

The Good News

November-December 2006

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING



Revitalize Your Marriage: Here's How!

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Surveyors today use highly accurate instruments to map territories and set property boundaries and borders. In olden times people used simple markers such as rock cairns to show such limits.

Civilized cultures have always valued the concept of boundaries to safeguard one's possessions and show respect for the rights of others. We even codify these rights into laws, for without legal standards and judicial structures to secure them, greed and jealousy inevitably tempt some people to connive ways to cheat others out of their property.

Nearly 3,000 years ago Solomon wrote in Proverbs 22:28: "Do not remove the ancient landmark . . ." His wisdom remains relevant to this day. He understood that when we tear down the boundaries that protect lands and property, tensions can set off fighting and even wars.

Why then would we expect anything less when we remove the

The pressing question is whether we see the future: What effects will we wreak on society by removing these ancient landmarks?

"ancient landmarks" that govern marriage and family relationships?

Sociologists universally recognize that healthy, happy marriages and families form the foundation for a strong civilization. These crucially important social units don't materialize accidentally! They are built by husbands and wives and fathers and mothers who cherish and train the next generation to respect the ancient landmarks that were established long ago by the One who perfectly understood the keys to happy living.

Today, though, the question is not whether the Creator's laws governing marriage and family are under attack—that's widely known! No, the pressing question for all humanity is whether we see the future: What effects will we wreak on society by removing these ancient landmarks? Solomon also warned, "Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Proverbs 29:18, American Standard Version).

"Where Divine revelation, and the faithful preaching of the sacred testimonies, are neither revered nor attended," wrote Adam Clarke in his commentary on this verse, "the ruin of that land is at no great distance."

One of the greatest tragedies of recent decades is how so many people have been steadily casting off moral, ethical and even legal restraints—removing those ancient landmarks.

Did we have no vision? Can we not already read the failing report card warning us of the long-term effects of immorality, broken marriages, confused gender roles and fractured families? Are we blind to how we must—*must*—reestablish fundamental godly landmarks such as commitment, faithfulness, reconciliation, respect, love, forgiveness and honor?

No matter how society is going, your marriage and family can be happy! The way is not lost. If you are despairing, there is hope. If your family is already happy, you can preserve that blessing. The lead article in this issue takes you back to some of the ancient landmark principles that build a happy marriage. Just because these precepts are old doesn't mean they're irrelevant!

We would all do well to heed another ancient piece of advice found in Jeremiah 6:16: "Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls."

—Clyde Kilough, Church president

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Church president: Clyde Kilough *Media operation manager:* Peter Eddington *Managing editor:* Scott Ashley *Senior writers:* Jerold Aust, Roger Foster, Melvin Rhodes, Tom Robinson, John Ross Schroeder *Art director:* Shaun Venish *Circulation manager:* John LaBissoniere *Editorial reviewers:* John Bald, Bruce Gore, Paul Kieffer, Graemme Marshall, Richard Thompson, David Treybig, Lyle Wely

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NORTH, SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

United States: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 Web site: www.gnmagazine.org E-mail: info@ucg.org

Canada: United Church of God—Canada, Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada
Phone: (905) 876-9966, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 876-0569 Web site: www.ucg.ca

Bahamas: United Church of God, P.O. Box N8873, Nassau, Bahamas
Phone: (242) 324-3169 Fax: (242) 364-5566

Martinique: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France

Spanish-speaking areas: Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 E-mail: info@ucg.org

EUROPE

British Isles: United Church of God, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts, WD19 6FZ, England
Phone: 020-8386-8467 Fax: 020-8386-1999 Web site: www.goodnews.org.uk

France: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France

Germany: Vereinte Kirche Gottes/Gute Nachrichten, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany
Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637

Italy: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24121 Bergamo Centro, Italy
Phone and Fax: (+39) 035 4523573 Web site: www.labuonanotizia.org E-mail: info@labuonanotizia.org

Netherlands: P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, Netherlands

Scandinavia: Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 3535, 111 74 Stockholm, Sweden
Phone: +44 20 8386-8467 Fax: 0046 0142 10340 E-mail: [svrige@ucg.org](mailto: sverige@ucg.org)

AFRICA

East Africa—Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda: United Church of God—East Africa
P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200, Kenya E-mail: kenya@ucg.org Web site: www.ucgeastafrica.org

Ghana: P.O. Box 3805, Kumasi, Ghana E-mail: ghana@ucg.org

Malawi: P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi Phone: (02) 226076 E-mail: malawi@ucg.org

Mauritius: P.O. Box 53, Quatre Bornes, Mauritius E-mail: mauritius@ucg.org

Nigeria: United Church of God—Nigeria, P.O. Box 2265 Somolu, Lagos, Nigeria

Phone: 01-8113644 Web site: www.ucgnigeria.org E-mail: nigeria@ucg.org

South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland:

United Church of God—Southern Africa, P.O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East London 5205, South Africa
Phone and Fax: 043 748-1694 Web site: www.ucg-rsa.org

Zambia: P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia Phone: (02) 226076 E-mail: zambia@ucg.org

Zimbabwe: P.O. Box 928, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe Phone: 011716273 E-mail: zimbabwe@ucg.org

PACIFIC REGION

Australia and Papua New Guinea: United Church of God—Australia
GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia Phone: 07 55 202 111 Free call: 1800 356 202
Fax: 07 55 202 122 Web site: www.ucg.org.au E-mail: info@ucg.org.au

Fiji: United Church of God, P.O. Box 11081, Laucala Beach Estate, Suva, Fiji

New Zealand: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Auckland 1015, New Zealand

Phone: Toll-free 0508-463-763

Tonga: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 2617, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

ASIA

All except Philippines: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 E-mail: info@ucg.org

Philippines: P.O. Box 81840, DCCPO, 8000 Davao City, Philippines Phone and fax: +63 82 224-4444
Cell/text: +63 918-904-4444 Web site: www.ucg.org.ph E-mail: info@ucg.org.ph

ALL AREAS AND NATIONS NOT LISTED

United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.

Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 E-mail: info@ucg.org

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Revitalize Your Marriage: Here's How!

After the husband and wife say, "I do," they go off into the sunset assuming their marriage will remain as it feels at that moment. But when the honeymoon wears off, they may begin thinking, "Maybe I don't." Why does this happen, and how can we make love last?

by Jerold Aust

John and Laura were two of the happiest people on earth the day they were married. It was the perfect outdoor wedding—the sun was shining brightly; puffy white clouds floated lazily overhead. Birds were singing their lilting songs, and the lush green grass under the couple's feet seemed like an exquisite carpet laid out for royalty.

The wedding went off without a hitch, and everyone present felt good to be a part of this wonderful event. John and Laura went off on their honeymoon, flush with excitement about spending the rest of their lives together.

There is a new feeling of optimism about marriage today and a growing realization that healthy marriages are of the utmost importance for the general well-being of our society.

Rarely were there any cross words between them, and it seemed it would be this way the rest of their lives. Within two years, they had their first child, over whom they doted. Two more children were added to their happy family over the next few years and life continued to get better and better.

One day, the children grew up, finished high school and left for college. John and Laura experienced, for the first time, the hollow feeling of the empty nest.

That's when things changed. Now Laura began to see John's shortcomings in a way she hadn't before. She let John know about her thoughts, which didn't sit well with him. John began to see Laura as a complainer; his wife suddenly seemed to be ungrateful for all the hard work he had done to earn a good living for the family.

This was more than a midlife crisis. Their thoughts and words were sometimes harsh and critical of each other, and this began to erode the close relationship they had developed over the years. Would their marriage

last? Could their marriage be improved to make it last, as the wedding ceremony's words said, "til death do us part"?

The state of marriage today

We can find literally shelves of books and magazine articles that focus on

the wonderful institution of marriage. Many are dedicated to the proposition that marriage is very important and if our marriage is faltering, we can take steps to steady and improve it.

David Popenoe, a professor of sociology at Rutgers University and codirector of the National Marriage Project, explains in the forward to a helpful book on marriage, how the marriage relationship has suffered in the past few years:

"In the early 1950s, the chance that a wedding would ultimately lead to divorce was less than 20 percent. Now it is around 50 percent! Despite these figures, there is a new feeling of optimism about marriage today, and a growing realization that healthy marriages are of the utmost importance—for individual happiness, for children, and for the general well-being of our society" (*Seven Secrets of a Happy*

Marriage, 2002, pp. v-vi).

What a world we live in today! Technology and transportation have catapulted us into a new and busier lifestyle that



has cost us dearly on the home front. We've reinvented ourselves, accepting the idea that the busier we are, the better off and happier we must be.

But what price are we paying when it comes to peace, harmony and happiness in marriage?

"The most convincing explanations for why the divorce rate has climbed so fast revolve around this fact that the concept of marriage itself has changed. A hundred years ago marriage was organized in terms of family connections, economic dependence and survival, and largely unbreakable religious and legal covenants. Today, marriage is focused far more on the pursuit of intimacy and companionship.

"Whereas once we looked for a mate who could be a reliable coworker in the struggle through life, today we look for a

Four Words That Can Transform a Troubled Marriage

Two short words can make big improvements in any marriage: "I'm sorry." When a husband and wife disagree on some issue they think is important to their marriage and family, it's easy to turn to denigrating one another's personality or character, or both. This is a tough time for both husband and wife, for suddenly the peace and harmony they have enjoyed in an otherwise good relationship is taken away.

Filling that vacuum are harsh words delivered in harsh voices, usually until one of the spouses determines to no longer engage in such meaningless, destructive venting.

Peace cannot grow in such poisoned ground of the mind and heart. But the moment the husband or wife, or both, sincerely say the words "I'm sorry," healing has a chance to enter and begin to salve the emotional wounds.



Generally husbands and wives don't vent their emotions toward one another unless they feel threatened in some way. Perhaps they feel their self-worth is being questioned or they have a perception that their mates don't respect them. Some of these perceptions might be real; others more likely are imagined. Still, "I'm sorry" is a powerful healing balm that can be placed over hurt and wounded feelings.

Two other short words go a long way toward creating credibility: "Thank you." There may be dozens of times each day when we should say "thank you" and we don't. We're either too busy, preoccupied with our own thoughts or feelings, or maybe we're unknowingly insensitive to the good deeds done by our mate. When your mate does anything in or out of the home that improves your situation, then is the time to say, "Thank you."

Too often we take one another for granted, jaded by deeds that have become expectations and assumptions. "Thank you" is a phrase that any of us can say that can help improve and revive our marriage. Say it once and reap the blessings. Say it often and you will enrich your marriage greatly!

best friend, a soulmate, who will make us feel emotionally fulfilled. Divorce used to take place only when a spouse became effectively incapacitated in some way; today, divorce takes place when we find ourselves 'falling out of love.' Certainly, though, people's emotions are not the most stable or reliable aspects of human nature and, as a result, modern marriage has become more fragile" (ibid., p. vi-vii).

Eroding factors

Dr. Popenoe touched on a key factor in the marriage relationship when he observed that "people's emotions are not the most stable or reliable aspects of human nature." Emotion is a wonderful part of human life.



It helps motivate people to get things done and to act on something rather than remain indifferent.

But an inappropriate emotional response to a particular situation can hurt not only the other person but also the person who has responded inappropriately. For example, a husband may think that he's helping his wife by commenting on her dress or hair, either when she asks for his thoughts or especially when she hasn't. The wife may then react emotionally in a way that surprises her husband, when all he intended was to be helpful.

In somewhat similar circumstances a wife might think she's helping her husband by reminding him of something he should be doing. The husband may then also react in a way that seems hurtful to his wife, when all she wanted was to be helpful.

No wonder, as Dr. Popenoe observed, "people's emotions are not the most stable or reliable aspects of human nature"!

Examples of marital improvement

Jack and Karen thought that after 20 years of marriage they knew one another.

Sometimes when they were discussing something, Karen would finish the sentence Jack had started. Occasionally Jack also tacked on the end of a thought that Karen had started.

If things were on an even keel with them at the time, each would simply acknowledge that is what he or she thought. If, on the other hand, Karen or Jack felt misunderstood and challenged, each one's reaction wasn't so pleasant or harmonious.

Such incidents could snowball. Each negative reaction would be met with an opposite reaction of greater force. Finally, though, they agreed to "fight fair" and stop picking at one another to get the upper hand for the moment. Instead, if one or the other reacted emotionally in a wrong way, they would take a break from each other and separate momentarily to regroup their thoughts.

This took sacrifice by both parties, but



it began to enrich their marriage, and they found that their love for one another was still just beneath the surface.

Gary and Deana spent their first 15 years of marriage communicating with one another like two lovebirds. They discussed anything and everything, never failing to enjoy a good conversation with each other.

But incrementally they began to discuss things less and less. Eventually a pall of silence began to settle over their otherwise happy home. Gone were the natural responses, the laughter and the good feelings of close companionship.

Deana seemed to notice the difference earlier, or at least she mentioned it first. Gary knew something was changing in their relationship, but he attributed it to knowing one another for so long.

Finally, when they decided to sit down and talk about it, they discovered that the television and their jobs were substituting for their formerly close relationship.

So they worked out a plan. They decided to start dating again, going out for a nice dinner together to help restore their communication. The television was shut off except at times when they could enjoy it together. And if there was something that one wanted to watch and the other didn't, they would talk about that too.

They also decided to "like their jobs, and love each other." Before long they had stirred up their relationship to how it once had been, and they were chattering back and forth, comfortably and with renewed satisfaction.

Don and Ellen felt they had a good relationship, which they had enjoyed for 12 years. But there was one thing in their marriage that they couldn't quite agree on: money. Ellen, like many wives, valued financial security. Don thought that as long as he was young and healthy, money was made to be spent. "After all," he remarked, "you can't take it with you."

Money, or the occasional lack of it,

that could use a little work. Here are some practical tips that can help you revitalize your marriage and strengthen the bonds of love.

• **Ask yourself what drew you to your mate.** Think back to the time you first met your husband or wife and you just knew that he or she was the right one for you. So you pulled out all stops and decided to do your best to make this relationship a lasting one. The things you saw in each other were the things you wanted in your future mate.

Time has passed since those days, and with a much busier life now it's easy to get caught

had your first baby boy or girl. The birth of your firstborn was so dramatic, so filled with emotion, something you had never experienced before.

When other children came along, each one added in a special way to your family. Recall and discuss the beginning of your family and the incredible joys that came with that wonderful time.

• **Review the growth of your family members and where they are today.** As time moved on, your



It's a rare marriage that doesn't have some rough spots that could use a little work. Here are some practical tips that can help you revitalize your marriage and strengthen the bonds of love.

began to gnaw at their relationship. They decided to do something about it and began reading some self-help material on curing their financial differences. Soon they realized that values were more important than money and "stuff."

Their plan came down to three things.

First, they would consider family values above all else, such as eating more and better meals at home (and spending less on eating out), and think more about what was best for the family.

Second, they would cut up the credit cards, except for one that they would use only in an emergency. They then set about saving for things they really needed, and not just wanted. This helped them to appreciate what they purchased.

Third, they agreed not to revolve their lives around "stuff" just to keep up with the Joneses. Before long, their relationship blossomed even more, and they began to realize how important this was as an example to their children.

How-to tips that can strengthen a marriage

Maybe these situations sound familiar to you, or maybe not. But it's a rare marriage that doesn't have some rough spots

up in work, hobbies, recreation and other activities. Considering what drew you to your mate in the first place helps you think about those qualities and be thankful for them. That's a good place to begin rejuvenating your relationship.

• **Restore the love you had when there were only two of you.** After you have revisited the exciting time in which you were drawn to your mate, set yourself to restore the love you had when you dated one another, talked about things you both enjoyed and even discussed what each of you expected in your marriage.

Now's the time to go out with your husband or wife on a date and say all those wonderful words you said before you were married! Now is the time to restore that love you once enjoyed with candlelight dinners, music, time together and delightful conversations.

• **Recall the beginning of your family and the joys of that time.** Advance the time frame a little and recall those tremendously exciting times when you

children grew up and each one was different. Their personalities were different and their gifts and desires differed far more than you could have imagined.

You worked through those wonderful times and allowed each child to realize his or her potential. So talk about them, discuss them and share your thankfulness for their good qualities today.

• **Communication is a two-way street.** There's a truism about communication between two people: It goes both ways. If a husband thinks that communication in a marriage means that he talks and she listens, you can expect difficulties. If a wife thinks that communication means for her husband to learn from her intuition, she may be forfeiting his logic (or vice versa).

