

May-June 2007

The Good News

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING



How Can You Help Your Child Succeed?

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Who and What Is Shaping You?



Not long ago I read, and then passed on to my father, a captivating history of our family's Scottish and Irish ancestors. Upon completing it, Dad said something to me that fueled a long conversation. "Now I get it!" he marveled. "I finally see, in the story of these people, so much of why I am the way I am!"

In light of the actions and antics of our long-dead forefathers, we could not deny seeing how we came to inherit certain family traits. Admittedly, depending on the nature of the insight, these traits can make you swell with pride one moment and burn with embarrassment the next!

One doesn't always expect to unearth such a personal mirror in the annals of a history book, but life surprises us like that. In sundry ways we steadily discover how our lives have been so greatly influenced by the cultures, teachings, behaviors, personalities and choices of the people who influenced us to one degree or another.

What is your plan for producing those traits in your children? What is shaping how you will shape your children?

Passing on to my dad a good history book was only a small favor in return. After all, the one thing that shaped my life more than any other was a history book that my parents gave to me when I was a child. More about that in a moment, but first, back to the influences on our lives.

It is certainly enlightening, and maybe at times almost scary, to comprehend the power other people have had over our lives. But sooner or later we realize that we, too, wield this power over others—especially those of us who are parents.

All of these thoughts and memories were triggered by a simple but crucial statement I read in this issue's lead article on page 4: "As a parent, you should realize that whether or not you help your children build their future, their future *will* be shaped by *someone*."

Jerold Aust's article "How Can You Help Your Child Succeed?" compellingly explains why your children are counting on you to be the strongest, most positive influence in their lives.

But who, and what, is shaping you? Where have your child development ideas, philosophies and tactics come from? What are the short-, intermediate- and long-term results you want to see in your child in the areas of character, personality, education and morality? What is your plan for producing those traits? What is shaping how you will shape your children?

Any parents seriously searching for advice on these fundamental questions soon discover the sad reality that even the "experts" trying to influence the way we rear our children contradict one another!

That's why, if you really want to be a good parent, I recommend as a foundational book the one I mentioned earlier, the one my parents gave me. I said it's a history book, but it's much more. It's also the ultimate family and child development book. It's a profound psychology book. It's a character education book and a book of wisdom. It is a book that explains all about family. After all, its author is our ultimate Father, the Creator God. That book is the Bible.

Making God the most powerful force in your life is *the* key to building a strong family. Don't put Him off. The day will come when your children are sufficiently mature and will begin to take stock of their lives and identify their major influences. When they do, those whose parents were shaped by God's Word will stand a much greater chance of looking back with gratitude, accomplishment and success.

—Clyde Kilough, Church president

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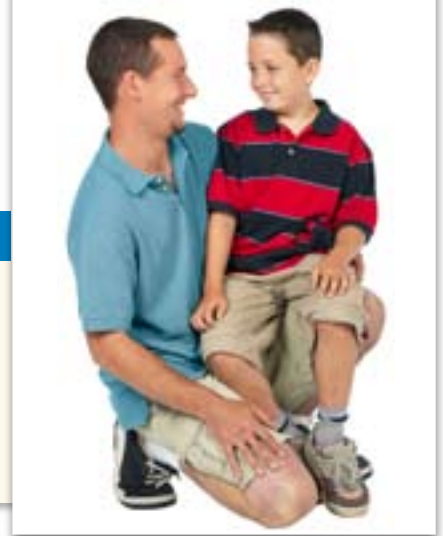
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James and Amy were young parents trying to put down roots in a large city. James was in sales; Amy had taught school. Now that they had children, they began planning for their children's futures.

Amy wanted her children to enjoy reading books, believing reading would offer them increased benefits throughout their lives. She subscribed to the adage that education, experience and memories can never be taken away from you.

James thought the children might become teachers, although he believed they had to ultimately choose their own professions. If they did what they really wanted to do, their job would be fun and not "work."

Eventually, both children decided to go to college. After high school, they got jobs and saved their money; both wanted to earn their education.

Surprisingly, both went on to get advanced degrees. No one in either James's or Amy's families ever studied for a graduate degree. So it was surprising and gratifying to them that their children did. While James and Amy realized that graduate education wasn't for everyone, they believed that a good education was a valuable tool for their children's success.

