.



In contrast, 19 of the 20 study subjects had increased blood flow when laughing at humorous movie segments, with blood flow increasing an average of 22 percent.

"We don't recommend that you laugh and not exercise, but we do recommend that you try to laugh on a regular basis," said Dr. Miller in reporting on the study. "Thirty minutes of exercise three times a week, and 15 minutes of laughter on a daily basis is probably good for the vascular system." He explained that "laughing may be important to maintain a healthy endothelium, and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease."

He also explained that "the magnitude of change we saw in the endothelium is similar to the benefit we might see with aerobic activity, but without the aches, pains and muscle tension associated with exercise."

In the second study, 1,005 heart failure patients were tracked and tested for depression by Dr. Wei Jiang and colleagues at North Carolina's Duke University. Dr. Jiang reported that patients with mild depression were at 44 percent greater risk of dying than those not experiencing depression, excluding other factors such as age, marital status and original cause of the patients' heart failure.

Dr. Jiang noted that patients experiencing depression tended to not take medications properly or not exercise and were more prone to making unhealthy lifestyle choices in diet and smoking.

60 Years After World War II: What Have We Learned?

Do you ever wonder what prevents evil from triumphing? This year marks the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II. Looking at these related issues should make us think about the deep currents of good and evil that flow in this world.

by Darris McNeely

On May 9, 60 world leaders gathered in Moscow to celebrate the end of World War II—"the Last Good War," as some call it. Over 40 million people perished in that conflict. It is fitting that Russia hosted the event since the Soviet Union lost more people, 27 million, than any other nation. Sixty years later they still reflect on what that conflict meant to the world.

In August the commemoration of the end of the war in the Pacific with the atomic bomb will follow, and we'll see more reflection over that event. Last year it was the 60th anniversary of D-Day that brought leaders to France to remember. Considering the age of the veterans of that astounding struggle—most of those still living are in their 80s—this will be the last great commemoration for the generation that fought in that global conflict.

Recently I heard former U.S. Senator Robert Dole, himself a veteran who was gravely wounded in Italy during the last days of the war, commenting on radio about how few Americans who fought then are still alive. The "greatest generation" is rapidly leaving us. Their story is truly one of heroic proportions.

Evil defeated—yet forgotten

Good and evil were clearly defined in that war. Nazi fascism was embodied in Benito Mussolini of Italy, Emperor Hirohito of Japan and, worst of all, Germany's Adolf Hitler. Had this original "axis of evil" won, it is likely I would not be writing to you in English. The whole history of the past 60 years would be much different.

But they did not win. America came late to that conflict yet made the decisive difference—turning the tide along with the other Allied powers.

But time marches on, and America's role in that conflict is gradually being forgotten by a new generation in Europe. This collective amnesia is part of the growing divide between Europe and the United States and has serious consequences.

One is that few Europeans today feel indebted to America for saving them from Nazism and returning freedom to their soil. World War II is the one item of European history about which Americans are likely to be well versed. It has been the theme of movies, books and memory for 60 years.

That is part of why Americans puzzle over the European failure to support U.S. intervention in Iraq. "We spent our blood to give you freedom; now why can't you support the same for another nation?," Americans ask. Yet the past is forgotten, as if it didn't happen.

> "The slaughters orchestrated by Hitler and Stalin have given way to mass murder in Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur. Though many claim to have learned from the unparalleled horrors of the 20th century, yet it is often not evident."

Europeans avidly consume American films and follow American politics. They are generally better informed about America than Americans are about them and can explain reasons for the vast gulf. The European view of America was largely shaped well before the recent Iraq war.

Another consequence of the European amnesia is the failure to see potential for a sudden shift in governmental policy toward a reduction of personal liberties. People may vote for European anti-immigration parties without thinking they are supporting ideas that once led to the ovens of Treblinka or Auschwitz. Sadly, some have even forgotten what the names of these extermination camps stand for.

Some observers speculate that an attack on a major European nation on the scale of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on America could quickly tip the scales of democracy toward a totalitarian form of government. Sixty years after the war one hears the strains of Rudyard Kipling's poem "Recessional," with its haunting refrain of "lest we forget, lest we forget!"

A war that shaped the century

The 20th century was one of mankind's bloodiest periods. World War II was really a continuation of World War I and represents the high-water mark of a century of tragedy. Its shadow defined the next 50 years, not only for the nations but for many individuals as well.

My father went to the war as a young man, newly married and with a newborn son, my older brother. Three of his brothers went off with him. They were descended from a stock of people who historically heeded the call of their country to fight its battles.

My father left the small family farm near a small Missouri town, not knowing anything of the horrors of war. He fought his way from the beaches of France to the forests of Germany before returning home.

What he did and saw during that time was locked deep within his mind and heart. But it altered his personality just enough that the woman he married could tell. Years later my mother would say, with a note of melancholy in her voice, that my father was not the same man when he returned from the war. The war cast a long shadow in our family.

How much have we learned?

From the ashes of this epic conflict came the idea for the United Nations, a world body dedicated to preventing another global catastrophe. The United Nations has a spotty record. It hasn't prevented many wars and sometimes its own troops have

participated in acts of atrocity. At times it has given its stage to despots such as Yasser Arafat, whose legacy is terror and conflict rather than peace.

Senator Dole summed up much of the legacy of the past 60 years in a piece published in *The Wall Street Journal* May 6. He wrote: "Admittedly, our victory was not total. No victory ever is. As the Cold War demonstrated, our way of life remained



General Douglas MacArthur signs the Japanese surrender papers *aboard the battleship* Missouri *in Tokyo Bay, Sept. 2, 1945, marking the official end of hostilities in the Pacific theater. The war in Europe had ended almost four months earlier.*

imperiled, and millions of east Europeans were trapped in tyranny.

"Today, many have still not fully accepted the state of Israel, and the Middle East remains troubled. Many governments are no more willing than before to grant freedom to their people. The slaughters orchestrated by Hitler and Stalin have given way to mass murder in Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur. Though many claim to have learned from the unparalleled horrors of the 20th century, it is often not evident. Sadly, we know there will be more genocide."

God is in control

So let me go back to my question, *what keeps evil from triumphing in this world?* The answer is that there must be a God who controls the course of nations and keeps one nation, empire or ideology from gaining total control over all others. Should that ever happen the world could be plunged into another dark age.

Notice what the prophet Daniel was inspired to tell one of the great imperial despots of the ancient world, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. It is a message that helps us understand that God oversees the course of world events.

Notice in Daniel 2:20-22: "Daniel answered and said: 'Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him.'"

Here is one of the little-known keys to understanding world history. You won't hear it taught in most classrooms or discussed by newsmen and commentators.

Nebuchadnezzar ruled over a vast realm and desired to bring his version of "the good life" to all others. History has seen that when messianic rulers arise with the ambition to extend their world vision over all others, the result is always war and destruction.

You see, there has never been one political, religious or philosophical system with which all races and nations could agree. The world is too divided by language and ethnic custom to see everyone come together under one banner of thought.

Jesus Christ's window on the future

Jesus said that the biblical "time of the end" would be one of nations rising against other nations in constant conflict. Notice what Christ said to His disciples in His prophecy recorded in Matthew 24: "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places . . . All these are the beginning of sorrows" (verses 6-8).

In this prophecy Christ gives a strong warning about some pretty bad world conditions. It reads like a lot of our news headlines today—war, famine, pestilence and bad government causing a lot of suffering.

Yet through this chapter runs a thread of promise from Jesus Christ that the Father is in control of events. And He assures us that "he who endures to the end shall be saved" (verse 13). He indicates that His protection will be on a small group of people who can discern the times and see the hand of God behind world events, and who remain close to Him no matter what.

He also says that for the sake of this small group, called "the elect," this time of turmoil will be cut short and the human race will not be extinguished (verse 22).

The horrors of war are both arbitrary and complete. The great wars of the 20th century destroyed and altered the faith of so many. The story of one 10-year-old girl perhaps says it best. One of the German bombing raids on London blew the roof off her parents' house. She struggled to understand where God was in all the destruction of her neighborhood: "I wondered why the God that my mother always prayed to had taken our neighbors' lives, but left our piano untouched."

That is indeed a lot to understand. God is the one who keeps evil from overcoming this world and bringing the human experience to a tragic close. God is the one who is ultimately overseeing events and guiding this world to a time when His good and His way will triumph over all other ideas. ***GN***

Recommended Reading



Where are the troubling trends we see all around us leading? Request our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* to understand our times and how God is directing world events to a conclusion that will usher in a time of peace that will have no end. To learn more about that promised time, also request *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. It, too, is free for the asking.