Both husband and wife should realize the great potential of good communication—that there are great blessings in both speaking and listening.

• **"Fight fair" by addressing issues**

rather than personalities. No marriage will benefit from fighting, especially when the fighting focuses on each other's personality and character. Carping, nagging, belittling and bullying do not belong in a good marriage. The term "fight fair" refers to addressing *issues*, not personalities. If a husband and wife disagree on an issue, they should be sure to focus on *the issue* and *not* each one's perception of the other's personality or character.

Besides, one or both might not perceive the other person accurately. How many times have you felt that your mate did not perceive you correctly? Think about that the next time you disagree on an issue of importance. Each mate should give a wide berth to attacks on personality and character. When you disagree, pause and take the time to discuss the issue you are disagreeing about.

• **Be sure you make up.** What does it really take? Some people have kidded that they love to fight because it's so much fun to make up. Those who actually practice this are playing "marriage roulette," though, because the more one demeans his or her partner's character, the more emotional scars remain.

Words are powerful. Damaging words hurt terribly. If you don't believe it, consider this: Why is it that you always seem to remember the damaging, thoughtless character assassinations others have inflicted on you in past years?

Never demean one another's character or belittle the other's personality. Instead, try a peaceful approach and encouragement. Always look for the good in him or her. Compliment your mate's personality and character, for you are now one and no longer two (Genesis 2:24), and no one ever hated his own flesh (Ephesians 5:29).

Some keys to making up are covered in the sidebar "Four Words That Can Transform a Troubled Marriage" on page 5.

• **Practice sacrifice and service.** Frankly, the debilitating state of marriage today is often fueled by one or both partners' selfishness and desire for instant gratification. After all, television programs, movies, music and immoral or amoral publications are pervasive, and they do have terrible effects on society—including the institution of marriage.

Truly happy and satisfying marriages are based on *giving*, not on *getting*. When both mates sacrifice for each other and begin to serve one another, their marriage improves overnight. This one act alone can turn a marriage around almost instantly. Don't

get caught up in the trap of this world's hedonistic and amoral notions. It doesn't make any difference if most people live this way. If millions of people do a stupid thing, it's still stupid.

• **Look on your mate's strengths and let him or her know you appreciate them.** What are your wife's strengths? Is she good with domestic things like cooking you a great meal? Is she good at helping you around the house, or shopping, or finances, or giving you insight as to your job or other commitments? Is she hospitable and helpful to others?

Whatever her strengths, let her know you appreciate them. And you can be sure she has strengths that help make your marriage stronger.

What are your husband's strengths? Is he a good provider, a good father and one who helps you around the house? Whatever his strengths—and he has some!—let him know that you appreciate them. Don't be abstract in telling your mate you appreciate his or her strengths; be specific and do this often—*very* often.

• **Have a relationship goal bigger than you.**

Your Bible speaks about the marriage relationship in a number of places. One of the most prominent passages on how to have a happy marriage is found in Ephesians 5:22-33. Here the apostle Paul gives both husbands and wives spiritual directives on how they should care for and respect each other. At the end of this chapter, Paul shows how the marriage of a man and woman is a type of the ultimate marriage between Christ and His Church, His true followers.

Many married couples might not be aware of the marriage relationship goal, its ultimate type and purpose. The fact is that marriage between a husband and wife is a type of Jesus Christ marrying the Church at His return to earth (Revelation 19:7-9). Armed with this knowledge, the husband and wife are better motivated to follow the apostle Paul's marital instruction in Ephesians 5.

• **Find a need in your marriage and fill it.** How often do we come to expect certain things that either the husband or wife do within the marriage, day after day? Surprise one another by looking for some need in your marriage. Don't worry that you won't find something that your wife or husband needs. There are many needs, too often left unfulfilled. Then fill that need without expecting anything in return. You'll be amazed how this will revitalize

the love and respect your mate has for you.

• **Be your husband's or wife's defender.** Wives or husbands, have you ever been in a group where some person says something insensitive about your mate? If that happens, what do you do?

It is very important to protect your mate in the company of others, and even more so in his or her absence. This will get around, and you will also set a good example for other couples.

• **Remember to do the little things.**

It's easy to do big things for others, like buy an expensive gift for your wife or husband, take him or her out for an expensive dinner or splurge on an expensive entertainment outing. But what about the little things in life, like listening to your mate to find out the little things he or she would like you to do?

Your wife may want you to clean off your shoes before coming into the house. Your husband may want you to not remind him over and over of things that he does already. Think about the little things that can be improved in your marriage and try your best to do them.

Make a list so you don't forget them. Sit down at the kitchen table and ask each other some of the little things the other would like you to do. Discuss them calmly and peacefully, remembering that you are both dedicating yourselves to the happiness of your mate. The little things truly do mean a lot.

A marriage made in heaven?

One thing every married couple should understand: A marriage is not naturally "made in heaven," with everything going perfectly.

In fact, it's impossible to enjoy a perfect marriage here on earth if one doesn't

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Recommended Reading

Few people realize it, but they already own one of the world's best books on marriage—the Bible! It's packed with lots of practical, helpful advice on all aspects of life, including marriage. And we can rest assured that it's good advice because, after all, its ultimate Author is the One who created marriage, our almighty and all-knowing Creator God! We've gathered much of the Bible's best guidance on the subject into a free booklet, *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. Request or download your free copy today!



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Has World War III Already Begun?

Five years after the devastating Sept. 11 attacks, the West remains far from where it should be in the growing conflict between the Western democracies and radical Islam.

Every August I take a small group of young people from North America to Ghana, in West Africa, to help with an annual summer camp sponsored by the United Church of God, the publisher of this magazine.

This year our journey was set to begin on Thursday, Aug. 10.

That evening we were all due to fly from various cities across the United States to London's Heathrow Airport. From there we would all be going to Accra, Ghana, on the same plane. There was only one exception, a young lady who was already in Europe visiting family would meet us in Ghana.

On that particular Thursday morning, I began my day by watching the world news on BBC America, a cable channel available throughout the United States.

The first item of news immediately caught my attention. London's Heathrow Airport was in chaos due to a terrorist scare. More than 20 suspected terrorists had been arrested, thought to be part of a plot to blow up 10 to 15 passenger jets headed toward U.S. cities, planes all set to depart from Heathrow.

If successful, the carnage could have been considerably greater than on Sept. 11, with a death toll estimated to be in the thousands.

Historian Niall Ferguson wrote in the London *Sunday Telegraph* Aug. 27 that, if successful, such an attack could have triggered a civil war in Britain ("Imagine the Bombs Had Gone Off: How Would Britain Have Changed?").

What it did trigger was chaos and confusion that continued for days. Out of our group of five young adults from America who passed through Heathrow, one was delayed for 24 hours while the other four did not see their luggage again for 10 days or more. In the case of one, the luggage was returned to the United States and never made it to Ghana.

Needless to say, the whole incident was a great inconvenience for us and for countless others.

Restrictions on the contents of hand

luggage left tens of thousands of businessmen and women unable to take laptop computers or mobile phones on board with them. I knew I couldn't take any liquids on board with me, but was surprised to have a magazine and newspaper confiscated.

Is history repeating itself?

Such is the age in which we live, one changed dramatically in the last five years—and likely to change even more dramatically in the years ahead!

The terrorist scare came only 13 months after the London terror attacks on the city's transportation system, attacks that left 56 dead.

Around the time of the

Spanish and Italians are all in decline.

His stark warning reminds us of the first Winston Churchill, who 70 years ago persistently warned the British people of the growing threat from Nazi Germany, a threat most people wanted to ignore.



Once again, huge numbers of people seem to be in denial of the growing threat to their peace and security, this time from global jihadists who are determined to bring about a clash of civilizations between the West and Islam.

anniversary of those attacks, a number of British papers polled Muslims. The results revealed that a significant percentage of British-born Muslims, most of them children of immigrants from developing countries, are supportive of the goals and methods of radical Islamic terrorist groups.

Unsurprisingly, *The Sunday Telegraph's* front page highlighted the fact that 53 percent of Britons now see Islam as a threat to their way of life. Not radical Islam, but *Islam itself*.

Winston Churchill III, a member of the British parliament and grandson of the famous World War II leader, warned on the BBC World Service on the anniversary of the July 7 bombings that this threat from radical Islam is growing, not just in Britain but throughout Western Europe. Demographic trends show a rapidly growing Muslim population in many countries, including the United States, while native Brits, Germans, French,

While Germany rapidly rearmed as it built up its industrial might following defeat in World War I and subsequent economic upheavals, Churchill's was a lone voice across the English Channel warning that the rise of Germany posed a grave threat to Britain and its empire.

Sadly, Churchill was proved correct. The Second World War was the result, a war formally declared on Germany by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain on Sept. 3, 1939. Less than a year earlier, after meeting with German Chancellor Adolf Hitler in Munich, Chamberlain had infamously assured the world of "peace in our time."

Although all the nations of the British Empire and Commonwealth, a quarter of the world's people, entered the war on Britain's side almost immediately, the United States stayed out of it until the Pearl Harbor attack 27 months later. The Japanese attack on the U.S. Pacific fleet

on Dec. 7, 1941, brought America into the war as a combatant.

But in reality, this worldwide conflict actually began much earlier, with the Japanese invasion of China in 1931. It could even be said that the defeat of Germany in World War I and the subsequent peace treaty made World War II inevitable. The rise of fascism in Italy in 1922 was another stepping-stone toward war in Europe.

While Churchill kept up his warnings during his “wilderness years,” most people remained oblivious to what was happening



in the world around them and to the growing threat to their peace and security.

As it was in the 1930s, so it is today, 70 years later.

Once again, huge numbers of people seem to be in denial of the growing threat to their peace and security, this time from global jihadists who are determined to bring about a clash of civilizations between the West and Islam, with the ultimate goal of forcing everyone on the planet to accept Islam. And *Islam*, we might remind ourselves, means

“submission”—submission to the will of Allah.

When did World War III begin?

Military historian Max Boot sums up the sobering situation today, five years after Sept. 11, 2001: “Iraq is slipping deeper into the blood-red waters of civil strife. The Taliban is resurgent in Afghanistan. Hizballah is crowing in the wake of Israel’s inconclusive attacks. Hamas runs the Palestinian Authority. Iran is drawing closer to acquiring nuclear weapons.

Osama bin Laden and his top deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, continue to taunt the West with messages of defiance, as jihadist cells from London to Lahore plot fresh attacks” (“It’s Not Over Yet,” *Time*, Sept. 11).

Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, wrote in the Sept. 7 issue of *The Wall Street Journal*: “Five years have passed since the horrific attack on our American homeland, and, still, there is one serious, undeniable fact we have yet to confront: We are, today, not where we wanted to be and nowhere near where we need to be” (“Bush and Lincoln”).

Interviewed on *The Journal Editorial Report* on Fox News Sept. 2, Amir Taheri, former editor of *Kayhan*, Iran’s largest daily newspaper, was asked if current developments were a prelude to World War III.

His response was that World War III actually began in 1979, when the Iranian revolution overthrew the pro-Western shah of Iran and replaced him with the anti-Western, theocratic Islamic Republic of Iran. Ever since, Iran has devoted itself to the spread of militant Islam and the defeat of “the Great Satan” (the United States) and “the Little Satans” (Britain and Israel).

Prior to World War II the world saw plenty of warning signs of what was coming. These included the rise of fascism

from 1922 on, Japan’s invasion of China in 1931, the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935, the German invasions of the Rhineland (1936), Austria and Czechoslovakia (1938), government-sanctioned attacks on Jews, not to mention the rising rhetoric of the antidemocratic forces in the nations that would soon form the Axis Powers.

But people in the democratic West wanted to believe all would be well and ignored the warning signs.

We’ve seen the same pattern since 1979 with the rise of radical Islam. The 1979 seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran and the holding hostage of dozens of American diplomatic personnel there for 444 days in direct contravention of international law, the founding of Hezbollah and the blowing up of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, the first attempt to bring down the World Trade Center 10 years later, attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the attack on the USS *Cole* in 2000, and then the 9/11 attacks all clearly show the jihadists’ intentions.

It certainly didn’t end there. Since then attacks have killed or injured more than 410 in Bali, Indonesia, in October 2002; 2,200 in Madrid, Spain, in March 2004; 340 in Beslan, Russia, in September 2004; 750 in London in July 2005; another 150 in Bali in October 2005 and almost 1,000 in Bombay in July 2006. This doesn’t include countless smaller attacks or plots disrupted before they could be carried out.

When did World War III begin? In the minds of the radical Islamists, the global jihadists, it clearly began a long time ago!

In this global conflict, the West remains at a disadvantage. One reason for this is the deep cultural and political divisions that exist in many Western nations. Jesus Christ observed in Matthew 12:25 that a house divided against itself cannot stand: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.” With this in mind, clearly the West as it is cannot win the current conflict.

America clearly divided over radical Islam

Mr. Gingrich observed that the United States has divided into three factions. There are those who “try to find some explainable way to avoid reality while advocating return to ‘normalcy,’ and promoting a policy of weakness and

withdrawal abroad.” A second group believes that the threat is very real but that America can handle it.

Drawing a parallel with the crisis confronting Abraham Lincoln in the Civil War, Mr. Gingrich shows that victory for the Union was not achieved until President Lincoln chose the third course: “Lincoln agonizingly concluded that a third faction had the right strategy for victory. This group’s strategy demanded reorganizing everything as needed, intensifying the war, and bringing the full might of the industrial North to bear until the war was won.”

In other words, Mr. Gingrich was saying the struggle against radical Islam should be the United States’ number one priority.

Few in the West fully realize the religious element involved in this conflict. As Karen Armstrong, a recognized expert on fundamentalism and the author of a number of books on Islam, put it on a Canadian television program last year, “In the 1960s everybody thought religion was passé,” a thing of the past. “Now at the beginning of the 21st century we see that nothing is more important!”

It is precisely because the West does not take religion seriously that it is at a distinct disadvantage. There is a failure at the deepest level to understand radical Islam.

Historical continuum of conflict

Pope Benedict XVI caused a furor when he touched on this during a visit to his Bavarian homeland on Sept. 14. He quoted a 14th-century emperor who said, “Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.”

The Byzantine emperor’s words turned out to also be quite prophetic—Muslim forces destroyed the Byzantine Empire in the following century, taking control of the capital city of Constantinople in 1453, extinguishing the Roman Empire in the East.

Islamic forces continued to expand after that conquest. In the following century they reached the gates of Vienna in the very heart of Europe. In two attempts to take the city they were repulsed by a multinational force of Europeans united by a common Catholic faith.

This was not the first time that the Church of Rome was a significant factor in fighting Islamic expansionism. In A.D. 800 the pope crowned Charlemagne Holy Roman emperor. Charlemagne’s grandfather, Charles Martel, had defeated Muslim forces at the gates of Paris in 732, exactly

100 years after the death of the prophet Muhammad.

Only a revived Western Roman Empire seemed able to unite the Catholic nations of Europe against both internal and external threats. Three centuries later another pope, Urban II, called on the Catholic countries of Europe to launch a “crusade” to recapture the Holy Land from Islam, a massive effort that led to two centuries of conflict between Catholic Europe and the Islamic world.

No country or organization on earth has had more experience battling against Islam than the papacy!

Following the pope’s comments in Bavaria, a spokesman for the Pakistani parliament warned of a “clash of civilizations” between the West and Islam along the lines of earlier clashes between the two that have taken place down through the centuries.

A world-shaking conflict to come

Believe it or not, the Bible also warns of this, a coming clash between a revived Roman Empire, a military and political alliance that Scripture refers to as “the Beast,” and “the king of the South,” a leader who from all appearances will emerge from the Islamic world.

Revelation 17 shows that the Beast power, a successor to the ancient Roman Empire, will come about very rapidly: “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast” (Revelation 17:12-13).

The same chapter shows that the Roman church will be heavily involved in this final revival of the Roman Empire (verse 9).

In the Old Testament book of Daniel, we read of a clash between this power, called “the king of the North,” and “the king of the South.” Daniel 11:40 reveals that “at the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships.”

In the same month that the pope made his comments on the nature of Islam, a significant European presence was once again taking shape in the Middle East at the request of the Israeli and Lebanese governments. Following their recent monthlong conflict, a UN-sponsored peacekeeping force is being deployed in southern Lebanon with the aim of preventing Hezbollah

from attacking Israel and averting another conflict between Israel and Lebanon.

“It’s Europe’s moment in the Arab-Israeli arena,” says former U.S. ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk, who now heads a Washington, D.C., think tank (“Just a Moment, or Possibly More,” *The Economist*, Sept. 2).

