

^{The} Good News

January-February 2006

A M A G A Z I N E O F U N D E R S T A N D I N G



God's Guide to **SEX**

What Is True Love? • The Abortion Controversy • Has World War III Started?
The Intelligent Design Revolution • The Privilege and Power of Prayer

A Tale of Two TV Commercials



It was bound to happen sooner or later. (I don't watch a lot of TV, so maybe you had this experience long before I did.)

Nevertheless, it was somewhat shocking when a commercial popped up on my TV for a male sexual enhancement drug—coincidentally followed immediately by another commercial for a drug to ease the symptoms of herpes, one of the most common and painful sexually transmitted diseases afflicting the Western world.

The juxtaposition of those two TV commercials says a lot about our culture. Not getting enough satisfaction? Take a pill! Certainly we shouldn't be expected to miss out on sex! Got a pesky sexually transmitted disease? Again, take a pill—you certainly shouldn't let an annoying little thing like that interfere with your fun!

Shouldn't laws about false advertising come into play somewhere here? After all, the perky, hip, 20-something girl in the STD-treatment commercial seemed to be having the time of her

It's ironic that in an age when knowledge is exploding, we choose to remain so clueless about one of the basic functions of life—sex.

life—riding horseback, sailing, enjoying a walk in a beautiful sunlit park with an equally attractive young man as they gently caressed each other, leaving little to the imagination as to what they'd be doing that night.

It all looked so appealing and wholesome that if some young person watching the commercial had no idea what that herpes was, he or she might well wonder, "Wow! How can I get that so my life can become so interesting and exciting!?!"

The truth, of course, is far different. It's ironic that in an age when knowledge is exploding, we choose to remain so clueless about one of the basic functions of life—sex. Seldom have so many comprehended so little about something so common. In this issue we hope to shed some biblical light on a much-misunderstood subject.

At the same time, the whole subject of sex can't really be separated from another subject discussed in this issue—namely, are we here by accident or are we the product of a supreme and divine intelligence that put us here for a reason?

Belief that we are here by accident has led us to the sorry state of sexual relationships we see all around us—sex simply for one's self-gratification, regardless of consequences. The result is a growing epidemic of disease, divorce and degradation, of anguish and abortion, of broken dreams, broken hearts and broken men and women.

Some of the leading thinkers behind the sexual revolution of the last century openly admit that they embraced evolution and its denial of God because they didn't want anyone or anything to interfere with their fun. Now we look at the sad state of marriages, families and relationships and wonder how it all went so horribly wrong.

In spite of our many failures, God hasn't left us. He wants a relationship with us. He wants us to know Him, to know His ways, to receive His blessings. Yet so many don't know where to begin.

To help you grasp the kind of relationship God wants with you, and how to build that relationship, we're starting a series of articles titled "Tools for Spiritual Growth." These will show you how you can begin to draw on the power of the greatest source of power in the universe to transform your life and reach the potential He planned for you. And that is truly good news!

—Scott Ashley, Managing editor

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Table of Contents



Sex: Are we missing a crucial piece of the picture? 4

Cover Feature

God's Guide to Sex

Does God have some major hang-ups about sex? After all, the Bible has a lot of "don'ts" when it comes to sex. Yet He is the one who created sex, who made us male and female and told our first parents to "be fruitful and multiply." So shouldn't we give the Bible's instructions about sex a closer look to see what we may be missing? 4

Just What Is True Love?

Are physical attraction and true love the same thing? Many assume they are—which leads to all sorts of problems. You need to understand what true love is and how you can apply it to your marriage. 9



Why is evolution losing ground? 18

The Abortion Controversy

What are the facts about abortion? Up to 53 million abortions are carried out each year. Is it a legitimate form of birth control, or is it murder of the unborn? What does God, the Creator of life, say about it? 12

Has World War III Already Begun?

What's behind the call by Iran's new president for the United States and Israel to be wiped off the face of the earth? Are Western leaders and nations blind to the growing threat from radical Islam? 16

The Intelligent Design Revolution

Intelligent design is shaking a scientific establishment built on the assumptions of Darwinian evolution. Why is it gaining ground to the point that many are calling for it to be taught alongside evolution? 18

The Privilege and Power of Prayer

The Bible discusses several tools we can use to grow spiritually and build our relationship with our Creator. In this first article in a series, we examine the tool of prayer—a key to communication with God. 22

How Can We Pass Our Faith on to Our Children?

God expects us to teach our children about Him and His way of life. But how do we do that? Let's look at some practical methods of teaching and consider a good general approach to instructing our children. 25



Tips for teaching God's way to our children 25

Regular Features

World News and Trends	An overview of conditions around the world.	14
God, Science and the Bible	News from the world of science about God and the Bible.	21
Letters From Our Readers	Readers of The Good News share their thoughts.	28
Questions and Answers	Answers to readers' questions.	29
Just for Youth	Right Dating: What Guys and Girls Want.	30

God's Guide to Sex

Everyone knows about the similarities between animal and human sexuality, but what about the differences? And what are the implications of those differences?

by David Treybig

God cares deeply about your sex life. What? You've got to be kidding, right? After all, doesn't God say don't do it while most people do? Does He know what we've been doing?

Surprising to many, God is quite concerned about our sexuality and wants us to have the best sex possible. And yes, He does know what each of us has been doing. And He's disappointed that so many are cheating themselves out of one of the greatest joys of being human—a rich, rewarding sex life.

God created sex

The ironic part of today's flawed understanding of sex is that by rejecting God's instruction, many have ended up with greatly diminished happiness. What instruction does God give that allows us to understand and best enjoy His gift of sexuality? What's missing in the sexual education most people are receiving?

The mistaken ideas that God doesn't like sex and that He doesn't want us to enjoy this most intimate of human relationships is contradicted by the fact that *God Himself* was the designer and creator of the male and female bodies.

The Bible tells us that in the beginning, "God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; *male and female He created them*" (Genesis 1:27, emphasis added throughout). In noting all of His creative efforts, including making us male and female, God said that it was all "*very good*" (verse 31). So there wasn't a design problem, and God clearly isn't against sex.

If God hadn't intended for us to have sexual relationships, He could have created us as androgynous beings, neither feminine nor masculine, who reproduce by an asexual process. But He didn't do that. God instead created us male and female with a strong desire to use and enjoy our sexuality.

And as we will see, following the biblical instructions God gave for this wonderful gift is critically important for



Human sexuality was designed far differently than animal sexuality. Animals don't have sex simply for pleasure or because they love or have emotional feelings for each other—as do human beings.

the happiness all of us seek.

A closer look at the physical side

From a strictly physical perspective, it seems that human sexuality has been studied in every way possible. From the organs themselves to fertility to the intricacies of gestation and birth, we are awash with the technical details of sex. Indeed, it seems that more knowledge is available regarding these physical aspects than any single human being could ever think to ask.

Among those who have sought to add to our understanding was Charles Darwin (1809-1882), the British naturalist famous for his theory of evolution through natural selection.

Darwin spent thousands of hours studying animals and flora while postulating the implications of his studies to human beings. His ideas regarding sexual selection (the theory that competition for mates between individuals of the same gender

drives the evolution of certain traits) were introduced in his first book, *Origin of the Species*, and even more exhaustively presented in his second book, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*.

Yet in all this sea of knowledge, it seems that humanity in general has overlooked some simple observations that should lead any rational person to the conclusion that *human sexuality was designed far differently than animal sexuality*.

As Romans 1:20 notes, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, *being understood by [means of] the things that are made*, even his eternal power and [Godhood]; so that they are without excuse" (King James Version, emphasis added throughout).

Put another way, things we observe about human beings (including their sexuality) should lead us to a better understanding of God. So what have we missed? In all of Darwin's studies, what did he miss? And

why didn't he see the spiritual connections?

Through his studies as a naturalist, Charles Darwin quickly realized that there were undeniable similarities between animal and human sexuality. Reasoning that he should only consider physical data, Darwin theorized that all life came into existence through natural, observable means. This premise provided a basis for excluding



God because God is supernatural—above and beyond physical dimensions.

Taking the scriptural account of creation out of the equation, Darwin assumed that human beings were simply part of the animal kingdom. This flawed premise has led to untold confusion not only about the origins of life, but also about what kind of human conduct would lead to the greatest human sexual satisfaction.

Noting that many animals typically mate with any opposite-sex member of their species that happens to be present at the appropriate time, some have mistakenly assumed that it is normal and natural for people to do the same. In fact, some proponents of Darwin's theory have openly admitted that their acceptance of his idea was sexually liberating. It gave them freedom to do whatever they wished. After all, if human beings are simply animals, why shouldn't we act similarly?

Sadly, this kind of reasoning has contributed to enormous ignorance about God's purpose for human sexuality. Sadder still, it has *diminished* our happiness. Commenting on those who rejected God, Paul explains that "their foolish minds became dark and confused. Claiming themselves to be wise without God, they became

utter fools instead" (Romans 1:21-22, The Living Bible).

In other words, when we refuse to accept God's instructions, our thinking becomes limited and unsound. This is especially true when it comes to sex.

Differences between animals and human beings

In observing the animal world, several important differences become quickly apparent. First, animal sexuality is, in general, much simpler than that of human beings. We might say that it is essentially "programmed."

In animals, mating occurs only when a female is "in heat"—that is, when the female's body has undergone changes, such as the release of a scent, to indicate to males that she is ready to be impregnated. Human beings, by contrast, are prepared for and willing to have sex much more frequently.

Second, animals mate for the purpose of producing offspring. Animals don't have sex simply for pleasure or because they love or have emotional feelings for each other, as do human beings. Instead, as already mentioned, animals essentially mate with whichever member of their species meets the selection criteria at the appropriate time.

If multiple females are around, males will often fight for the right to impregnate the females while the females await the dominant male, whichever one that happens to be. And as illogical as it may seem, some theorize that it is perfectly okay for human beings to conduct themselves the same way, mating with whomever happens to be around.

Third, animals have no shame when it is time to mate. They do so in the open, among the other animals, no matter who or what is watching. Exhibitionists notwithstanding, this is not the way most people conduct themselves.

So how did Darwin deal with these all-too-obvious differences between animals and people? While holding that human beings were still part of the animal kingdom, he theorized that we are simply at a higher level of evolutionary development.

Of course, when one rejects the biblical

account of creation, such reasoning may seem perfectly logical. After all, if there are no guidelines or instructions, similarities between animals and people can give the appearance that there is little difference between the two.

When people act like animals

Setting aside God's instructions regarding human conduct, people have experimented with just about every kind of sexual relationship imaginable—including woman with woman, man with man, group sex, one man with multiple women, one woman with multiple men. Some are so perverted they approve of acts between adults and minors and even sexual activity with animals.

In spite of all the experimentation, research conclusively shows that traditional families—wherein sexual relationships are only between the father and mother—produce the most successful children.

As psychologist Robert Evans explains in his book *Family Matters: How Schools Can Cope With the Crisis in Childrearing*: "Children need what both fathers and mothers naturally provide. No wonder an extensive review of studies of parenting found children raised by traditionally sex-typed parents to be more competent than others" (2004, p. 49).

But instead of accepting these results, those who reject God attack the research, arguing that it was flawed by preconceived social values and that when society becomes more open to alternative sexual relationships, they also will produce emotionally and psychologically sound, stable children. Such is the blind faith in faulty premises.

Pursuing the theory

When Darwin theorized that human beings were on a higher level than animals, he was onto a principle that he should have pursued more fully. Regrettably, he omitted the data that could have reshaped his thinking and provided the keys to the understanding he was seeking. He chose not to accept what the Bible reveals about the unique status of humankind.

When we look into God's Word—His instruction book for mankind that includes additional knowledge beyond what we can physically discover—we find the crucial information that helps us understand human sexuality. God's Word reveals that we are indeed on a higher level than animals. In fact, we are so much higher

than animals that we are *in a separate category altogether*.

In the earliest chapters of the first book of the Bible we find that God made each animal to reproduce “according to its kind” (Genesis 1:24-25). But when He made man, God made him in *His own* “image,” in *His own* “likeness” (verse 26). Human beings were modeled *after God—not after other animals!*

Being created in God's image means that we have godlike abilities and potential unlike any animal. We can think in the abstract. We can make plans for tomorrow or for a lifetime. We have a highly sophisticated ability to communicate with each other through written and spoken words. We have mobile phones, computers and the Internet. We can appreciate art, music and beauty in ways that no animal enjoys.

And these magnificent qualities, so far beyond what animals can do, are only the beginning.

God, through His Word the Bible, tells us that we were designed for God's “pleasure” (Revelation 4:11, King James Version), which includes becoming part of His eternal family (Ephesians 1:5; Luke 12:32). Unlike animals, we have the opportunity to live forever as beings transformed into divine spirit rather than earthly matter (1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 41-53).

When we consider emotions and the spiritual principles on which human life is patterned, we see additional evidence that God made mankind, not animals, in His image.

Emotional differences between man and animals

While animals display a variety of individual temperaments, these emotional expressions are quite lowly in comparison to those of human beings. This huge difference between animals and people is so well understood that cartoonists have had extremely successful careers portraying animals with humanlike feelings and conversations. Their work is funny because everyone knows animals aren't just like human beings—especially when it comes to reasoning, conversations, perspectives and human emotions.

When we are feeling discouraged or upset, we have the capacity to self-analyze and change our outlook if we so desire. Our ability to do this is called “emotional intelligence,” and although this varies with each person, we can all learn how to manage and even reshape our feelings. For example, it is common knowledge

that we can often talk to others and choose behaviors—such as exercising or listening to calming music—that will reshape our thinking and put us in a different mood.

Although emotional intelligence has, until recently, been one of the most overlooked measures of intelligence, researchers such as Daniel Goleman have come to the conclusion that it is one of the most



Sex for human beings is far more than simply a biological itch than can be scratched without further impact. God made human sexuality to be an intensely personal activity that produces far-reaching emotional consequences.

critically important measures of a person's ability to succeed.

This more highly developed emotional intelligence that is unique to human beings is also a means through which we can have understanding of and contact with our Creator. God, through His Holy Spirit, can work with our thinking and reasoning. When we acknowledge that we do indeed have a Creator, we can read His Word and go to Him in prayer to help change our moods.

This emotional difference between animals and people is also an important aspect of human sexuality. For us, sexual intimacy forms an emotional bond. Under normal circumstances, we human beings each like to have our personal space. For example, in a typical, nonsexual conversation, we simply don't like people getting too close to us.

But as we all know, in the marital relationship there is not only closeness but a literal joining of two bodies together. This

physical intimacy along with the pleasure of sexual intercourse tends to produce an emotional bond between the partners.

This is one of the reasons why people who have an intimate relationship and regularly have sexual intercourse miss each other so much when they are away and why they often get “the blues” or have “heartaches” when they break up. Sex

for human beings is far more than simply a biological itch than can be scratched without further impact. God made human sexuality to be an intensely personal activity that produces far-reaching emotional consequences.

Spiritual insight from God's Word

While human beings quickly come to understand much of the physical side of sex, many acquire little knowledge of the *emotional and spiritual dimensions* that make it complete. Without this knowledge, men and women miss out on one of the greatest joys of life and the happiness that God makes available to those who understand His plan for humanity and follow His instructions.

So what was God thinking when He created us as sexual beings? This question is the one so very few ever ask; its answer is the foundation for sexual fulfillment.

When God made us, there were two major spiritual principles on which we

were created. The first, already noted, is that we were made in God's image for the purpose of ultimately becoming part of His family.

In Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." Of all God's creation, only human beings have this unique heritage and basis of existence. And just as we reproduce and expand our families, so God is likewise reproducing Himself and expanding His family, giving us the opportunity to become part of that family (see John 1:12; Ephesians 1:5; 2:19; 3:14-15).

In the bigger picture, we need to remember that this physical life is not all there is. This life is not the most important thing. A cause and purpose is being worked out here on earth that is far bigger than any one of us, yet each of us can be part of this grand design. (For more information about God's purpose for you, be sure to read our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?*).

The second major spiritual principle on which we were created is related to our emotional intelligence and sexual conduct. In writing about marriage, the apostle Paul explained that the husband-wife relationship represents the relationship between Jesus Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:31-32).