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How's Your **Prayer Life?**

We all make time for what we value the most. Have you gotten into the habit of praying to God on a regular basis? Need some instruction and encouragement? Here it is!

by Andy Burnett

How's your prayer life? Some would answer, "What prayer life? I don't have a prayer life. I'm too busy!" Yes, we are all quite busy, but is that a legitimate excuse? Several years ago, a good friend of mine passed on a phrase that his father used to tell him: "You make time for what you value most."

What do we value most? If what we value most is a relationship with God, our Father in heaven, then we will set aside regular time during each day to pray to Him.

David was king over the entire nation of Israel. Can we even imagine all the responsibilities that came with the job? Still, he prayed to God morning, noon and evening (Psalm 55:17). Daniel, one of the chief advisers to the Persian governor of Babylonia, found time in his busy schedule to do the same (Daniel 6:10). Both men placed God first in their lives, in spite of their many commitments. Their examples leave us without excuse.

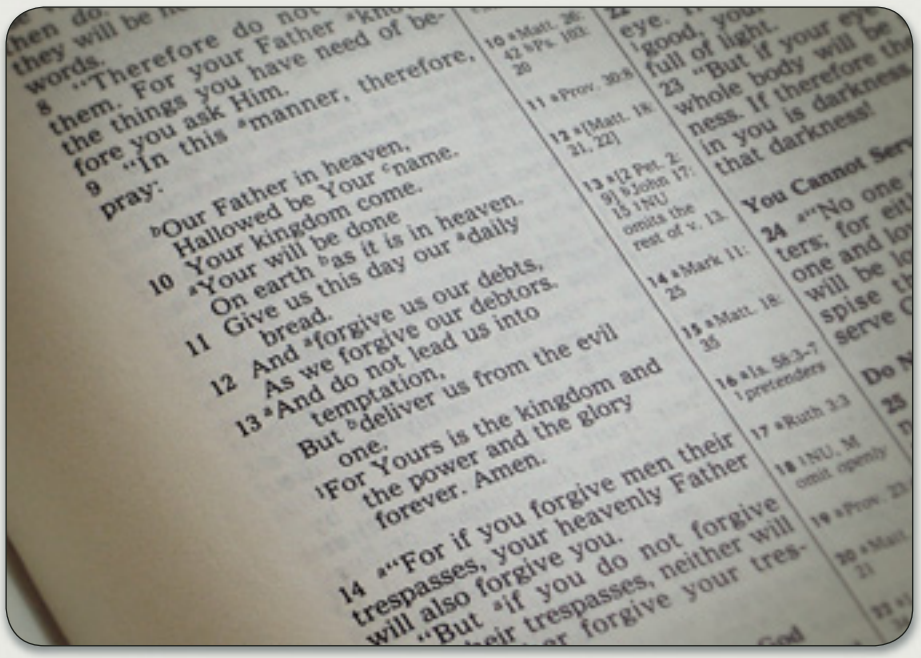
Others might say, "But I don't even know *how* to pray! What am I supposed to pray about?" That's a fair question. The 12 disciples asked the same of Jesus. On one occasion they saw Jesus praying, and when He finished, "His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray'" (Luke 11:1). The instruction Jesus gave them in the words that followed we could call *the model prayer.*

This sample prayer (found in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4) is not intended to be recited over and over when we pray to God. Rather it is a general *outline* of the topics to cover with God as we come before Him daily in prayer. Let's look at what the various phrases in this prayer mean.

The model prayer

Our Father in heaven—We are to pray to the Father. In the introductory part of our prayers, we are to acknowledge Him as such. We should express our thankfulness for His role in our lives as a loving and involved Father. We can discuss with Him how He works with and helps us just as a human father looks after the needs of his own children.

Reflect with Him about His glorious throne where He sits in heaven. Read passages about God's throne in all its majesty (for example, Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4).



As we bow to God in prayer, we are to revere and honor Him for who and what He is. It helps us consider the third of the Ten Commandments: "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain [in an empty, useless or meaningless way], for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

The various titles used of God in the Bible tell us much about Him. Here are some examples of names of God taken from the Hebrew language, the language in which most of the Old Testament was written. *Elohim* is a plural term representing God as creator, connected with His creation of all things (Genesis 1:26).

YHWH is the Eternal, the Immutable One, the One who was, who is and who is to come. *YHWH* represents God in a covenant relationship with those whom He has created. *YHWH* is connected with a variety of descriptors in the Bible: *YHWH* who provides, who heals, my banner, who sanctifies, who is peace, of hosts, our righteousness, who is there, Most High and my shepherd (Genesis 22:14; Exodus 15:26; 17:15; 31:13; Judges 6:24; 1 Samuel 1:3; Jeremiah 23:6; Ezekiel 48:35; Psalm 7:17; 23:1).

El is the Almighty in all His strength and power (Genesis 14:18-22; 16:13; Psalm 57:2).

All of these names give us a better understanding of our Father's majesty and greatness. We are to honor Him as we address Him.

Hallowed be Your name—While we honor God for His greatness, we also ask God to *cause* His name to be made holy. The Twentieth Century New Testament captures the meaning more accurately, rendering this *"May thy name be held holy."*

This and the next two items mentioned in this prayer—"Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"—all go together, asking God to extend to earth the peaceful, righteous conditions

Shaun Venish

that now exist in heaven.

Essentially what the opening of the prayer is saying is this: "Our Great and Almighty Father in heaven (where Your name is hallowed in constant angelic praise), may Your name be made holy throughout the earth as it now is in heaven, may Your Kingdom be established throughout the earth as it now is in heaven, and may Your will be done throughout the earth as it now is in heaven."

Your kingdom come—We are to pray that God will hasten Christ's coming to establish the Kingdom of God (2 Peter 3:11-13; Matthew 6:33). We are to talk with Him about why we need His Kingdom to come, giving specific situations that we see going on in the world, in our own lives and in the lives of our friends and family (Ezekiel 9:4).

The world overflows with tragedies. God wants us to spend time reflecting on the pain and sorrow in the world around us so we can vividly see the need for Him to send Jesus Christ back to earth to set up His government, a kingdom that will yield peace, joy and abundance.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven—Here we continue to let Him know that we want what *He* wants. We ask Him to help us seek what He wants for us. And we ask that He do the same for others. We can also ask for God's blessing on His work being done through the Church.

This section of prayer prevents us from becoming self-absorbed. It helps us realize, "It's not all about *me.*" It's about God, His plan and His purpose. Jesus Christ sought God's will, not His own, as He prayed to God before His trial and crucifixion (Matthew 26:39). We must do the same, never forgetting that God always has our best interests at heart (Romans 8:31; 1 Peter 5:6-7).

If we are to ask sincerely that God's will be done throughout the earth, we must of course be willing to completely surrender to His will now in every aspect of our lives.

Give us this day our daily bread—God wants us to continue asking Him to look after our physical and spiritual needs. He assures us that He will (Matthew 6:25-33), but He still wants us to ask (Matthew 7:7-11).

We are to be specific. It is not selfish to discuss with Him our specific needs. It's acceptable and appropriate to continue asking for something (Luke 18:1-8) if we are seeking His will.

Some of our needs include protection during travel, at work and at home; guidance in what we say and do; an income for food, clothing, shelter and so we can be in a position to help others in need; strength to ward off the pulls of the world (1 John 2:15-17) and the influence of Satan.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors (or "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us")—We are to ask God's forgiveness for our specific sins. We ask Him to help us see areas in our lives where we don't realize we are sinning. We confess to Him our sin, how we fell short, what we did or didn't do that got us there in the first place (Psalm 51).

We are to also thank Him for Jesus Christ whose sacrifice enables us to be cleansed of our sins. Of course we have to commit to change. We have to talk with God about the plan we will devise to keep ourselves from sinning in that area again. We ask for His help and guidance in implementing that plan.

Also, we solicit His aid in helping us to be forgiving to those who have sinned against us. We ask for His help to "let the hurt go." We must both forgive and ask for forgiveness!

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one—This is where we pray for God's spiritual guidance and help in our lives and in the lives of others. The wording here can be somewhat misleading, since we are tempted and led astray by our own shortsighted and selfish desires, not by God (James 1:13). God does not tempt anyone.

The Greek word translated "temptation" would be more accurately translated as "trial" or "test." The New Revised Standard Version translates this as "do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one." The overall thought is that we should always ask God for His protection and help against our enemy, Satan the devil (1 Peter 5:8), and that we should learn our lessons now so we won't have go through sore trials to be corrected.