In a further sign of a buildup toward greater conflict, “the extraordinary buildup of European naval and military strength in and around Lebanon’s shores is way out of proportion for the task the European contingents . . . have undertaken: to create a buffer between Israel and Hizballah . . .

“It is linked to the general anticipation of a military clash between the United States and Israel, on one side, and Iran and possibly Syria on the other” (“Lebanese Security’ Is the Pretext for the Naval Babel Around Lebanon’s Shores,” www.debka.com, Sept. 4).

Implicit in this commentary is the fact that Europe and America continue to be in disagreement over the Middle East.

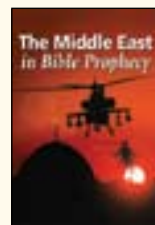
Clearly there is great danger of the continuing conflict between the West and Islam worsening yet further.

Christians know that the prophesied end-time events center on the Middle East. They can also be reassured by the fact that ultimately there will be peace in this area and throughout the world. A central focus of Bible prophecy is the coming Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14). Jesus Christ is set to return to save humanity from itself (Matthew 24:22).

The “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6) will return to firmly establish His Kingdom. He will “judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off” and “they shall beat their swords into plowshares” (Micah 4:3). In the coming Kingdom of God, we will see an end to the constant conflict between Islam and the West. **GN**

Recommended Reading

Why is the Middle East the source of so much hatred and hostility? Why does news from this long-troubled region dominate our headlines? Do Bible history and prophecy help provide the answers? You won’t understand where events in the Middle East are heading from your newspaper or TV nightly news. But you can discover them in the pages of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. Request or download your free copy of this eye-opening booklet today!



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God, Science and the Bible

News from the world of science about God and the Bible

by Mario Seiglie, Tom Robinson and Scott Ashley

The mystery of dark matter

The more scientists study the universe, the stranger it sometimes seems.

For instance, did you know that approximately 96 percent of the forces that sustain the universe is not produced by ordinary matter and energy?

Since 1933, scientists have measured the gravitational force holding galactic clusters, galaxies and solar systems together and have determined that only about 4 percent of it consists of ordinary matter. In other words, if you piled up all the known matter in the universe—all the stars, planets, cosmic dust and gases—and measured the gravitational effect their combined mass exerts, it would be only about 4 percent of the force necessary to hold things together!

Where is the remaining 96 percent of the missing mass, scientists ask? This has been a real puzzle for astronomers. One remarked that this is a case not of the dog wagging the tail, but the tail wagging the dog. It's as if more than 90 percent of the universe consisted of something other than atoms and photons, the bedrock of ordinary matter and energy.

The unseen force holding things together, scientists conclude, must be produced by other things—which, for lack of better terms, are classed as “dark matter” and “dark energy” (“dark” meaning they emit no radiation directly perceptible to us, whether visible light or otherwise).

Dark matter, the scientists believe, coexists with normal matter, but they still don't know what it is. Even stranger than dark matter is dark energy, for it appears to work across large distances and in an opposite way to

gravity. This antigravity force seems responsible for the accelerating pace of the universe's ongoing expansion.

Just recently, the existence of dark matter appears to have been substantiated when astronomers observed two large clusters of galaxies passing through each other. Dark matter and normal matter seem to have been wrenched apart by the tremendous collision of these two galactic clusters. The discovery, using NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory and other telescopes, provides supporting evidence for dark matter.

“A universe that's dominated by dark stuff seems preposterous, so we wanted to test whether there were any basic flaws in our thinking,” said Doug Clowe of the University of Arizona at Tucson and leader of the study. “These results are direct proof that dark matter exists” (NASA news release, Aug. 21).

This finding also backs the notion that Newtonian gravity on earth and in the solar system works on the huge scales of galaxy clusters as well. “We've closed this loophole about gravity, and we've come closer than ever to seeing this invisible matter,” Dr. Clowe said (*ibid.*).

“But observing dark matter and knowing what it is are very different,” cautions an Aug. 23 editorial in *The New York Times*, “and we are nowhere near the latter. Then, beyond the problem of dark matter lies the greater problem of dark energy. This is a mysterious universe, and the more we know about it the more mysterious it seems.”

Hmmm. Dark matter, dark energy—constituting 96 percent of the force that holds things together and more than 10 times the known mass of the universe—yet



imperceptible to scientists with even the best of our modern technologies?

Dare we call this unseen force holding the universe together—brace yourself—*spiritual* in nature?

Isn't it interesting that when we turn to the Bible it says, “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen *were not made of things which are visible*” (Hebrews 11:3, emphasis added throughout).

Then notice what Hebrews 1:1-4 states about Jesus Christ: “God . . . has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He *made* the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and *upholding all things by the word of His power*, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

Where is the missing mass—the so-called dark matter and energy—exerting this enormous force on the entire universe? Is it possible the answer has been hiding in plain sight in Scripture all this time?

Evolution's “vestigial organ” argument debunked

How many have been taught in school about our body's supposed “vestigial organs”? The standard definition of a vestigial organ is a body part that was once useful in a species' ancestral past but has now become virtually useless.

Evolutionists have used the vestigial-organ argument for decades to show the supposed evolution of animal and human bodies. They claimed that vestigial or diminishingly useful organs, which Charles Darwin called rudimentary, proved that bodies had evolved from more primitive forms.

However, research has shown the supposed vestigial organs or structures of the human body—such as the appendix, the tonsils and the tailbone—are not “vestigial” at all, but rather are quite useful and purposeful body structures.

The appendix, probably the prime example of a supposed vestigial organ, is now known to have an important immunological function, especially in the first years of life.

“The appendix, like the once ‘vestigial’ tonsils and adenoids, is a lymphoid organ (part of the body's immune system) which makes antibodies against infections in the digestive system. Believing it to be a useless evolutionary ‘left over,’ many surgeons once removed even the healthy appendix whenever they were in the abdominal cavity. Today, removal of a healthy appendix under most circumstances would be considered medical malpractice” (David Menton, Ph.D., “The Human Tail, and Other Tales of Evolution,” *St. Louis MetroVoice*, January 1994, Vol. 4, No. 1).

The tonsils, long thought to be useless, are now known to have a useful

function in the immune system. They act as a defense mechanism against infection of the upper respiratory tract and perform an important service to the digestive system by filtering out alien materials that may enter the body through the mouth or the nose.

“Doctors once thought tonsils were simply useless evolutionary leftovers and took them out thinking that it could do no harm. Today there is considerable evidence that there are more troubles in the upper respiratory tract *after* tonsil removal than before, and doctors generally agree that simple enlargement of tonsils is hardly an indication for surgery” (J.D. Ratcliff, *Your Body and How it Works*, 1975, p. 137).

The tailbone, properly known as the coccyx, is another supposed example of a vestigial structure that has been found to have a valuable function—especially regarding the ability to sit comfortably. Many people who have had this bone removed have great difficulty sitting.

Moreover, various muscles attached to the tailbone are important for helping bowel and childbirth movements, for supporting internal organs and keeping the entrance of the alimentary canal closed. It also has an important function as a point of insertion for several muscles and ligaments, including the gluteus maximus, which is the large muscle that runs down the back of the thigh and allows us to walk upright.

The list of what were once considered vestigial organs in our body has gone from 100 in the early 20th century to virtually zero in 2006, thanks to more research and discoveries in the fields of human anatomy and physiology. What were once considered virtually useless organs have now proven to be quite useful, yet many school and college textbooks on evolution still continue to use them as evidence of evolutionary theory.

What We Don't Know Can and Will Hurt Us

While technology expands exponentially, the kind of knowledge we urgently need to survive ebbs and wanes. Will you be among those who wait until it's too late?

by John Ross Schroeder

A feature article in *USA Today* tells us, “Most American kids and adults don’t even have a basic knowledge of our Constitution” (Nat Hentoff, “What You Don’t Know Can Hurt You,” July 14). This is virtually the same thing as saying Americans’ grasp of their own history and government is becoming very feeble.

Retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor said some shocking words about modern education: “*Public schools have pretty much stopped teaching government, civics and American history . . . I truly don’t know how long we can survive as a strong nation if our younger citizens don’t understand the nature of our government . . . That is something you have to learn*” (ibid., emphasis added throughout).

Many Americans are also somewhat ignorant of their national heroes. Consider George Washington, called the father of America.

As noted British historian Paul Johnson cannily observed: “George Washington is at present an unfashionable subject in American historical writing. Joseph Ellis [author of *His Excellency George Washington*] points out that ‘any aspiring doctoral candidate who declares an interest in Washington’s career as commander-in-chief or president has inadvertently confessed intellectual bankruptcy.’

“More ‘fashionable’ he says, would be to study ‘ordinary soldiers in his army or the slaves at Mount Vernon’” (“America’s



“Public schools have pretty much stopped teaching government, civics and American history . . . I truly don’t know how long we can survive as a strong nation if our younger citizens don’t understand the nature of our government . . .”

—Retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Conner

Greatest Stroke of Luck,” *The Daily Telegraph*, March 20, 2005).

Political correctness has reached new heights, especially in the academic world.

A small-town, but priceless, education

Some 50 years ago my own experience was not by any means unique, but it apparently would be now.

My junior year in high school (in

Kenedy, Texas) was transformed by a teacher named Leonard Harold Menn. He taught both American and world history in a manner that inspired many of my classmates to hit their history books and bone up on current affairs. We regularly had to write essays on such concepts as the American federal system, the separation of powers and other subjects of a similar nature.

To seniors Mr. Menn taught civics and English IV. We learned the importance of

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government and the U.S. Constitution from this scholarly gentleman who commanded great respect.

Today, however, this type of education is not so readily available to our young people. In a recent American Bar Association poll, fewer than half of the respondents had any idea what the “separation of powers” was all about. Too many Americans don’t know the basics of how their own government operates, whether federal or state. Long-term, this clearly constitutes a serious and disturbing threat to the American democratic way of life.

As another article in *USA Today* explained, “Cocooning is back with a vengeance.” It seems as the world gets scarier and more stressful, more people are turning their homes into entertainment centers and burrowing in with their stuff (Mike Snider, Oct. 5, 2004).

Trivia or truth?

My memory is filled with major league baseball statistics learned in my youth. Their only benefit now is in remembering credit card PINs by association. How many number one hits has Madonna had? Her fans know. We are deeply into trivia today, and its endless availability on the Internet is almost incomprehensible.

Many have cocooned into their own little worlds, whether it’s watching time-wasting soap operas, frittering away money gambling on the Internet or some other useless and at times hurtful pursuit. Meanwhile, essential biblically based spiritual knowledge, also readily available on the Internet, goes begging. It won’t be there forever!

The Hebrew prophet Hosea resolutely recorded God’s warning: “*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge . . . You have forgotten the law of your God*” (Hosea 4:6). A few verses earlier we learn that “there is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed” (verses 1-2).

Does this passage go a long way in describing the state of our Western societies today and how we break the Ten Commandments with impunity?

Understanding our core values

During the recent crisis where terrorists apparently intended to blow up airplanes crossing the Atlantic, British Home Secretary John Reid described the ongoing struggle with international terrorism as one involving “the core values of a free

society.” Yet many of us appear to have forgotten what these really are.

A *Financial Times Magazine* columnist understands that our liberal world “*has raised the pursuit of wealth, hedonism and distraction to great heights,*” but also writes that “the core tenets of a free society are hard to define.” He wonders “how they may be expressed and lived” (Aug. 19).

Jesus Christ was also supremely concerned about core values. He knew exactly what they were from eternity and taught them to His disciples and future apostles.

He further instructed this group of specially chosen men to preach and teach these biblical values to the nations of the world: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, *teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you*” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The knowledge of these core values is far more important than knowing how our respective national governments operate (although this is also essential for our general well-being). Ignorance of God’s law endangers our spiritual salvation. What we don’t know about God and His way of life *can and will hurt us!*

A famine of the Word coming

We need the knowledge of God, and we need it now. The time is prophesied to come when there will be a famine—not of food, but of *God’s Word*. When the knowledge of God is no longer available, people paradoxically will want and search diligently for it. But then it will be too late.

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord GOD, “that *I will send a famine on the land*, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, *but of hearing the words of the LORD*. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, *but shall not find it*” (Amos 8:11-12).

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Why not take advantage of these valuable spiritual resources while they are still available? Then God can say to you as in Jeremiah 33:3, “Call to Me, and I will answer you, *and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.*” **GN**

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A new Middle East peace initiative: Is the time really ripe?

American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has described the present distress as “the birth pangs of a new Middle East.” Former President Bill Clinton indicated that the recent deterioration of conditions in Iraq, Lebanon and Gaza had paradoxically created a climate for “some kind of positive movement to take place” (*Financial Times*, Sept. 20). President George Bush recently said, “Some of the [positive] changes in the Middle East are happening gradually, but they are real” (*USA Today*, Sept. 20).

One journalist recently talked about “a new momentum for a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace settlement out of the ashes of the past several months.”

But are all these comments pie-in-the-sky? Are they just another manifestation of the proverbial triumph of hope over hard experience? True, even the Bible does indicate that conditions are going to come together that may produce a temporary peace that causes world leaders to say, “Peace, peace!” when there is no [real] peace” (Jeremiah 6:14).

However, not all astute observers of the world scene would agree that substantive prospects for peace exist in the Middle East. Consider the views



The sobering possibility is that another global conflict is brewing today—centered on Palestine and Mesopotamia.

of Harvard historian and author Niall Ferguson. He conceives of a conflict there that could spark a global conflagration. Professor Ferguson considers the 20th century to have been the most violent in

the history of humankind and sees the 21st century as beginning to move in the same tragic direction.

He wrote in the September/October issue of *Foreign Affairs*: “Today one region displays in abundance all of the characteristics of the worst conflict zones of the twentieth century. Economic volatility has remained pronounced there even as it has diminished in the rest of the world . . . That place is the Middle East” (emphasis added throughout).

Ferguson concluded his article with these words of warning: “The sobering possibility we urgently need to confront is that another global conflict is brewing today—centered not on Poland or Manchuria, but more likely on Palestine and Mesopotamia.”

Another long-neglected source of wisdom is the Bible. It is full of forewarnings of Armageddon-like conditions that will prevail in the Middle East. Its pages foretell a series of shattering events that will end with the Messiah returning to Jerusalem, from where He will govern the earth—finally ushering in the utopian peace that mankind has so long sought for in vain. To understand how this will come about, request or download our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *USA Today*, *Financial Times*, *Foreign Affairs*.)

Rivals catching up with America

Recent newspaper reports have indicated a certain shift beginning to take place in the world’s economic balance of power. For instance, according to *The Guardian*, “The recent flow of news around the world suggests that the balance of world economic power may finally be swinging away from the United States—the powerhouse of the past decade or more—towards Japan and Europe, which have lagged behind for many years.” China and India are also growing economically at breakneck speed.

Also a recent report from the European Commission stated that Europe was finally beginning to catch up with growth and productivity rates in the United States. The growth rate in Europe has been buoyed up by a resurgent German economy, which had been long arrested by difficult problems with the reunification of West and East Germany following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

One observer stated, “For years we Germans have seen the glass as half-empty; now at long last, it is half full”—reflecting a positive change in German attitudes. (Source: *The Guardian* [London].)



Hatred of Israel and the rise of anti-Semitism

The so-called nonaligned nations recently met in Havana, Cuba, and heartily endorsed one point: their condemnation of Israel.

Elsewhere, Europeans were often in the forefront of criticism of Israel’s conduct of the Lebanese war. Whether in parliaments, on the street or in TV studios, Israel was generally accused of a “disproportionate reaction” and “indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets.” Polls show that many Europeans believe Israel is a greater menace to peace in the world than rogue nations like Iran and North Korea.

According to *The Economist*, “Some Americans blame rising anti-Semitism in Europe” for these attitudes against the state of Israel (Aug. 17). And

although anti-Semitism and broad-based criticism of Israel are not necessarily synonymous, clearly the two do often go hand in hand. For instance, “A group of prominent MPs, alarmed at the rise of anti-Semitism in Britain, will accuse some left-wing activists and Muslim extremists this week of using criticism of Israel as ‘a pretext’ for spreading hatred against British Jews” (*The Observer*, Sept. 3).

According to news sources like *The Times*, synagogues and Jewish citizens have been specifically targeted. Britain has also seen a decided increase in hate mail, verbal harassment, graffiti and vandalism directed at Jews.