God's plan for Jesus to die for the forgiveness of our sins has been in existence since the foundation of the world (compare Revelation 13:8). The way Christ gave Himself for the Church is the model of conduct for husbands, and the way the Church is supposed to respond to Christ is the model of conduct for wives.

God wants us to learn to control our thoughts and actions and to learn what true love really is, and marriage is the best environment given to mankind for learning these crucial spiritual principles and traits.

When we understand that a definite intelligent design was involved in our creation by a great, loving God, we begin to understand just how different we are from animals. With this foundation, we can also have a greater appreciation for His rules for sex.

God's rules for happiness

When God created us both male and female, He knew that we would need instructions on how to use our sexuality for good—so we could lead full, happy, complete lives. In fact, when we study the Bible, the subject of sex is one of the topics mentioned most often. Yes, the Bible is filled with sex! And in its pages God not only gives us timeless instructions about

sex, but He also includes the results of what happens when His rules are broken.

God is no prude. He isn't embarrassed. He clearly explains what works best and what He had in mind for His gift of human sexuality. As a loving Father, He wants us to be happy. So He gives us instructions that will produce the full, satisfying lives we desire. In fact, key principles about sex are found in the first two chapters of the first book of the Bible!

After reading that God was the Creator of sex (Genesis 1:27), we then see how it was to be used: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:24-25).

From this brief overview we learn several important principles. First, we see that the foundational definition for a family is *one man with one woman*. The biblical model for families is always one man with one woman. It is never a man with another man or a woman with another woman.

Also, this one-man-one-woman relationship was not a continuation of the parents' family, but the beginning of another. The relationship between the man and his wife was the primary and foundational one in the sense that it came into existence prior to children and was designed to continue after children were born and reared. In spite of human attempts to redefine family, God here establishes His intent that one man be the husband of one wife.

From the Genesis 2 account we also note that the man and woman who left family to become a new family unit were to "become one flesh," including intimacy and sexual relations (1 Corinthians 6:16).

This is the only context—with one's spouse within marriage—in which God sanctions sexual activity. He declares sex within marriage to be holy, honorable and good (Hebrews 13:4) while condemning *all* sexual activity outside of marriage—including homosexuality, group sex, bestiality, premarital sex and adultery.

Narrow-minded thinkers who mistakenly assume that God's instructions about sex are overly restrictive and thwart the individual's happiness ironically *reject* the very instruction that leads to the *greatest* human happiness.

While almost any male and female can have sexual intercourse, all sex isn't equally satisfying—and sex outside of marriage can be particularly unrewarding. Commenting on the qualitative analysis

What If You've Made a Mistake?

When it comes to sex, people make mistakes—both premarital and extramarital. Sometimes after making a sexual mistake, people will reason that since they've already committed the sin, they may as well continue doing so. This is faulty thinking because continuing to practice premarital sex or adultery perpetuates one's sin and can lead to a seared, unresponsive conscience. The biblical way to cleanse one's conscience is to *repent*—that is, stop breaking God's law.

Because sex is enjoyable and because an emotional bond is created between two people through this act, breaking off an unlawful sexual relationship can be difficult. Here are a few points to keep in mind if you need to end or have recently ended a sinful relationship:

Repent. To repent means to stop what we are doing wrong and to change direction. It also includes admitting our sin to God and asking for His forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Repentance is mandatory for being forgiven.

Have courage to do what is right. God respects people of courage who do what He says, and He promises us strength when we do. Psalm 31:24 says, "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the LORD." Ask God for the courage you need as you cease your wrong conduct. Strive to do what is right and ask for God's help at the same time because "whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22).

Accept God's forgiveness. When we repent, God not only removes our sin from us, He no longer thinks of us as having committed it (Psalm 103:12; Hebrews 8:12). While penalties may remain (loss of virginity, an STD or a temporarily broken heart), God forgives us completely when we repent. Believe God—not your unstable emotions

"Sin no more." This is what Christ told both a man and a woman who had committed sins (John 5:14; 8:11). To follow this instruction, one may need to change habits and, in some cases, even friends. Being accountable to God through daily prayer and Bible study as well as attending worship services every Sabbath are excellent means to fulfilling Christ's command. Hearing God's Word regularly at Sabbath services will also increase your faith (Romans 10:17).

Though it is always hard to leave sinful conduct because of the temporary pleasure associated with it (Hebrews 11:25), doing so is well worth the effort. Remember God's promise in Proverbs 11:18: "He who sows righteousness will have a sure reward."

(Reprinted from *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. For your free copy, visit www.ucg.org/booklets or contact our office nearest you.)

of sex, counselor Pam Stenzel, in her book *Sex Has a Price Tag*, writes:

“Several years ago, researchers did a study on who was having the best sex. Conventional wisdom says that the people who are having the best sex are those who’ve had a lot of experience with a variety of partners, and who feel free from rules and regulations about sexual activity—in other words, the people who have sex whenever they want with whomever they want.

“Guess what? Conventional wisdom is wrong. According to the studies, married Christian women are having the best sex. That’s right. Church women are the most satisfied group of sexually active people. I’m betting their husbands are pretty happy, too” (p. 34).

As much as some people hate to admit it, God really does know what He is talking about when it comes to sex. The laws He gives us regarding our sexual conduct are designed for our good and our happiness!

The sex chapter

Students of the Bible often name specific chapters to reflect their contents. For example, we may refer to 1 Corinthians 13 as the “love chapter” and to Hebrews 11 as the “faith chapter.” Yet how many people today, even Christians, have any idea as to which chapter could be called the “sex chapter”?

Leviticus 18 is one of the best candidates for such a title. In this passage, God gives extensive instruction regarding those with whom we should not have sex and why these prohibitions are so important. Before getting into the long list of illicit sexual relationships, God begins by explaining that obedience to Him means living a different lifestyle than those who reject Him (verses 1-5).

Then, after listing people with whom we should not have sex, God said: “Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled . . . You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled) . . .

“Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am the LORD your God” (verses 24-30).

Sadly, the percentage of professing Christians who still engage in extramarital affairs and end their marriages in divorce is just as high, and sometimes even higher, than among non-Christians. God obviously is not pleased with such conduct because it is counter to His instructions and wreaks havoc on the happiness and stability of marriages. Innocent children are often the unintended victims.

God hates such conduct. Remember, He calls these activities “abominations,” meaning things horrible and detestable—*because they lead to human heartache and suffering*.

If you have committed a sexual sin such as fornication or adultery, keep in mind that God is very willing to forgive us of such sins once we repent and change our conduct (Acts 2:38; 1 John 1:9). The blood of Jesus Christ our Saviour was shed to enable us to have a new start (Hebrews 9:14). When we repent, His blood covers our sins and we have a fresh opportunity to live in ways that please God and bring His blessings.

Delayed gratification

Waiting to experience sex until one is married, and then having a sexual relationship only with one’s spouse, requires self-discipline and personal integrity. Obedience to this code of conduct is not only honorable and pleasing to God, it is a key to happy, long-lasting marriages. The benefits *far* outweigh the restrictions.

Waiting for the right time to “awaken love” is critical in terms of healthy sexual development (Song of Solomon 2:7). As Solomon wrote in the book of Ecclesiastes, “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). There is also “a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing” (verse 5).

An obvious but underreported fact is that a child’s sexuality is greatly shaped and influenced by parental example—as well as by whomever first awakens the child’s sexuality. Oh that we would teach our children God’s ways by living them ourselves!

Regrettably, society today has turned things upside down. It ignores the proven benefits of following God’s instructions and portrays sexual immorality as normal and healthy. Pornography and masturbation warp God’s purpose for sex. The media broadcasts the false message that everyone is doing it, which only adds to the breakdown of families and the misery of adults and children alike.

The good news is that society is going to be changed by Jesus Christ at His return. The time is coming when adults will be sexually responsible and children will be taught God’s values (Jeremiah 31:33-34). The bad news is that things will get worse before they get better.

Sexual behavior in prophecy

Just before Jesus Christ returns to earth at the end of “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4) to usher in the age of the Kingdom of God, Bible prophecy tells us that sexual immorality will be rampant. While Jesus and those who truly follow His example warn men and women to repent of their sins, including sexual ones (Matthew 4:17; Mark 6:12; Acts 2:38; Revelation 3:19), many people at that time will engage indiscriminately in sexually promiscuous lifestyles.

Even after a series of plagues to punish mankind for its sins, many will refuse to abandon their sexual immorality for the far better lifestyle revealed in God’s laws. In spite of severe punishment, Revelation 9:21 explains that people will still refuse to “repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”

In spite of the perilous times and punishments to come, God is calling people today to live in harmony with His laws. God wants to give us everything that is good and healthy for us. He wants us to take pleasure in sex within marriage and reveals to us the keys for most enjoying this wonderful gift.

God really does want you to have the best marriage, family and sex life possible. Why not follow the instructions of our loving Creator? **GN**

Recommended Reading

To understand our Creator’s answers to the questions regarding sexuality, marriage and family, be sure to request our free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. If you have teens or young adults living in your home, you can also request a free subscription to *Vertical Thought: A Magazine of Understanding for Tomorrow’s Leaders*. This quarterly publication dares to be different when it comes to sexual values. It presents God’s way as the positive, smart choice that it truly is. It encourages young people to resist negative influences toward sexual immorality. To learn more, see the ad on page 31.



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Just What Is True Love?

Are physical attraction and true love the same thing? Many people assume they are. You need to understand what true love is and how you can apply it to your marriage.

by Jerold Aust

If it feels good and you're not hurting anybody, do it! This conventional wisdom is based on emotion, not logic. Conventional wisdom is something that human beings commonly accept—often without thinking about it.

What about the common experience that people call “love”? Is love a combination of what looks good to the eye and makes the heart race? Doesn't everyone experience the same euphoric feelings when they fall in love?

If these physical reactions accurately define true love, why are there so many divorces? And why wouldn't “love at first sight” seal a marriage “til death do us part”? The Western world's sky-high divorce rates strongly indicate there must be more to true love than natural, short-lived emotional reactions.

Movies and marriage

Consider the movies. A few years ago, the movie *The Bridges of Madison County* was touted as “the love story of the century.” This remarkably short-sighted advertisement illustrates how many people equate a brief clandestine encounter with true love.

The movie appeared to respond to a public that the entertainment moguls felt were more interested in *falling* in love than *staying* in love. This also faults a gullible society that encourages such movies. Today it's almost rare to see a movie in which a couple doesn't meet, fall in love, jump into bed together and live happily ever after—a scenario that almost never works out well in real life.

Clearly, people contemplating marriage and married couples need help in defining and understanding true love. Do you know what defines true love, the kind of love that establishes and promotes a fulfilling, lifelong marriage?

Test your true love quotient

To help determine your “true love quotient,” take this true-false test from the book *The Truth About Love* by Dr. Pat Love (2001, pp. 18-19). Ready? Here goes:



Is love a combination of what looks good to the eye and makes the heart race? Do you know what defines true love, the kind of love that establishes and promotes a fulfilling, lifelong marriage?

- Happy, stable couples . . .
- *Never argue.*
 - *Are not dependent on each other.*
 - *Both want sex equally.*
 - *Never get angry.*
 - *Get all their needs met.*
 - *Share responsibilities equally.*
 - *Never feel lonely.*
 - *Always agree.*
 - *Think alike.*
 - *Never get bored.*
 - *Always know what the other wants.*
 - *Resolve all of their problems.*

So how do you think you did? The correct answer to all these questions is *false*. Surprised? Let's read on for a more realistic view of true love and marriage than that held by many people.

Basic ingredients of true love

Among the many helpful books about love and marriage, one that seems well grounded and well researched is the one from which this test is taken. In it, Dr.

Love goes beyond the more common informal marital observations and prescriptions, including both physiological and psychological guides to a lasting love.

Here are some basic ingredients of true love: “We know that true love requires basically three elements: chemistry, compatibility and commitment” (p. 20).

Most “lovers” have the chemistry thing down but they seldom remain together long enough to see whether they are compatible and committed. Based on Dr. Love's research, a couple should experience several progressive stages to sustain and perpetuate true love. Let's see what they are and how you can put this insightful knowledge to good use in your marriage.

Common marital misconceptions

Any marriage will inevitably face challenges. Most of them are normal—predictable and common to all marriages, provided you allow for differences between genders, cultures, ethnicities and genetics.

To assume that some marriages are free from challenges is to misunderstand basic human differences, not only because men and women differ dramatically but also because there are varying physiological and psychological factors within each gender.

Many couples assume that once they fall in love they will remain enthralled forever, with no work involved. True marital love is not a once-done, permanent thing. It is a growing, living and unfolding journey throughout one's natural life.

No marriage can be truly happy without attentive sacrifice and service by both the husband and wife. Some people give up on an otherwise potentially good relationship only to discover that the very same weaknesses that contributed to the first breakup show up in later marriages.

The moment one person positively changes his or her part of the relationship, the entire relationship changes. Still, both mates must make positive changes to grow a happy marriage.

Your marriage is not much different from others. All marriages have good and bad times. There is no perfect marriage, but every marriage can be "perfected" a little each day—and it will, if both mates sensitively contribute to the marriage relationship.

**Love's chemistry:
Falling in love or infatuation**

The initial ingredient of love is the chemistry associated with love. This draws a man and woman together but isn't the end-all to a good marriage. "When you look at societies with the least stable marriages and highest divorce rates, they are the ones that use infatuation as the sole or major criterion for marriage" (Love, p. 37).

What is infatuation? *Webster's Dictionary* defines infatuation as lacking sound judgment, foolish, completely carried away by foolish or shallow love or affection, or extrapolating from insufficient information.

Contrary to popular opinion, there is nothing magic about "falling in love." If you can breathe, you can "fall" in love. Infatuation is universal; no one has a corner on it. Relatively recent research has uncovered a wealth of information that demystifies the love potion and helps to educate us to the truth about love.

Dr. Love explains the neurobiological and psychological processes that make up love's chemistry and separates infatuation from sexual gratification: "From the outset it is important to distinguish infatu-

ation from sex drive, which is simply the craving for sexual gratification," she writes. "Humans can feel the urge for sex with someone without having romantic inclinations."

Infatuation is different. Dr. Love's research shows that "you can be attracted to a number of people but infatuated with only one at a time. Infatuation is characterized by focused attention on a specific partner. When you are infatuated with someone, only this person can give you those



True marital love is not a once-done, permanent thing. It is a growing, living and unfolding journey throughout one's natural life.

euphoric 'in love' feelings" (p. 27).

Infatuation is not initially about sex. All people are equipped with a powerful "love potion." Infatuation triggers euphoria, an altered state of consciousness induced by the action of what neurobiologists call PEA, an acronym for the chemical compound phenylethylamine. PEA, known as the "love molecule," works with the hormones dopamine and norepinephrine and triggers powerful side effects.

"Symptoms include a delightfully positive attitude, increased energy, decreased need for sleep, and loss of appetite" (p. 29). People who experience the state of being "in love" can be considered under the influence.

Interestingly, the "love molecule" must be powerful in order to overcome the amygdale, a part of the brain linked with fear and emotions. Our neurobiological system includes the amygdale to caution us against doing something stupid.

"Full-blown infatuation knows no fear," writes Dr. Love. "Researchers propose that in the presence of a sufficiently intense attraction, virtually everyone's neural lattices become marinated in natural amphetamines. The frenzied action of lovers' neurons renders them fearless and unrealistically optimistic.

"It is no wonder that they tend to discount alarming qualities in their sweethearts. You may gently remind a love-struck friend: 'Have you really considered the fact that he/she is a practicing alcoholic, has lost three jobs in a row, and has been divorced only two months?' Your friend sweetly responds: 'We can work it out.' . . . Adversity just intensifies the influence of the love drugs because PEA is activated, as well as enhanced, by danger, fear, and risk" (pp. 29-30).

Sex enters the picture with the admixture of PEA, dopamine and norepinephrine. "This delightful influence of infatuation makes us dangerously inclined to make decisions we may later regret," Dr. Love explains. "It is important, though, to realize that infatuation is merely the earliest stage of love. Do not mistake this temporary power surge for a permanent condition, or confuse it with true love" (p. 31).

Love's *chemistry* starts us on the road to

true love by attracting us to another person. But it is love's *compatibility* that leads us to a more permanent condition.