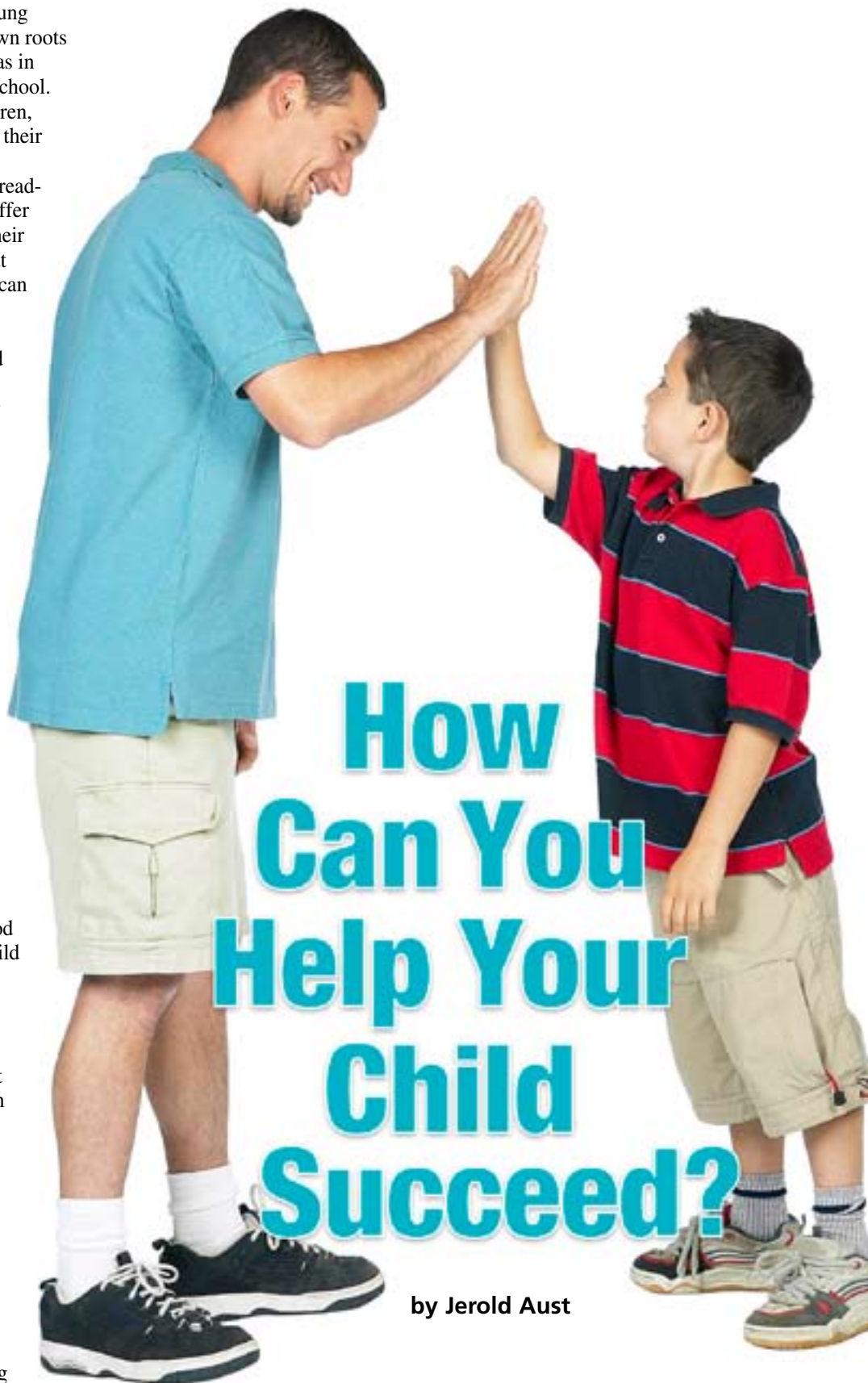
We'll return to James and Amy's story shortly to see how they helped their children take the right paths. First, though, let's consider some good building blocks that can help your child succeed.

Building blocks for your child's success

As a parent, you should realize that whether or not you help your children build their future, their future *will* be shaped by *someone*.

Without guidance, children can struggle, looking for whatever is available, or they can always follow in their parents' footsteps. Some parents *expect* their children to follow in their footsteps. This can lead to problems, for not all children have the talents or desires their parents have.

Wise parents provide an overarching environment for their children's future success, introducing them to a wide range of possibilities. As *Positive Thinking* writer John Maxwell notes: "Becoming a parent, who sees his children not as they are but as they



How Can You Help Your Child Succeed?

by Jerold Aust

Too many parents allow the harmful influences of society to shape their children's future. Children need good parental attention. What can you do to help your child succeed?

could be, takes time and effort. It doesn't happen overnight, but it really pays off. The key to making it happen is focusing on our children's potential" ("Unlock Your Child's Potential," October 2002, p. 27).