A new 58-page House of Commons report showed that “Anti-Semitism in Britain is flourishing and on the rise” (*Jewish Chronicle*, Sept. 8). But Britain is by no means unique. This plague is also rampant through much of the rest of the Europe. (Sources: *The Times*, *The Observer*, *Jewish Chronicle* [all London], *The Economist*.)

The Horn of Africa and Darfur on the road to ruin

Bossaso is a case in point. According to *The Economist*, “Bossaso is an exit point from the Horn of Africa . . . This port in Northern Somalia already has 300,000 people . . . It is a raw place, entrepreneurial, resilient, armed to the teeth. It is also diseased, inadequate and famished.” Islamists are also on the increase there. Already the powerful

Islamic Militia dominates much of the southern part of Somalia.

Despite enormous international pressure on Khartoum, the countdown to carnage and the possibility of a mini-holocaust remains in Darfur. The UN peace plan has been trampled and the Sudanese government rejects UN peacekeepers. Aid groups and charities are also threatened from carrying out their work for those who desperately need help.

Clearly parts of Africa continue in appalling conflict and turmoil, with no end in sight. (Sources: *The Guardian* [London], *Scotland on Sunday*, *The Economist*.)

Incurable TB threatens South Africa

According to *The Guardian*, "Doctors at the Church of Scotland Hospital in Tugela Ferry [in South Africa] were already grappling with the onslaught of AIDS and its partner in death, tuberculosis."

Dr. Tony Noll, chief medical officer at the hospital, is additionally now very concerned about a fresh outbreak of apparently *untreatable* TB. Regular tuberculosis is the single largest killer of those who are

already afflicted with AIDS. One in 10 of the South African population is HIV-positive.

Recently the World Health Organization (WHO) and America's Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have urged quick action in meeting this new drug-resistant strain of TB. We have this stern warning from the head of the research team at Durban's Nelson Mandela School of Medicine in dealing with this fresh outbreak of TB: "I hope and pray that that it dies out. If we do nothing about it and it spreads, it could make bird flu look like a picnic."

Disease epidemics are represented by one of the

four horsemen of the Apocalypse, the book of Revelation. To understand more about what is coming on the world in terms of great pandemics, request or download our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. (Source: *The Guardian* online.)

Will the Pope, Habermas turn Germans to religion?

Pope Benedict XVI's recent message in Germany urged Europe to rethink the notion that secularism and economic progress is the answer to the European Union's future. As a matter of record, some EU parliamentarians have resisted the notion that Christianity should be in the EU charter as the primary religion, thinking this is a veiled strategy to make Catholicism the EU religion and give the Vatican greater influence within the EU.

Europe's dark history of church-state relations has not been forgotten. Still many Germans are now beginning to turn back to religion. "The recent shift of Jürgen Habermas, one of Germany's foremost philosophers, shows evidence of the potential for a rethinking of the public role of religion. A professed secularist who has spent nearly half a century arguing against religiously informed moral argument, he made some arresting statements in his 2004 essay, 'A Time of Transition'" (*Christian Science Monitor*, Sept. 15).

Remarkably, Habermas wrote that "Christianity, and nothing else, is the ultimate foundation of liberty, conscience, human rights, and democracy, the benchmarks of western civilization. To this day, we have no other options [from which to derive these]. We continue to nourish ourselves from this source. Everything else is postmodern chatter" (ibid.). To understand how a religious revival will play a dominant role in Europe's future, request or download your free copy of *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. (Source: *Christian Science Monitor*.)

Digging a moat around Baghdad?

It appears that the Middle Ages moat has not gone out of style. "Iraqi security forces will dig trenches around Baghdad and set up checkpoints along all roads leading into the city to reduce some of the violence plaguing the capital" (*USA Today*, Sept. 15). While it doesn't appear there will be water in these trenches, the purpose is similar: to stop Islamic extremists from driving explosives-laden vehicles into Baghdad, then detonating them and killing dozens of innocent civilians.

The idea of these Islamic extremists is to create more terror; that's why they are called terrorists.

Both Arabic Islamic insurgents and Iran are behind this struggle for power in Iraq, for different reasons.

The fighting focuses on the power struggle between Iraq's Shiite and Sunni Muslims. Both Arabic Islamic insurgents and Iran are behind this struggle for power in Iraq, for different reasons.

The Iranians would like to keep America and coalition forces bogged down in Iraq so Iran can continue to expand its influence throughout the Middle East. Of course, down the road Shiite-dominated Iran would like to link up with a new Shiite-dominated Iraq to form a new regional superpower capable of enforcing its will on the many oil-rich Sunni Muslim governments of the Middle East.

Meanwhile, Arabic Islamic insurgents are likely supported by both Iran and Syria in hopes of derailing the new Iraqi democratic government. Militant Islamic groups hate democracy, believing it would undermine their deep-seated religious beliefs and culture.

For now, in Baghdad, digging trenches around the

Revisiting Gibraltar: Long "siege" finally ended

According to *The Times*, officials "from Britain, Spain and Gibraltar are meeting to sign a deal that is expected effectively to end the siege imposed on the disputed territory by General Franco [of Spain] almost four decades ago." As a result, border restrictions will be eased and thousands of Spanish employees who commute to the Rock of Gibraltar will find their working lives more pleasant than before.

However, more basic issues remain. As *The Guardian* stated, "The symbolic importance of Gibraltar and Spain coming to a first direct agreement will not be lost on Spanish conservatives who want sovereignty returned to Madrid . . . 300 years after it was handed to Britain in the Treaty of Utrecht [1713]."



Gibraltar has been a burr under the saddle between England and Spain ever since the British first captured the Rock in 1704. Historically Gibraltar, guarding the western end of the

Mediterranean Sea, has been one of Britain's crucial strategic possessions and played a significant role in both world wars. If you would like to understand the prophetic importance of the gaining and loss of Britain's seagates, request or download our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *The Times*, *The Guardian* [both London].)

city is necessary to slow down and stop the ruthless bloodshed. The jury is still out on whether such killings can be stopped. To better understand the bloodstained history of the Middle East and where it is leading, request or download your free copy of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. (Source: *USA Today*.)

Photos (from left): iStockphoto/Adam Korzekva, United States Army, iStockphoto/Nick Strubbs



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!

The Top 10 Reasons Why I Don't Celebrate Christmas

It's that time of year again! You'll soon be barraged by the sights, sounds and smells of Christmas. Shoppers will soon go into spending overdrive, and when the bills arrive, some will wonder if it's really worth it. Here's a perspective from one who kicked the Christmas habit.

by Scott Ashley

Christmas is a hugely popular holiday celebrated by some 2 billion people worldwide. It's become such an ingrained part of modern culture that even people in nations with little or no Christian history or tradition are celebrating it in increasing numbers.

Christmas is so big that it plays a key role in the economies of many nations. In the U.S. retail industry, the day after the Thanksgiving holiday is commonly known as "Black Friday"—not because it's bad, but because this marks the beginning of the Christmas shopping season and stores that have been "in the red"—operating at a loss all year—suddenly see their sales shoot up so fast that they are now operating in the black (at a profit) the rest of the year. "Black Friday" is the biggest shopping day of the year due to its Christmas sales.

Christmas is big—*very* big. Schools and colleges commonly take a week or longer break at this time, some businesses shut down to give their employees time off, many families plan trips and get-togethers, and some people darken the door of a church for perhaps the first time all year.

So it's not surprising that I get some pretty shocked looks when I tell people I don't celebrate Christmas. That's pretty unusual for anyone, much less someone who's been an ordained minister for 15 years and edits a Christian magazine.

So what's up with this? Why would *anyone* not want to celebrate Christmas like nearly everybody else? Are there valid reasons for not participating in all the holiday hoopla?

American *Late Show* television program host David Letterman is famous for his "top 10" lists in which he offers pointed commentary about popular culture and

current events. So here I offer my top 10 reasons for not celebrating Christmas!

1 Christmas is driven by commercialism.

It's not that difficult to recognize what really drives the holiday in our age. Cal Thomas, an American syndicated



Why would anyone not want to celebrate Christmas like nearly everybody else? Are there valid reasons for not participating in all the holiday hoopla?

columnist who often writes from a Christian perspective, acknowledged uncomfortable truths about Christmas in a December 2003 column.

"I'm not sure it's worth keeping Christmas anymore," he began, lamenting that the holiday has become a "road show of reindeer, winter scenes, elves and the God substitute, Santa Claus, who serves as a front for merchants seeking to play on the guilt some parents bear for ignoring

their kids the rest of the year."

He asks a great question: "Why participate any longer in this charade where the focal point of worship has shifted from a babe in a manger to a babe in the Victoria's Secret window? . . . No room in the inn has been replaced by no room in the mall parking lot."

But perhaps his most insightful statement is this: "It's instructive how just one season away from lusting after material things can break the habit. It's something like liberation from an addiction or lifestyle choice. Being away from it can cause one to realize the behavior is neither missed nor needed for fulfillment and enjoyment."

Having said good-bye to the Christmas habit several decades ago, I couldn't have said it better myself!

2 Christmas is nowhere mentioned in the Bible.

This is rather obvious, but most people never give it a second thought. The books of the New Testament cover 30+ years of Jesus Christ's life, then another 30+ years of the early Church following His death and resurrection, but nowhere do we find any hint of a Christmas

celebration or anything remotely like it.

Yes, the Bible does give us quite a few details of His birth—the angelic appearance to Mary and then Joseph, the conditions surrounding His birth in a stable in Bethlehem, the heavenly choir's performance for the shepherds in the fields outside the town. But nowhere in the Bible is there *any* record of *anyone* observing Christmas or any hint that God the Father or Jesus Christ expects us to do so.

3 Jesus wasn't born on or near Dec. 25.

Surprising but true! Remember those shepherds who were “living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night”? (Luke 2:8). December weather around Bethlehem is often miserably cold, wet and rainy. No shepherd in his right mind would have kept his flocks outside at night at that time of year!

The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary says this passage argues “against the birth [of Christ] occurring on Dec. 25 since the weather would not have permitted” shepherds to be out in the fields with their flocks then.

And *Celebrations: The Complete Book of American Holidays* tells us that Luke's account of Christ's birth “suggests that Jesus may have been born in summer or early fall. Since December is cold and rainy in Judea, it is likely the shepherds would have sought shelter for their flocks at night” (p. 309) rather than keeping them outdoors.

Also, Luke 2:1-4 tells us that Jesus was born in Bethlehem because his parents came to that town to register in a Roman census. The Romans were well known as highly efficient administrators. It would have made no sense to have conducted a census in the dead of winter, when temperatures often dropped below freezing and traveling was difficult due to poor road conditions. Taking a census under such conditions would have been self-defeating!

4 The Christmas holiday is largely a recycled pagan celebration.

Again, surprising but true! Read it for yourself in just about any encyclopedia.

Consider the customs associated with Christmas. What do decorated evergreen trees, holly, mistletoe, yule logs, a jolly plump man in a fur-lined red suit, sleighs and flying reindeer have to do with the birth of Jesus Christ?

None of these things have anything to do with Him, but they have a lot to do with ancient pagan festivals. (Read the eye-opening details in our free booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?*)

And what about the date of Dec. 25? How did it come to be assigned as the supposed date of Jesus Christ's birth? Historians Gerard and Patricia Del Re explain:

“The tradition of celebrating December 25 as Christ's birthday came to the Romans from Persia. Mithra, the Persian

god of light and sacred contracts, was born out of a rock on December 25. Rome was famous for its flirtations with strange gods and cults, and in the third century the unchristian emperor Aurelian established the festival of Dies Invicti Solis, the Day of the Invincible Sun, on December 25.

“Mithra was an embodiment of the sun, so this period of its rebirth was a major day in Mithraism, which had become Rome's latest official religion . . . It is believed that the emperor Constantine adhered to Mithraism up to the time of his conversion to Christianity. He was probably instrumental in seeing that the major feast of his old religion was carried over to his new faith” (*The Christmas Almanac*, 1979, p. 17).

It's difficult to determine the first time anyone celebrated Dec. 25 as Christmas, but historians generally agree that it was sometime during the fourth century—some 300 years after Christ's death. And then a contrived date was chosen because it was *already* a popular pagan holiday celebrating the birth of the sun god!

Similarly, virtually all of the customs associated with Christmas are recycled from ancient pagan festivals honoring other gods.

5 God condemns using pagan customs to worship Him.

Since Christmas is supposedly a day to worship and celebrate God the Father and Jesus Christ, wouldn't it be a good idea to look into the Bible to see what it says about *how* we should worship God?

The answer is quite clear. God gives specific instruction about using pagan practices to worship Him—the *exact thing* Christmas does! Notice what He says in Deuteronomy 12:30-32: “. . . Do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ *You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way . . . Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it*” (emphasis added throughout).

And lest some think this is simply an Old Testament command that no longer applies, the apostle Paul makes the same point in 2 Corinthians 6, where he addresses whether unbiblical religious customs and practices have any place in the worship of God's people:

“What fellowship has *righteousness with lawlessness*? And what communion has *light with darkness*? And what accord has *Christ with Belial* [the devil and/or demons]? Or what part has a believer with

an unbeliever? And what agreement has *the temple of God with idols*? For you are the temple of the living God . . .

“Therefore ‘*Come out from among them and be separate*, says the Lord. *Do not touch what is unclean*, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.’ Therefore, having these promises, beloved, *let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*” (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 7:1).

Rather than relabeling pagan customs as Christian, or allowing members of the Church to continue their old pagan practices, the apostle Paul told them in no uncertain terms to leave behind all these forms of worship and worship God in true holiness as He commands. Jesus likewise says His true followers “must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24)—not revel in recycled pagan customs and symbolism.

6 Christmas is worshipping God in vain.

Since Christmas is a jumble of ancient pagan customs invented by men, and a holiday found nowhere in the Bible, does God honor or accept such worship?

Jesus provides the answer in His stern rebuke of the religious teachers of His day, men who had substituted *human* traditions and teachings for God's divine truths and commands: “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites . . . ‘in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ . . . All too well you *reject the commandment of God*, that you *may keep your tradition*” (Mark 7:6-9).

In the 17th century Christmas was actually outlawed in England and some parts of the American colonies because of its unbiblical and pagan origins. They knew something most people today have forgotten or have never known!

7 You can't put Christ back into something He was never in.

Some people admit the many problems with Christmas. But rather than face up to those problems, some assert that we should “put Christ back in Christmas.”

However, it's impossible to “put Christ back in Christmas” since He never was in Christmas in the first place! He never so much as heard the word “Christmas” during His lifetime on earth, nor did His apostles after Him. You can search the Bible cover to cover but you won't find the words “Christmas,” “Christmas tree,”

“mistletoe,” “holly,” “Santa Claus” or “flying reindeer.”

Putting Christ back in Christmas may sound like a nice sentiment, but it's really only a misguided effort to try to justify a long-standing human tradition rather than what the Bible tells us we should do.

8 The Bible nowhere tells us to observe a holiday celebrating Jesus Christ's birth—but it clearly does tell us to commemorate His death.

As noted earlier, the Bible nowhere mentions Christmas or tells us to celebrate Christ's birth.

This is not to say that the Bible doesn't tell us to commemorate a highly significant event in Jesus Christ's life on earth. It *does*—but that event is His *death*, not His birth.

Notice what the apostle Paul, conveying the instructions of Jesus Himself, tells Christians: “For *I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’*”

“In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. *This do*, as often as

death—not His birth—by observing the Passover.

9 Christmas obscures God's plan for mankind.

Passover, mentioned above, has enormous significance in God's plan for humanity. The Old Testament Passover, described in Exodus 12, was symbolic of Jesus Christ's future role and sacrifice. As the blood of the slain Passover lambs on the Israelites' houses spared them while the firstborn of the Egyptians were slain, so does Jesus Christ's sacrificial death on our behalf spare us from death—*eternal* death.

Paul alluded to this great truth when he wrote in 1 Corinthians 5:7 that “Christ, *our Passover*, was sacrificed for us.” Similarly John the Baptist, speaking under divine inspiration, said of Jesus, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

Peter wrote that we are redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, *as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*” (1 Peter 1:19)—a clear reference to the Passover lambs (Exodus 12:5).

A central key to God's plan for humanity is Jesus Christ's sacrificial death on our behalf. He is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation

us to, or expect Him to honor whatever religious practices we choose regardless of what His Word says?

It's always good to ask the question, *What would Jesus do?* The answer, from the Scriptures, is quite clear as to what Jesus *did*. Jesus didn't allow His followers the option of adopting pagan practices in their worship. He and the apostles plainly kept God's Holy Days and festivals that we find recorded in Leviticus 23.