**Love's compatibility:
Sustaining a relationship**

The chemistry of love is "the force that gets you together with a genetic match and provides sexual excitement and romance," notes Dr. Love. "Compatibility sustains the relationship over the years and sweetens your daily life through cooperative companionship" (p. 110). In stepwise progression, a couple adds a working partnership to a romantic relationship by applying the value of compatibility.

A high-compatibility couple consists of a man and woman who get along well. Kindness and respect are hallmarks of such a couple, as they are always ready to override negative interactions with positive ones.

Their compatibility and friendship dominate their relationship. They often

begin their relationship as friends and progress into loving each other.

The two confide in and consult with each other regularly. They also talk with one another and laugh together often, every day, even when at work. They are good friends, enriching their friendship with love's chemistry—romance.

“Without a doubt compatibility is the lifeblood of true love. Research and common sense alike tell us that being kind, caring, friendly, positive, good-natured, apologetic, and well mannered in your relationship is the best investment in home improvement” (p. 125). A compatible couple's next move, or step up, is commitment.

Love's commitment: Enjoying a permanent relationship

High-commitment couples value their partnership and enjoy the lifestyle that comes with a permanent relationship. They also relate well to their extended families and their community (p. 125). The partners want to be known as a committed couple and like to be seen together. High-commitment couples often have children and view child care as part of their relationship.

As might be expected, when a couple high in chemistry and compatibility but not in commitment has children, the relationship naturally reduces in intensity. Conversely, marital satisfaction goes up with high-commitment couples *because* of the addition of children to the family. High-commitment partners are family-oriented and they are always ready to include other people into their relationship.

Naturally, there are different types of commitment. There is commitment that says, “‘til death do us part.” There is also commitment that commits to the maintenance and betterment of the relationship.

Obviously, marital commitment succeeds based on committing ourselves to our husband or wife. “None of us is perfect enough to merit undying devotion on a daily basis,” Dr. Love explains. “There has to be a commitment to something bigger. Commitment to the marriage takes over where commitment to the person ends. Commitment to the relationship transcends the highs and lows of love” (p. 128).

Dr. Love gives four guidelines that help define our expectations of love:

Be clear. Communication plays a vital part in a good, healthy marital relationship. Communicate clearly, avoiding assumptions and abstractions. If you want your spouse to know precisely what you're thinking, you must be deliberately specific. Try to be clear

when defining your expectations.

Be realistic. When a spouse *expects* his or her counterpart to feel, think and talk as he or she does, that is unrealistic. Opposites attract, but why push a good thing by acting unrealistically? Spouses who are realistic with each other will promote a healthier relationship and marital environment. Unrealistic expectations lead to marital disappointment.

Be flexible. Flexibility is a vital key to a permanent marital relationship. A couple must understand that nothing is more permanent in any marriage than change. However, one who is flexible in marriage will be willing to change how he or she relates to his or her spouse. A flexible husband and wife honor and respect each other's needs.

Be equitable. Marital partners who are equitable are fair about their expectations of each other. Sacrifice and service are important fairness ingredients. Seeking immediate self-gratification is an enemy of long-term marital happiness. Build trust and love in the relationship; be equitable.

The ultimate true love

The Greek language in which the New Testament was written uses several different words to express different types of love. *Eros*, *philia* and *agape* are three of them.

Eros refers to sexual love. (From it derives the English word “erotic.”) This word isn't found in the New Testament.

Philia means brotherly love or genuine affection, as in Philadelphia, connoting “city of brotherly love.” In the New Testament, Jesus displayed brotherly affection for John and Lazarus, for example.

The noblest form of love, however, is *agape*. *Agape* has to do with the mind. It rises above emotion to encompass the principles by which we deliberately live. *Agape* could be defined as caring love, the kind Jesus said we must have for all men—even our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). This kind of *selfless*, *outgoing* love comes as a gift from God.

God is the author of this kind of true love. When the Bible speaks of God's love, this is the word used.

Paul's classic description of *agape* in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 defines what true love is all about: “Love [*agape*] is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all

things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends” (New Revised Standard Version).

God gives His divine true love to human beings who truly want it and who present themselves appropriately before Him to receive it. A person can receive God's gift of true godly love only through His Holy Spirit. “If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit” (1 John 4:12-13).

God gives His Holy Spirit only to those who are willing to obey Him. “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit [which] God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:32). These are the basic expectations of and qualifications for human beings to receive God's gift of divine love.

Putting the pieces together

We began with the “love molecule” or love's chemistry, moved forward to love's compatibility and then to love's commitment in marriage. These are the physiological and psychological contributions to what the world calls “true love.” But there's more. The final and perfect contributor to a happy marriage is *agape*, God's divine love given to humankind through His Spirit to those who believe and obey Him.

Just what is true love and who has it? God is the author of true love, and any marriage that possesses godly love has the greatest opportunity to have a lifelong marriage with each partner luxuriating in outgoing concern for the other person.

You can find more of the divine ingredients of godly love in the apostle Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus (Ephesians 5:22-33). Read and apply these divine instructions and your marriage can be a growing labor of love “‘til death do us part.” **GN**

Recommended Reading

Would you like to learn more about the meaning of true love? How about discovering how to start living that kind of love in building your marriage and family? We've put together the best practical and priceless advice in our new booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. A free copy is waiting for you!



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The Abortion Controversy

What are the facts about abortion? Is it really murder? What does the Bible say?

by Tom Clark

I'll never forget the day she came to my office. She had called earlier in the day, audibly upset, and asked if she could come over and talk with me. As her pastor, I naturally said that would be fine and made time for her. A little while later she walked into my office, looking very distraught with her face red and eyes bloodshot and puffy from crying. At that moment she looked much older than her 16 years. I handed her a box of tissues and sat down to hear her story.

She began telling me of her relationship with a boy at school. She had been sneaking out to be with him without her parents' knowledge, and one thing had led to another until she had very recently discovered that she was pregnant.

She knew she was too young to raise a child and her boyfriend didn't want the financial responsibility, so he had provided the money required for an abortion. Earlier that day she had added one more baby to the more than

1.5 million who were aborted that year in the United States.

With tears running down her cheeks and pleading in her voice, she begged me to tell her she

had not just killed her baby. She kept asking, "What do I do now?"

Although the number of abortions taking place has declined over the past decade in the United States, the numbers are still staggering. Experts estimate that worldwide between 36 and 53 million abortions are carried out every year—with slightly less than half of those being legally performed. If current rates continue, more than 40 percent of American women will have at least one abortion by age 45.

For 61 percent of the world's population, abortions are legal. But are they right? Those who call themselves "pro-choice" consider abortion to be a legitimate form of birth control and a matter that is entirely the personal choice of the mother. But it is important for us to ask what God thinks about abortion. Is abortion morally acceptable behavior, or is it a sin before God?

What God says

Most people are aware of and agree with God's command in Exodus 20:13, "You shall not murder." But does an unborn child have life? The answer to that seems clear from the Bible, scientific sources and the practical experience of countless parents.

The Bible says that the life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:14). Medical science has shown us that within a few days of conception, the tiny embryo attaches itself to the wall of its mother's uterus to begin receiving oxygen and nutrients from the mother's blood supply. Within four to five weeks (before many women even know they are pregnant), an identifiable blood system has

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already developed in the new baby. By six weeks a beating heart is discernable.

Dr. Hymie Gordon, chairman of the Department of Genetics at the Mayo Clinic, in testimony before Senate Judiciary Subcommittee hearings said, "By all the criteria of modern molecular biology, life is present from the moment of conception" (www.prolife.com/FETALDEV.html).

Practical experience also demonstrates that a baby has the ability to sense and react long before he is born. His mother will often notice him responding to sound or sudden movement in the months before birth. After he is born he will generally respond to voices or sounds he heard while he was in the womb. For example, when a newborn lies on his mother's chest he will calm down as he hears the familiar sound of her heartbeat and the soothing sound of her voice.



One mother reflected that when she was pregnant with her second child, she sat with her first child, a daughter, as the daughter practiced her violin lessons. After the birth of her second child, a son, the mother noticed that when violin practice began each afternoon, no matter how painful it may have been for an adult to listen to, the infant would immediately calm down and listen quietly.

Why? It seems the sound was familiar to him since he'd listened to it for months before his birth!

It is clear that our unborn children have life! They take in oxygen and nutrients through the miraculous means designed by God. Their hearts are beating. They hear and respond to the outside world and remember certain sounds after they are born.

From the moment of conception, a life has begun—an awe-inspiring process by which God allows a mother and father to participate in the process of creation! To do anything to purposely destroy such a precious life is to violate the Sixth Commandment and commit murder. Simply put, abortion is a sin.

In light of life beginning at conception, and since the Bible describes babies in the womb as essentially live persons (see Jeremiah 1:5; Job 31:15; Luke 1:41, 44), we look forward to the innocent victims of abortion living again in a future resurrection. Yet this does not minimize the grievous wrong of taking their lives today—or of the fact that so much of the world has declared this horrible act to be legal.

After an abortion

With this understanding, let's go back to the young lady I mentioned at the beginning. What was she to do, now that the deed was already done? What should you do if you have already had an abortion? Once again, we turn to the sure Word of God for the answer.

The great and eternal God is a God of compassion, mercy and forgiveness. He has promised to forgive all our sins—whatever those sins may be—if we will only come to Him with a humble heart and repent (Acts 3:19). To repent means not only to ask for forgiveness, but also to make the lifestyle changes needed so we do not repeat the sin.

In the case of my young counselee, she needed to make several changes from that point forward. Premarital sex was the cause of the pregnancy, and the Bible clearly labels any sex outside of marriage a sin.

But as with nearly all cases of teen pregnancies, this young lady's problems started well before she became sexually active.

She needed to reconsider the relationship she had with her boyfriend. She needed to ask if it was a healthy relationship for her (or anyone) to be in. How was that relationship affecting other aspects of her life? How was she handling responsibilities like school, family and perhaps a job? Was she showing her parents the respect and honor she should have been?

As we considered these questions, she could see where she needed to make changes in her life to avoid repeating the same mistake.

If you find yourself in a similar situation, you may need to follow this same line of reasoning to determine what areas of your life need to be changed, with God's help, so you may truly repent of this sin. As God said to King Solomon, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Dealing with guilt

Repentance and making positive changes in our lives are what God requires after we realize we've sinned. Following an abortion, an additional step may be needed.

The weight of this sin may result in extreme guilt, grief, anxiety and depression that are nearly impossible for some teens and women to overcome alone. Rather than allow these emotions to become destructive, it would be wise to seek the services of a competent grief counselor. A physician, school counselor or minister may be able to point you in the right direction for a counselor in your area.

And finally, as with every sin we commit and repent of, we then need to go forward in faith, knowing that God will provide what is best for us from this point on. No one can undo the past nor make the physical consequences of sin go away. But with God's guidance and help, we can work through those consequences and strive to make wiser decisions for the rest of our lives—even after an abortion.

May it be from this day onward that you never experience the crushing grief this sin brings. Think about things from above and view life from a godly perspective—because there is a better way! **GN**

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World News and Trends

An Overview of Conditions Around the World

by John Ross Schroeder and Jerold Aust

Avian flu: Potentially a major global threat

The 1918-19 influenza pandemic killed an estimated 50 to 100 million people around the world. Another potential threat from a particular bird flu has emerged this winter. The United Nation's coordinator for avian flu and human influenza, Dr. David Nabarro, warns that if the flu strain mutates into one that can spread directly from person to person, "the range of deaths could be anything from 5 to 150 million" (*The Times* online).

The *Foreign Affairs* quarterly journal relates: "Today, with a world population of 6.5 billion people, more than three times that of 1918, even a 'mild' pandemic could kill many millions of people." Further, "Dr. Julie Gerbreeding, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, called the possibility of avian flu spreading from Southeast Asia (its likely place of origin), a very ominous situation for the globe" (*International Herald Tribune*).

In Britain the nation's new chief medical officer, Sir Liam Donaldson, recently called together 30 public health leaders to discuss this potential problem. He said, "The disease could kill between 50,000 and 750,000 people and should not be treated as a joke" (BBC News online).

Finally, Dr. Michael Osterholm, director for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, warned that "an influenza pandemic of even moderate impact will result in the biggest single human disaster ever—far greater than AIDS, 9/11, all wars in the 20th century and the recent tsunami combined. It has the potential to redirect world history as the Black Death redirected European history in the 14th century" (www.SurviveTheFlu.com).

Other observers believe that the scientific community is seriously overreacting and that the fatalities would in fact be much smaller than officials

now believe even if such a flu strain emerges.

Nonetheless, since very early last year millions of birds in Southeast Asia have died. This particular flu mutates and jumps from species to species of birds. It has also been found in certain mammals and an increasing number of people. Although it apparently has not yet fully mutated into a form that is easily transmissible to or between human beings, that possibility is very real and very worrisome.

Various countermeasures such as the slaughtering of millions of birds in affected countries plus measures like bans on the imports of all captive birds in Western nations have been taken around



"An influenza pandemic of even moderate impact will result in the biggest single human disaster ever . . ."

the world. Also, when dealing with any rapidly mutating virus, some of the drugs created to fight such an outbreak may not be all that effective. One Vietnamese doctor who has already treated 41 victims of avian influenza said that drugs being stocked to counter the epidemic are useless against the virus (*The Sunday Times*).

Infectious disease remains very high on the list of large-scale threats to human life. Some 25 million human beings have already died from AIDS, ago" (*International Herald Tribune*).

We should not underestimate Poland. Before World War II it had the largest GDP in Eastern Europe. Hitler's invasion of the Polish Republic caused Britain and France to declare war on Germany. Poland, with a population of 40 million people, is the largest and most influential of the 10 states that were inducted into the EU in 2004.

For one thing, Poland's "fast-growth, low-wage and low-tax system is perceived as a threat to the stodgier, high-employment economies of Germany and France." The new Polish government formed by the right-wing Law and Justice Party came from behind to thwart an expected victory by the liberals.

Maciej Giertych, one of 10 European Parliament members from the Law and Justice Party, stated: "We accept the teachings of the Catholic Church on all moral issues. If you want to know our opinions,

and another estimated 39 million are infected with HIV. Malaria and tuberculosis are also major causes of death.

Disease pandemics will form a major part of fulfilled biblical prophecy at the time of the end. Jesus Christ Himself foretold that pestilences (disease epidemics) would occur along with major wars, famines and earthquakes in various places (Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:11). The Old Testament also warns us about such epidemics being among the consequences of our lawless way of life (see Leviticus 26:25; Deuteronomy 28:21).

Among the four horsemen of the book of Revelation is the pale horse, symbolic of devastating disease epidemics to ravage the earth in the end time. The Bible makes it clear that we have not yet seen the full impact of these deadly modern plagues—far from it! (Sources: *The Times* [London], BBC News online, www.SurviveTheFlu.com, *International Herald Tribune*.)

What's really behind the French riots?

The international press in general wholly blamed the French riots in October and November almost exclusively on poverty, unemployment, racism and discrimination. But was this a realistic and accurate assessment?

Daily Mail feature writer Melanie Phillips takes issue with this evaluation and calls it a state of denial. She writes: "Denying the Islamic element of these riots is to deny the obvious: The vast majority of the rioters are Muslim. They have sent parts of France up in flames . . . [and declare] that they intend to turn France into 'Beirut' and issue pledges of support for Osama Bin Laden" (*The Jewish Chronicle*).

This astute journalist advises, "Britain should be watching these events across the Channel with undiluted alarm." One reason is that troubles like these could spread to other parts of Europe, including the United Kingdom. Some EU countries with growing Muslim populations could be on the verge of a demographic and social meltdown. (Source: *The Jewish Chronicle* [London].)

read the opinions of the Catholic Church." In terms of mainstream religion, where might developments like these lead? To understand more, request or download our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. (Source: *International Herald Tribune*.)

Polish Catholics press their values on the EU

Most of the countries of the European Union are notorious for their secular way of life. Not even the late Pope John Paul II could persuade the EU to mention God in the European constitution. But since the inclusion of Poland and other Eastern European states into the EU, conditions may be changing somewhat.