Your child's success is built one step at a time. The old axiom still holds true: There is no elevator to true success; everyone must take the stairs.

A child's future is shaped early

When our own children were tiny babies, my wife and I determined that they should get the best start in life possible. We had heard that approximately 80 percent of a child's cognitive process is formed by age 3 and 90 percent by age 5.

That was a sobering thought for us. So we set ourselves to do the very best we could for our children in that very short span of time. That's not easy when most parents are focused on the basics, like feeding and protecting their babies. For entertainment we were concerned about

Helpful hints for parents

Former U.S. Vice President Dan Quayle and clinical psychologist Diane Medved collaborated on *The American Family: Discovering the Values That Make Us Strong* (1996). Here are some of their tips for bringing up successful children:

- Be a cheerleader to your children. A parent teaches values by example.
- Make your home the center of your children's activities.
- Children need standards set by both the father and mother.
- Respect for the family is essential. At the daily send-off, let them know they are representing the family at their school.
- Inflexible activities, such as the children's bedtime, give the children order and security. They also help parents retain authority.
- Engender love for education by reading to your children and helping them through their homework. This promotes education and helps parents and children to bond.
- Parents should stick to their word.
- Emphasize completion of a project. It builds confidence and security.
- Teach gratitude for special privileges and gifts. When your children receive services or goods from others, encourage them to be thankful.
- Parents should be punctual. This teaches reliability as well as respect for others. A penalty can be given if children begin to develop a habit of lateness.

providing them with toys and, at times, acceptable children's television programs.

Family counselor "Dr. Phil" McGraw, well known for his books and TV program, focuses on the importance of parenting: "Your role as a parent is the highest, noblest calling you will ever have in your life. What's more, I believe that you can and will rise to that challenge if given the proper knowledge and tools for this important task.

"I know that you already possess the most powerful and important ingredient to succeeding. That critical factor is an unconditional and heartfelt love and devotion you have for your child. But it takes much, much more than love and good intentions because you aren't the only influence in your child's life" (*Family First*, 2004, p. 10).

Let's explore five building blocks that can help prepare a successful future for your children.

One: Set a good example for your children

Looking back over the years, my wife

"You already possess the most powerful and important ingredient to succeeding . . . the unconditional and heartfelt love and devotion you have for your child."

and I were occasionally surprised at some of the things our children said and did in the normal course of family life. We knew that the unsavory things that came out could sometimes be traced back to us. We discussed this at length and determined to set the best example we could, though it wouldn't of course be perfect.

In fact, author and leadership consultant Stephen Covey wrote: "Good families—even great families—are off track 90 percent of the time! The key is that they have a sense of destination. They know what the 'track' looks like. And they keep coming back to it time and time again" (*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families*, 1997, p. 9).

Much of our lives were spent giving of ourselves to our children. Some even thought we were giving *too much* of our time to our children, but we stayed the course. We knew that they needed *us* far more than physical things and money.

The Bible tells parents they must spiritually ground their children in knowledge about God and His way of life: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your

strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

Although no parent is perfect in this, those who would create the best moral climate and educational environment for their children will start with God's instructions. Imperfection is no excuse for the thoughtful and understanding parents who strive to give the best of themselves to their children.

Life is an exercise in learning to do what is right instead of what is wrong. It gets down to a matter of choices. We choose to do what we do. And we can choose to be dedicated to teaching and exemplifying the right things to our children.

Two: Encourage your child to read and communicate

Amy, as a child living on a farm, loved books and reading widely. James, conversely, spent most of his time working

outside. In her early days, Amy had no television or other negative influences that might come from modern media and crowded big cities. What she did have was an active imagination fired by the books she read.

With James's help, Amy wanted her children to develop a love for books and reading widely. They would read to their children every night and discuss the exciting stories that ignited their children's imaginations. Perhaps more than anything else, this early reading process contributed to their children's later successes.

James and Amy also allowed their children to discuss issues that many parents might think objectionable. For example, they discussed sex and reproduction and answered their children's questions as accurately as possible so the children wouldn't have to learn the *wrong* things from peers and other misinformed sources.

Realizing their children would spend many hours each day without their attentive supervision, they took advantage of their private family time and discussed the important topics of life one-on-one.

Addressing the issue of personal growth in the family, John Maxwell advises: “Look at each day as an opportunity to develop yourself. Read books and listen to tapes on areas where you want to grow. Go to conferences. Spend time with successful people.

“Make your home a growth environment. Begin by praising your children anytime they show a desire to learn. Provide opportunities for them to have new experiences. Buy books and tapes for them. Show them that you value growth” (“Unlock Your Child’s Potential,” October 2002, p. 29).