As noted above, they kept the Passover (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Scripture shows they also observed the Days of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8). The New Testament Church itself was founded on the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:1), another biblical festival they clearly observed (Acts 20:16). They likewise kept the Day of Atonement (called “the Fast” in Acts 27:9) and the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2, 10).

Christmas, meanwhile, is totally missing from the biblical record.

Most people don't know that the Bible includes a whole list of festivals that God commanded, that Jesus Himself observed and that the apostles and early Church were still keeping decades after Christ's death and resurrection. And unlike Christmas, these reveal a great deal about Jesus Christ's role and mission.

Each one teaches us a vital lesson in what Jesus *has done*, *is doing* and *will yet do* in carrying out God's great plan for humankind. The differences between these and the tired old paganism and crass commercialism of Christmas is truly like the difference between day and night. Why not look into them for yourself?

I've given you my top 10 reasons for not celebrating Christmas. What do you suppose God thinks of your reasons for continuing to observe it? **GN**

Christmas, which is a hodgepodge of unbiblical customs and beliefs thrown together with a few elements of biblical truth, only obscures the incredible purpose of Jesus Christ's coming!

you drink it, *in remembrance of Me.*’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes . . . Let a man examine himself, and *so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup*” (1 Corinthians 11:23-28).

And yes, many believers do what they consider a form of this today in taking communion or “the Lord's supper.” They fail to realize, however, the full significance of these acts, or that what Paul is actually describing here is *the Passover*—which is what Jesus Himself called this observance (Matthew 26:18-19; Mark 14:14-16; Luke 22:8-13, 15).

And many have no idea of the real date of Christ's death and the annual Passover observance, but that's an issue for another time. (Hint: It isn't “Good Friday” prior to Easter as so many mistakenly believe. See our booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?* for details.) The point is: Jesus clearly expects His true followers to commemorate His

13:8)—meaning His death for our sins was planned before the first human beings were ever created (1 Peter 1:18-20). Only through His death to pay the penalty for our sins can human beings receive God's gift of eternal life (John 3:14-17; Acts 4:12; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

Christmas, in contrast, teaches us none of this. Regrettably, because it is a hodgepodge of unbiblical customs and beliefs thrown together with a few elements of biblical truth, it only obscures the incredible purpose of Jesus Christ's coming—as well as why He must return to earth a second time! (For more details, request our free booklets *Jesus Christ: The Real Story* and *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.)

10 I'd rather celebrate the Holy Days Jesus Christ and the apostles observed.

God in His Word sets out many choices for us. Will we do things *His* way or our own? Will we worship Him as *He* tells

Recommended Reading

Don't take our word for the origins of Christmas. Find out for yourself! Take a look at some good encyclopedias or do a search on “origins of Christmas” on the Internet. You'll find much more than we've covered in this brief article! If you'd like to learn more about the subjects covered here, request or download the free booklets *Holidays or Holy Days:*



Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?, *Jesus Christ: The Real Story* and *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. All 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

I Stand Corrected—Or Do I?

It seems that nobody likes correction. Instead of accepting it, some get angry, get hurt or get even. How you choose to handle it can make a world of difference in your job and in your life.

by Bonnie Greider

The department manager was discussing with one of his staff members the need to change a document she had written in his name.

He told her the article was not written in his style, did not include the information he wanted and should not be published. She argued that the article was hers to write and that she felt it was a good piece.

He became agitated and told her to change it anyway. She refused. He was insistent. She was obstinate, and she finally stomped out of the room.

Then the worst possible outcome of all happened. *Nothing was done to resolve the issue.* The poorly written article was published and embarrassed the entire organization and everyone in it. Her insubordinate attitude affected her coworkers and made working with her very difficult. The manager ended up losing vital respect from his employees.

A tool for growth

Why is correction so difficult to take? Why is it so important? What are some vital keys to using correction as an effective and valuable tool for growth?

Human beings can be quite sensitive. When corrected, we often attach motives to the one giving the correction—motives that may or may not be there. Yet every one of us needs to grow in social and professional skills and in our character. When left to ourselves, we don't often see the need to make real and lasting changes.

Most people will have others over them in authority at various times in their lives. This can be a good time for growth. How we react when corrected can make the difference between success and failure, both professionally and socially.

Correction can be hard to take. But it can also be hard to give! Friendships and working relationships have been destroyed by the lack of tact and wisdom when either giving or receiving needed pointers. We may have no control over how correction is delivered, but we can choose how to take it.

Pitfalls to avoid

So what are some of the pitfalls to



Why is correction so difficult to take? Why is it so important? What are some vital keys to using correction as an effective and valuable tool for growth?

avoid when we are being corrected?

Sometimes we allow our feelings to be hurt. Somebody is telling us that something about us is wrong. We take it as a personal affront, and it cuts to the core. We become embarrassed.

What happens next? We usually react emotionally. Maybe we show it outwardly, or perhaps we harbor our hurt and nurture it for a while until it comes into full bloom and manifests itself later on. Instead of making the changes and moving on, we all too easily wallow in self-pity and hurt feelings and shrink from positive action.

Our pride might lead us to assume we are being accused of something that isn't true. Maybe we really aren't wrong. Maybe we're just being misunderstood.

But what is the result of this thinking? We don't change anything. We may

convince ourselves that we have been misunderstood. We continue on our way without making the needed course correction (the *Titanic* comes to mind here!).

Hurt feelings sometimes cause us to assign motives to the person delivering the correction. "Maybe he doesn't like me," we rationalize. Or "Maybe she is jealous of me and trying to make me look bad."

This type of defensiveness usually brings very bad results. Resentment, distrust and anger grow, and we can start looking for ways to protect our own self-interest.

We go on the offensive. We talk to others about how we have been wronged and victimized and look for ways to get back at our "accuser." We think of ourselves as martyrs. We affect the morale

Continued on page 27

Liberté! Égalité! Fraternité!

More than 200 years ago these three French words reverberated through the streets of Paris during the French Revolution. If only every society could truly practice the biblical version of liberty, equality and brotherhood! Yet the time is coming when they will.

by Les McCullough

The French Revolution erupted like a long-dormant volcano, spewing out recriminations against the monarchy and any with whom the people found fault. The aristocracy's oppression over the years had fueled the frustration of the masses. The resulting firestorm of rebellion ended the lives of many of the ruling class on the guillotine. It left France bogged down in a morass of conflicting ideas about leadership.

Out of this time of revolution and chaos, three words emerged that conveyed some of the deepest yearnings of humanity: *Liberté! Égalité! Fraternité!* (liberty, equality and brotherhood).

The echoes of these three qualities have never died. They still vibrate along the corridors of modern society, although sometimes in different terms. At times the vibrations are muted as the far-off rumblings of a thunderstorm. Other times, they grumble and growl, shaking the very fiber of society.

The revolution continues today

Today these same three values loosely bind together widely disparate groups of people. Most want freedom of action, equal rights and the commonality of all people.

In Western societies, the rallying points—gay rights, clean air, animal rights, etc.—are as multitudinous as the people involved. Societies struggle to achieve the desires of various groups and often end up trampling on the rights or desires of others. After all, if we are honest, one person's freedom may well lead to another person's oppression.

If one person is granted the right to smoke, it befouls the air of those who don't smoke—and in fact endangers their health.

Does one have the right to harm his fellow man in the name of personal freedom?

How can we give preference to one group without discriminating against another?

More and more we hear of backlash

we do don't produce those results. Our world continues to get worse and worse.

The apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote about our time: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times

will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

What a horrendous condition! Look around you. Is it happening in your society? Be honest. As just one example, how many times have we read of political, business or union leaders being found guilty of malfeasance and lining their own pockets with others' money? It happens every day.

The changes have been so gradual and seemingly reasonable that many are unaware how far down we've come.

The X, Y and Z generations have not been around long enough to see any major differences in society. But if you are able to look back over 50 or 60 years, the changes have been astonishing.

Consider the student movements of the 1950s. First the cry was for freedom of speech in the classroom. Students wanted the right to speak to an instructor in a disrespectful manner as if he were one of them. Later it was freedom of dirty speech. Now it's anything goes.

The movie classic *Gone With the Wind* created quite a stir with Clark Gable's now-famous line, "Frankly my dear, I don't give a d**n." Young children weren't allowed to attend the movie because of this one line.



Liberty! Equality! Brotherhood!
The echoes of these three qualities have never died. They still vibrate along the corridors of modern society.

groups forming in reaction to what they feel are infringements of their rights. In the United States some pro-life advocates have resorted to violence to support their beliefs about abortion; pro-abortion groups and those supporting gay marriage do end runs around the democratic process by trying to find sympathetic judges willing to overturn laws.

On many issues, groups react by mass demonstrations. Allowed to run its course, the ultimate result would be anarchy.

Trouble in the Western world

Everyone wants liberty, equality and brotherhood, but the reality is that the things

What a contrast to today's entertainment that is filled with cursing and swearing!

How things have changed—and the changes are accelerating! Even in schools young children are subjected to extremely coarse language not only from classmates but occasionally instructors as well, and sexual harassment is commonplace. Such are the fruits of freedom without responsibility.

The Creator's handbook

Is it wrong to want liberty, equality and brotherhood for all? No, a thousand times over! But how will it come about?

What if you could buy a book that could accurately be titled *The Key to a Happy Life*? This book promised you the absolute key to having a happy, abundant, joyful life, showing the way to real brotherhood, freedom and equality. How much would it be worth to you?

Would you buy it? Would you read it? Would you practice what it says?

There is such a best-selling book. *It is the Bible!* Perhaps you're of a mind to dismiss that and stop reading this article now. But I challenge you to put it to the test. The Bible has been called the Creator's handbook or instruction manual for mankind. How about giving it a try? It ranks well above all the self-help books put together.

The Bible gives the ultimate key to having equality with your fellow man. It shows you how to have the greatest freedom ever. It proclaims brotherhood for every single human being on earth. Who can fault those goals?

The atheist will say, "I don't believe in God." The agnostic might comment, "I am not sure there is a God." Have they given the Bible a fair chance? Have you? (Request or download our free booklet *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* for some interesting and intriguing thoughts on the subject.)

Liberty: Its biblical meaning

What does liberty mean to you? For the oppressed people of some dictatorship, it means everything many of us take for granted. But do you realize that regardless of your citizenship, you are (if not a true Christian) subject to the greatest, most evil dictator ever?

There is one who is called "the god of this age" who rules in the affairs of men. The apostle Paul wrote, "If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds *the god of this age* has blinded" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, emphasis added throughout).

His credentials are also attested to in Ephesians 2:1-2: "You . . . were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, *the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.*" (For further understanding, request or download our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*)

Human nature is subject to sin, which means all men and women are slaves to the evil god of this world, Satan the devil. He is a severe taskmaster. Witness all the heartache from alcoholism, drug abuse, infidelity, gambling, crime, child abuse; and the list goes on. Being sinners, it means we are all subject to the penalty for sin, which is death (Romans 6:23).

Other scriptures say that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). No one escapes. All fall under that condemnation until truly converted. "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" (Romans 6:16).

Jesus Christ died so that all mankind could be forgiven of sin, have the death penalty removed and receive true freedom (1 Corinthians 15:3). We can be set free and no longer have to be slaves to the god of this world (Romans 6:18; Hebrews 2:14-15).

Equality: Its biblical meaning

In God's master plan, in due time every human being will have an equal opportunity for salvation (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Galatians 3:28). It doesn't matter what nationality or gender, nor does a person's intelligence improve or lessen his or her chances.

God is just and God is fair. But in the ultimate sense, we can be very thankful that we don't receive what we justly deserve. God's merciful gift of salvation is not something we could ever earn, yet He freely and equally gives it to all who repent and start serving Him, whether for a long time or a short time. We can be very thankful that God's equality is guided by His mercy.

Notice Psalm 98:9: "With righteousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity." God's ways and judgments are more than fair for all men of all ages. We all will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10). In the long run there is merciful equality in the most important decision—our eternal life.

Brotherhood: Its biblical meaning

Paul records God's wonderful promise to all who will follow Him: "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:18).

What a marvelous and priceless promise! Humanly we can't really envision that in its full and majestic meaning, but it is an absolute promise to each of us.

In Jesus' prayer to the Father on the night before His crucifixion, He makes a very special request: "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are" (John 17:11).

When we are born, we become a part of our human father's family. Jesus was asking for us to be given our Heavenly Father's name.

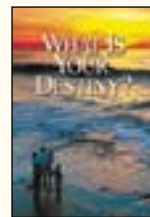
Christ is the Son of God. And those who are truly converted are to be children of God too! Read Romans 8:14-17: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these are the sons of God.* For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption [or "sonship"] by [which] we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' For the Spirit [itself] bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

This is talking about *supreme* brotherhood. All who are willing can become true brothers and sisters of one another and of Jesus Christ. The Father's ultimate desire is that we all become His children and a part of His family.

This is the future God has called you to—liberty, equality and brotherhood forever in the family of God! **GN**

Recommended Reading

Would you like to learn more about the destiny God has called you to—the very reason you were born? Request or download your free copy of *What Is Your Destiny?* To learn how all of mankind will have the opportunity to experience true liberty, equality and brotherhood greater than anything we've ever dreamed, request or download *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. 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

Baptism: Beginning of a New Life

Previous articles in this series have covered the vital spiritual tools of prayer, Bible study, meditation, fasting and repentance. But to receive the greatest gifts of God, there is another step you must take—the commitment of water baptism.

by Don Hooser

The greatest gifts anyone can receive come “from above”—from our Creator God (James 1:17). And God offers us two gifts that are by far the most important that any human being can receive in this life. The first gift is the forgiveness of sins. The second is the indwelling presence of God’s Holy Spirit.

In turn, these two gifts make possible the greatest gift of all, which is eternal, glorified life after death in the everlasting Kingdom of God (Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58).

Countless people are confused, thinking they have already received God’s forgiveness when they haven’t, and thinking they already have God’s Holy Spirit when they haven’t. This article will help you to know one way or the other.

First, it is always *God* who must initiate a relationship with Him. Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws [or calls] him” (John 6:44). God calls a person by causing him to hear the true gospel while at the same time opening up his mind to spiritual understanding (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14).

There is nothing we can possibly do to *earn* eternal life, but God does have *conditions* that we must fulfill. The last article in this series focused on one of those conditions—real heartfelt *repentance* over having disobeyed God’s laws. Another condition is *faith* in God—trusting in Him and believing His Word, the Bible. Jesus Christ emphasized these two conditions during His ministry (Mark 1:15).

What shall we do?

But for us to receive forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit, more is required than just repentance and faith. In Acts 2, we read a summary of the apostle Peter’s inspired sermon. He explained that the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ was necessary to pay the penalty for our sins. It is



Once a person mature enough to make important lifelong decisions has a basic spiritual understanding of and belief in the gospel, God urgently desires to see him or her repent and be baptized.

our sinfulness that was responsible for His suffering. In essence, “you crucified” Him (Acts 2:36).

Notice the reaction of the listeners: “Now when they heard this, *they were cut to the heart*, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” (verse 37, emphasis added throughout). They knew God would require them to *do* certain things if they were to be given eternal life.

“Then Peter said to them, ‘*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized* in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [forgiveness] of sins; and *you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*’” (verse 38). Peter made it clear that we *must* receive two things to be reconciled to God—forgiveness and the Holy Spirit.

Peter said we must first *repent*. But Peter didn’t mention the other condition,

which is *faith*. Why not? The very question “What shall we do?” showed Peter that the people believed in his message and in the Scriptures. They wanted to know what they should do next to *act* on that faith!

Therefore, once a person mature enough to make important lifelong decisions has a basic spiritual understanding of and belief in the “gospel,” meaning the *good news* of the coming Kingdom of God and His plan of salvation, God urgently desires to see him or her repent and be baptized as soon as is practical. Then he can receive the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit.

What is baptism?

The Greek word translated “baptize” is *baptizo*, the common Greek term for *immerse, submerge* or *put into*. So most English Bibles merely anglicize the word to a slightly different spelling rather than

translate it. The important point is that, in the Bible, “baptize” always means *immerse*.

Other authors of the time write of naval battles in which ships were “baptized”—completely sunk—in the sea. Therefore, it is nonsensical to say one can baptize (immerse or submerge) by pouring or sprinkling. The Bible itself proves that baptism meant immersion. John the Baptist needed “*much water*” for baptizing (John 3:23). Jesus, when John baptized Him, “came up immediately *from the water*” (Matthew 3:16). When Philip baptized the eunuch, they “*went down into the water*” (Acts 8:38). Afterwards, “*they came up out of the water*” (verse 39).