Said Briton Michael Cashman, liberal European parliamentarian, "New groups have come in from Poland, the Czech Republic [and] Latvia and Catholicism is certainly becoming a very angry voice against what it sees as a very liberal EU." He complained: "We are fighting battles [on gay and women's rights] that we thought we had won years



Some good news about America

In the words of *USA Today* contributor Alcetis Oberg: "In the wave of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the country did not wait for a government to act. Our response to others in need was not just about donating money and goods, but also about the giving of ourselves."

In Houston, Texas, within days after Katrina struck and evacuees were headed there, church and civic people set up hundreds of public shelters, health and child care centers, housing and transport assistance, security protection and temporary

schooling. More than 50,000 volunteers helped wherever there was a need.

Others from various parts of the nation used their vacation time to travel to the stricken Gulf states, employing their talents and resources to help out. Some provided free meals, laundry, wireless Internet services and even entertainment. On the downside, "carpetbaggers" also traveled to the disaster area for free food and shelter and even stole truckloads of donated supplies.

Throughout the country, millions more donated to charities set up to help hurricane victims. Overall, ordinary Americans acquitted themselves well during this national crisis. This is something for which we should all give thanks to God. (Source: *USA Today*.)

What if America leaves Iraq?

American troops will one day leave Iraq. When and how this will happen are difficult questions to answer. The variables governing American withdrawal from Iraqi soil are complex, for both Iraqis and American forces.

If America withdraws abruptly, terrorists would claim immediate victory (as Hamas terrorists have done in the wake of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza), showing that terrorist tactics work and no doubt encouraging their spread.

This would undoubtedly also encourage other governments to view America as a frightened superpower—prompting friends to lose respect and question American commitments and motivating enemies to further test U.S. muscle. If America has no prepared strategy for its departure, the Middle East could easily become even more of a seething cauldron than it already is.

Much good has been accomplished: The removal of Saddam Hussein and of the potential for weapons of mass destruction, as well as giving the Iraqis a chance to create a nontotalitarian government, is commendable, although the loss of any human life is terrible.

Does prophecy deal with the Middle East question? The Bible reveals that "at the time of the end" a great Muslim confederation will arise in the Middle East, led by an individual referred to as "the king of the South" (Daniel 11:40). When that happens, Armageddon will follow shortly, moving God to send the Messiah to save humankind from itself. If you'd like to learn more, request or download our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.

Israel to strike Iran in coming months?

According to a recent feature article in *The Sunday Times*, "Israel's armed forces have been ordered by Ariel Sharon, the prime minister, to be ready by the end of March for possible strikes on secret uranium enrichment sites in Iran, military sources have revealed" (Dec. 11).

Two days earlier Eric Silver reported for *The Jewish Chronicle* that "Prime Minister Ariel Sharon this

Israel believes that by the end of March the crisis will have reached the point of no return.

week warned that Israel could not tolerate Iran having nuclear arms." Israel still hopes that the United Nations, the United States, the European Union or Russia will be able to persuade Tehran to rethink its determination to become a nuclear power.

But based on habitual Iranian stubbornness in resisting diplomatic pressure, the Israeli government has serious doubts that diplomacy without a real willingness to act militarily will do any good. Israeli chief of staff Dan Halutz said, "I believe that the political means that are used by the Europeans and the US to convince the Iranians to stop the project [persisting with the full uranium fuel cycle which could result in nuclear weapons] will not succeed."

The crisis could really surface in March when the International Atomic Energy Agency is scheduled to report on activities in Iran. If the diplomatic arm has not worked by that time, Israel believes that by the end of that month the crisis will have reached the point of no return.

Pressure to act against Iran also comes from former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu,

27 pornography channels in Britain

According to *Daily Mail* media editor Matt Born, "Britain has become the television porn capital of Europe—with five times more adult-only channels than anywhere else . . . UK viewers [by encryption] can now tune into 27 dedicated porn channels compared to just five in Germany—our nearest rival."

Of course, these channels can only be shown between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5:30 a.m. on encrypted channels that require a subscription and personal identification number for viewing. There are now 84 pornographic channels in Europe in comparison to three only a decade ago.

British commentator Bel Mooney lamented: "I'm tired of repellent, exploitative images being defended by privileged people who should know better—and who would sooner swallow razor blades than see their own daughters sell themselves for the gratification of strangers . . . Now ask yourselves: 'What effect does it have on young boys to see women routinely treated like animals? What are the consequences of young women being brainwashed into thinking of themselves as mere sex objects?'" (*Daily Mail*).

We should not forget that more than half of Britain's young people have viewed Internet pornography. It is sad to know that not only in Britain, but on a worldwide basis, human lovemaking is being reduced to a crude, joyless and demeaning display—pandering to the depths of the downside of human nature. What are we doing to the next generation? (Source: *Daily Mail* [London].)

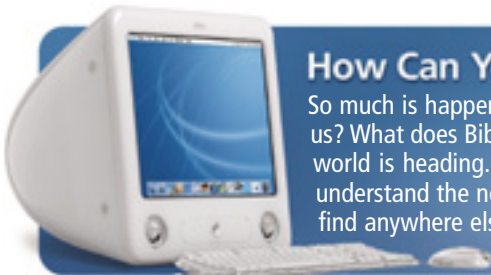
likely leader of the Likud Party in the next election. He has publicly stated that he supports Israel taking the type of military action used by the late Menachem Begin in knocking out Iraq's nuclear reactor in 1981 just before it became operational. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid-Reza Assefi promised a "devastating" response by Iran to any Israeli attack.

Also, news has recently surfaced that "Iran's foreign minister met leading figures from three Islamic militant groups to co-ordinate a united front against Israel days before a recent escalation of [military] attacks against Israeli targets shattered fragile ceasefires with Lebanon and the Palestinians" (*The Sunday Times*, Dec. 11).

If you would like to understand where Mideast tensions will finally lead us, request or download our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *The Sunday Times*, *The Jewish Chronicle* [London].)

How Can You Make Sense of the News?

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly. Where are today's dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? You're probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. So are we. That's why we've created the *World News & Prophecy* Web site—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. This eye-opening site offers you a perspective you won't find anywhere else—the perspective of God's Word, the Bible. Visit us at www.wnponline.org today!



Has World War III **Already Begun?**

What's behind the call by Iran's new president for the United States and Israel to be wiped off the face of the earth? Are Western nations blind to the growing threat from radical Islam?

by Melvin Rhodes

On Oct. 26, in advance of Jerusalem Day—instituted by Iran's religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979 to express the Muslim world's ambition to "liberate" Jerusalem—Iran's new president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called for the complete annihilation of the nation of Israel.

"Very soon, this stain of disgrace [referring to Israel] will be purged from the center of the Islamic world," he said, according to a text of the speech published by the official Iranian news agency IRNA, adding, "and this is attainable."

Not only did President Ahmadinejad promise the annihilation of Israel, he also assured his followers that the world would also soon be rid of the United States and Britain.

In December, as quoted by IRNA, he followed up these comments by calling the holocaust a myth and suggesting that the "tumor" that is the state of Israel should be relocated to Europe or North America.

Threat to the West

A little over 25 years ago America was first confronted with militant Islam when the pro-Western shah of Iran was overthrown and U.S. embassy personnel there were taken hostage for 444 days by followers of the late Ayatollah Khomeini. The theocratic Islamic Republic of Iran was established in 1979 and has been a thorn in the side of the United States ever since.

It has also helped spread radical Islam and aided militant terrorist groups in repeatedly attacking Israel. Present at the "World Without Zionism" (meaning "without Israel") conference at which President Ahmadinejad made these comments were representatives of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Society for the Defense of the Palestinian Nation, three terrorist organizations. Also present were members of the Islamic Students Union and hundreds of other students.

What makes this verbal attack particularly frightening is that Iran is, in



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad speaks during a conference in Tehran titled "The World Without Zionism," during which he openly called for Israel to be "wiped off the map."

the estimation of many national intelligence agencies, working on developing nuclear weapons in flagrant defiance of international law.

The director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohammed ElBaradei, stated Dec. 5 that he thinks Israel's assessment of Iran's nuclear program is correct and that Iran is only a few months away from creating a nuclear weapon.

When it has nuclear arms, Iran could easily use them against Israel, only 500 miles away at its closest point. (Iran could also target American bases and oil supplies throughout the Middle East.) No wonder that former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for immediate action to be taken against Iran before the possibility of a nuclear attack on his country.

Islam vs. "the World of Arrogance"

While members of the European Union

and the United States immediately condemned Iran's call to wipe Israel off the map, little attention has been given to some of the other statements made by the Iranian president in his speech.

Going right back to the beginnings of the nation of Israel, established by a vote of the United Nations in May 1948, the Iranian president declared that "the establishment of the regime that is occupying Jerusalem was a very grave move by the hegemonic and arrogant system [meaning the West] against the Islamic world. We are in the process of an historical war between the World of Arrogance [the West] and the Islamic world, and this war has been going on for hundreds of years."

This statement alone shows how dangerous the thinking is among many in the Middle East. President Ahmadinejad is not speaking only for himself. He certainly had the support of those present at the conference and has the wider support of many among the Iranian people.

Additionally, he is speaking for Islamic militants around the world whose main priority is to destroy Israel and end the Western presence in the Middle East, ridding the region of non-Muslims, or "infidels."

Short memories and long memories

Most people in Western countries like the United States and Britain have very short memories. Many people sincerely believe that the threat from Islamic terrorism is due to the actions of the Bush administration, when the immediate problem goes back decades and the roots of these difficulties go back thousands of years.

While the West may have a short memory, this is not the case in the Middle East, where some Muslims trace their own family history back to the time of the prophet Muhammad in the seventh century. Memories of the European Crusades against the Islamic world almost 1,000 years ago are often invoked to justify fears of the modern state of Israel today.

Notice how far the Iranian president went back in this section of his speech: "In this historical war, the situation at the fronts has changed many times. During some periods, the Muslims were the victors and were very active, and looked forward, and the World of Arrogance was in retreat. Unfortunately, in the past 300 years, the Islamic world has been in retreat vis-à-vis the World of Arrogance . . .

"During the period of the last 100 years, the walls of the world of Islam were destroyed and the World of Arrogance turned the regime occupying Jerusalem into a bridge for its dominance over the Islamic world . . . This occupying country [Israel] is in fact a front of the World of Arrogance in the heart of the Islamic world. They have in fact built a bastion [Israel] from which they can expand their rule to the entire Islamic world."

When Mr. Ahmadinejad refers to "the situation at the fronts" changing many times, he is referring to the 1,400-year history of the recurring conflict between Islam and Christendom.

This is a perspective on history that is not shared by people in the West who in the last 40 years have increasingly embraced idyllic multiculturalism. The basic theory behind this ideal is that all peoples are basically the same and that all people, no matter what their religion or culture, can live peaceably side by side.

History does not support this idea, particularly where Islam and Christianity are concerned. These two civilizations have clashed repeatedly, starting in the years immediately after the death of the founder of Islam, Muhammad, in 632. As the new religion spread across the Middle East and North Africa, it came into conflict with both the Sassanid Persian Empire and the Christian empire of Byzantium, the eastern division of the Roman Empire.

These were the two superpowers of their day. Both suffered defeat at the hands of Muhammad's forces within a few years of his death. Eventually, both fell as the Islamic empire expanded.

One down, one to go

Just as Muhammad's forces brought down the two superpowers of his day, so many of his believers are determined to do the same today. Islamic fighters, including Osama bin Laden and his followers,

defeated the forces of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, a serious setback that was a major cause of the collapse of the U.S.S.R. in 1991.

One superpower is gone, one is left. The United States is next, believe the Islamic militants who are gradually increasing their efforts to rid the world of "the Great Satan," a term first used by the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini.

Reminding his followers of past successes, the Iranian president emboldened them toward further victories against Israel and the West. "When the dear Imam [Khomeini] began his movement, all the powers supported the Shah's corrupt regime . . . and said [the fall of the Shah of Iran] was not possible. However, our nation stood firm, and by now we have, for 27 years, been living without a government dependent on America.

"Imam Khomeini said: 'The rule of the East [the Soviet Union] and of the West [the United States] should be ended.'" He then reminded his listeners that the Soviet Union has gone and so has Saddam Hussein, with whom Iran fought an eight-year war. Next, he promised, "This regime that is occupying Jerusalem must be eliminated from the pages of history."

Conflict over the Holy Land

The Jewish nation of Israel occupies land that was ruled by Muslims for centuries. This is unacceptable to many Muslims, especially those who once lived in what is now the state of Israel or are descendants of those who did.

But Israel also reminds Muslims of the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem that occupied roughly the same area for most of the 12th century. This occurred during the two centuries of the Christian Crusades against the Islamic world.

The short-lived Kingdom of Jerusalem, defeated by the forces of Saladin, encourages Muslims today who want to ensure that Israel's presence is only temporary. Like that ancient kingdom, Israel is also seen as a temporary Western presence in the Islamic world. America is held responsible for supporting Israel and enabling it to exist, while Britain is blamed for helping give birth to the nation, which was formerly a mandated territory under British rule.

The Crusades were a part of the

repeated clash of civilizations between these two religions going back 1,400 years. After spreading across North Africa, Islamic forces invaded Spain, which they then ruled for hundreds of years. In 732, exactly 100 years after the death of Muhammad, his followers were at the gates of Paris, where they were defeated by the forces of Charlemagne's grandfather Charles Martel in the Battle of Tours.

Just over three centuries later, Pope Urban II called on Europeans to launch a "Crusade" to recover Christian holy places in the Middle East. Eventually the crusaders were driven out. The Turkish Ottoman Empire then conquered most of southeastern Europe and twice tried to take the city of Vienna, in the heart of Europe.

As the Iranian president pointed out, Muslims have not done so well during the last 300 years as the Ottoman Empire was slowly pushed back out of Europe and Western nations colonized parts of the Islamic world. This has led to grievances and frustrations, exacerbated by economic problems in societies that suffer from poverty and other social ills.

A new period of conflict

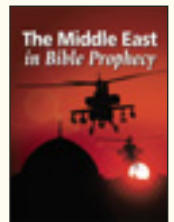
Waves of conflict followed by periods of peace have been the norm between these two religions. Europe today can hardly be called Christian, but its secular values are, if anything, even more offensive to the Islamic world, and a major clash seems inevitable.

Indeed, it is already taking place. Britain and Spain have experienced devastating terrorist bombings by Islamic radicals within the last two years. In October

Continued on page 24

Recommended Reading

Where is this long-term conflict between Islam and the West leading? What will be its end? How will it impact you and your family? To understand more about these end-time powers and the coming clash of civilizations prophesied in your Bible, request or download your free copy of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. You need this crucial information!



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The Intelligent Design Revolution

A new movement is starting to shake a scientific establishment built on the assumptions of Darwinian evolution. What is intelligent design, and why is it gaining so much ground?

by Mario Seiglie

We are living in momentous times, whether we know it or not. A scientific revolution is beginning to take place before our very eyes. Exciting information is coming out almost daily about “intelligent design,” a concept challenging the reigning worldview of Darwinian evolution in classrooms and the media, not to mention in the biology labs.

“We are in the very initial stages of a scientific revolution,” said Dr. Stephen Meyer, director of the Discovery Institute, a think tank supporting intelligent design. “We want to have an effect on the dominant view of culture” (“Polititized Scholars Put Evolution on the Defensive,” *The New York Times*, Aug. 21, 2005).

The strength of this scientific revolution can be seen by the recent comment from U.S. President George W. Bush that intelligent design should be taught in public schools alongside evolution.

“I think that part of education is to expose people to different schools of thought,” he said. Asked whether he believed that both sides in the debate between evolution and intelligent design should be taught, Mr. Bush replied that he did, “so people can understand what the debate is about” (“Bush Remarks Roil Debate Over Teaching of Evolution,” *New York Times*, Aug. 3, 2005).

A few days later, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, who is also a physician, made the same point. He said teaching both intelligent design and evolution in schools “doesn’t force any particular theory on anyone” and that “in a pluralistic society that is the fairest way to go about education and training people for the future” (“Show Me the Evidence,” *New York Times*, Aug. 28, 2005.).

Responding to President Bush’s remarks, Dr. Meyer went on to say: “We interpret this as the president using his bully pulpit to support freedom of inquiry and free speech about the issue of biblical origins. It’s extremely timely and welcome because so many scientists are experiencing recriminations for breaking with Darwinist orthodoxy” (“Bush Remarks Roil Debate Over Teaching of Evolution”).