Three: Extend your child’s educational opportunities

How far do you go to increase your child’s educational opportunities? Some parents look forward to the time when their children are old enough to enter kindergarten or the first grade because they want more free time for themselves. They think children are a burden to free expression, an unnecessary and temporary interruption of their life’s great pursuits.

When a man and woman marry, they assume they are in agreement on just about everything. Their early time together working through small challenges and differences can help solidify their marriage. After the honeymoon wears off, many experience a big change. Suddenly another human being enters their lives. From the moment of their child’s birth, they turn their time and attention to the new love of their lives.

Now they have to get up in the middle of the night to tend to their little baby, to feed and change diapers. Gone is the time they once had to enjoy each other. Night after night of only a few hours of sleep can wear many a parent down.

Now, instead of the peace and tranquility and uninterrupted mutual love and joy they had with each other, suddenly too many couples find fault with each other and argue over the very gift that fulfilled their lives. Patience for each other wanes; respect and love is now secondary in their relationship.

Adding to this, parents sometimes resort to the TV to get a break in their now busy and hectic lives. There the commercials and TV programs suggest they could be better off with faster cars, nicer clothes and unlimited spending. It’s all very unrealistic, but it sells.

The example of James and Amy is instructive here. Realizing such



Your child can succeed. All loving parents can be equipped to help their children succeed if they understand God’s purpose for humankind and if they are willing to dedicate themselves to the ongoing welfare of their children and grandchildren.

factors could pull them off course, they decided to take charge of their lives and the lives of their children. They began to plan for their children’s future.

They encouraged their children to think about what they might like to do after high school. Their children recognized that their parents had college degrees that helped them in their personal lives and in their chosen professions.

Amy and James, however, realized that their children might not want to follow in their footsteps. They openly discussed this with their children and didn’t try to force their personal desires on them. They had no intention of trying to relive their lives through their children.

Dr. Phil adds to this idea: “Survey Fact: Forty-eight percent of parents said that their own parents had too high expectations and feel that this caused high anxiety for them as adults” (*Family First*, p. 69). Naturally, parents can provide counsel for their children’s future work, but the son or daughter must make the final decision.

Today, James and Amy’s children are happier because they are doing what they enjoy, knowing as well that even better career opportunities might later open up for them in related fields. They didn’t lock themselves into something they wouldn’t continue to enjoy for the rest of their lives. And they have learned to be flexible in an ever-changing world.

Four: Teach your children godly morals

Personally, my wife and I trained our children to follow God’s Word as their moral guide. When our son was just a couple of months old, we would place him on the bed while we knelt by it and prayed. Our children learned about our relationship with God through prayer. Now they pray with their children.

Elva Anson wrote this about the importance of prayer in a family: “Teaching children to pray should be as natural and easy as teaching them to talk. When children learn to talk, they simply imitate the sounds they hear us make. When they learn to pray, the same principle applies. If we have never learned to pray ourselves, our children have nothing to imitate” (“Teaching Your Child to Pray,” *Positive Thinking*, March 2001, p. 26).

The world we live in is not given to godly morals. Lust, dishonesty, drugs, violence and war are the common fare for humanity from birth to death. Our children are immersed in the world’s immoral ways

from the time they are born.

Godly morals come from God's laws, specifically the Ten Commandments. How many people do you encounter on the street, in shopping malls and in social gatherings who actually try to live by the Ten Commandments? Listen to the majority of people for hardly any time at all and you quickly learn that God plays almost no role in their lives.

Parents who teach their children about God's Word and His Ten Commandments are the very ones who can appreciate and enjoy true success. This is the one common denominator for true success, even in a world that does not recognize God's laws at work in their lives.

Amy and James taught their children about God. They read children's Bible books about Old Testament personalities and their personal struggles. They discussed with them how to apply the principles of God's laws to their personal lives.

When James and Amy allowed their children to watch television, they watched it with them. They let their children choose what they watched as a family, with parental guidance. As they watched a television show, if something objectionable came up that they didn't want their children to copy or consider acceptable, they would momentarily discuss it with them in brief interactive exchanges. That way the children could learn to quickly recognize right and wrong moral messages.

James and Amy applied this teaching method in various settings and circumstances—when they went shopping, playing with their children on the playground and when they went for evening walks. They dedicated themselves to teaching their children godly morality based on God's holy and spiritual laws. Now thoroughly grounded in the Bible, their children do the same.

Five: Never stop sharing yourself with your children

Finally, parents should never stop sharing themselves with their children. This doesn't mean they should remain in charge of their children after the children have become adults, are married and have their own children. Parents should be available to their adult children and graciously accept the gift of grandparenting as it comes their way. This is God's way, for wisdom comes with age; and compassion and forgiveness, from experience.