Why is this important? *Because of what baptism represents*. Being put into and under water pictures a burial, and rising from the water pictures a resurrection.

Baptism actually pictures *three* deaths, burials and resurrections. First, baptism symbolizes our faith “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Second, it symbolizes our acknowledgement of the need for our old sinful way of life to be “put to death” and be buried forever (Colossians 3:5; 2:12). And our rising from the water symbolizes our beginning to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-6). Of course our spiritual character isn’t immediately transformed in those few seconds. Baptism is a sign of our lifelong dedication and commitment to that goal.

Third, baptism symbolizes one’s faith in the hope of the literal resurrection to come—“that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15).

Baptism: Much more than a ceremony

Symbolism is important, but baptism is *much more* than symbolism. If you were to ask 100 people who are seeking to be baptized, “Have you ever asked God to forgive you?” probably 99 would say yes. Then ask the 99, “Do you think God answered those prayers and forgave you?” Maybe 98 of them will say yes. Then ask them, “So why be baptized if God has already forgiven you, since Acts 2:38 says that the purpose of baptism is to have your sins forgiven?”

Most people are confused. Even when

they realize baptism is a biblical requirement, they think of it as a mere ritual of thanksgiving for God’s forgiveness. But Acts 2:38 states that baptism is a *required condition* for forgiveness. Before forgiveness, God requires this *public profession of commitment* to Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord (meaning *Master*—to rule over our lives, Luke 6:46).

Many have misinterpreted 1 John 1:9, which says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Most people fail to realize that the New Testament epistles were written primarily to Church members—those who had already been baptized. In the epistles, the pronouns “we” and “us” refer to baptized members; “they” and “them” usually refer to nonmembers.

Therefore, 1 John 1:9 tells us that if a person who has received initial forgiveness through baptism sins after that, he does not need to be baptized again and again. Each subsequent time he sins, he only needs to repent of that sin, confess it to God and ask God’s forgiveness—and God will immediately forgive. This is one of the awesome privileges a person has once he has been baptized!

This explains why baptism is *so important!* God holds each person guilty of *every sin he has ever committed* until those sins are blotted out at baptism (Acts 3:19; 22:16). At the moment the repentant person is immersed in water, all his past sins are forgiven! What a joy it is to stand clean before God!

The next step: Receive God’s Holy Spirit

Once a person has been baptized, he is ready to receive God’s Holy Spirit. The Bible shows that the Holy Spirit is the spiritual essence and power that emanates from God the Father and from Jesus Christ. Many are surprised to find that the Bible never mentions a Trinity. Indeed, careful study shows that the traditional formulations of men are quite different from the biblical teaching. (For a definitive scriptural study, read our free booklet *Who Is God?*)

The gift of the Holy Spirit does not come during the baptism. Scripture shows that God gives it immediately afterwards during the *laying on of hands* by one of God’s ministers as he prays for the baptized person to receive the gift of God’s Spirit (Acts 8:14-17; 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6).

Once you have the Holy Spirit, you have “Christ in you” (Colossians 1:27). You are “baptized into Christ” (Galatians 3:27). You abide in Christ and He abides in you (1 John 3:24). You are among the “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). You have a “new heart” and are becoming a “new man” (Ezekiel 18:31; Ephesians 4:24).

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . . the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:13, 27). That “body” is the Church—the “church of God” (Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 1:2). We cannot “join” the Church of God. God adds us to it when He gives us the gift of His Spirit. We are then *members* of God’s Church (1 Corinthians 12:27).

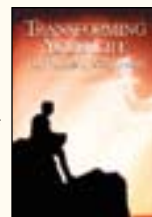
“Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, *he is not His*”—he doesn’t belong to Christ (Romans 8:9). He is not a true Christian or “son of God” (verse 14). To become a real Christian, you must believe, repent, be baptized, experience the laying on of hands from one of God’s ministers, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Once a mature person has spiritual understanding and faith and has repented of his sins, he should not delay baptism. When God is offering you a gift, why not accept it? Jesus warned against rejecting God’s offer: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). As Ananias said to Saul (whose name was changed to Paul), “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins” (Acts 22:16).

After one receives the Holy Spirit, that is when real spiritual growth begins! The next article in this series will explain much about what a baptized member should do to grow spiritually. **GN**

Recommended Reading

For a thorough explanation of God’s plan for salvation including the subjects of baptism, the Holy Spirit and spiritual growth, request or download our free booklet *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*. The United Church of God, publisher of *The Good News*, also has many trained ministers who are happy to answer your questions, counsel you for baptism and serve you in any way they can.



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

www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

Television Log

For additional information and the most current airing times, or to download or view programs online, visit www.beyondtoday.tv.

Arizona
Phoenix Prescott ch. 24, Mondays 5:30 p.m.; ch. 13, Sundays 6:30 a.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m.
Prescott Valley ch. 13, Sundays 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.; Mondays 9 a.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m. & 3 p.m.
Tucson ch. 73, 98, Sundays 7:30 a.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.

Arkansas
Fayetteville ch. 18, Sundays 10 a.m.; Wednesdays 6 p.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m.
Mena ch. 19, Sundays 8:30 a.m.
Mountain Home ch. 7, 22, Sundays 9 a.m.

California
Alamo ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Berkeley ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
Chatsworth ch. 34, Sundays 2:30 p.m.
Clayton ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Concord ch. 26, 6, 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Danville ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Dublin ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
El Cerrito ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
El Sobrante ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
Emeryville ch. 26, Sundays 8 a.m.
Eureka ch. 10, Fridays 7 p.m.
Fremont ch. 27, 29, Tuesdays 6:30 p.m.
Hayward ch. 28, Tuesdays 10 p.m.
Hemet ch. 3, Fridays 3 p.m.
Hercules ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
Lafayette ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Livermore ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
Marin County ch. 26, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Martinez ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Modesto ch. 26, Thursdays 8:30 p.m.; Fridays 6 p.m.
Monrovia ch. 16, 98, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays 4:30 p.m.
Moraga ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Newark ch. 27, 29, Tuesdays 6:30 p.m.
Novato ch. 71, Tuesdays 9:30 p.m.
Oakland ch. 26, Sundays 8 a.m.
Orinda ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Palo Cedro ch. 26, Thursdays 10 a.m.
Pasadena ch. 56, Sundays 6 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Petaluma ch. 26, Sundays 8 p.m.; Fridays 4 p.m.
Piedmont ch. 26, Sundays 8 a.m.
Pittsburg ch. 26, Thursdays 12 midnight
Pleasant Hill ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Pleasanton ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
Redding ch. 11, Sundays 11:30 a.m.
Richmond ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
Rossmore ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Sacramento ch. 18, Thursdays 6 p.m.
San Diego ch. 23, Thursdays 10 p.m.
San Diego (North) ch. 19, 23, Sundays 3:30 p.m.
San Francisco ch. 29, Sundays 9 a.m.
San Jose ch. 15A, Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.
San Rafael ch. 26, Tuesdays 8:30 p.m.
Santa Clara ch. 15A, Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.
Santa Rosa ch. 72, Sundays 7:30 p.m.; Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
S. Pasadena ch. 6, Thursdays 4 p.m.
Van Nuys ch. 25, Sundays 2 p.m.
Verdugo Hills ch. 20, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.
Walnut Creek ch. 6, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.

Colorado
Boulder ch. 43, Fridays 1 p.m.

Florida
Clearwater ch. 21, 96, Sundays 6 a.m.; Tuesdays 6 p.m.; Fridays 10:30 a.m.
St. Petersburg ch. 21, 96, Sundays 6 a.m.; Tuesdays 6 p.m.; Fridays 10:30 a.m.
Tampa ch. 19, 20, Sundays 12:30 p.m.; Saturdays 1 p.m.

Georgia
Cornelia ch. 4, Sundays 2 p.m.

Hawaii
Lanai ch. 13, Fridays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 7 a.m.
Maui ch. 52, Fridays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 7 a.m.
Molokai ch. 13, Fridays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 7 a.m.

Idaho
Boise ch. 11, Wednesdays 7:30 p.m.
Coeur d'Alene ch. 19, Fridays 4 p.m.

Illinois
Arlington Heights ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Bartlett ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Buffalo Grove ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Chicago ch. 36, times vary
Des Plaines ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
East St. Louis ch. 18, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.
Elk Grove Village ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Glenview ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Golf ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.

Hanover Park ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Hoffman Estates ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Lincolnwood ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Morton Grove ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Mt. Prospect ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Naperville ch. 17, Sundays 10 a.m.
Northbrook ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Palatine ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Park Ridge ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Prospect Heights ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Rolling Meadows ch. 19, Thursdays 6:30 p.m.
Romeoville ch. 6, Sundays 9 a.m.
Schaumburg ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Skokie ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Springfield ch. 4, Fridays 3 a.m., 11 a.m. & 8 p.m.
Streamwood ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Wheeling ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Wilmette ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.

Indiana
Bloomington ch. 3, Sundays 9:30 p.m.
Elkhart ch. 99, Mondays 4:30 p.m.
Evansville ch. 7, Mondays 5:30 p.m.
Ft. Wayne ch. 57, Thursdays 2 p.m.
Valparaiso ch. 99, Tuesdays 8:30 p.m.

Iowa
Des Moines ch. 15, Sundays 11:30 a.m.

Kentucky
Covington ch. 17, Sundays 9 a.m.; Fridays 8 p.m.
Hopkinsville ch. 23, Wednesdays and Fridays 11 a.m.
Murray ch. 19, Sundays 8 p.m.
Owensboro ch. 52, Sundays 8 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Paducah ch. 2, Thursdays 3:30 p.m.

Massachusetts
Amherst ch. 12, Tuesdays 9 p.m.
Billeria ch. 8, Sundays 11:30 a.m.; Mondays 12 p.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Boston ch. 22, 23, 83, Sundays 7 a.m.; Wednesdays 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.
Cambridge ch. 22, 23, 83, Sundays 7 a.m.; Wednesdays 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.
Greenfield ch. 17, Tuesdays 4 p.m.; Wednesdays 10:30 a.m.
Palmer ch. 15, Sundays 12, 2:30 & 8 p.m.
Shrewsbury ch. 33, Wednesdays 10 p.m.; Thursdays 7 a.m.
Worcester ch. 13, Thursdays 10 a.m.

Michigan
Ann Arbor ch. 17, Thursdays 4:30 p.m.
Grand Haven ch. 22, Mondays 4 p.m.
Grand Rapids ch. 25, Tuesdays or Wednesdays 11 a.m.
Kalamazoo ch. 19, Sundays 8:30 p.m.
Midland ch. 3, Fridays 5:30 p.m.
Mt. Pleasant ch. 3, times vary
Traverse City ch. 2, Sundays 11:30 a.m.

Minnesota
Albert Lea ch. 6, Sundays 9:55 a.m.
Austin ch. 6, Sundays 7 p.m.
Blaine ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Brooklyn Center ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.
Brooklyn Park ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.
Burnsville ch. 14, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 4:30 p.m.; Saturdays, Tuesdays, Thursdays 4:30 a.m.
Centerville ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Circle Pines ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Eagan ch. 15, Sundays 6:30 a.m.; Mondays 12:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 9:30 p.m.; Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.; Thursdays 3:30 p.m.; Fridays 12:30 p.m.; Saturdays 9:30 a.m.
Golden Valley ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.
Ham Lake ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Inver Grove Hts. ch. 15, Sundays 6:30 a.m.; Mondays 12:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 9:30 p.m.; Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.; Thursdays 3:30 p.m.; Fridays 12:30 p.m.; Saturdays 9:30 a.m.
Lexington ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Lino Lakes ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Litchfield ch. 10, Sundays 2 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 1 p.m., 7 p.m.; Wednesdays 1 a.m., 3 a.m., 8:30 a.m.; 6:30 p.m.
Maple Grove ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.
Minneapolis ch. 75, Mondays 6:30 p.m.
New Hope ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.
New Ulm ch. 72, Sundays 5 p.m.; Thursdays 10 a.m.; Fridays 7 p.m.
Osseo ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m.,

Plymouth 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.
Robbinsdale ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.
Rochester ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.
St. Charles ch. 10, Sundays 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.
Spring Lake Park ch. 20, Sundays 2 p.m.; Wednesdays 3 p.m.
Willmar ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Winona ch. 8, Thursdays 8 a.m. & 5 p.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m.
Wabasha ch. 20, Sundays 2 p.m.; Wednesdays 3 p.m.

Missouri
Cape Girardeau ch. 5, Sundays 9 a.m.
Jackson ch. 5, Sundays 9 a.m.
Jefferson City ch. 3, Wednesdays 6 p.m.
Poplar Bluff ch. 54, Tuesdays 4 p.m.
Springfield ch. 26, Sundays 8:30 a.m.; Wednesdays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 8:30 a.m.
St. Charles ch. 18, Sundays 8 a.m., Saturdays 10 p.m.
St. Louis ch. 18, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.
Billings ch. 7, Sundays 6 p.m.; Saturdays 11 a.m.
Helena ch. 11, Sundays 3 p.m.
Missoula ch. 7, Sundays 11 a.m.

Nevada
Carson City ch. 10, Wednesdays 7:30 p.m.
Reno/Sparks ch. 16, Wednesdays 7 p.m.

New Hampshire
LaConia ch. 25, 26, Sundays 7:30 a.m. & 4:30 p.m.

New Jersey
Newark ch. 19, Sundays 6:30 a.m.

New Mexico
Albuquerque ch. 27, Fridays 2:30 p.m.; Saturdays 7 p.m.
Santa Fe ch. 16, Sundays 10 a.m.; Mondays 6:30 p.m.

New York
Binghamton ch. 4, Thursdays 5:30 p.m.
Brooklyn ch. 56, 69, Sundays 10 a.m.
Canandaigua ch. 12, Sundays 2 p.m.
Long Island ch. 20, Thursdays 9:30 a.m.
Manhatten ch. 57, Sundays 7 a.m.
Olean ch. 6, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.
Oneonta ch. 23, Mondays 6 p.m.; Wednesdays 9 p.m.
Queens ch. 35, Mondays 10:30 a.m.; ch. 56, Sundays 10 p.m.; Thursdays 4:30 p.m.
Rochester ch. 15, Tuesdays & Thursdays 8 a.m.
Woodbury ch. 20, Sundays 8:30 a.m.

North Carolina
Asheville ch. 20, Wednesdays 2 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.
Burlington ch. 5, 10, Sundays 10 a.m.
Charlotte ch. 21, Saturdays 2 p.m.
Durham ch. 8, Wednesdays 7:30 a.m.
Greensboro ch. 8, Sundays 10 a.m.
Hickory ch. 21, Tuesdays 7 p.m.; Wednesdays 12:30, 4:30 & 8:30 a.m.; 2:30, 6:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Mebane ch. 12, Wednesdays 10 a.m. & 3 p.m.
Raleigh ch. 18, Sundays 10:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 10 p.m.; Thursdays 11 p.m.; Saturdays 6:30 a.m.
New Orleans ch. 21, Sundays 11:30 a.m.; Thursdays 7 p.m.
Cincinnati ch. 12, Tuesdays 11 a.m.; Saturdays 3 p.m.
Cleveland West suburbs ch. 5, Sundays 12 noon; Thursdays 6 p.m.
Dayton ch. 12, Tuesdays 11 a.m.; Saturdays 3 p.m.
Defiance ch. 5, Sundays 12 noon; Thursdays 6 p.m.
Fairborn ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Greenview ch. 3, Thursdays 8 p.m.
Oberlin/Wellington ch. 12, Sundays & Saturdays 9 a.m.
Springfield ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Trotwood ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Urbana ch. 1, daily 8 a.m., 2 p.m. & 11 p.m.
Vandalia ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Washington Court House ch. 3, Wednesdays 2 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.
Xenia ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.

Oregon

Ashland ch. 15, 31, 95, Sundays 2 p.m.
Eugene ch. 29, Mondays 12:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.
McMinnville ch. 11, Sundays 5:30 p.m.; Wednesdays 8 p.m.
Oregon City ch. 21, Mondays 8 p.m.
Portland ch. 22, Sundays 7:30 p.m.
Salem ch. 23, Sundays 12:30 p.m.; Fridays 2 p.m.; Saturdays 11:30 a.m.
Ch. 11, Sundays 9 a.m.