How did this revolution begin? The story is fascinating.

Origin of the movement

As with most scientific revolutions, this one didn’t take place with someone casually doing some abstract thinking.

of evolution from his observations during an around-the-world trip on the ship *The Beagle* and from his fondness of breeding different varieties of pigeons.

The recent intelligent design revolution also started because of practical observations rather than abstract musings. In certain



“Evidence for an intelligent designer becomes more compelling the more we understand about our carefully crafted habitat.”

Galileo started a scientific revolution when he used the recently invented telescope and saw moons orbiting around the planet Jupiter. This went against the reigning scientific worldview of that day, which taught that everything in the starry skies revolved around the earth. The discovery led to his backing the sun-centered theory, which sparked a scientific revolution in astronomy and general culture.

Isaac Newton also began to question the typical explanation of the movement of the heavens when he noticed an apple falling from a tree in his garden. (The legend that an apple fell on his head does not have much credible evidence to back it up, but that an apple fell in front of him certainly does.)

Albert Einstein developed some of his theories because of his fascination with magnets and swirling tea leaves in a cup.

Charles Darwin also developed his theory

biology labs, scientists couldn’t explain by evolutionary theory what they were seeing inside the cell.

“Modern design arguments,” writes Canadian science writer and journalist Denyse O’Leary, “stem from 20th century science findings about the complexity of life that Darwin and his followers did not expect. The modern case for design is based on information theory [which] provides a tool for distinguishing between mere order, which can occur without design, and complex order, which probably cannot” (*By Design or By Chance?* 2004, p. 172).

Of course, just as with previous scientific revolutions, this one started when a courageous group of scientists questioned the dominant theory in a field of science and offered the evidence to unseat it. They faced strong opposition from the reigning authorities, who felt their prominent position,

reputations and power were being threatened.

Revolutionary pioneers

In the 1980s, several scientists began meeting together to try to explain the incredible complexity they were witnessing inside the cell—and especially the vast amount of information in the form of a language imbedded in the DNA molecule. They began to challenge the theory of evolution within their own field of biology rather than from a religious point of view.

One of those scientists, biochemist Charles Thaxton, coined the term “intelligent design” to explain the need for intelligence behind the elaborate information found inside DNA. “Just when it seemed that natural causes might suffice to account for all natural phenomenon,” he notes, “there were breakthrough discoveries in both mathematics and biology” (“A New Design Argument,” *Cosmic Pursuit*, March 1, 1998).

The intelligent design movement gained momentum when New Zealand molecular biologist Michael Denton, a medical doctor and agnostic, carefully examined the main arguments for Darwinian evolution and found them very deficient.

He wrote in his book *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* that the problems with the theory of evolution “are too severe and intractable to offer any hope of resolution in terms of the orthodox Darwinian framework” and that the accepted traditional view “is no longer tenable” (1985, p. 16).

He then concluded at the end of the book, “Ultimately the Darwinian theory of evolution is no more nor less than the great cosmogenic myth of the twentieth century” (p. 358).

In England, a University of California at Berkeley law professor on sabbatical, Philip Johnson, read *The Blind Watchmaker*, by prominent British zoologist and atheist Richard Dawkins, who advocated evolution as the real designer behind all living things.

Professor Johnson’s legal mind quickly noticed the flimsy and emotional arguments in the book, bereft of solid evidence. He wondered why a noted scientist would resort to such trickery if the theory was on such solid ground. Here was a challenge, he thought.

Professor Johnson began a thorough investigation of the evolutionary literature and was astounded with what he found. As a famous fable says, truly the emperor wasn’t wearing any clothes! He began publishing his findings about Darwinian evolution in popular books such as *Darwin on Trial* (1991) and *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (1997).

Meanwhile, at a biology lab in a Pennsylvania university, biochemist Michael Behe

was also puzzled by the astounding complexity he found inside the cell. On reading Dr. Denton’s book, he was angered about the suppression of such evidence by the scientific community. He wrote a bestseller, *Darwin’s Black Box* (1996), exposing major scientific weaknesses in the theory of evolution.

Another biologist, Jonathan Wells, also was incensed with the faulty information being perpetuated by Darwinian evolutionists in schools and universities. He wrote the book *Icons of Evolution* (2000), which exposed how some of the major “scientific” examples used to teach Darwinian evolution are in fact fraudulent or misrepresented.

Since then the intelligent design movement has gained notable influence on the public. A 2005 poll showed that a majority of Americans believe in it, and another poll of medical doctors found that 65 percent think intelligent design should be allowed or required to be taught in schools along with evolution. Now a growing number of U.S. school boards are beginning to insist that intelligent design be taught alongside evolution.

“This year,” says *The New York Times*, “the National Center for Science Education has tracked 70 new controversies over evolution in 26 states, some in school districts, others in the state legislatures” (“Teaching of Creationism Is Endorsed in New Survey,” Aug. 31).

What is the basis for the intelligent design revolution? There are four main aspects to it: information theory, irreducible complexity, the anthropic principle and the design inference. Let’s briefly consider each of these.

1. Information theory

In the 1960s, some scientists began to look at information as something different from matter and energy. For example, a book contains information, but the ink and paper of the book are *not the information itself* and can only transmit it. Thus, the means of transmission is entirely different from the message itself.

As George Williams, himself an evolutionary biologist, states: “Information doesn’t have mass or charge or length in millimeters. Likewise, matter doesn’t have bytes. You can’t measure so much gold in so many bytes . . . This dearth of shared descriptors makes matter and information two separate domains of existence, which have to be discussed separately, in their own terms” (John Brockman, *The Third Culture: Beyond the Scientific Revolution*, 1995, p. 43).

Interestingly, matter, energy and information all unite in living things. Without information, an organism cannot live. In fact,

at death, all the biochemical ingredients are still there, but the information is no longer being effectively relayed to the trillions of cells in the body—so the complex biological machinery shuts down.

One of the main points of the intelligent design revolution is that evolution has not been able to explain either the origin of life or the information in our cells, since neither life nor information has been shown to spontaneously arise from matter or energy.

“Science doesn’t have the slightest idea how life began,” says Gregg Easterbrook, senior editor of *The New Republic*. “No generally accepted theory exists, and the steps leading from a barren primordial world to the fragile chemistry of life seem imponderable” (quoted by Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*, 2004, p. 41).

“It was once expected,” adds Dr. Behe, “that the basis of life would be exceedingly simple. That expectation has been smashed. Vision, motion, and other biological functions have proven to be no less sophisticated than television cameras and automobiles.

“Science has made enormous progress in understanding how the chemistry of life works, but the elegance and complexity of biological systems at the molecular level have paralyzed science’s attempt to explain their origins” (*Darwin’s Black Box*, 1996, p. x).

So not only the problem of the origin of life but also the dilemma of the information inside the DNA molecule defies Darwinian explanation and argues powerfully for intelligent design.

Recently, one of the world’s most renowned atheists, Sir Antony Flew, renounced his atheism because of the compelling evidence of the DNA molecule.

“It now seems to me,” he remarked, “that the findings of more than fifty years of DNA research have provided materials for a new and enormously powerful argument to design . . . Biologists’ investigation of DNA has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), that intelligence must have been involved.”

In the end, explained Professor Flew, he “had to go where the evidence leads” (“Famous Atheist Now Believes in God,” Dec. 9, 2004, Associated Press report).

2. Irreducible complexity

In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin acknowledged that “if it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.”

Intelligent design theorists have demonstrated that living things are full of such examples at the molecular level.

Dr. Behe coined the term “irreducible complexity” to explain that complex systems will work only if all the components operate at once. He explains that you could not get an intricate, interrelated system from successive and slight modifications, as Darwin proposed.

For instance, blood clotting needs 20 different proteins to work together in sequence for the process to occur. If only one of the proteins is missing, the result is hemophilia, where blood does not clot as it should.

Eukaryotic cells, which digest nutrients or excrete waste, contain an elaborate traffic system that directs proteins to the right places—another irreducibly complex system.

The bacterial flagellum has some 40 working parts, all carefully coordinated and interacting together. But by removing any of its key components, the whole mechanism grinds to a halt. So how did all 40 parts evolve into a complex interrelated system when none of the parts on their own, whether fully or partially developed, offered any evolutionary advantage?

This is one example of molecular “machines” inside living beings that could not have appeared in a step-by-step evolutionary process. They are, in fact, obvious evidence of intelligent design.

3. The anthropic principle

Since Darwin, it has been common for scientists to believe that the earth is a planet with no special characteristics and that conditions in the universe simply allowed life to evolve from natural processes.

As atheist Sir Julian Huxley said during the Darwin Centennial in 1959: “The earth was not created, it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion” (quoted by Denyse O’Leary, p. 133).

“Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe,” added Carl Sagan, the late astronomer, “are challenged by this point of pale light [upon our world]. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark” (*Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space*, 1994, p. 7).

Yet now the scientific evidence has revealed that we occupy a very privileged position in the universe. To explain this cosmic fine-tuning, scientists coined the term “anthropic principle,” which describes a uni-

verse *designed* for life—and, in particular, *human* life.

This principle states that all the constants in physics are *precisely* the values required if you want to have a universe capable of supporting life.

Astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle, an agnostic, reluctantly admitted that the universe appears to be delicately tuned for life: “A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintelligence has monkeyed with the physics, as well as the chemistry and biology [of the universe] . . . The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question” (quoted by Denyse O’Leary, p. 41).

As it turns out, our planet is a very special place in the universe. “We’ve found,” says astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez, “that our location in the universe, in our galaxy, in our solar system, as well as such things as the size and rotation of the Earth, the mass of the moon and sun and so forth—a whole range of factors—conspire together in an amazing way to make Earth a habitable planet” (quoted by Lee Strobel, p. 164).

This is also a powerful argument for intelligent design. “It is quite easy to understand,” says Walter Bradley, author of the landmark book *The Mystery of Life’s Origin*, “why so many scientists have changed their minds in the past thirty years, agreeing that the universe cannot reasonably be explained as a cosmic accident. Evidence for an intelligent designer becomes more compelling the more we understand about our carefully crafted habitat” (quoted by Lee Strobel, p. 127).

4. The design inference

Another tool intelligent design advocates are using is a precise, scientific method to determine what is intelligently designed from what is not.

Dr. Behe explains this concept: “The basic

idea is that by looking at features from natural systems, you can discern an intelligent agent was involved in setting up the system. A good example in the U.S. is a mountain called Mt. Rushmore.

“On the face of this mountain have been carved the faces of four American presidents. If you were from another country and never heard of Mt. Rushmore, and were driving down the road when suddenly you see these faces on the mountain, you would know they were not formed by erosion, wind or any other unintelligent sources. You would know a mind was involved, some culture was out there and made that.

“The same idea applies in any area of nature. Suppose you’re an astronomer and you’re studying the radio waves that fill the universe. Most of them are static, but you have your antennae focused, and all of a sudden you hear radio waves that are conveying a message—something like ‘We would like pizza, too’ or ‘Greetings from Alpha Centauri’—then it would be dumb to ascribe those to random physical forces. You would ascribe them to intelligent space aliens.

“Now if you are a biologist and you think the cell is a glob of protoplasm but you go on to investigate it and you find out that instead of being simple, it is filled with these elegant machines—machines of greater sophistication than we are capable of making—that is telling us something.

“The intelligent design hypothesis says we can infer that a mind was at work *there*, too—that matter and energy and natural processes are not sufficient to explain how the cell came to be arranged that way” (interview in *The Good News*, May-June 2005, p. 8).

Where does it go from here?

Linus Pauling, twice a Nobel Prize winner, once wrote, “Science is the search for truth, the effort to understand the world” (*No More War*, 1958, p. 209).

The pursuit of truth, however, has a price. It is not always going to be received with open arms. Deeply entrenched beliefs, whether in science or religion, are hard to give up.

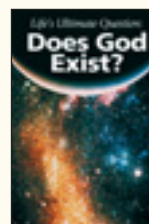
What the Bible says about truth in another context also applies here. It says that “no lie is of the truth” (1 John 2:21) and also, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). These verses are talking about being set free from falsehoods that distort our thinking and present a counterfeit reality.

Yet it will be a struggle to be free of strongly held but erroneous academic beliefs misidentified as science. This is evident by

Continued on page 29

Recommended Reading

Would you like to see proof that we are unmistakably the result of a great Creator? Our eye-opening free booklet *Life’s Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* shows clearly that God is real and that we are His handiwork. What about the evidence for and against Darwinian evolution? You’ll discover many shocking facts in our free booklet *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?* Both booklets are yours free for the asking!



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

www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

God, Science and the Bible

News from the world of science about God and the Bible



by Mario Seiglie, Tom Robinson and Scott Ashley

Jerusalem's Pool of Siloam yields more secrets

In John 9:7 Jesus told a blind man to “wash in the pool of Siloam” to be healed. The March-April 2005 *Good News* described archaeologists’ discovery of this very pool (“Archaeologists discover biblical Pool of Siloam,” p. 16). Subsequent excavations in the area have begun to yield more secrets, possibly including the discovery of another, much older pool mentioned in the Bible.

At one end of the steps descending to the Pool of Siloam archaeologists dug a shaft to learn what lay beneath it. According to reports from the Israel Antiquities Authority, there they found remains of a much earlier pool tentatively identified as the one mentioned in Nehemiah 3:15.

Describing the repairs to the city wall initiated by Nehemiah in the fifth century B.C., this passage states: “Shallun . . . repaired the wall of the Pool of Shelah by the King’s Garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the City of David.”

The newly discovered pool fits this geographic description very well. The area of “the King’s Garden,” also mentioned in connection with King Zedekiah’s attempted escape from the Babylonians recorded in Jeremiah 39:4-5 and 2 Kings 25:4-5, is thought to be the unexcavated orchard and garden, owned by the Greek Orthodox Church, part of which currently overlays most of the Pool of Siloam.

At the other end of the Pool of Siloam excavators have uncovered what they believe is a colonnaded plaza that joined the pool to a previously discovered first-century street that led up the Tyropoean Valley to the magnificent temple complex constructed by Herod the Great. If so, they will be bringing to light

more of the first-century streets on which Jesus and the disciples walked.

Archaeologists also uncovered a portion of an aqueduct, covered with stone slabs, which passed through yet another small pool exposed in the upper steps of the Pool of Siloam.

In the immediate area is the southern end of Hezekiah’s Tunnel, a 581-yard passageway carved by workmen under the command of Judah’s King Hezekiah in the eighth century B.C. to provide a secure water source for Jerusalem in the face of an Assyrian invasion. This ancient engineering feat is

described in 2 Chronicles 32:30, which records that “Hezekiah also stopped the water outlet of Upper Gihon [spring], and brought the water by tunnel to the west side of the City of David.”

Also in the area are drainage channels, leading from the nearby Gihon Spring, which are thought to date from the time of King Solomon in the 10th century B.C.

Excavations are continuing in the area under the direction of Eli Shukron of the Israel Antiquities Authority and Professor Ronny Reich of the University of Haifa.



Visitors inspect a portion of the biblical Pool of Siloam, above, mentioned in John 9:7. Archaeologists recently discovered remains of another pool underneath it, possibly the Pool of Shelah, hundreds of years older, mentioned in Nehemiah 3:15. At right Darris McNeely, managing editor of The Good News’ sister publication World News and Prophecy, examines what excavators believe is part of a colonnaded plaza near the pool dating to the time of Jesus Christ and the apostles.

Inscription discovery shoots down anti-Bible claims

Scholars who support the biblical “minimalist” view—that the Old Testament is myth because the Hebrews were wandering tribesmen who never learned how to write until sometime after the Babylonian captivity began in 586 B.C.—received a rude awakening last summer.

At an excavation in Tel Zayit, an ancient site about 30 miles southwest

An analysis showed that the inscription dated to the 10th century B.C.—well before minimalist Bible critics say any Israelites could write.

of Jerusalem, archaeologists noticed an inscribed stone imbedded in a wall. Examining it more closely, they realized they had found an ancient example of an abecedarium—a listing of the letters of the alphabet written out in sequence from beginning to end.

Even more remarkable, an analysis of pottery and the position of the wall in the ruins showed that the inscription dated to the 10th century B.C.—well before minimalist Bible critics say any Israelites could write.