Again, we are to be specific. We know what we and those close to us are battling and can talk to God about those battles. We ask for His help as we develop a plan. We can claim the promise of James 4:7, which is a strategy for victory over Satan's influence.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever—We began with praising God's greatness, and we end doing the same. This portion of our prayer reminds us again that *we* are not the focus of our prayer—*God* is. He is great; He is love; His will is going to be accomplished; and we are thankful that He has given us a part to play in His plan.

Here we talk with God about His wonderful plan that will come to pass. Of course, we can't talk to Him about that plan unless we know what it is! Read passages such as Revelation 21 and 22 that reveal to us a much different future than what we experience now. Ask that He keep us mindful of that magnificent plan so we don't lose the vision as we experience trials in our lives.

Amen—"Amen" means "truly" or "so be it." We conclude our prayers in Jesus Christ's name as He instructed the disciples to do in John 14:13-14. He makes it possible for us to pray to the Father.

Final tips

• Become "conversational" with God, being always mindful of honoring Him as we address Him.

• God converses with us as we read His Word, the Bible. One-way-only conversations don't work—with others or with God.

• Pray in private (Matthew 6:6) at a time when there will be minimal distractions.

• It's a good idea for us to clear the cobwebs from our eyes before we pray. Otherwise, we can tend to fall asleep!

• We must strive to become totally dependent on a relationship with our Father to the point that we feel like we can't survive physically and spiritually without Him. In reality, we can't.

• We must make time for prayer *daily* for it to become a habit. It gets easier as we stick with it.

Do you value the opportunity you have to develop a strong, lifelong relationship with your spiritual Father? To do this you must pray daily. Remember, we will make time for what we value most. ***GN***

What do we value most? If what we value most is a relationship with God, our Father in heaven, then we will set aside regular time during each day to pray to Him.

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Prescott Valley — ch. 13, Sundays 9 a.m. & 3 p.m.; Mondays 9 a.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m. & 3 p.m.
Tucson — ch. 73, 74, Sundays 8 & 10 a.m.; Saturdays 8 & 9:30 a.m.

Arkansas
Fayetteville — ch. 18, Sundays 12 noon; Fridays 12:30 p.m.; Saturdays 11 a.m.
Mena — ch. 19, Sundays 2 p.m.

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Alamo — ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Berkeley — ch. 26, Mondays 10 p.m.
Chatsworth — ch. 34, Fridays 10:30 p.m
Clayton — ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Concord — ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
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Fremont — ch. 27, Mondays 11:30 a.m.
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Hemet — ch. 3, Fridays 3 p.m.
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Livermore — ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
Marin County — ch. 26, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Martinez — ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Modesto — ch. 26, Mondays 1:30 p.m.; Thursdays 8:30 p.m.
Moraga — ch. 26, 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Newark — ch. 27, Mondays 11:30 a.m.
Novato — ch. 71, Tuesdays 7:30 p.m.
Orange County — ch. 3, Sundays 11 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.; ch. 6, Sundays 11:30 a.m. & 8:30 p.m.
Orinda — ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Palo Cedro — DCA cable link, Thursdays 10:00 a.m.
Pasadena — ch. 56, Sundays 6 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Petaluma — ch. 26, Wednesdays 7 & 8 p.m.; Fridays 4, 8 & 10 p.m.
Pittsburg — ch. 26, Thursdays 12 midnight
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Pleasanton — ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
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Rossmore — ch. 26, 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
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Santa Clara — ch. 15A, Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.
Santa Rosa — ch. 72, Sundays 6 p.m.; Saturdays 3 p.m.
Sobrante — ch. 26, Mondays 10 p.m.
S. Pasadena — ch. 6, Thursdays 4 p.m.
Van Nuys — ch. 25, Saturdays 10 a.m.
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ch. 20, Fridays 12 noon

Illinois
Arlington Heights — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Aurora — ch. 6, 10, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Bartlett — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Bristol — ch. 6, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Buffalo Grove — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Chicago — ch. 36, times vary
Des Plaines — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
East St. Louis — ch. 18, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.
Elkgrove Village — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
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Golf — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Hanover Park — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Hoffman Estates — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
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Montgomery — ch. 6, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Morton Grove — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Mt. Prospect — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Naperville — ch. 17, Sundays 10 a.m.
Niles — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
North Aurora — ch. 6, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Northbrook — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Oswego — ch. 6, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Palatine — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Park Ridge — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Prospect Heights — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Rolling Meadows — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Romeoville — ch. 6, weekdays 6 p.m.
Schaumburg — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Skokie — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Streamwood — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Wheeling — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Wilmette — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.

Indiana
Bloomington — ch. 3, Sundays 9:30 p.m.
Elkhart — ch. 3, Sundays 9:30 p.m.
Ft. Wayne — ch. 57, Sundays 12:30 p.m.
South Bend — ch. 3, Sundays 9:30 p.m.

Iowa
Des Moines — ch. 3, Mondays 4:30 a.m.
Iowa City — ch. 18, Tuesdays 12:30 p.m.; Fridays 5:30 p.m.

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Paducah — ch. 2, Tuesdays 4 p.m.; Thursdays 10 a.m.

Maryland
Frostburg — ch. 19, Tuesdays 2 p.m.
George's Creek — ch. 19, Tuesdays 2 p.m.
Keyser — ch. 19, Tuesdays 2 p.m.

Massachusetts
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Shrewsbury — ch. 33, Wednesdays 10 p.m.; Thursdays 7 a.m.

Michigan
Ann Arbor — ch. 17, Thursdays 4 p.m.
Grand Rapids — ch. 25, Tuesdays or Wednesdays 11 a.m.
Kalamazoo — ch. 19, Sundays 8:30 a.m.
Midland — ch. 3, Thursdays 12:30 p.m.
Portage — ch. 19, Mondays 8:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 2 p.m.; Thursdays 6:30 p.m.
Traverse City — ch. 2, Sundays 11:30 a.m.

Minnesota
Austin — ch. 6, Sundays 7 p.m.
Blaine — ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Centerville — ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Circle Pines — ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Eagan — ch. 15, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 7 p.m.
Ham Lake — ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Inver Grove Hts. — ch. 15, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 7 p.m.
Lexington — ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Lino Lakes — ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Minneapolis — ch. 75, Mondays 6:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 1:30 a.m.
Rochester — ch. 10, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays 7:30 p.m.; Sundays 10:30 a.m.
Spring Lake Park — ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
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Bingham — ch. 4, Thursdays 5:30 p.m.
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Hauppauge — ch. 20, Saturdays 7:30 a.m.
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Rochester — ch. 15, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.

North Carolina
Charlotte — ch. 21, Saturdays 2 p.m.
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Akron — ch. 23, Sundays 6:30 a.m.
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Dayton — ch. 12, Tuesdays 2 p.m.; Wednesdays 6 p.m.; Fridays 6 a.m.
ch. 23, Fridays 2:30 a.m.
Defiance — ch. 5, Sundays 11 a.m.
Enon — ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Fairborn — ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
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Oregon
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ch. 11, Sundays 6 p.m.
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Woodburn — ch. 11, Sundays 9 a.m.

Rhode Island
Entire state — ch. 14, Sundays 8 a.m.; Fridays 10:30 a.m.

Texas
Arlington — ch. 16, Mondays 1:30 p.m.
Austin — ch. 11, Mondays 6 p.m.; Thursdays 6 p.m.
Corpus Christi — ch. 10, Sundays 5 p.m.; Mondays 3 p.m.; Thursdays 9:30 p.m.
Dallas — ch. 14B, Sundays 10 a.m.; Tuesdays 9:30 p.m.
Del Rio — ch. 19, Sundays 9 a.m.; Wednesdays 5 p.m.
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Laredo — ch. 2, Thursdays 7 p.m.
Longview — ch. 10, Wednesdays 10 p.m.; Fridays 12 noon
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Eau Claire — ch. 11, Sundays 2 p.m.
Kenosha — ch. 14, Mondays 7:30 p.m.; Thursdays 5:30 p.m.
Madison — ch. 4, Sundays 10:30 a.m.
Milwaukee — ch. 96, Mondays 7:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 6 p.m.
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XM Satellite Radio — 170, Sundays 8:30 a.m. (EST)
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Arizona
Douglas — 930 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
Globe — 1240 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
Sierra Vista — 1470 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
Tucson — 940 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.

California
San Diego — 760 AM, Sundays 6 a.m.

Florida
Orlando — 540 AM, Sundays 6:30 a.m.

Indiana
Indianapolis — 1070 AM, Sundays 7 a.m.

Louisiana
New Orleans — 870 AM, Saturdays 9:30 p.m.

New York
Buffalo — 930 AM, Sundays 6:30 a.m.

Ohio
Portsmouth — 1400 AM, Sundays 6:30 a.m.