Woodburn ch. 21, times vary
Pittsburgh ch. 16, Sundays 8:30 p.m.; Mondays 4:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.

Pennsylvania
York ch. 14, Fridays 10:30 a.m.

Rhode Island

Tennessee
Chattanooga ch. 46, Fridays 11 a.m.

Texas
Arlington ch. 95, Mondays 1:30 p.m.
Austin ch. 11, Mondays 6 p.m.
Dallas ch. 148, 74, Sundays 12:30 p.m.; Thursdays 9:30 p.m.
Del Rio ch. 19, Sundays 9 a.m.; Wednesdays 5 p.m.
El Paso ch. 15, Mondays, Fridays, Saturdays 1 p.m.
Fort Worth ch. 28, Tuesdays 5:30 p.m.; Thursdays 1 p.m.
Houston ch. 17, 98, Sundays 3 p.m.
Longview ch. 10, Wednesdays 10 p.m.; Fridays 12 noon
San Antonio ch. 20, Mondays 10:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

Virginia
Hampton Roads ch. 71, 74, Sundays 10 a.m.

Washington
Everett ch. 77, Wednesday 5 p.m.
Kennewick ch. 13, Sundays 6 p.m.; Tuesdays 8:30 p.m.
Olympia ch. 22, 29, Sundays 9 a.m.; Thursdays 10:30 p.m.
Spokane ch. 14, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.
Vancouver ch. 11, Sundays 1 p.m.; Tuesdays 3:30 p.m.; Thursdays 12 noon; Fridays 8 p.m.

West Virginia
Morgantown ch. 3, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 3 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.

Wisconsin
Beloit ch. 12, Thursdays 6:30 p.m.
Eau Claire ch. 11, Sundays 2 p.m.
Kenosha ch. 14, Sundays & Mondays 7:30 p.m.
Madison ch. 4, Sundays 12:30 p.m.
Milwaukee ch. 96, times vary
Oshkosh ch. 2, Mondays 4 p.m.; Tuesdays 2 p.m.; Fridays 1 p.m.; Saturdays 8 p.m.
Stevens Point ch. 3, Mondays 5 & 9:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 10 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.
West Allis ch. 14, times vary

Radio Log

For additional information and the most current airing times, or to download or view programs online, visit www.beyondtoday.tv/radio/.

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Internet Radio live365.com, Sundays 9 a.m. (PST)

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Turson 1470 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.

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San Diego 940 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.

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Louisiana 1070 AM, Sundays 7 a.m.

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

Michigan
Flint 89.7 FM, Sundays 7 a.m.
Lansing 88.1 FM, Sundays 7:30 a.m.
Lapeer 88.1 FM, Sundays 7 a.m.

Montana
Helena 101.9 FM, Mondays 8 p.m.; Fridays 8 p.m.; Saturdays 8 a.m.

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

Nebraska
Omaha 1110 AM, Sundays 7:30 a.m.

Oklahoma
Tulsa 740 AM, Sundays 8 a.m.

Washington
Seattle 770 AM, Sundays 7 a.m.

West Virginia
Wheeling 1170 AM, Fridays 8:15 p.m.



How Can You Transform Your Life?

The Bible talks about conversion, but what does it mean? Do you really know? It's crucial that you accurately understand what the Bible teaches!

by **Beyond Today** host Gary Petty

Have you ever asked yourself, “How can God love me? I do so many things wrong. I try, but I’m just so inadequate.”

Some people point to the obvious gap between biblical teachings and many professing Christians’ conduct to claim that religion is irrelevant or hypocritical. Why is there sometimes such disparity between who we want to be and who we are?

Back to the beginning

When we turn to the Bible as God’s revealed knowledge for humanity, we find in Genesis 1:26-27 that mankind is created in the likeness of God. Human beings were created to have a relationship with their Creator.

The Bible also tells us in Genesis 2:7 that the first man, Adam, became “a *living soul*” (King James Version)—referring to a physical being. Both the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel and the New Testament apostle Paul tell us that “*the soul who sins shall die*” and that “*the wages of sin is death*” (Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23, emphasis added throughout). Decay and death are the natural results of living differently from the way directed by our Creator.

When Adam and Eve sinned against God in Eden, they came under the influence of the fallen angel Satan. From that point onward all humankind has been under Satan’s manipulation (Revelation 12:9), and human nature has developed contrary to God’s nature. Mankind has literally become the enemy of God. Paul writes in Romans 8:7 that the natural human mind is “*enmity against God*” and “*not subject to the law of God.*”

If you really want to know how to turn your life around, this information is absolutely necessary! It’s not just “old-time religion.” We’re talking about the reality of the Creator of the universe and your relationship with Him!

Cut off from God, subject to the influence of a powerful and evil being who wants to

destroy us, and condemned to death because our very nature is corrupted by sin, every human being is in a real sense lost and hopeless.

What do we do? Where do we turn? How do we start to turn this situation around?

“Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, *unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*’”

Contrary to some popular teachings, the



“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”

If you have any kind of Christian background you’ve heard that God sent His Son to save human beings from eternal punishment. This is true, but Christ does more than that. God wants to heal the sickness in your nature, your thoughts, your desires, your emotions, your values. He wants to *change you* to reflect *His* nature. This process is known as *conversion*.

Read what Jesus taught His disciples in Matthew 18:1-3: “At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’”

Bible reveals that Christian conversion is more than an intellectual acceptance of God’s existence. It’s more than simply believing in Jesus as Savior. It’s more than proclaiming a certain set of religious teachings. Conversion takes place when individuals, of their own free will, repent of their nature and submit to the bonding of God’s Holy Spirit to their mind, thereby becoming partakers of God’s nature.

Does this sound a little far-fetched? Can a human being actually share the thoughts, love and life-changing power of the Creator?

The apostle Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 that a real relationship with God's Spirit produces *genuine life change*, not just a one-time emotional experience of "giving your heart to the Lord."

Paul writes: "But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except [by] the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except [by] the Spirit of God.

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit [that] is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

You see, human beings are an *incomplete* life form. God isn't finished with our development, and as astounding as it may seem, unless we receive a "Spirit" from God we can never become completed creations.

The conversion process

Conversion is a process comparable to the metamorphosis of some insects. One of the most fascinating examples is how a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly.

Did you know that a caterpillar's skin can't stretch except when new? As it consumes food, its skin quickly stretches to the limit. The only reason it can grow larger is that a new, soft skin forms under the old one. After a while the old skin bursts open and is discarded.

The caterpillar continues this process until it is as large as it can get. Then the process gets really interesting. The caterpillar attaches itself to a twig, sheds its skin and creates a chrysalis. It now appears as a totally different insect. This strange creature is called a pupa.

The caterpillar may spend weeks as a pupa, but inside that enclosing case something marvelous is taking place. What was once a caterpillar is transforming into a new creature. When completely developed, an exquisite butterfly emerges.

Conversion is the divinely directed metamorphosis of our minds, emotions, motivations, desires and actions from the way of

the natural person, which guarantees death, to *the spiritual character of God*. God isn't interested in just *remodeling* our character. He wants to *replace it* with His nature. God wants to change us from mud crawlers into creatures who can fly!

This process of conversion isn't easy. It involves a struggle between our own selfish nature and the new nature being created by God's Holy Spirit. True conversion isn't a simple matter of accepting certain religious teachings or doing good deeds. True conversion is the sometimes painful, sometimes exhilarating commitment to the struggle of allowing God to create in us a totally new person.

Do converted people sin?

How then do we explain the fact that Christians sin? Understand that since conversion is a process, Christians are in various stages of the spiritual metamorphosis of having their human nature changed to a godly nature. All Christians, even with God's Spirit, wrestle with sin. All Christians from time to time return to or give in to selfish ways.

The apostle John writes about this subject starting in 1 John 1:8. He writes: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Will God give up on me?

It's common for human beings, faced with inadequacies, to fall into the trap of thinking, "What can God see in me?" We see that real change and overcoming come so slowly that we wonder if God is going to someday just give up on us.

It's true that God doesn't condone sin, and unrepentant sinners will receive eternal punishment. So how does God look at a Christian who has received His Spirit, yet is struggling with sin and sometimes loses a battle with his or her old nature or Satan?

The conversion process can be illustrated by this story.

In September 1924 a stout, robust 60-year-old man was spending many hours hiking the rugged area around the Harney Range of South Dakota. He was searching the crest of every mountain peak looking for something. Some thought this man's dream was unrealistic. There was doubt

about how the project was to be funded.

But this man was driven by a dream that filled him with one purpose. Where other people saw rugged crags and inhospitable rocks, this man saw faces.

His son, Lincoln Borglum, wrote in *Mount Rushmore: The Story Behind the Scenery* about what it was like when his father found and chose a remote mountain as the place to complete his dream:

"This was the monolith my father had been searching for: a gigantic mountain of solid granite, towering above the surrounding peaks and well separated from them. Most important, the major face of the rock was to the southwest, an aspect essential for maximum sunlight during the daylight hours. As he talked in that positive, mesmerizing way of his, I began to see in the great peak the colossal mountain sculpture he could create there."

Where other people saw rocks, sculptor Gutzon Borglum saw the faces of America's greatest presidents—George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln.

It took years of hard, sometimes seemingly impossible work to complete the project. Dynamite was used to sculpt the peak into general shapes. Hundreds of men, sweating in the summer heat and freezing in winter, driven by the will of one man, shaped Mount Rushmore into one of the greatest feats of sculpture accomplished in history.

God's creation is also driven by one dream—the return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection or spiritual transformation of His children. At that time God will change the saints into spirit and they will finally see God face to face. This is the promise to all who wish to submit to God's creative conversion process!

When Christians look into the spiritual mirror, sometimes all we can see are the rocks, the unsightly cracks and outcroppings that make us so imperfect. What God sees is the emerging faces of His children! **GN**

Recommended Reading

Most people really don't understand what the Bible reveals about conversion. Most think it's a one-time event, "giving your heart to the Lord." But that step—heartfelt surrender to God—crucial though it is, is only the start. To learn where God expects you to go from there, be sure to read *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.



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www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

I Stand Corrected

Continued from page 19

of all those around us with our newly created scenario of injustice, and others become suspicious and insecure. This is a divisive and destructive path that spirals downward and sucks others around us into the vortex. Everybody loses.

What is the right course?

So, what is the appropriate course of action to take when you find yourself being corrected? It may not be easy or comfortable for any of us, but there is a process that can produce positive results and growth.

- **First of all, try to listen with your mind instead of your emotions.** Somebody is trying to tell me that he sees something in me or my actions that is harmful, either to me or to others around me. Maybe it isn't totally accurate, but this person has taken the time to tell me that this is how I appear to him.

- **Analyze what is being said.** Could it possibly be true? What are the facts being presented? What can I do to improve what I am doing and how I am coming across? When the point being made is accurate, even to a small degree, if we are honest with ourselves we usually can see that yes, there is something to what is being pointed out to us.

- **Consider your own motives.** Do I want to become a better person, coworker, supervisor? Can I see beyond the personality of the person correcting me enough to take needed correction with dignity and grace, and make the necessary changes without feeling embarrassed?

Do I have the character to admit that I am wrong? Often when we impute motives to someone, we are revealing something about our own way of thinking—perhaps,

without recognizing it, even putting our motives behind the words and actions of other people.

- **Try to see this as an opportunity for growth.** No matter who we are or what our responsibilities may be, there is always something we can do better. Having that pointed out to us, and taking it to heart, can make us even better at what we do and increase the respect others have for us.

- **Look for ways to improve on your own.** Most of us know when we have an attitude or approach that isn't working. Maybe others have become upset with us, or perhaps we can sense that things just aren't going right. How much better it is for us to recognize this fact and make the change on our own, without somebody having to come and hit us over the head with the obvious!

Sometimes you can directly ask those around you how you are coming across—especially if you hold a supervisory position. I've found that it makes working relationships much easier if I'm up-front and honest with those I supervise.

Tell them that you want them to succeed, and that you know one of the primary steps for success is for open and honest conversation (not to be confused with criticism). Ask them to be sure to let you know if something you are saying or doing makes it more difficult for them to do their jobs well, or if they have ideas that might make for even greater success on the job. Sometimes the results are humbling!

- **Finally, be humble enough to make the right changes.** Nobody knows everything. We may be great at 99 percent of everything we do, but there's still room to improve on that one percent we may not even clearly see.

The rest of the story

Oh, and about the staff member who wouldn't take the correction? Although I've since left the company due to a family move, the last I knew she was still there—still doing things her own way, still refusing to take correction. She had earned little respect from her coworkers. She hadn't grown in her job skills or her character.

And the manager? He missed a golden opportunity to help someone else overcome and to improve the working conditions and morale within the corporation. And, as noted earlier, he ended up also losing respect. **GN**

Revitalize Marriage

Continued from page 7

understand human nature and what kind of help is needed to “perfect” a marriage. Since God instituted marriage, and He is the help that all married couples need to have a happy marriage, it follows that only God's instruction can help “perfect” a marriage.

Human nature is the greatest natural deterrent to what could otherwise be a happy marriage. All husbands and wives have human nature. Human nature is just that: It is the nature of human beings, acquired from Satan, the unseen ruler of this world, and other human beings under his influence. Human nature is not of God.

And human nature never goes away in this life. Of itself it is selfish and often becomes even more so as it absorbs and acquires the selfishness of the world around it.

When human beings are born, they are born with a “clean slate.” But as we age, we increasingly take on the characteristics of the Satan-led world around us, a world that's primarily built on selfishness and self-interest. This inevitably leads to conflict as people's self-interests collide—particularly when people are in such a close relationship and partnership as marriage.

It's important to know about human nature and its ability to erode what otherwise could and should be a happy marriage. The Bible tells us that we can overcome our human nature by doing good or godly things toward others (Romans 12:21). This is what Jesus Christ was and is all about. Happiness comes from *giving*. A seldom-understood truth is that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35)—and nowhere is this more crucial than in marriage.

Finally, all married couples (and those contemplating marriage), should know and understand that the emotional high of love that a man and woman feel for each other during the wedding ceremony will moderate as time passes. With a little understanding about how a marriage can work better, the “I dos” that both parties agreed to originally can overcome the “I don'ts” that will surely and inadvertently surface later in the marriage.

Your marriage can be strengthened, improved and revitalized. Choose now to serve one another across the board, and you can have a happier marriage than you ever imagined. May God bless you with a very long and happy marriage! **GN**

Recommended Reading

Did you realize that you probably already own the best self-help book ever published? Believe it or not, that book is the Holy Bible! It's packed with timeless and powerful advice on relationships, finances, parenting, job and career, success and so much more. We've gathered some of the best advice into a booklet called *Making Life Work*. Request or download your free copy today!



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

www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

“Radical Islam: An Arc of Extremism That Threatens the Globe”

Thank you for *The Good News* magazine. It is topical, informative and biblically accurate. Reading Melvin Rhodes' very timely article “Radical Islam: An Arc of Extremism,” I had to wonder about a possible implication that came to my mind after reading his warnings. Is it possible that this religion could be the basis of a false religion that will dupe so many and cost so much in the final days of the last generation?

L.J.K., Arkansas

Thank you for your comments. While many people have accepted the distorted view of God presented by Islam, a careful analysis of biblical prophecies shows that Islam does not fit the great end-time false religion. To learn more, please read our reprint series “The Horsemen of Revelation” at www.ucg.org/reprints and The Book of Revelation Unveiled at www.ucg.org/booklets.

“What Motivates Ahmadinejad?”

Thank you for sending me *The Good News* magazine free of charge for the past year. The July-August issue contains insightful articles. I especially appreciated the article “What Motivates Ahmadinejad?” It gives a spiritual perspective not covered in the secular news media.

D.N., Republic of South Africa

Your *Good News* magazine is well researched and explained. “What Motivates Ahmadinejad?” was very informative. I fail to understand why Muslims would hate Jews so much that they even could think of an idea of wiping them off the face of the earth. We Christians are waiting for our Messiah, but this does not lead us to hate or kill anyone for that matter.

F.S.L., Nairobi, Kenya

Thank you for your comments. However, we must remember the carnage that has occurred in the name of Christianity during the Crusades, the Inquisition and in other periods. Regrettably, Bible prophecy indicates history will be similarly repeated in the end time. To learn more, read our free booklet The Book of Revelation Unveiled.

“Can You Believe Both the Bible and Evolution?”

Concerning your article “Can You Believe Both the Bible and Evolution?,” this topic is very interesting and educational as well. Your magazine is very rich in content, so place me perpetually on your mailing list.