Inscriptions from the Old Testament period are extremely rare. Only a few have been found, and many critics dismiss them as forgeries. Only stone, clay and metal objects from this period have survived. Other writing media, such as papyrus and parchment (which the Bible clearly says were in use at the time, as recorded in Jeremiah 36), have long since decayed into dust.

Critics use such “absence of evidence” as “evidence of absence,” as some archaeologists put it. They have contended that the lack of actual hard evidence of writing from this period means that people of that period didn’t know how to read and write. Therefore, they have argued, the Bible couldn’t have been written when it claims to have been written, but was fabricated long after the supposed events and history recorded in it. Consequently, they have asserted, the biblical picture of the 10th century—the time when King David and his son and successor Solomon ruled a powerful Israelite empire—is simply a fabrication.

This latest find, like others reported in this section of *The Good News*, demonstrates again the shallowness and inaccuracy of such arguments, not to mention the willful denial of hard evidence. It shows that even in an outlying border town like this one, far from the national capital at Jerusalem, the Hebrew alphabet was in use.

Further, an analysis of ancient structures at the site indicates that it likely was a significant border town established by a growing Jerusalem-centered Israelite kingdom just as the Bible describes, says Ron Tappy, the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary archaeologist directing the excavations.

Tools for Spiritual Growth

The Privilege and Power of Prayer

The Bible reveals and discusses several tools we can use to grow spiritually and build our relationship with our Creator. In this first article in a series on these tools for spiritual growth, we examine the foundational tool of prayer—a key to communication with God.

by Don Hooser

"Phone home!" Sound familiar? Maybe you heard it from your parents. Parents want to hear from their children—because they love them.

God wants to hear from His children for the same reason—because He loves us.

What is prayer? It is speaking to and conversing with our Creator. Everyone can do it and *should* do it. What is breathtakingly inspiring is that God hears, is interested in and answers prayers! Prayer is effective—in other words, prayer from those sincerely responsive to God gets results.

Phone home! God is never asleep or too busy to listen. There is never a bad connection or a bad time. You never get a busy signal or voice mail or get put on hold. You have unlimited free minutes—and hours. So no excuses!

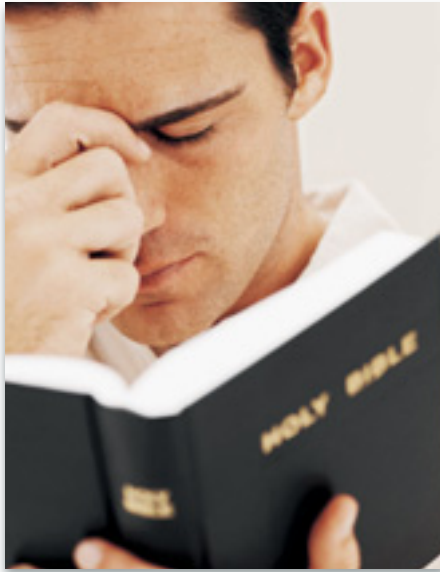
The most powerful man in history

Even though Jesus Christ was God in the flesh (John 1:1-5, 14), He knew the importance of praying to our heavenly Father. The Bible gives us many examples of Jesus fervently praying to His Father, not only praising God but asking for help. Jesus clearly knew that God in heaven was the ultimate source of success in every endeavor.

If Jesus Christ needed help from His heavenly Father, how much more do we! And we have many other role models as well. All the dedicated people of God in the Bible and in history have been people of prayer.

Jesus' disciples soon realized their Master's source of power. They said, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Would you like to learn Christ's teachings regarding prayer? You probably have them in your home. They are scattered throughout the Bible.

Anyone can begin to pray even before he has learned anything about prayer. God hears and appreciates the simplest of prayers. Jesus made it plain: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you"



Prayer and Bible study go hand in hand, along with serious introspection about how to apply God's teachings in our own lives.

(Matthew 7:7). It's noteworthy that in English the first letters of the key words "ask, seek, knock" spell *ask!*

But God wants us to *grow* in understanding and application of how to pray. Like learning a new hobby, sport or activity, satisfaction and rewards increase with added knowledge and skill. So it is invaluable to read and understand the biblical teachings regarding prayer.

We can gain much understanding and inspiration from many wonderful *examples* of prayers in the book of Psalms and throughout the Bible. Daily *practice* naturally leads to added proficiency and pleasure in prayer. Countless people have attested to this.

Talk to God as your Father

When His disciples said, "Teach us to pray," Jesus began His lesson in prayer by

giving them a brief outline of some of the most important things to pray about on a daily basis. Commonly called the "Lord's prayer," Jesus' instruction is found in Luke 11:2-4 and Matthew 6:9-13.

Note that Jesus suggested that the most frequent way that we are to address God is as "our Father in heaven." We can and should have many relationships with God, which are revealed by the names and titles for God found in Scripture. But the most important relationship is that of *our Father*—an all-loving and perfect father.

All human beings can and should think of God as their Father since He is their Creator. And as their relationship with God becomes closer, that father-child relationship builds to deeper and more intimate levels.

So how should we talk to God? He wants us to come to Him as a beloved parent. We should feel confident, secure, understood, appreciated and loved in coming before Him. When we talk with our physical fathers, we are not repetitious or scripted, we don't use an unnatural syrupy tone or a monotone. And we don't use archaic language because we think it sounds more religious. Neither is this necessary with God.

Our heavenly Father cherishes prayers offered with complete honesty and sincerity, even if they include respectful complaints. The prayers in the book of Psalms certainly portray candid honesty.

When people pray nice words while thinking and doing contradictory things, they apparently think God can't read minds. When we use our tongue to "bless our God and Father, and [to] curse men," our prayer is counted as hypocrisy (James 3:9-12, 17; see also Matthew 7:21-23).

Imagining what God is like is relatively easy for someone who has had a loving and attentive earthly father. Admittedly, it is much more difficult, especially at first, for someone whose parental experience has been with a cold, uncommunicative, abusive or absentee father.

Such a person should make a major effort

to learn what an ideal father is like and establish that picture in his or her mind's eye. Some inspiring and encouraging descriptions of God as our heavenly Father are found in Matthew 7:9-11; John 3:16-17; James 1:5, 17; 1 John 4:8-19; Psalm 103 and Luke 15:11-32 (the father in the parable of the prodigal son).

Life is about relationships

Of all God's creatures, human being have

everything we need to know about His plan for our lives. His Word gives us His worldview, the framework for a true perspective on life—past, present and future. Plus He communicates with us and guides us in other ways—by His Holy Spirit, through His Church, through other individuals, through circumstances and through experiences that He sets up.

But a good relationship depends on *two-way communication—a dialogue*. Prayer

who are relying on Him to protect them from the majority of mishaps. God allows His followers to suffer *some* personal trials to learn certain lessons, but He protects them from most dangers.

For those who seek to do God's will and ask for help, He will continually guide, help and protect them. If we don't forsake God, He will never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). What a promise! And what peace of mind that promise brings!

To continue to get answers, God has conditions

It's inspiring to hear how many people have had obvious answers to their prayers even before they knew much about God or were trying to obey Him. That shows how wonderfully merciful and generous God is toward people who are taking their first sincere steps to humbly talk to their Maker. By granting their desires, He is encouraging them to take further steps in building their relationship with Him.

As we grow in our relationship with God, it is only logical that He expects us to fulfill certain conditions if we want His help. God will not continue to answer prayers for someone who is unwilling to do his or her part—to read the Bible, obey what it says and learn to love God. "We love Him because He first loved us," 1 John 4:19 tells us.

But what is the primary evidence of love for God? The apostle John sums it up: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). And John makes it clear that *obedience to God* is the most important condition for answered prayer: "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22).

If we expect God to continue hearing our prayers, we must begin obeying the Ten Commandments and His other commandments.

In the name of Jesus Christ

Some people have not learned that Jesus Christ is the one "door" and the one "way" to God (John 10:9; 14:6). Does God ever answer their prayers anyway? Because God is immensely merciful, He probably does. If a person's religious practices at first fall short of true biblical Christianity, God may for awhile answer some of his prayers *in spite of his religious ignorance* rather than because of it. But that won't

Additional conditions for answered prayer (And God will help you to fulfill the conditions!)

Confess your sins to God so that your sins will no longer stand in the way. Remember that to be forgiven, we must be forgiving of everyone (Matthew 6:12, 14-15; Isaiah 59:2).

One's motives should not be selfish, greedy or trying to impress others (James 4:2-3; Matthew 6:5-6; 18:9-14).

Study the Bible to know and pray according to God's mind and will (John 15:7; 1 John 5:14-15; Matthew 4:4).

Believe—have full faith in God's love, mercy and promises—and expect answers (Mark 11:24;

Hebrews 10:22, 38-39; 11:6; James 1:5-6).

Be extremely grateful to God and express thanksgiving and praise profusely (Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Be wholehearted, fervent, passionate in prayer (James 5:16; Psalm 119:145; Hosea 7:14).

Multiple repetitions of words and phrases are worthless, although Christ taught persistence in repeating a petition to God day after day (Matthew 6:7-8; Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-7).

Ask God to guide and inspire you with His Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14-15, 26-27; John 14:26).

the unique and awesome privilege of being created in His image (Genesis 1:26-27). The greatest benefit of this is being able to have a personal relationship with God.

Throughout His Word, God repeatedly stresses the importance of right relationships. In fact, Jesus said that the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love your fellow man (Matthew 22:35-40).

Beginning with our creation, God has done many things to initiate a relationship with us. It is up to us to respond to Him and show initiative in nurturing that relationship with good communication. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you," James 4:8 tells us. Our prayers keep us connected to God. (Future articles in this series will cover Bible study, meditation and fasting and how they also help us draw near and stay near to God.)

Jesus said to His disciples, "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). Here Jesus explained a crucial factor in true friendship—*ongoing open and sincere communication*. A true friend is someone you talk with openly and regularly.

God is the Great Communicator. He records in the Bible His revelation of

and Bible study go hand in hand, along with serious thought and introspection about how to apply God's teachings in our own lives. Each of us must ask: How good a friend am I to God? How good a son or daughter am I to my Father? Call home daily!

Without prayer, life is precarious

Physical, frail human beings are highly vulnerable to countless dangers—physical, mental and spiritual perils. The greatest danger is from our greatest enemy, Satan the devil, who "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Ephesians 6:10-20 explains how we need spiritual armor "to stand against the wiles of the devil," and prayer is an important part of that armor (verses 18-19). Why face life's battles with no armor? If we don't pray, we become prey to this ruthless predator.

We are terribly foolish to try "going it alone" in this evil and dangerous world—neglecting to rely on God. Some suffering is punishment from God, particularly when people knowingly sin against Him. But most suffering comes automatically from our own actions, the actions of others, or time and chance.

However, God will intervene for those

last if he makes no effort to learn and do as the Bible teaches.

The only *promise* of answered prayer on a regular basis is to the true followers of the God and Father of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the One who, though divine, became a human being, lived a perfect life and suffered and died to pay the penalties of sin for all mankind. He alone is the Savior of the world. Speaking of Jesus, the apostle Peter said, “There is no salvation through anyone else; in all the world no other name has been granted to mankind by which we can be saved” (Acts 4:12, Revised English Bible)

Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you” (John 16:23-24; see also John 14:13-14). As human beings, we do not of ourselves have the right, authority or privilege to approach God’s throne with our prayers because of our own goodness. But through faith and commitment to Jesus Christ, He authorizes us to call on God in His name, acting with His authorization. Thus, with His approval, we have access to God when we pray “in Jesus’ name.”

Jesus further serves us as our High Priest by interceding and mediating on our behalf with the Father (Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1-2). This assures us that we have access through Him to the fullness of God’s mercy and forgiveness (Hebrews 2:17; 4:14-16; 10:19-22). Then God the Father makes the decision as to how to answer the prayer, and Jesus Christ carries out the Father’s will.

A few more points on prayer

God certainly “hears” silent prayers, and someone who is close to God may utter silent prayers often throughout each day. The Bible tells us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

But God is also pleased to have us vocalize audible prayers. Numerous times the Scriptures mention the praying person using his voice, mouth, lips and tongue. The Bible also frequently uses expressions like *cry*, *cried out*, *cried aloud*, *called to*, etc.

Certain biblical references to frequency of prayer, like twice daily (Psalm 88:1) and thrice daily (Psalm 55:17; Daniel 6:10), probably refer to the number of audible prayers, not the number of total prayers.

Regarding bodily positions during prayer, the Bible mentions several—kneeling, standing, sitting, lying down. Circumstances, including health problems, sometimes limit us in what positions we

can choose. We can talk with God while taking a walk or driving a car. The most important consideration is to always do your best to express humility and deep reverence.

The Bible includes examples of appropriate public prayer and group prayer, but the majority of our personal prayers should be private communication with God (Matthew 6:5-6). However, *family prayer* is vitally important. It’s important to teach children from a very young age to pray. Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me” (Matthew 19:14). God is very interested in and responsive to their prayers. (see “How Can We Pass Our Faith on to Our Children?” beginning on the next page, for more on this vital subject).

Busy? Most of us are. Lack time to pray? Consider that we all make time for those things we consider most important. And we will accomplish more in the long run when we put God first. Hence we cannot afford to *not* pray. Prayer needs to be a top priority and a daily habit.

In your prayers, besides going through your needs and wants, make sure to take time to thank God for the many ways He has blessed you in your life. And take time to pray for others.

If you’re coming to God about a problem, pour out your heart to Him about it without dictating what His solutions should be. Father knows best. God always responds in the way that is best for us spiritually, and that sometimes means the answer is “no” or “not now,” or the answer is something other than what we expected or wanted.

Phone home

“What is man that You are mindful of him?” asked David in Psalm 8:4. It’s a wonder of wonders how God cares for His little creatures—that He would listen to each of their prayers and give them His personal attention. But it’s true—He does.

Let’s not let the wonderful spiritual tool of prayer go to waste by not using it. Let’s walk with God—obey Him and talk with Him—in prayer.

The Bible compares this life to our being pilgrims living in tents far from home. Our goal is enter the Kingdom of God—to “dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (Psalm 23:6). Home is wherever God is, and our destiny, after Christ returns to earth, is to dwell with Him forever.

In the meantime, we can stay in touch—daily and more than daily—with our Father and our elder Brother, Jesus Christ.

Phone home. *Pray. GN*

World War III

Continued from page 17

and November, cities across France suffered three weeks of nightly riots by young, mostly Muslim immigrants who are unable to reconcile their religion with the values of secular French society. The Islamic element has been downplayed in the media, which is dominated by multiculturalists who cannot seem to face what is really happening.

When the Iranian president refers to the “World of Arrogance” he is primarily speaking of the United States. But his references to historical events centuries ago, events that predate the existence of the United States as a country, show that in his mind the United States is simply a continuation of the European Christian powers that sent the Crusaders to the land of Islam almost 1,000 years ago.

President Bush’s use of the word “crusade” in the aftermath of 9/11 only added to this conviction of a continuing threat from the West. To us the term now means only a zealous, values-driven project. To them it means a Christian war of conquest to take back the Middle East from Islam.

Where will it all end?

The end result of this growing clash of civilizations was prophesied thousands of years ago in the pages of your Bible.

The Old Testament book of Daniel contains a prophecy about “the time of the end” beginning in Daniel 11:40. Here we are told that at that time “the king of the South” will push against “the king of the North,” who will then react violently and invade the Middle East, where “many countries will be overthrown.”

The kings of North and South in ancient times were the heads of two powerful kingdoms to the north and south of Jerusalem, the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties that divided up the greater part of the empire of Alexander the Great. The Seleucid kingdom in the north, with its Hellenistic cultural views, was eventually absorbed into the European-based Roman Empire while the Ptolemaic empire in time was, following the Roman period, absorbed into the Islamic world.

Continual wars between these competing kingdoms greatly impacted the Jewish people who lived between them. In the same way, a coming conflict between the modern-day successors to these two powers will greatly impact the modern Jewish state of Israel and forever change our world. Will you be ready? **GN**

How Can We Pass Our Faith on to Our Children?

In a previous article we covered the basic reasons why we should teach our children about God. Now we'll look at the actual mechanics as well as a good general approach to instructing our children.

by Jim Servidio

A very real battle is taking place between good and evil today. Satan wants to convince our sons and daughters that his way leads to happiness and fun.