Oklahoma
Tulsa — 740 AM, Sundays 8 a.m.

Tennessee
Memphis — 600 AM, Sundays 9 a.m.

Virginia
Norfolk — 850 AM, Sundays 10 a.m.

West Virginia
Wheeling — 1170 AM, Mondays 12:30 a.m.

Why Isn't Sex Safe?

An estimated 45 million people in the United States are infected with genital herpes. The number is growing by a million new cases a year. This year one in four sexually active teens will contract a sexually transmitted disease. Young people are encouraged to practice "safe sex"—but is there such a thing?

by Gary Petty

Sex is one of the most basic of biological functions. It's how the human race is propagated from one generation to the next. So why is this natural function causing people to get sick and even die?

Several decades ago educators and sociologists argued that sex education in public schools would curb rising rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unwanted pregnancies. People were told that they could avoid harmful consequences of sexual behavior by practicing "safe sex."

It would seem that the fear of STDs would cause teenagers to think twice about engaging in any sexual activity, but the statistics prove otherwise.

According to a *U.S. News and World Report* article titled "Risky Business," "Kids from all walks of life are having sex at younger and younger ages—nearly 1 in 10 reports losing his or her virginity before the age of 13, a 15 percent increase since 1997 . . . Some 16 percent of high school sophomores have had four or more sexual partners" (May 27, 2002).

The most frightening of all sexually transmitted diseases is AIDS. Once a disease common to mainly the homosexual community, the majority of AIDS cases are now transmitted though heterosexual contact.

AIDS is truly a global problem. Some 40 million adults and children are infected with HIV or AIDS. Five million people were infected in 2004 alone.

There is no more tragic example of the scourge of AIDS than in Africa, where an estimated 28 million people are afflicted with it. According to *The Economist,* in some villages of southern Africa virtually every person between the ages of 15 and 45 has already died from complications due to AIDS. This leaves elderly grandparents to raise little children with no real means of economic support.



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God didn't create sex to make us sick. He created this union to be a special aspect of the relationship between a man and woman united in the sacred covenant of marriage.

Where is God in all this suffering?

Why does God allow such horrible diseases? How can a loving God allow innocent children to be born infected with the HIV virus?

The Christianity of the Bible has solutions for today's problems, but few people, even many professing Christians, want to apply those principles.

Sex and marriage were created by God as the most fundamental of human relationships. In the Genesis account of creation God gives the instruction that "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). It's true that all mammals reproduce through a sexual union, but the "one flesh" concept particular to human beings transforms this biological function into a mental and emotional experience.

The apostle Paul writes about the uniquely human aspect of the "one flesh" experience in Ephesians 5:28: "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it . . ."

God didn't create sex to make us sick. He created this union to be a special aspect of the relationship between a man and woman united in the sacred covenant of marriage. A sexual relationship in marriage is not only for reproduction, but is meant to produce a pleasure bond and emotional attachment between two people who are committed to each other for life. Adultery is condemned so strongly in the Bible because it damages this unique and beautiful relationship.

At the heart of the frightening growth of STDs is society's disregard for the special relationship of marriage. Any solution to the AIDS epidemic must begin with the promotion of the concept of the sacredness of marriage.

And it must start in the Christian world! How can non-Christians see the benefit of God's instructions regarding sex

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in marriage if Christians are no different from the rest of the world when it comes to sexual immorality, homosexuality and divorce?

The failure of public schools to curb harmful sexual behavior proves that solutions promoting information without moral responsibility don't work. They simply propagate the diseases and emotional trauma they were intended to alleviate.

When will educators acknowledge that failure? Will it ultimately take the number of AIDS victims in the United States reaching the catastrophic levels of much of Africa? Will it take 30 or 40 million people infected with HIV to turn the heads of those who refuse to accept that this isn't just an issue of biology but an issue of why human beings exist and what our purpose is in life?

Teenagers at risk

Christian groups, and even some educators involved in public school sex education, are promoting abstinence as the only really safe sex. But what is abstinence? That may seem like a strange question, but for many teenagers abstinence has come to mean avoiding full sexual intercourse by substituting other dangerous sexual activities.

U.S. News and World Report states: "What nearly everyone agrees on is that STDs and risky 'anything but intercourse' behaviors are rampant among teens—and that what to do about it is a very complicated question. Across the country, clinicians report rising diagnoses of herpes and human papillomavirus, or HPV (which can cause genital warts), which are now thought to affect 15 percent of the teen population. Girls 15 to 19 have higher rates of gonorrhea than any other age group. One quarter of all HIV cases occur in those under the age of 21."

This same article contains an interview with a worker at an adolescent health clinic that treats teenagers with cases of gonorrhea of the throat.

The *San Antonio Express News* reports: "According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, sexual activity among teens has declined 14 percent since 1995. But health experts note that this survey did not ask about oral sex. And that many teens are turning to oral sex in the misguided belief that it's not 'real sex.'

"A recent survey by Ansell Healthcare, manufacturers of LifeStyles condoms, found that one-third of teenage girls said that oral sex is not sex. Twenty percent of teens had oral sex by age 15, half by age 17.

"In some circles, say health officials, oral sex is almost obligatory, like a good night kiss.

"According to a survey by the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation, 20 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds believe that oral sex is safe sex. Even more—36 percent—of 15- to 17-year-olds thought so."

But these practices are not safe! Cathy Novak, director of education for the San Antonio AIDS Foundation told the *Express News:* "Unprotected oral sex is not safe sex. It can lead to sexually transmitted diseases of the mouth and throat."

Also, for young people who decide to engage in sexual intercourse, there is always the danger of unwanted pregnancy. Of course, statistics don't even begin to measure the emotional price young people suffer from premature sexual experiences.

What can parents do?

How do we protect our children from STDs? It really is going to take a change in perspective and some real dedication and work on the part of parents. Public sex education has failed, and teaching abstinence without understanding the Creator's purpose for human sexuality leaves young people confused and frustrated.

What can parents do to combat the sexual pressures our children face? Christians must begin by developing a positive, proactive approach to teaching children about sex. It can be difficult for parents to accept that their children are sexual beings.

The basis of all Christian sexual education is Genesis 1:27-28, which states: "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply . . .'"

Unlike sexual behavior in animals, God created human sexuality for more than just reproduction. Human beings are created in the image of God and capable of empathy, cognitive understanding and love. God designed the marriage relationship to produce an emotional, physical and spiritual bond between husband and wife as the basis of a healthy family.

We see the importance God places on human sexuality by reading the instructions given in the Bible. Scripture contains many commands against wrong sexual practices including adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality, rape, prostitution, bestiality, incest and even sexual thoughts about someone other than your spouse.

As parents, we must be willing to accept our children's sexuality, their curiosity and, as they grow older, their attraction to the opposite sex. God made us the way we are, and there is nothing wrong with human sexuality if used properly. Yet if misused, sex can become one of the most destructive, unhappy forces in our lives.

Be aware that each child must be taught individually so that the amount and kind of information is tailored to his or her personal needs at the time.

We can easily go to the extremes of either not giving our children enough right information or giving too much too soon—like the mother of a 9-year-old boy who, when he asked, "Mom, what is sex?," proceeded to give him a 45-minute lecture on the details of human reproduction. Afterwards, he showed her his school enrollment card with the little box marked "sex" and asked how he was going to get all that in that little box.

A great deal of how children will treat their future spouses is learned by how they see their parents treat each other. Obviously, children shouldn't be privy to their parents' intimacies, but children learn much about the special relationship between husband and wife by witnessing the simple affection and care they see Mom and Dad showing each other.

At the appropriate age children should be taught:

- Biological facts about pregnancy and the birth process. Use plants and animals as illustrations. Some excellent illustrated books are available for all levels of physical, emotional and mental development.
- Male and female anatomy.
- Menstruation and puberty.
- God's purposes for human sexuality in marriage, how it differs from animals, and that the misuse of sex brings tragic results.
- Problems that may stem from sexual guilt, fantasy and pornography.
- Facts concerning STDs and AIDS.
- How to deal with their attraction to the opposite sex and how to avoid sexual situations that could get out of control.
- The differences between male and female sexual responses and how to respect those differences.
- The sexual myths teens tell each other as factual.

Helping teens

Teenagers can suffer from deep anxiety concerning their sexuality. They worry about questions like: "Will I develop normally?" "Does God reject me because of

Continued on page 27

A Message of Hope Following the Death of a Loved One

Losing any loved one is difficult. But what hope can we look to when a child is lost to sudden tragedy?

by Melvin Rhodes

A close friend of mine lost his son last December.