B.N., Internet

“Our Amazing Spaceship Earth”

I am 93 years old and hopefully of a sound mind. I just finished reading “Our Amazing Spaceship Earth” in *The Good News* and value it as the most captivating piece of literature I've ever read outside of the Bible. Thank you, Mario Seigle.

A.G., Brooklyn, Michigan

My first issue really deserves an outstanding commendation, especially the well-presented “Our Amazing Spaceship Earth.” The more the evolution myth asserts for its public acceptance, the more the truth about creation emerges to be understood even by a little boy. Indeed your efforts are a whisper of God.

F.C.M., Philippines

Help for anxiety and depression

I want to thank you for all your free publications. They have truly been a blessing. I just recently became a Christian after being a pagan for 23 years. Since I've accepted Jesus everything has become much better. For the last 10 years I've battled depression, crippling anxiety attacks, suicidal thoughts and demonic activity of various types. Now I'm starting to heal and it is all due to our wonderful Lord Jesus. I would be appreciative of anything you could recommend to help me on my spiritual path.

B.S., Converse, South Carolina

Our free reprint articles “Depression: Ways to Win the Battle” and “The Bible's Keys to Mental Health” at www.ucg.org/reprints may be of assistance

in your continuing effort to master anxiety and depression. Also the free booklet Transforming Your Life and our Living Christianity series titled “Tools for Spiritual Growth” (see page 22 in this issue) would help in furthering your Christian life.

Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension

I am so amazed at the information I have read in your free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. Through it I have “discovered” some problems that I personally had with relationships in my young childhood years, especially with the opposite sex. This booklet clearly explained what I needed to know. I do thank God for His great wisdom and for helping us understand about life. I now see for what they are all the world's so-called “acceptable” social ways and alternative lifestyles that are against God's plan. Now that I have a better understanding about human relationships, I can be more confident in building my friendship with my husband.

A.F., Belvoir, Virginia

Bible Study Course

I have downloaded the *Bible Study Course* and have been reading it. I want to take the time to answer any questions. I feel as if you are a direct link to God's Word. God bless you and everyone associated with your organization. I will be sending a generous donation so that your work continues in providing the Word to the world.

A.A., Internet

The question-and-answer pattern of the *Bible Study Course* has opened up my understanding of many matters.

Dr. K.A.A.V., India

Each one of your *Bible Study Course* lessons strengthens me more. I am really interested in the one about the Ten Commandments. My belief about the Sabbath is that it is still Saturday. If God intended to change the Sabbath to Sunday, He would have never written it on stone tablets. You can't change what's written on stone.

T.C., Amarillo, Texas

Additional compelling reasons for observing the seventh-day Sabbath can be found by requesting our free booklet Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest.

Readers residing in Australia

Thank you so much for your *Good News* magazines. They have enlightened our family and friends so much, especially in these times of great turmoil with earthquakes, pestilences and diseases happening throughout the world. Many people we have spoken to or passed on your *Good News* to are aware of these things now and will be prepared as all these Bible prophecies come true.

Reader from Carpendeit, Victoria

For quite a while now I have been reading your magazine with great interest and I have found it to be excellent throughout. It is a publication of both balance and commentary that deals with personal, social and family issues as well as the bigger picture of domestic and international politics and the bigger, important issues of Christianity and all things theological.

Reader from Mt. Druitt, New South Wales

I am so pleased to be able to read *The Good News* and finally know what Jesus wants from us. I had never understood that God had Holy Days we had to observe and that many of man's days we celebrate are not what God wants us to do.

Reader from Prosperine, Queensland

Please find enclosed a donation towards the wonderful work you are doing. I really appreciate the publication you send me.

Reader from Christie Downs, South Australia

Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to *The Good News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, Ohio 45254-1027, U.S.A., or e-mail gninfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).



Q: I have no doubt that God exists and that the man called Jesus of Nazareth was His Son. What I cannot credit is all that is done in the name of God by churches. I find hardly any reference to the word “church” in the words of Jesus. And I certainly cannot connect Him with popes, cardinals or archbishops and domineering pastors. Jesus was not in the churches where I worshipped, and yet everyone insisted on His presence. It is better to believe that He is at God’s right hand until He returns. Don’t feel obligated to answer my doubts about Christianity, but I am sure what you have to say will be valuable in that you are plain speaking and uncomplicated. (From a lapsed churchgoer.)

J.R.L., Southport, England

A: We can empathize with your plight. Certainly God the Father and Jesus Christ do exist (as we regularly make plain in articles in *The Good News*). Regrettably, it is also true that many abuses have been perpetrated in the various churches of this world.

However, this is not the fault of God and Christ but of human leaders who have, whether knowingly or unknowingly, made wrong decisions. To the extent that church organizations have allowed themselves to become expressions of the darker side of human nature, the purity of godly biblical standards has been tarnished in the world of “churchianity.”

Actually the English word “church” has been translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means “called-out ones (to an assembly).” There is no doubt that Jesus did use the word “church” several times in Matthew’s Gospel account. For example, He said, “I will build My church” (Matthew 16:18).

In using this word, Jesus Christ was referring to a special group of people who would follow His teachings and preach the gospel to the world (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20). What held them together was the presence of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13)—through which the Father and Christ dwell within true believers (see John 14:23).

However, what has generally emerged in the mainstream churches during the many centuries that followed is not what Jesus had in mind. We must remember that many who profess to follow Christ do not (Matthew 7:21-23).

Furthermore, as you suggest, the hierarchy of popes, cardinals, bishops, etc., is not based on the New Testament model. Christ emphasized responsible stewardship and loving service by church leaders (Matthew 20:25-28)—not the Roman authoritarian model. And we certainly agree that the simplicity of the gospel has often been lost in the shuffle of mainstream church politics and complex theologues. This was a problem even in the apostle Paul’s day (2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

We understand your frustration with your previous church experience. Many have shared it. Yet we must make a distinction between that which is merely a negative manifestation of human nature and that which comes down from “the Father of lights” (James 1:17). He gives good gifts as the constant, unchanging, loving and absolutely reliable Father. He has given His Son Jesus Christ to the true Church to be its active spiritual head (Ephesians 1:22-23).

The apostle Peter speaks of this Church—God’s assembly, called out of this world and its systems and ways of doing things—in glowing terms. “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10, emphasis added).

Whatever happens in this world’s churchianity, God’s plan and purpose to redeem humankind continues to unfold and reap a spiritual harvest of those who have committed themselves to His way of life to be part of His coming Kingdom.

You may find our booklet *The Church Jesus Built* to be of additional help.

Q: I have read your statement of beliefs. I find it hard to accept Jesus as God. I believe Jesus is the Messiah but not God. Do you believe that Jesus is also God?

Reader from Sweden

A: The Bible’s revelation of God is found throughout its pages. Some of the key points are:

In the Bible, the word “God” sometimes comprises more than one divine being. The Hebrew word *Elohim*, translated “God” more than 2,300 times in the Old Testament, is a plural word (in Hebrew the *-im* ending indicates plurality, just as in English adding *s* or *es* to a noun makes it plural).

Genesis 1:26, the account of man’s creation, shows that more than one divine being was involved. It states: “Then God [*Elohim*, plural] said, ‘Let *Us* [note the plural] make man in *Our* [plural] image, according to *Our* [again plural] likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”

So, from the very first book of the Bible, we have the revelation that more than one divine being constitutes the one God.

In the Gospel of John, we find several other revelations about the nature of God: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1-3).

Here we see two divine beings—one designated “the Word” who “was *with* God” and also “was God” from the beginning. Further, “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” So this Being, the Word, was the Creator.

Continuing in verse 14: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” This verse and the next few verses identify “the Word,” this Being who was *with* God and *was* God from the beginning and who made all things, as the One who was born as Jesus Christ. This also tells us that there is another divine being known as “the Father.”

John continues in verse 18: “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”

This tells us again that there is a “Son” and a “Father” (as Jesus Christ repeatedly mentions throughout the four Gospels). But it also tells us that “no one has seen God at any time.” Since the Gospels show that thousands of people had seen Jesus Christ in the flesh during His earthly ministry, the “God” whom no one had seen could only have been the One known as “the Father.”

But if no one had ever seen the Father, who was the God who at times revealed Himself directly to various people in the Old Testament? Obviously it could only have been the One who later would be born as a human being, Jesus Christ. Thus the “God” of the Old Testament who created all things and interacted with human beings was Jesus Christ! (Compare 1 Corinthians 10:4.)

You might also want to read Hebrews 1:1-2, Colossians 1:16, John 1:10 and Ephesians 3:9, all of which clearly tell us that Jesus was the divine being through whom the universe was created.

Scripture tells us that God is *a family*. Jesus Himself makes this clear from His dozens of references to the Father and the Son. God’s ultimate design is for us to be His children in that family (1 John 3:1-2; Romans 8:14-21; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 4:6-7; Revelation 21:7), of which Jesus is “the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

Space here is inadequate for a complete exploration of what the Bible has to say on this issue. Much more information is available in our free booklets *Jesus Christ: The Real Story, Who Is God?* and *What Is Your Destiny?*

What is love, and what is infatuation? Do you think you know? Before you assume you're in love, you should be sure you know what it is!

by Tim Waddle

It was the first day of classes my senior year in college. I walked into a computer class and looked around for a familiar face. As I quickly scanned the room, I noticed a couple of my friends, but I also noticed a beautiful brunette with deep dark eyes, and an empty seat next to her.

Our eyes met briefly, and I noticed a sweet smile come across her face. That was all the invitation I needed. Valerie and I started dating shortly after that first day of class together, and we were married almost one year later to the day. That was 16 years ago.

Was this love at first sight? Are we part of the lucky few who met their “soul mate”? Did we fall in love when our eyes met?

Wanting to love and be loved is very normal and healthy. Many of us grow up watching movies, listening to songs and reading books where the heroes “fall” in love and live happily ever after. This is what we desire in our own lives. Not only do the movies, songs and books deceive us into believing that we should fall in love, but our own brains can fool us as well.

When someone we think is attractive notices us, our brains release chemicals that make us feel good. Many confuse these feelings with love. But is this really love? Many people believe it is love, and they continue to fall in and out of love as these feelings come and go.

An article titled “Love Is the Drug” claims that

passionate or romantic love is like a drug in the human brain. “That’s exactly what a team of scientists is discovering as they watch new love literally blaze its trail across the living brain. Using real-time MRI brain images of people in the initial throes of passion, they’re finding that love originates far from the brain’s logic center” (*HealthDay News*, June 10, 2005).

“In fact, love may vie for the same real estate in the brain as drug addiction. ‘There’s this general craving-and-desire system that’s engaged, only in this case the desire isn’t for money or a drug or power or freedom. The desire is for merging with another person,’ explained co-researcher Arthur Aron, a professor of psychology at the State University of New York at Stony Brook” (*ibid.*).

Dopamine + serotonin = infatuation

Scientists seemingly confuse these feelings with love. Could we do the same?

Other studies have shown that when we meet someone we find attractive, the human brain’s neurotransmitters, dopamine and serotonin, kick in.

“In the right proportions, dopamine creates intense energy, exhilaration, focused attention and motivation to win rewards” (“Love: The Chemical Reaction,” *National Geographic*, February 2006). At the same time we develop a serotonin imbalance similar to people who have obsessive-compulsive disorder. The article goes on to say, “Love and mental illness may be difficult to tell apart.”

This is how strong the emotions and feelings can be! Emotional chemistry, passionate love, romantic love or love sickness are all terms people use to describe the new and exciting feelings of attraction. But one word can sum it up—*infatuation*. A huge aspect of having a successful loving and lasting relationship is recognizing what infatuation is and recognizing that true love is not infatuation.

According to WordNet online dictionary, infatuation is a “foolish and usually extravagant passion or love or admiration; temporary love of an adolescent” or “an object of extravagant short-lived passion.”

Notice that lasting love is not part of the definition. The emotions change, the feelings are lost over time and those susceptible to infatuation “fall out of love” and begin the search for those feelings, which they think constitute love, all over again.

True love

I mentioned earlier the influence that movies, songs and books can have on our perception of love. At least one love song I know gets it right. On his album

Infatuation or Love?



Nothin' but the Tailights, country artist Clint Black recorded a love song titled "Something That We Do." Here is one verse from this song:

*I remember well the day we wed
I can see that picture in my head
Love isn't just those words we said
It's something that we do
There's no request too big or small
We give ourselves, we give our all
Love isn't someplace that we fall
It's something that we do*

I like this song because his emphasis isn't on falling in love, but recognizing that love is much more than a feeling. Love may very well start with feelings, but it must become something we do, not just something we feel or something we get.

In Greek, the language of the New Testament, there are three words for "love." One is *eros*, which refers to a romantic or sexual love. Another is *philia*, which means brotherly love or friendship. And the third is *agape*, a broader word used to describe God's outflowing love.

A good marriage will have all three kinds of love. Romance and romantic feelings are good and should be a part of a healthy marriage. But a relationship should not be based just on romantic feelings. Friendship

and it is not something we fall into.

Notice what the apostle Paul says about true love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

This is outgoing love. Notice that this love does not seek its own. This means not focusing on self nor on what you can get out of a relationship, but on what you have to give and contribute to a relationship.

How true love develops

This type of love is best developed by first establishing a lasting relationship with God and then by striving to be more like Him. Once you have a relationship with God, ask Him to be involved in your love life. Ask God to help you develop godly love that you can share in the right way at the right time with another human being. Focus on what you have to offer to someone else, instead of what you can get from a relationship.

The feelings are the easy part. The feelings will come and the feelings will go.

It takes time for real love to grow. It doesn't happen at first sight. It doesn't happen only when we find a soul mate, and it is not something we fall into.

and companionship with good communication are also part of a healthy marriage.

But true love goes beyond friendship. True love will have and demonstrate outflowing, caring love. This is the type of love that God expresses toward mankind. It is the kind of love that is listed as part of the fruit of His Spirit in Galatians 5:22.

This kind of love takes time to develop. It goes beyond feelings and emotions. This true love or outgoing concern means being willing to set aside our own desires in order to provide for the needs of the other and to give of ourselves even when the dopamine and serotonin have settled down and we are back to reality.

Again, it takes time for real love to grow. It doesn't happen at first sight. It doesn't happen only if or when we find a soul mate,

Will you recognize them for what they are? Will you mistake emotions and feelings for true love? If you do, when the feelings wear off you'll fall out of love and have to start looking to fall in love again.

Valerie and I had those feelings for each other over 16 years ago, but we did not allow them to dictate our actions. We got to know each other, and with God's help we developed love for one another. We still have those feelings. We still have love for one another, and we still have God involved in our relationship.

Emotional chemistry may be the start of a lasting relationship, but if it's lasting love you want, it's important to recognize what *infatuation* is and what *love* is. They are not the same, even if your brain tells you they are. **GN**



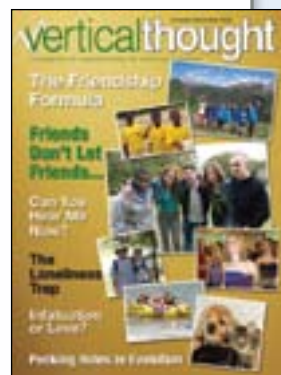
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What's the Real Truth About Christmas?

*T*is the season to be jolly—or is it? It may not be if you know the real truth about the holiday!

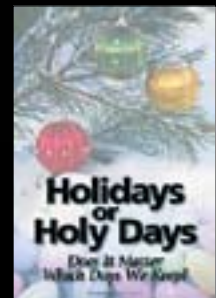
Millions of people continue the curious customs of Christmas, but few understand why they do it or what the customs and symbols are all about. After all, what does a jolly plump man in a red suit (riding in a sleigh pulled by flying reindeer!) have to do with the birth of the Son of God?

How did December 25 come to be chosen as the date of the birth of Jesus Christ when the Bible nowhere tells us the exact date—and in fact shows that He *wasn't* born in winter? Have you ever heard the real story?

And what about decorating with holly wreaths, kissing under mistletoe, burning yule logs and setting up colorfully ornamented Christmas trees? What's the origin of these odd practices and how did they come to be associated with the birth of the Savior of mankind? They're not found in the Bible, so who started them and why?

You need to discover the facts about this popular holiday. And, most important, since most people celebrate it to worship God, you need to understand what *He* thinks about it!

Our eye-opening free booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Really Matter Which Days We Keep?* will give you the surprising (and sometimes shocking!) answers. For your free copy, visit our Web site or contact any of our offices listed on page 2.



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