What are some of the lies he tells our children? That we as parents want to prevent them from having any fun and so we shouldn't have any authority over them. That to be popular, they need to think, talk and act as modern culture tells them to. That there's no need to worry about tomorrow—that they should go for all the pleasure they can get today. That illicit sex is fun and everybody is (or should be) doing it. That drugs and alcohol are a wonderful escape.

As we can see, Satan has been remarkably successful in his efforts.

To counteract this influence, parents

different talents, gifts, fears and desires. The challenge of a parent is to meet each child at his or her point of need and interest. We should help them connect to God in the context of *their* individual emotional and intellectual makeup—not simply



It may be helpful to list the name of each child and write down his or her unique leanings and talents. These could then be linked to biblical figures who had those same talents and proclivities to show how God was able to use them in a special way.

For example, King David was an accomplished musician. Solomon liked to study animals and nature. Dorcas really enjoyed sewing. Peter and other disciples were avid fishermen. Paul was a bookworm who loved to read and study. Many biblical figures were called to serve God at a very young age.

Making such connections with your children's interests will help them connect to others who walked with God successfully. They can and should picture themselves as having the potential to be servants of God just like the many men and women of faith recorded in the Bible.

Parents must attempt to connect with their children by perceiving what is in their hearts, their feelings and emotions, hopes and dreams and what they aspire to. These can become the basis for discussion of how God and His truth can impact their lives. They will gradually learn that God is there as a friend and a help. It needs to become very personal or else they will feel it doesn't apply to them.

Consider prayer as an example. We should help our children see that prayer is a very real conversation with God Himself—showing them how to share what is on their minds with Him (see "Teach Your Children How to Pray," page 27).

Another example is helping them relate what is going on in school with God's desire to be there for them and make a difference in their lives. Biblical principles must become real to them.

Strategies in teaching the Bible itself

The Bible is a large book, and to introduce its study to our children we must first present it in small, manageable portions. We should decide what basic subjects we need to cover with our children and then think about how to present them in a user-friendly way. Often we may choose to cover a certain topic over several sessions.

All Christian parents undoubtedly have a desire to see their children live by the truths of the Bible, the very Word of God. Yet not all know how to pass these truths on to their children.

must tell God's story to their children as soon as they are able to grasp it. This is done by parents exposing their children to the Scriptures, sharing what God has done in their own lives and helping each child connect to God's love and His plan.

Each child is unique

Each child is a unique individual. As such, he or she will naturally express

according to how everything is filtered through *our* lives as parents.

In embracing the way of God, a child will have to identify this way with his or her own personal circumstances and thinking. Our educational efforts as parents have to be tailored to the individual child. Parents should ask God in prayer to help them see the ways that they can make His existence and truth relevant to their children.

Handling Difficulties Discreetly

Where possible, use popular culture to connect with God's plan. We should not overreact or lash out verbally if our adolescent son or daughter mentions an interest in or connection with something that is of questionable morality. All young people are sorting through complex and confusing issues in life.

Instantly berating them may damage or destroy the special relationship you have with them. Avoid appearing horrified or shocked. Maybe suggest that theirs is an interesting viewpoint and you would like to discuss it further with them. Walk through the

situation with them and tactfully explain God's truth as you go. Avoid the tendency to lecture.

Talk with them about the full scope and ramifications of what they are dealing with—anything from thinking of having a tattoo to questioning the merits of honesty.

The key again is to connect them to God's way from where *they* are, not from where *we* are. Deuteronomy 6:7 implies teaching in many different contexts. Understanding how life affects each child uniquely is necessary to effectively help them connect with their Creator.

We should focus on presenting important biblical teachings that they can use throughout their lives. Examples could include the life of Jesus Christ, the coming Kingdom of God, the Ten Commandments, lessons from the various heroes of the Bible, the history of the New Testament Church and the proofs of God's existence.

The publishers of *The Good News* offer free booklets on many of these crucial subjects that will provide you with plenty of material for teaching and discussion. For a current list of available material, visit www.ucg.org/booklets. Many other teaching materials for youth of various ages can be found at www.ucg.org/youth/index.htm.

After making a list of subjects you would like them to learn, write down the benefits your child might gain from the study to help orient how to present it. It would be good to even note some potential obstacles beforehand and work out a plan to get past



Children learn in many ways. One of the most effective teaching tools is by *example*. It is important that our children understand that we, as Christian parents, talk to God in prayer on a regular basis.

them. Also, realize that some subjects will be easier to teach while others will take more effort.

Identify other helpful sources for material such as those noted above, a conservative Bible commentary or even Internet research. Most children love to play computer games and this interest can be guided into learning about the Bible as well.

Create a specific plan of action that breaks each lesson down into small manageable parts and set a target completion date for each area of study.

Be sure that each of your children has a good "working" Bible in which he or she can write or mark scriptures. It should be a true Bible, not a "pseudo-Bible" or a child's storybook-type volume.

A version such as the International Children's Bible or New Century Version is good for younger children, with the New King James translation more suitable for older children, elementary through adult. Thumb tabs are very helpful for a young

student of the Bible to navigate around this big book more quickly.

Make Bible study a habit

Try to establish a regular time to study the Bible with your children, as this helps develop the habit—a habit that we want our children to carry with them into adulthood. To begin with, set a length of maybe 15 to 20 minutes. Never go on too long at one sitting, and be attentive to when the children lose concentration.

Start out slowly until you're comfortable with some of the techniques and ideas. Don't try to cover too much in one session and don't let the sessions drag by going

into a single subject too deeply. Move matters along.

It's a good idea to sit at a table when possible, where the setting and atmosphere is clearly "study time" and the family comes together in attentive respect for God's Word.

Try to minimize distractions. Clear the table of clutter. Leave the radio and television off. If the telephone tends to ring during study time, turn it down and use an answering machine.

Also, make this a *pleasant* time. By making it special, we are showing we place special value on God's Word and the privilege of studying it. Perhaps share a special drink such as juice or hot cocoa during the study, or light some candles to put on the table to create the atmosphere that this is a special occasion. Be sure to begin each study session with a brief prayer together, asking for God's help in understanding His Word.

Marking our Bibles

One way of making Bible study more

interesting to our children is simply marking our Bibles in an organized way. This helps us to concentrate on the Scriptures and remember where a certain passage is found. Marking adds a certain creative and interactive dimension to learning the Bible.

Each person can establish his or her own marking system. Use several colored pencils that are distinctive from one another and that will show up clearly on the page. It may make marking easier if a thin sheet of card is placed under the page.

Each child can start a marking system by using scratch paper to practice some ideas. Once a basic system is agreed on, making up a sheet of paper with the legend or key for the system is helpful.

A simple way to mark a verse or passage is to "frame" it with a color, simply using a ruler to mark a line around the outside of the verse or passage. Different frame colors can be used for different major subjects in the Bible such as God, prayer, God's law and so on.

Other subjects could be marked by writing a short word over the passage or drawing a symbol on the passage. For example, perhaps draw a crown or write the letters KOG for Kingdom of God. Maybe draw a pair of lips over verses discussing speech or gossip. For anyone who enjoys being artistic, there are countless possibilities for marking certain passages.

Consider having a notebook or ring-binder for each child with dividers to separate maps, other drawings, memory verses, notes on Bible teachings and so on.

God reveals Himself in the Bible

Jesus Christ said, "*Learn of Me*" (Matthew 11:29, King James Version). In other words, "Learn about Me; learn what I am all about." God reveals Himself *in the Bible*. Whatever subject we choose to study will teach us something about God, His purpose and His plan. This is like God telling us His story.

Many options are available for how to cover subject matter related to God's story. Some may wish to start with Genesis and continue reading verse by verse (perhaps with the exception of continuous genealogies—yet even here interesting things can be pointed out and it might be fun for some to try to pronounce the many odd-looking names). If the family starts soon enough, they might actually read the entire Bible through together as a family.

However, please be aware that some subject matter, even included in the pages

Teach Your Children How to Pray

Teaching children to pray is a vital part of passing on our faith. Hebrews 4:16 reminds us that Christians can “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” It’s important that our children learn that they can also go to God, our loving Father, who is there to help and strengthen them. He wants them to build a relationship with Him through prayer as well as Bible study.

Children learn in many ways. One of the most effective teaching tools is by *example*. It is important that our children understand that we, as Christian parents, talk to God in prayer on a regular basis.

The formal examples they see of asking a blessing at mealtime, of anointing and prayer for illness and of prayers at Church services provide important lessons about our relationship with God. But children also need to see that parents spend time with God in *personal* prayer on a daily basis and that we should go to God first when faced with a difficult trial or an important decision.

The instructions that Jesus Christ provided in the Lord’s Prayer (actually His *outline* for prayer), found in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4, are useful in teaching our children how to pray. Friday evening on the Sabbath, before bedtime or shortly after dinner, is an ideal time for the entire family to kneel down and use this outline of prayer as a teaching tool. Following is a practical way of doing this.

Using blank cards, write on each card a phrase from the Lord’s Prayer followed by a simple explanation of what to pray about. For example, write on the first card the phrase “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name,” followed by the statement, “Praise and thank God.”

On the next card write, “Your kingdom come,” followed by the statement, “Pray about why the world needs the coming Kingdom of God and the changes it will bring.”

“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” can be written on three separate cards followed by the statements, “Pray for the work of the Church,” “Pray for others (family, the sick, needy, etc.)” and “Pray for God’s direction in our own decisions.”

On another card write, “Give us this day our daily bread” with the statement “Pray for things we need.”

On the next card write, “Forgive us our debts (our sins), as we forgive our debtors (those who sin against us)” followed by, “Things we are sorry for.”

On the next card write, “Do not lead us into temptation (or sore trial), but deliver us from the

evil one” followed by, “Ask God for protection.”

On the last card write, “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever” followed by “Praise and thank God again.”

The entire family should kneel down together and each one will draw one of the cards. The statement on the card is what each one will pray about that evening and what the children will be asked to pray about during the week.

For example, those who draw the cards that say “Praise and thank God” will think about things to praise God for and about things for which they are thankful to have or to understand and will pray out loud about those things.

Dad should begin the session by praying out loud about what is on his card. Mom follows and then each child according to whatever order is established. Dad and Mom’s prayer may last a few minutes, and each child’s prayer will probably be shorter.

The prayers of very young children will be simple and probably very brief. As children get older, their prayers will reflect more mature thinking and will lengthen in time. If a child has difficulty in thinking of something to pray about, Dad or Mom may want to suggest a few items and at times may need to coach little ones throughout their brief prayers.

Dad can then bring the entire session to a close with another brief prayer asking God’s blessing on the family and His protection through the night, ending with “Amen” (making sure children understand that this expresses sincerity and trust in God and not “Goodbye,” as God never leaves us).

Parents can begin using this technique with very young children and will find that they are usually willing participants. They do not seem to have the sense of awkwardness about praying out loud with others present that teens or adults often have.

Depending on the nature of the relationships within a family, teens and even young adults living at home may be willing to continue to participate in this family tradition if begun when the children are young. Drawing the cards is no longer necessary after a certain age, and each family member can simply pray about what is on his mind.

This method can teach children how to pray about all of the elements in Christ’s instructions since, over time, they will hear their parents praying about each one. The time spent together praying out loud also has a powerful bonding effect that can draw family members close to one another as the family draws close to God. As the adage goes, “The family that prays together stays together.”

of the Bible, may not be appropriate for detailed exposition to small children, especially those of a sensitive disposition.

An alternative would be to read a selected book of the Bible, or to concentrate on a particular theme. The book of Proverbs is an excellent choice to study with children. Everyone can take turns reading, with each family member

reading several verses or a passage. Stop to discuss or to mark subjects with the colored pencils as often as needed.

Reviewing sermon notes is another option, or listening to a sermon tape and stopping it as necessary for discussion and marking scriptures. This is a good way to teach specific biblical topics.

Readings in the Bible can be assigned

for later discussion. Study does not have to follow the same format every time.

Yet another option is to write out verses together. There is good value to writing out the Scriptures, and perhaps your family could choose a shorter book of the Bible to copy verbatim (compare Deuteronomy 17:18-20).

Advance preparation can be useful. For example, you could find maps or pictures about the geographical area where the events you will be studying took place. Make copies and then hand out a map for each person to add to his or her notebook. Similarly, timelines can be useful for covering historical events.

Memorizing specific scriptures and learning what they mean can be fun. It is not wrong to offer an age-appropriate reward such as a sticker, treat or a small gift. These could also be given when a certain topic or project is completed. Children like to feel they have accomplished something.

Your own walk with God

Besides learning about *God’s* story found in the Bible, our children need to hear about our own personal spiritual walk with God—*our* story.

Parents may be reluctant and hesitant in sharing their own “testimony” with their children. They may feel they will sound too religious, or are simply private about personal spiritual matters. Pray for help in moving beyond such thinking.

God’s love, mercy, faithfulness and, yes, even a certain amount of correction should be shared with our children when appropriate. Keeping these matters entirely to ourselves limits the good work God’s intervention in our lives can accomplish.

Sharing also helps our children see that God is real and is involved in everyday events if we ask Him to be. This falls into the category of talking of the things of God “when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:7).

Some circumstances that could be shared with our children might be what led up to our baptism (there is no need to be specific about serious mistakes), how God has answered prayers in our everyday life experiences and why we believe in God.

Children need to share in and understand how God is working with their parents. This makes God more real to them and draws them closer to their parents. It shows that we all share in the same calling, that God’s promises are real and that His way works. **GN**



Letters From Our Readers

“Why Some Christians Don’t Celebrate Christmas”

I received your Nov.-Dec. issue. The article about Christmas really opened my eyes to the truth. Even though I knew it was a pagan holiday, I also went along with the drift. Thank you very much for enlightening me on this subject. I have also requested *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?* It is very appropriate for this season, where I will be able to educate my children about the true meaning of Christmas.

P.O., Sri Lanka

Thank you for sending *The Good News*. Your articles are very interesting and full of common sense. I particularly liked “Why Some Christians Don’t Celebrate Christmas.” I have been studying with a Christian group for some time and they confirm the points in your article concerning “Was Jesus Really Born on December 25?” As Luke tells us, the shepherds were keeping the sheep in the fields at night when Jesus was born. Considering the cold weather, I agree with asking, “Would shepherds keep their flocks out in the cold?” So Dec. 25 could not have been Christ’s birthday.

B.N., Banbury, England

By the way, Christmas is biblical. It doesn’t have to be Dec. 25. We celebrate our Savior’s birthday. There was a lot of celebration in the Bible when He was born.

M.L., Albany, Oregon

I cannot stand by and let your “politically correct” statements ruin Christmas. Most of us do not care or want to know where all the traditions came from. Do you think that God cares either? Of course He does not.

N.S., Nottingham, England

I don’t agree that Christmas is about paganism. That might have been the case 4,000 years ago, but Christians have turned around to celebrate the birth of Christ and totally blocked out all thoughts of paganism just like Jesus would have wanted us to do. Father Christmas represents the kings and wise men who travelled far to bring gifts. We decorate the tree with the Star of David or the angel of the Lord. We have turned bad into good.

W.W., Blackburn, England

We received many comments about the Christmas article, both pro and con. This selection shows how interested our readers are in the subject. The Questions and Answers feature on page 29 addresses when Jesus was born, showing that it was nowhere near Dec. 25.

The whole issue turns on which days God and Jesus Christ want Christians to observe today. The concluding section of our free booklet Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe? addresses the most crucial question: “Does It Matter to God?”

We encourage all interested readers to read this free publication and its companion booklet God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind. It reveals and explains those annual days that are in the Bible, the celebrations God expects Christians to be observing.

Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?

I read with real pleasure your outstanding publication *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?* I am a former outspoken evolutionist who came to accept Christ only after being intellectually convinced (by evidence similar to that which you provide) of the misrepresented “scientific” status of evolution as taught to me in public schools and the University of Michigan.

This process (conversion) took many years and much frustration as I waded through arguments and counter-arguments from both sides. Now to see such a concise, responsible (and unemotional) assembly of key scientific statements is most gratifying. From my experience I know that this publication will play a major role in helping others overcome the artificial barrier to Christianity that evolution poses. Your efforts will be blessed and appreciated by many.