Although Richard and I first met some years ago, it wasn't until February of last year that we really got to know each other.

Every February I spend three weeks at the Ambassador Bible Center (ABC) where I teach classes on the books of Daniel and Revelation and give an overview of where we are now in Bible prophecy. ABC is located at the home office of the United Church of God, publisher of *The Good News,* just outside Cincinnati, Ohio.

Although I am a regular writer for the Church's publications and have to use a computer almost every day of my life, I must confess to being somewhat technologically challenged. So I needed Richard's help (Richard is the information technology manager for the United Church of God).

My two one-hour classes began each weekday at 8:30 a.m. I usually turned up at Richard's office an hour earlier desperately in need of technical support just so I'd be able to give my classroom presentation. While he was helping me, we would talk. A mutually rewarding friendship developed.

Traveling to Africa and England

It turned out we had a great deal in common. We both came from families with six boys and no girls. I am the oldest of the six in my family; he is the fourth in his. We both married about the same time, and he had three children who arrived in the same birth order as my own—girl, boy, girl.

As I got to know Richard, I learned that his wife Emma also worked in the church office, in mail processing. I learned, too, that Richard and Emma had just gone through a severe two-year trial battling Emma's cancer. It was only then that they were emerging from that ordeal with greater hope for the future.

As Emma was recovering, we invited them to visit us in Michigan. It was clear that they are a loving and devoted couple. Their love and devotion to each other has helped them greatly through the many difficulties and challenges of life.



Photos.com

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

In our conversations, Richard would often ask about my experience overseas and the responsibilities I now have that require travel. He expressed such an interest in Ghana and England, the two countries I visit most frequently, that I invited him to come along with me on a future trip.

The Sunday after Thanksgiving we both left for a 10-day visit to Ghana followed by a few days in England. Richard loved Ghana and its people and was very helpful to many on the trip, solving their computer problems and helping out wherever he could.

After Ghana, we visited a congregation of the United Church of God in northern England, the closest one to where all my brothers live. After the church service, we drove over to see my brothers. He really appreciated the opportunity to get to know my family.

Sixteen days after leaving the United States, we were back. The following day, as one of our colleagues at the office put it, "Richard was beaming. He was so full of the trip." I was pleased to hear that.

Then, sudden tragedy struck.

An unbearable loss

Barely 24 hours after arriving back in the United States, Richard phoned me at 2:17 a.m. I remember the exact time, as I looked at my alarm clock when the phone rang. I knew at that time of the night it had to be bad news. And it was. Distraught, he told me that his 22-year-old son Ryan had been taken to the hospital with life-threatening injuries.

An hour later, when the phone rang again, I knew it could only be the worst news a parent can hear. Ryan had died. Richard and Emma's only son had passed away in the early hours of Thursday, Dec. 16, without regaining consciousness.

For days it was all I could think about. We had spent so much time talking about our children that I deeply felt this tragic news. But what I was feeling was nothing compared to the pain and suffering that Richard and Emma were going through.

Ryan's death led to my changing my sermon subject two days later. I wanted to share with the members of my congregation the good news of God's promise of eternal life. It wasn't something that was new to them, but the timely words were an encouragement to all.

The Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes tells us that there is "a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die . . ." (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2).

In the same book we also read that "the dead know nothing" (Ecclesiastes 9:5). Contrary to popular belief, people do not go in conscious awareness to heaven or hell or purgatory when they die. When people die, they are really dead—they are unconscious with no more powers of thinking and reasoning.

But does this mean that there is no hope?

God's promise to overcome death

Job asked this all-important question: "If a man dies, shall he live again?" He also answers it: "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, *till my change come.* Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee . . ." (Job 14:14-15, King James Version, emphasis added throughout).

Job knew that he could look forward to a change to eternal life, but he also knew that it was a long way off. In fact, Job is still waiting, thousands of years later.

Writing in the New Testament, the apostle Paul looked forward to the future time of change, when some will receive eternal life.

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Note that "the dead in Christ will rise first." These are those throughout history who faithfully served Him in life and now sleep in the grave. Immediately after them will be Jesus' followers who are alive at the time of His return. Salvation is only possible through Jesus Christ. ". . . For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Jesus Christ Himself rose from the dead. Writing to the skeptical Corinthians, the apostle Paul reminded them of this fact. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:22-23).

Just as Jesus Christ rose from the dead, so His followers can also look forward to eternal life with Him. In the words of Jesus Christ: "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).



"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."

Paul wrote the following words to the Romans: ". . . If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit [which] dwells in you . . . For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:11, 14).

Paul reminded the Corinthians that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption." He explained to his readers that "we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet [when Christ returns]. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory'" (1 Corinthians 15:50-54).

But what about non-Christians?

We have already seen that salvation is only possible through Jesus Christ. But does this mean that non-Christians have no opportunity for salvation? Will some people miss out on eternal life simply because they were born into the wrong religion, or grew up in a part of the world that does not know Jesus Christ?

The apostle Peter wrote that God is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Repentance and baptism are prerequisites for eternal life (Acts 2:38).

We have already seen that only those who are Christ's are given eternal life at His coming. So how does God give others who have never known Jesus Christ the opportunity to receive salvation? And what about those brought up in the Christian faith who did not live long enough to repent and receive the Holy Spirit?

It is comforting to know that God thinks of everybody. In His plan for mankind, *all* have an opportunity for salvation, for eternal life.

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In the book of Revelation, we see a future time that is the fulfillment of Christ's words quoted above. "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment [rulership] was committed to them . . . And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This [i.e., the resurrection at the beginning of the thousand years] is the first resurrection" (Revelation 20:4-5).

Here we see some very profound words. We read again that those in Christ will receive eternal life at His return. But we also read that "this is *the first resurrection.*" We read, too, that *"the rest of the dead"*—the nonbelievers—"did not live again until the thousand years were finished."

This clearly means there is *more than one resurrection.* In its haste to embrace the concept of the immortality of the soul, most of the Christian world has overlooked this plain and simple truth.

The next verse simply emphasizes what we have now come to understand: "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (verse 6).

So those in the *first* resurrection receive eternal life immediately at the second coming of Jesus Christ. But those in the *second* resurrection at the end of the thousand years do not. Why not? Why aren't they treated the same?

The answer is *because they are not ready.* Remember, eternal life is only possible through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins. Before we can truly come to Him, we must repent and be baptized; then we receive the gift of God's Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; Romans 8:11, 14).

In Ezekiel 37 we read of a resurrection quite different from the first. The dead here have been dead for a very long time, as their bones are described as being "very dry" (verse 2).

In this resurrection God says: "I will put sinews [muscles] on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD" (verse 6). This is a resurrection to a second physical existence, at which time those resurrected "shall know that I am the LORD." They will have the opportunity to receive God's Holy Spirit and live (verse 14).

These words are an encouragement to all who have lost loved ones, as they have been for Richard and Emma during their time of great loss. Their strong religious faith has seen them through other trials and will also see them through this one.



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"The Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

Ryan's memorial service

The day after my sermon my wife and I were in Kentucky for Ryan's memorial service and burial. About 200 people were present at the memorial service, making it one of the largest I have ever attended.

It's quite an accomplishment for a young man of 22 to have touched the lives of so many people. It had been more than three years since his graduation from high school, but more than 25 of his high school friends were present.

At the service, we learned that Ryan had written and had published several short stories and articles, one play and one short film script. Who knows what achievements were in store if only he had lived? It was deeply moving to see the loving support and encouragement of so many friends sharing in the family's grief.

Ryan was laid to rest alongside his grandfather on his grandmother's own land in Greenup County. Afterwards my wife and I were invited to eat with the family before returning to Michigan. Both sides of the family were present and one thing was very clear to me: Richard and Emma both have the strong, loving support of a close-knit family.

Ryan was blessed with two sisters, one older and one younger. I already knew the youngest, Elesha, who was a student in my ABC class last year. Richelle, the eldest, and her husband, Will, had just had a baby daughter only 10 weeks before Ryan died. Ryan had doted on his niece, Zandra Belle, and was so proud to be an uncle. With new life comes new hope. Zandra will help get the family through this awful trial.

These observations brought to mind the words of Jesus Christ when a lawyer asked Him the question, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus' response was: "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40).

In these few verses, Jesus told His followers what their priorities should be. We should first love God, which emphasizes the need for a close, personal relationship with our Father in heaven. Then we should love our fellow man, family and friends. This is the way to happiness in this life and eternal life in the next.

Living the two great commandments is also the key to coping with adversity during the difficult periods we inevitably face in life. At some point we all suffer loss. For most it's the loss of grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles, older siblings, friends and neighbors. For some, like Richard and Emma, it's losing a child, a loss that is so much harder to bear. At such a time, only faith in God and the loving support of family and friends can ease that pain.

As Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:18, "Therefore comfort one another with these words." ***GN***

Recommended Reading



Would you like to learn more? The Bible has much more to teach us about the resurrection of the dead, heaven, hell and the incredible future God has in store for us. To learn more about the scriptural truth about life after death, be sure to request the free booklets *What Happens After Death?* and *Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?* Both are yours free for the asking!

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Marriage

Continued from page 9

Even in Jesus' day, many had lost sight of the true meaning of the marriage bond. Apparently it was common to divorce one's wife "for just any reason," a concept Jesus was asked about in Matthew 19:3. When He disagreed, even His disciples were surprised. Their initial response was, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry" (verse 10). That response is indicative of the tendency of human beings to ignore God's instructions and drift away from the way of life He has revealed to us.

Paul explained to the Romans that those who had suppressed divinely revealed truth "did not like to retain God in their knowledge." Hence, "God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting" (Romans 1:28). These words are strong, but also very instructive. When people reject God, bad things happen.

Consider how we got to the present moral crisis concerning marriage. In the 19th century those "professing to be wise" dispensed with the Creator in favor of the Darwinian theory of evolution. This shook the foundation of the purpose for marriage. Without a Creator, the institution of marriage had lost its moral foundation.

The sexual revolution of the 20th century dispensed with the permanence of the marital relationship in lieu of newfound sexual freedom. And finally, it appears that those "professing to be wise" wish to redefine or dispense with marriage altogether by sanctioning all types of sexual relationships between same-sex and multiple partners.

Paul explained the pattern in his message to the Romans. First there is the rejection of creation in which "His invisible attributes are clearly seen." Then God gives them over to a "debased mind," which results in all kinds of depravity—from sexual immorality (adultery, fornication, etc.) to "vile passions," defined by Paul as homosexual activity. Rejecting God as our Creator distorts the mind.

Marriage doesn't come with a divorce clause

Marriage was intended by God to form a union that transcends all human relationships. A man and woman are to become one flesh, and what God has joined, no one is to trivially separate. Contrast God's intent with the accepted practice of our current culture where divorce is an accepted and easy exit strategy from the marriage covenant. Prenuptial agreements even define the terms much like a termination clause in a business contract. However, this permissive view is incompatible with sound Scriptural teaching.

In a study released in September 2004, pollster George Barna found that "although many Christian churches attempt to dissuade congregants from getting a divorce, the research confirmed a finding identified by Barna a decade ago (and further confirmed through tracking studies conducted each year since): born again Christians have the same likelihood of divorce as do non-Christians."

The divorce rate for professed born-again Christians was "statistically identical to the figure among non-Christians." This should not be so. Christ makes it clear that He expects those who would be His followers to have a different standard—to be the salt of the earth and light to the world (Matthew 5:13-14).

Could it be that the light among the professing Christian community has been so dimmed by a mediocre attitude toward commitment in marriage that the current calls to abolish or prohibit same-sex marriage are justifiably viewed by its proponents as hypocritical?

Jesus Christ expects His followers to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven," He said, "but he who *does the will of My Father in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

All sex outside marriage is sin

The New Testament puts sex outside of marriage between heterosexual partners in the same category as sex between same-sex partners—sin! Sin with enormous physical and spiritual consequences! In New Testament parlance such sins are against the body. Paul says: "Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

With the proliferation of sexually transmissible diseases these timeless words of Paul ring true. Millions have literally died because they "sinned against their bodies" by engaging in illicit sexual behavior.

Paul reveals a different purpose, a higher standard: "Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body . . . Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!" (1 Corinthians 6:13-15).

For a genuinely committed Christian, the human body is much more than a sex object. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit . . . and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Premarital sex is no laughing matter

The movies might depict that first fling

Children Are a Blessing, Not an Inconvenience

Marriage was designed by the Creator God to be a lasting, stable union where sexual relationships can be safely and purposely enjoyed—where children can grow and be nurtured in a stable environment to become upstanding citizens in the community.

A tragic consequence of the pervasive defilement of this institution is the widely accepted view that children are an inconvenience—even among married couples. Children interfere with their preferred lifestyle. Some parents openly declare that they "just can't wait" until their children are out of the house.

What a tragedy. God has an entirely different view. "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward" (Psalm 127:3).

A reward? Contrast that to popular perception. According to God, children *are,* not *could be,* a blessing to be cherished. (To maintain this blessing, they should, as Ephesians 6:4 says, be brought up "in the training and admonition of the Lord." Please see our free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension.*)

Do you realize that the low birthrate in Western democracies which is occurring as a result of children being viewed as an infringement on a free lifestyle is already making its mark? As the birthrate drops, pension funds (both public and private) also begin to diminish. In the next decade and beyond, these shifting demographics are threatening the retirement funds of future retirees. Treating children as a "bother" is already threatening to cause acute economic problems in the future.

Though it is prudent to not have more children than we are able to support, the Western world's declining birthrate, which is more about accomodating selfish interests, is producing grave geopolitical consequences.

A lesson of history from the ancient Israelites in Egypt is that population growth produces power. God illustrates the dynamics of this in Psalm 127:4-5: "Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate."

as fortuitous fun. The high school social scene makes sex the ultimate expression of passion. Some see it as a test of manhood. Adults smile at these youthful indiscretions.

These attitudes simply highlight our contemporary moral state. According to the New Testament, premarital sex, as with extramarital sex in general, is no laughing matter: "Fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

Strong language, yes, but strong dilution of truth requires a strong antidote to be effective.

Sex outside of marriage brings all kinds of undesirable consequences, not to mention spiritual alienation from God. Movies, music and popular culture suppress this truth, and even millions of professing Christians suffer from the consequences these promiscuous lifestyles bring.

Marriage preservation begins with you

Marriage is vital. Marriage is a God-ordained institution that must be preserved or the cost to our society will be incalculable. But if marriage is to survive, more is required than constitutional amendments—much, much more.

Action is required on the home front. Those who still believe in the institution of marriage must shed cultural influences and practice what they proclaim to believe. They must embrace the challenge to preserve marriage by preserving it among their own ranks. No constitutional amendment is required to do that!

All of us need to put on the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5) and embrace the truth about marriage as delivered by God through His prophets, Jesus Christ and His apostles. We can only change the world one family at a time. So let's get started today! ***GN***

Recommended Reading



What are the true keys to saving marriage? What will it take to restore marriage to its proper place as the foundational building block of society? How can you be sure your marriage will weather the storms of life? To discover the biblical keys to a strong and lasting marriage, request or download your free copy of *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* today. Those who are struggling with same-sex attraction can request a free subscription to *Anchor: A Publication of Hope for Christians Struggling With Homosexuality* by visiting its Web site at www.anchorhelp.com.

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Safe Sex

Continued from page 22

sexual thoughts?" "Why do I have pain in certain areas of my body at times?" "Can I get a sexually transmitted disease from kissing?" "What if no one ever really wants me?" "I've made a mistake and had sex; am I now worthless?"

Two areas are particularly vital where parents must communicate about sex to their teens.

One, help them not to fall into the trap of "How far can I go before it is sin?" All forms of physical contact lead to a greater need for intimacy and stimulation. Holding hands may be harmless, but if you hold hands every time you're with your boyfriend or girlfriend then eventually you'll want more in the relationship.

A kiss goodnight may be harmless, but it reaches a point when it isn't enough. Kissing leads to necking, necking to touching in private places. Once the genie is out of the bottle, it becomes difficult to get it back in.

It is important that teenagers see such value in a proper sexual relationship that they are willing to wait until marriage. This means that they should be involved in group activities instead of one-on-one dating where they can more easily find themselves in situations where they are driven by hormones instead of values of right and wrong.

Secondly, it's easy for teenagers, and adults for that matter, to be in love with the idea of being in love. This produces a fantasy relationship that many times has little to do with reality.

Parents must also be ready to deal with teens who make mistakes. As parents we must never condone our children's wrong actions, but must gently help them face their wrongdoing and the consequences. We must teach them repentance and the understanding that God will forgive them, show them unconditional love and help them put their lives back together.

One of the greatest blessings from God in this life is the proper relationship that forms between a man and woman who love each other and are united in marriage. Sex was never meant by God to be degrading or to produce heartache or disease.

As parents, we have the responsibility to teach and guard our children. At times this may make us unpopular with them. But for their sakes now, and for their futures, we must take the time and effort to teach them about the proper use of this great gift from God. ***GN***



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All materials are provided free in the public interest.

Letters From Our Readers

"DNA: The Tiny Code That's Toppling Evolution"

It is a shame that you spread misinformation because you can't grasp the reality of real science. Not a bit of your text shows any merit. I and many like me will not let you bring our nation back into the Dark Ages without speaking out against this. Unlike science with its volumes of proof in what it states, your side holds absolutely no proof of what you say other than your interpretation of a book written thousands of years ago by men with little or no education. Not one shred of evidence can you produce. Let the truth prevail.

R.M., Salisbury, New York

The DNA article to which you refer quoted the conclusions of professors of science, molecular biologists, medical doctors and the like, each of whom was carefully identified. The article also included the background and qualifications of the sources quoted.

Dare we suggest that you request our free booklet Is the Bible True? *Many of the Bible's writers were very well educated. Consider the man who wrote the Pentateuch: "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22).*

"God, Science and the Bible"

I must commend you for the inclusion of the "God, Science and the Bible" feature. Apart from the updates it will inevitably provide, it will also serve as a reminder that as long as man searches and longs for meaning, He will always need to be reminded of the ever-present help and existence of God.

Reader on Internet

Jesus Christ: The Real Story

I have just received the booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story* and have found it to be illuminating. It has made me think about some ideas in a new way. It expanded my realization and deepened my desire for knowing Jesus Christ.

B.L., Coshocton, Ohio

I have read so many books about the story of Jesus Christ and who He was. None of these books were able to give me answers to some of the hidden and controversial questions about the day of His birth and who exactly He is and so on. All these and many more questions were answered in your booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*. I commend you for such clear explanations.

C.O., Nigeria

I thank you for the booklets listed and not least for the marvelous *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*, a great publication for which I am extremely grateful. I am enjoying and appreciating every line of it. One feels that the writers have made a thorough investigation of the Word of God coupled with a sincere desire to understand the meaning of our destiny here on earth.

E.G., Hayes, England

Comments on *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* from a soldier serving in Iraq

I just finished reading your booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* and it was profound. I'm serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom and writing to see if you could send all of your booklets to the address I've given. Many days we have just enough downtime to read a booklet in a day. This would really help with the separation from family and church. However, if you're able to send extra copies as well, I could give them to our chapel so others could read *The Good News* too! Thank you so much.

J.B.C., Iraq

The Good News

I just wanted to let you know that I did not request *The Good News.* I was going to cancel it, tired of companies charging me for things that I did not register for or request. But I was happy to see that I won't have to pay. I was even more pleased to see an article titled "Bringing Up a Moral Child." It is something I think about most every day. I have a 17-year-old who was ruined not only by circumstances in our family, but by society. Now I have an 8-month-old. I'm constantly thinking of how I will bring her up. How will I protect her from a society that has no respect for itself? So I look for Christian help everywhere.

C.I., Kissimmee, Florida

You may find that our free booklet Making Life Work *will be of help, as well as the new booklet* Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension, *offered in this issue.*

Thank you very much for all your magazines, which I find interesting and informative. Thank you for providing such rich and informative reading material. Your articles cover a vast range of subjects and, unlike many publications, you maintain an unbiased and respectful stance toward other believers. *The Good News* has become a close and inseparable friend and a source of advice that helps me to face life's problems with hope.

A.G., Eritrea

Last week I found a copy of your magazine and read it. I have never been so impressed by any magazine in my life. You have covered so much that I am interested in and concerned about. I want all the suggested readings mentioned in each article. And I will make a contribution as soon as I figure out where to send one. If you come back to me on e-mail, I will send it to wherever you direct.

D.R.N., Internet

Answering readers' questions

God really brought you to solve problems for people like me. There are puzzling questions in my mind that you have done a lot of justice to. Keep it up.

Reader on Internet

For the very first time I came upon *The Good News* magazine and am more than captivated by it. This is what I have been looking for. I am pleased to know that the questions that I have had such a hard time answering myself just by reading the Bible will finally be answered. Thank you so much for fulfilling your purpose and dissolving the wall of unanswered questions.

C.B., Huntington, Massachusetts

Readers who have questions are very welcome to send them in by letter, e-mail or fax. We will send the appropriate printed publication(s), or one of our personal correspondents will be glad to reply.

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: I disagree with the logic in your *Good News* sidebar titled "Do All Churches Get Their Teaching From the Bible?" (May-June 2005, p. 19), which stated that there is no directive in the Scriptures for Sunday worship and that "people who think that the Scriptures should be the sole authority, should logically . . . keep Saturday holy."

I believe Scripture does present Sunday, the first day of the week, as a day of worship (see Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Revelation 1:10)—as a change made by the apostles. Also, we gentiles may be under different commandments than the Jews.

J.F.B., Aguilar, Colorado

A: Thank you for giving us an opportunity to explain these comments in greater detail.

Please note that the quotes in that sidebar were actually admissions from Catholic authorities and publications acknowledging the fact that the Roman Catholic Church replaced observance of the seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath with Sunday, the first day of the week, based on church authority rather than Scripture.

While we agree with their admissions, which are well borne out in history, we strongly disagree that any person or church has the authority to change such a direct commandment from God—particularly one of the Ten Commandments.

As for the scriptural passages you mention, do they refer to worship on Sunday? In fact they do not, and the Bible nowhere shows the first-century apostles changing the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday.

Each of these passages is thoroughly addressed and explained on pages 36-37 of our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest* under the title "Was Sunday the New Testament Day of Worship?" Following are some of the essential points regarding these passages.

"One scripture commonly cited to justify Sunday worship is Revelation 1:10, where John said, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day' . . . Nowhere does the Bible define 'Lord's Day' as the first day of the week . . . If this were referring to a day of the week, we would have to conclude that John meant the seventh day, since Jesus Christ said He was the 'Lord of the Sabbath' (Mark 2:28)."

As our Sabbath booklet further explains, this passage in context refers John's *vision* of the future period the Bible repeatedly calls "the Day of the Lord," a time when many end-time prophecies will be fulfilled. It is not referring to a day of the week.

The next scripture addressed is Acts 20:7 about *breaking bread.* This term does not denote a religious service but the dividing of loaves of bread for eating a meal—as other New Testament passages show. Since days in the Bible begin and end at sunset (compare Genesis 1:5; Leviticus 23:32), the events described in Acts 20 begin with a meal on Saturday evening after the Sabbath had ended (as several translations clearly show).

As our Sabbath booklet explains about this passage: "After speaking and talking all night [after sundown], Paul the next morning walked almost 20 miles to Assos to meet the rest of the people in his group who had sailed there (verses 11, 13-14). Rather than describing a religious service on Sunday, this passage actually documents Paul walking 20 miles on foot on the first day of the week—hardly making it a day of rest and worship for him!"

Now consider 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, widely assumed to be an offertory collection during a Sunday worship service. Although a collection did take place on the first day of the week, nowhere is it stated that a worship service was involved. This was actually a special circumstance—part of a wider famine-relief effort aimed at providing Church members in Judea with food supplies. As some Bible commentaries note, this appears to be the same relief effort mentioned in Acts 11:28-30.

As the booklet explains: "These contributions were to be 'laid aside' and 'stored up,' not brought to a church service and collected there. To say this is an account of a collection taken up during a Sunday worship service is to read into the Bible an unwarranted personal interpretation."

Again, these three passages of Scripture are all explained in considerably greater detail in our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest.*

What, then, of the idea that Jews are required to keep the Sabbath but Christians are not? After the creation of Adam and Eve, God rested on the seventh day and sanctified it—setting it apart as the Sabbath day (Genesis 2:1-3). This was some 2,000 years before the Jewish people ever came on the scene.

Notice further what Leviticus 23:1-3 says regarding ownership of the Sabbath: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: *The feasts of the LORD,* which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations [mandatory sacred assemblies], *these are My feasts.* Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; *it is the Sabbath of the LORD* in all your dwellings" (emphasis added throughout).

Here God repeatedly emphasizes that the Sabbath belongs to *Him,* not to any particular group of people. As for whom it was made, Jesus said "the Sabbath was made *for humankind"* (Mark 2:27, New Revised Standard Version)—that is, *for all people,* not just the Jews.

Another key to understanding the Sabbath as the day all Christians should observe is the often-overlooked fact that it is one of the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20:11 shows that the rationale for keeping it is based on the fact that God rested, blessed and hallowed the seventh day at *creation,* which concerns all humanity, not just the Jewish people. (Request our free booklet *The Ten Commandments*, noting especially pages 31–36.)

Again, if you carefully read and study our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*, you will discover that the significance and importance of this particular day is discussed from practically every possible angle.