D.B., Orchard Lake, Michigan

Appreciation for *The Good News*

Thanks for the recent copy of *The Good News*. I always look forward to reading it, since I find it contains outstanding biblical application to world issues. I find it a great education on what’s been going on in the news and what our future is going to be like. When I receive *The Good News*, I open it

straight away and it usually takes two days to read it and to consider everything in the magazine.

T.W., Australia

I thank God for your efforts because it takes deep thinking and research to produce the articles you publish. I’m a social-science student and really enjoy your material about political situations. It helps me a lot in school. You are really the pathfinder for human problems because some of us had lost hope, but you illuminate matters to gear us up so that we can still go on.

A.O.S., Lagos, Nigeria

I want to express my appreciation for your magazine. I find it very enlightening and informative. Your supplemental material has also been excellent. Very rarely do I find myself in disagreement with your views, and the vast majority of articles have been very helpful in my search for understanding and growth. I would like to see more articles with respect to scientists who believe that science points to a designer and those whose beliefs have been changed through science.

J.S., Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Be sure to read “*The Intelligent Design Revolution*” beginning on page 18.

Young prospective Christian

I am a 16-year-old *Good News* subscriber. Through reading your booklets and other publications, my mind was opened to the truth about God and the Bible. If I understand it right, God wants the people that He is calling to be a part of His Church. Sad to say, but I don’t feel as if the church I am part of is His Church because of its many wrong beliefs and traditions. I really want to be converted.

Reader on Internet

Our free booklet The Church Jesus Built may be helpful to any other readers with similar thoughts. Feel free to download or request a free copy at www.ucg.org/booklets.

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 just received the Nov.-Dec. *Good News*. The article “Why Some Christians Don’t Celebrate Christmas” is educating. I have a question though. As a person who follows Jesus Christ’s teachings and believes in the Son of God, shouldn’t I celebrate His birthday? I need to know the exact—or better still, the true Bible birth date—of Jesus Christ. Is this possible?

A.D., Orpington, England

A. History convincingly shows that Dec. 25 was popularized as the date for Christmas not because Christ was born on that day, but because it was already popular in pagan religious celebrations as the birthday of the sun.

But is it possible that Dec. 25 could be the day of Christ’s birth?

“Lacking any scriptural pointers to Jesus’s birthday, early Christian teachers suggested dates all over the calendar. Clement . . . picked November 18. Hippolytus . . . figured Christ must have been born on a Wednesday . . . An anonymous document[,] believed to have been written in North Africa around A.D. 243, placed Jesus’s birth on March 28” (Jeffery Sheler, *U.S. News & World Report*, “In Search of Christmas,” Dec. 23, 1996, p. 58).

A careful analysis of Scripture, however, clearly indicates that Dec. 25 could not have been the date for Christ’s birth. Here are two primary reasons:

First, we know that shepherds were “living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night,” at the time of Jesus’ birth (Luke 2:8). In that area, shepherds simply were not out in the fields at night with their flocks during December.

The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary, for example, explains that this passage argues “against the birth [of Christ] occurring on Dec. 25 since the weather would not have permitted” shepherds watching over their flocks in the fields at night. It was simply too wet and cold for these events mentioned in connection with Christ’s birth to have taken place in December.

Second, Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem to register in a Roman census (Luke 2:1-4). The Romans were highly efficient administrators, and such a census would never have been undertaken in winter when temperatures often dropped below freezing and roads were in poor condition. Taking a census under such conditions would have been self-defeating.

The Bible makes no mention of Christmas, nor does it anywhere encourage any sort of celebration of Christ’s birth. History records no such celebration until at least several centuries later, when the Catholic Church essentially adopted the pagan mid-winter Saturnalia festival and the Dec. 25 celebration of the birthday of the pagan sun god Mithra as the supposed birthday of Jesus Christ in an effort to make Christianity more appealing to pagans.

Given the difficulties and the desire to bring pagans into Christianity, writes author William Walsh, “the important fact then which I have asked you to get clearly into your head is that the fixing of the date as December 25th was a compromise with paganism” (*The Story of Santa Klaus*, 1970, p. 62).

If Jesus Christ was not born on Dec. 25, does the Bible indicate when He was born?

We do find scriptural clues that point to the autumn of the year as the most likely time of Jesus’ birth, based on the conception and birth of John the Baptist.

Since Elizabeth (John’s mother) was in her sixth month of pregnancy when Jesus was conceived (Luke 1:24-36), we can determine the approximate time of year Jesus was born if we know when John was born. John’s father Zacharias was a priest serving in the Jerusalem temple during “the division of Abijah” (Luke 1:5)—designating a particular rotation in priestly service. Historical calculations indicate that this course of service corresponded to June 13-19 in that year (*The Companion Bible*, 1974, Appendix 179, p. 200).

During this time of temple service, Zacharias learned that he and his wife Elizabeth would have a child (Luke 1:8-13). After he completed his service and traveled home, Elizabeth conceived (verses 23-24). Assuming John’s conception took place near the end of June, adding nine months brings us to the end of March as the most likely time for John’s birth. Adding another six months (the difference in ages between John and Jesus) brings us to the end of September as the likely time of Jesus’ birth.

In any event, nowhere in the New Testament did Jesus tell us to observe His birth. Instead, He personally commanded us to commemorate annually His sacrificial death on our behalf (Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29). For further understanding, please request or download our free booklets *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?* and *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.

Intelligent Design

Continued from page 20

what Harvard zoologist Richard Lewontin candidly admitted:

“We take the side of science [as he calls it] in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, and in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so-stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism . . .

we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door” (quoted by Denyse O’Leary, p. 222, emphasis added).

Kansas State immunologist Scott Todd adds, “Even if all the data point to an intelligent designer, such a hypothesis is excluded from science because it is not naturalistic” (*Nature*, Sept. 30, 1999, p. 423). Yet true science is the pursuit of truth, not merely the pursuit of a materialistic explanation despite evidence to the contrary.

So the scientific revolution now taking place—which includes the very meaning of

science—will be a long and difficult battle. Yet, hopefully, the evidence in the fields of biology, chemistry, astronomy and physics will prevail to show that a supposedly blind and purposeless process like evolution cannot possibly account for the complexity, beauty and harmony we see all around us.

From the orderly pattern of the enormous universe, the galaxies and our planet with its amazing creatures, to the equally wondrous and complex microcosm of the cell, the evidence shouts an unmistakable message: We are the result of a Master Designer! **GN**

Right Dating: What Guys & Girls Want

Like a perfect rose blooming in a pockmarked battlefield is the fine art of proper dating. Most of what you've learned about dating in popular culture is like the battlefield. Want to keep your emotions, body and spirit flying safely above the bombs bursting in air? Then read on!

by Randy Stiver

What's the general goal of much or most of dating today? That's right. It's all over the sitcoms, lots of the "chick flicks," R-rated movies and conversations among teens and young adults in school hallways and social hangouts. There's just one primary message about what too many guys and girls want of each other—and it's not good conversation, fine friendship or eventual marriage.

What's the endgame of wrong and promiscuous dating? Right again. Ragged

the loving God who made you want for you? Correct—a better kind of dating than that described above. Second, what as a guy do you want in a girl, or what as a girl do you want in a guy?

Remember, whether you're in your teens or 20s (or later), dating often leads to marriage. Right dating provides you the opportunity in the meantime to build good character and polish your personality as you get to know a variety of people, until ultimately you find your own true love.

see in a guy? I recently posed that question to a group of more than 20 teens and young adults, mostly singles with a handful of young married couples. Their answers proved most insightful and instructive.

Ladies first: What girls want in guys

Gentleness and kindness, genuineness and sincerity. No interest here in the broody, hot-tempered and rough or the obsessively jealous. *Easy to communicate with.* They were silent on the silent type.



and jaded emotions; sinfully violated bodies (both genders); a haunting, sad-eyed, brokenhearted, guilty conscience; premarital pregnancies ending in either the weary and lonely existence of single-mom misery or tiny aborted lives snuffed out before they can even cry for help.

Need we even mention sexually transmitted diseases and the statistical tendency of sexually active young people to engage in other risky behavior like smoking, drinking and illegal drug use with the related criminal paths such things can lead to? That's a crummy kind of dating.

Two questions

Now what about you? Consider two questions. First, what kind of dating does

The most famous British leader of the 20th century, Sir Winston Churchill, observed it this way: "Where does family start? It starts with a young man falling in love with a girl. No superior alternative has yet to be found."

Or ever will be. That's why God made us male and female. Marriage and family are God's way. The book of Proverbs frames the beauty of dating and true romantic love like this: "There are three things which are too wonderful for me, yes, four which I do not understand." The fourth one, perhaps most wonderful of all, was the way of a man with a young woman (Proverbs 30:18-19).

So what should a guy want to see in a girl, and what should a girl want to

Maturity on demand. Fun-loving is fine, but foolish is out. *Chivalrous, respectful and eager to serve others.* A fellow who opens doors for them and keeps his armor of honor well shined.

Appropriate self-confidence with a strong work ethic, finding joy in his work. When this kind of young man matures, he can and will provide well for his wife—and children. That's a serious concern on girls' minds, guys—girls who are thinking, that is. *Self-control with money and toys and a tempered temperament.* There are few things worse than being shackled to a broke, hot-tempered goof-off.

Patience with women and with womanly behavior they don't fully understand. This is very important when dating and

in marriage. *Not self-centered; interested in all types of people.* This is the kind of guy girls love to be around. *Thoughtful and appreciative—one “thank you” goes a long way.* The females of the species get far too little credit for all they do, gentlemen.

A positive attitude when facing the challenges and trials of life. This is a sign and act of leadership. *Tamed-down heroism in the daily details of life.* This means he brings flowers, sends cards, etc. *Creative attentiveness; he knows what to do and when* (or at least takes such advice well). *Takes initiative in making decisions.* Remember, fellows, God made the man to be the primary leader of the family (see Ephesians 5).

Then came the guys' turn to comment on girls.

What guys want in girls

Honesty with diplomacy—a girl who kindly speaks her mind. Uncomplicated, and says what she means. Too much feminine mystique can be a mistake. *Thinks for herself and is not clingy.* A girl who fosters intelligent opinions and has the confidence and poise to pose them.

Gracefully polite and courteous. Manners matter to good guys. *Graceful in damage control.* She adroitly resolves difficulties and keeps her cool.

Graceful in posture; fit and strong. Did you know that, all the girls' sports programs notwithstanding, American girls statistically stop exercising at age 13? Guys can't help but notice the fit and strong ideal girl/woman of Proverbs 31:17.

A good sense of style and modesty in dress. Bugs and guys that sting are attracted by bare skin; not the kind of guy you want to win. *Cleanliness in person and housekeeping.* This reveals much about who you are inside (and it applies to guys too!).

Empathetic; notices the needs of others and is willing to serve. This is the essence of Christian love for fellow man. *Desire to teach children.* Remember, dating eventually leads to marriage, which leads to kids.

Good cook and good driver. Trust guys to think of the practical. *Joyful, happy personality with a good sense of humor; a complete person.* The girl who is balanced, comfortable with herself, emotionally healthy and who doesn't take herself

too seriously is the kind of girl that guys are drawn to. *Strong in the faith and dedicated to God and His ways.* High spiritual standards may not make you popular with a lot of fellows, but they're not the ones you want to date anyway.

Then a funny thing happened in our discussion—the girls decided that they needed to add to their list of what they want to see in guys. Perhaps it's not surprising, though, because communications experts say that the average man speaks about 15,000 words a day, but the average woman intones closer to 30,000. So speak on, ladies.

More of what girls want

A good cook and a good eater. Lassies like lads who won't starve when they're on their own and who can lend a hand in the kitchen. *Emotionally secure, with absolute trust and trustworthiness.* Someone who is steady at the wheel and loyal to the core.

Ability to compromise on practical matters (and who doesn't pout when he doesn't get his own way). *Common sense and intelligence.* These are vital when a girl seeks to follow a guy's lead on a date or in life.

Willingness to change when needed. Stubbornness is unattractive in both genders. *Ability to rightly prioritize his life.* This kind of a fellow can get some traction. *Right kind of ambition; a go-getter.* This applies to education and career, and wise girls notice it.

Most importantly, a strong belief in God and His way of life. Spiritual wishy-washiness is a danger sign to girls with eyes to see.

It was a fascinating discussion. It was sound thinking from a perceptive group. Why not give this list a thought or two of your own? It may prove most useful in making your true dating experiences in family, group and couple settings come alive with value.

Don't sell yourself short. Don't give your heart—or body—to the wrong kind of person or at the wrong time.

Right dating is a fine art that, with practice, builds important life skills. In the middle of that emotional battlefield of the sexes called modern dating grows a perfect rose. Ask God to lead you to it, and when the time is right, with His blessing, to carry it home and make it your own. **GN**



Want to Learn More?

If you like reading our articles for teens and young adults in *The Good News*, be sure to take a look at our companion magazine, *Vertical Thought*, at www.verticalthought.org.

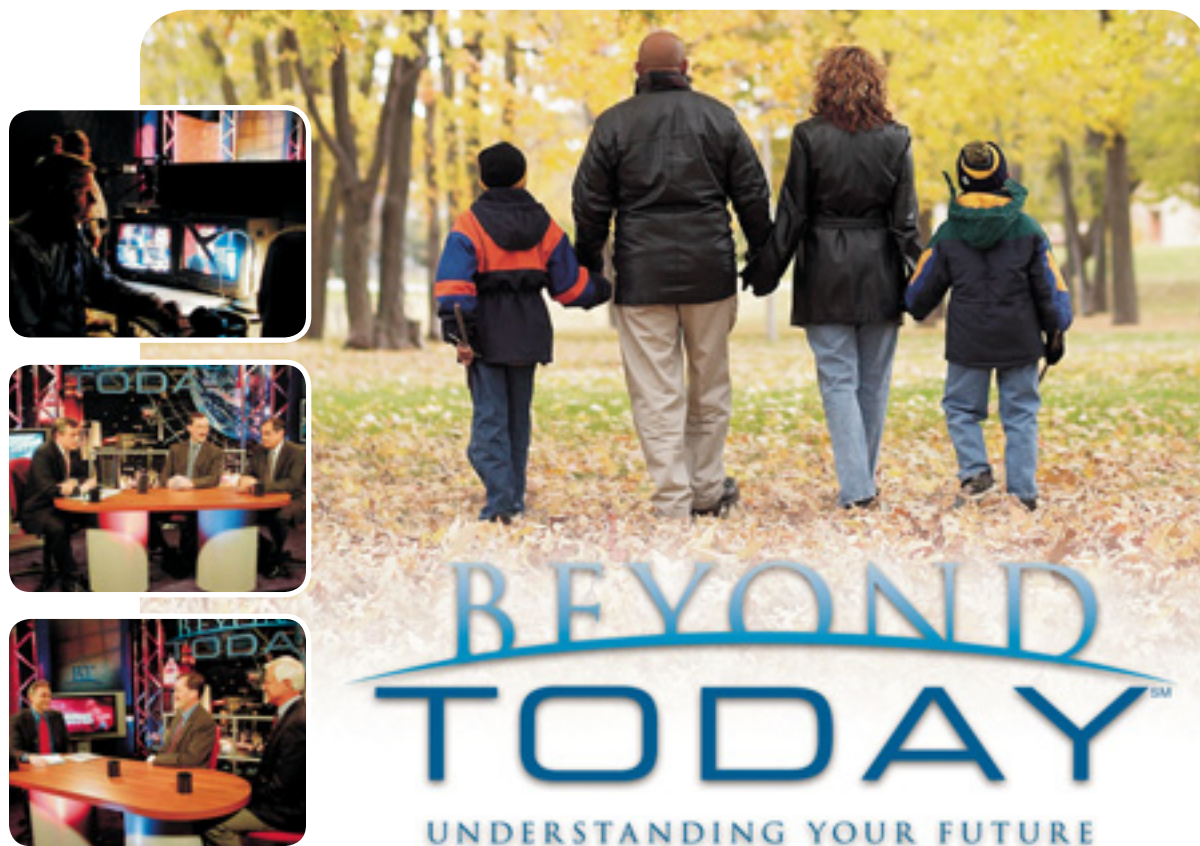
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