Editor's note: *Space limitations often prevent us from answering all questions in every detail, thus letters may be shortened and/or additional questions omitted. We want to reply to as many different readers as possible. That is why we urge our readers to request or download the appropriate free publications that more fully address such questions and concerns.*

It *Does* Matter Who Your Friends Are

The Bible tells us that we get to decide whether we'll walk with the wise or flounder with fools. Which will you choose?

by Jason Ranew

What impact have your friends had on you lately? This might sound like a strange question, but your friends have influenced you—for better or for worse—more than you think. Does it really matter which friends you select? After all, shouldn't a Christian be willing to have anyone around as a friend?

Some argue that Christians should invite everyone into their circle of friends since Jesus Christ was inclusive during His earthly ministry. This belief seems appealing on its surface, but there is more to the issue than meets the eye. The Bible indicates that whom you choose as your friends has much to do with how far you will go in life.

As a former prosecuting attorney, I observed many bright and talented young people as they faced the criminal justice system. Regrettably, their presence in a courtroom almost always came about because of unwise decisions. The collective testimony of these young defendants reveals that long before they were charged with an offense and brought before a judge, they made poor choices of friends. A few examples illustrate this point:

Chuck (names have been changed) was an intelligent high school junior who went to a privileged school and came from a good family. He was athletic, witty and well connected. Although he planned on attending a top university, one day he accepted some less ambitious individuals into his ever-widening circle of friends. They tempted him to try alcohol and marijuana. Soon he was comfortable with his newfound friends and habits.

One evening, following a day of surfing with his buddies, he went to a party where he drank alcohol and smoked marijuana. He left the party and was arrested for driving under the influence and possession of marijuana. He was convicted of the offenses and spent time in jail. At that point, his life wasn't ruined but his future was certainly tainted. The court made it clear to him that unless he found a new group of friends, this would not be his last visit to the jail cell.

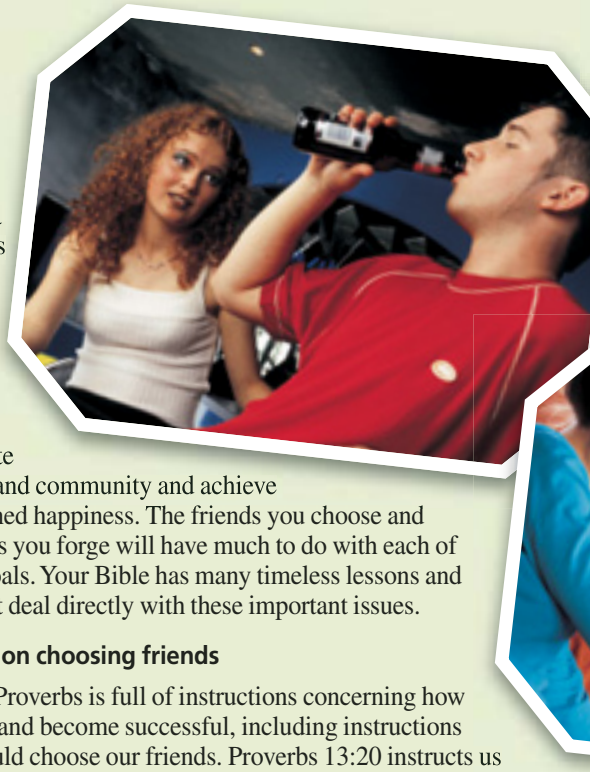
Jennifer was a gifted, attractive teen who had everything going for her. Besides the blessing of living in an intact Christian home, she had a positive group of friends at church and school. Although everyone around her was certain she would attain her goal of becoming a veterinarian, everything changed when she started spending less time with her church friends in favor of a delinquent group at school.

Disregarding her parents' instructions, she persisted in associating with this group, which was into drugs and other illicit activities. Within three years, she was married, divorced and had two children by two of these young men. Meanwhile, her dream of becoming a veterinarian is still on hold. As she tends to the children alone, she wonders when she will realistically be able to start college.

By all accounts, **Seth** was a good person and a law-abiding citizen, but as a high school senior, he found himself in court on a drug charge. According to what his attorney told me, he wasn't afraid of going to jail for a few days. He feared that merely having a drug conviction on his record would keep him out of a good university and would shatter his dream of becoming an engineer.

I worked with this sincere young man and offered him a deal that did not result in a conviction. Today he is getting ready to enter an engineering program, but if he continues to associate with the same "friends" who helped him get arrested, he might not be in the program long.

In each of these cases, a decent young person chose to form relationships with foolish and unprincipled individuals. None of these three appreciated the importance of choosing good friends who would lift them up and make them better persons. Being in a bad circle of friends influenced each of these defendants to abandon good judgment and make choices that led to the courtroom and, in some cases, jail. Beyond the criminal justice system, each person mentioned above is probably scarred for life and may never reach his or her full potential.



If you are reading this magazine, you probably want to do well in life and live in a way that pleases God and those close to you. You probably want to be a good citizen, make a good living, contribute to your church and community and achieve genuine, sustained happiness. The friends you choose and the relationships you forge will have much to do with each of these worthy goals. Your Bible has many timeless lessons and instructions that deal directly with these important issues.

Biblical advice on choosing friends

The book of Proverbs is full of instructions concerning how we can do well and become successful, including instructions on how we should choose our friends. Proverbs 13:20 instructs us that "he who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm" (New International Version throughout, emphasis added). Here we are instructed that to befriend foolish people will bring harm to our lives. On the other hand, seeking out wise friends who live right will bring about blessings.

Proverbs 1:10-16 provides a compelling warning against befriending those who engage in sinful lifestyles. The passage begins, "My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them." Solomon then describes the voice of these sinners: They will persuasively attempt to recruit you for a myriad of sinful or illicit actions, including harming others and theft (verses 11-14). In verse 15, he continues, "My son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; for their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed blood."

The apostle Paul affirms: "Do not be misled: 'Bad company

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corrupts good character'" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

If Chuck, Jennifer and Seth had internalized these passages, perhaps they would have avoided the life-altering consequences of having an unprincipled group of friends.

These scriptures and others indicate that in order to do well, be happy and obey God, we must choose good, principled friends and avoid negative, immoral people.

Advice from successful leaders

Many successful and prominent leaders have discovered the importance of choosing one's friends and associates wisely. If you know someone in business, government or your local church who has accomplished worthwhile endeavors, you can be sure that he or she was influenced by great people along the way.





Rudy Giuliani, former mayor of New York City, understands the fundamental importance of being mindful of your friends and associates. In his best-selling book *Leadership* (2002), Mr. Giuliani discusses the importance of this issue at length in a chapter titled "Surround Yourself With Great People."

What Mr. Giuliani essentially affirms in this chapter is the consistent and predictable truth of Proverbs 13:20: If you surround yourself with great (wise) people, you will benefit in countless ways. Conversely, if you surround yourself with mediocre, immoral or unethical people, you will take on their character traits and will not do well in life.

Distinguished leadership author John Maxwell teaches this same principle. In his book *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (1998), Mr. Maxwell writes, "A leader's potential is determined by those closest to him." He calls this principle "The Law of the Inner Circle." During His earthly ministry, even Jesus had an "inner circle" that included His most trusted disciples (Peter, James and John). Jesus also called His disciples His friends (John 15:15).

Jesus' example

One should note that even among His disciples, not everyone was included in Jesus' inner circle. Jesus is unique in that His potential was not determined by His friends. Even so, He set a clear example for us to follow in that He had an inner circle of trusted friends and He was careful about whom He included.

So what can we learn from the examples of Chuck, Jennifer and Seth and the writings of Rudy Giuliani and John Maxwell? There is no escaping the truth of Proverbs 13:20: "He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm."

If you apply this principle and surround yourself with good, wise friends and associates throughout your life, you will reap limitless benefits in the forms of success, happiness and personal contribution to others.

To surround yourself with positive people, consider implementing the following strategy: Begin by replacing your negative or morally deficient friends with good ones. This might not be easy, but it is necessary to avoid having these people influence you toward unchristian values. The only way to avoid this possibility is to make a clean yet polite break with the negative group and then gradually make friends with individuals who are moral and positive. These friends will elevate you to higher standards and will help you reach your potential.

Finally, beyond being on the "receiving end" of positive friendships, resolve to be a positive friend yourself. Set a strong, godly example and be a light for others. In this way, you will also contribute to their lives and character. ***GN***



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Printed in the U.S.A.
Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement Number 40026236

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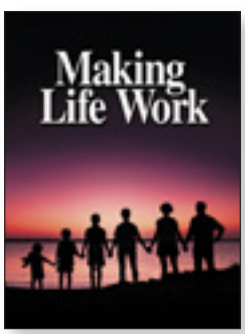

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