James and Amy determined that they would always try to spend time themselves

with their children, even as they grew older. They knew that age and experience can be tremendous resources that children and grandchildren can benefit from and enjoy. Instead of heading off into the sunset, disconnected from their children and their families, they determined there was no greater or more lasting satisfaction than to share their autumn years with their children and grandchildren.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with traveling, or golf, or whatever retirement opportunity older parents might like to pursue. But there is something wrong with parents and grandparents divorcing themselves from their children and grandchildren to grasp at last-minute satisfactions, only to inherit the wind.

Dr. Covey addresses the debilitating factor of putting family second to one's own personal interests and job. While conducting a seminar on the importance of extended family relationships, he shared this:

"These men and women [were] sobered and very thoughtful. Their failure to succeed in this family effort drove them to really examine their own personal lives. As they did so, they came to the realization that family was not just some sideshow. It was tremendously important to them. And they began to realize that 'success' in this area of their lives was not a matter of technique and a quick fix; it was based on the long-term principles that govern in every dimension of life" (p. 103).

It's important to never stop sharing yourself with your children.

Assurances of success of children

Above everything else, God's number-one purpose for humankind is family. The success of a family also means the success of children.

Distinguished scholar Merrill Unger summarized the Bible's revelation about God and the family in his *Unger's Bible Dictionary*: "The family relation is the institution of God lying at the foundation of all human society . . . The family occupies a prominent place throughout Scripture, is the first form of society, and has continued to be the germ and representative of every fellowship" (1972, "Family").

The Bible contains many prophecies about the good news of Jesus Christ's coming Kingdom on earth. Included in God's many positive and encouraging promises is this one about how families will dwell in peace with multiple generations coexisting in close proximity:

"Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever" (Ezekiel 37:25).

Zechariah 8:4-5 adds: "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing.'"

God is pro-children and pro-family. He is dedicated to the success of parents, for He knows that as parents go, so goes the family. God is also dedicated to children. In fact, God is so moved by the attitudes of little children that Jesus Christ set them up as good examples all adults should follow:

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' 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. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me'" (Matthew 18:1-5).

James and Amy's parenting efforts yielded excellent results. So can yours. Your child *can* succeed. All loving parents can be equipped to help their children succeed if they understand God's purpose for humankind and if they are willing to dedicate themselves to the ongoing welfare of their children and grandchildren. As a steward over God's future sons and daughters, you can help your child succeed. God is always ready to help! **GN**

Recommended Reading

Few people realize it, but they already own one of the world's best books on successful parenting—the Bible! It's packed with practical, helpful advice on all aspects of life, including child rearing. And we can be sure that it's good advice because its ultimate Author is the One who created parents, children and family—our almighty and all-knowing Creator! Discover for yourself much of the Bible's best guidance in our free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. Request or download your free copy today!



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Playing the 'Dad Card'

Fathers, you may not realize it, but you matter more to your daughter than any other man. Why is that? Why is it so important to her future? And how seriously do you take this crucial responsibility?

by John Miller

Some time ago my adult daughter wrote asking me to play what she called the “dad card.” If you knew my free-spirited daughter, you would understand that this is not a common occurrence. She has grown up to be a confident young woman quite capable of managing her own life, no matter where she happens to be.

Later she confided that her confidence draws from the fact that she has the “dad card” up her sleeve that can be played in the unlikely event she might need it.

The “dad card” defined

The “dad card” symbolizes the strong relationship that should exist between every father and daughter—a relationship that endows her with the sure knowledge that she can invoke her father’s name and intrinsic authority to seek protection, comfort or security in time of threat or need.

It’s a relationship that must be built over time; it’s a relationship that will be tested during the stormy teenage years. Its strength is critical to her development and maturity because studies repeatedly show that *you as a father matter more to your daughter than any other man.*

On that day it mattered and she played the “dad card.” This experience caused me to think more deeply about the continual importance of the relationship between a father and his daughter. Do we value this relationship? More importantly, for me, had I given it enough ongoing attention?

The prophet Malachi highlights the importance of the father-child relationship in our time by prophesying that the “hearts of the fathers” must be turned “to the children” and the “hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:6).

To be sure, the heart of the father must focus on all his children, but this article focuses on the father-daughter relationship. The curses referred to by Malachi are the naturally occurring consequences resulting from the violation or neglect of timeless principles contained in God’s revealed instruction—“remember the Law

of Moses,” Malachi urges his end-time audience (Malachi 4:4).

For every 21st-century father seeking a strong relationship with his daughter or daughters, two books are a must-read: The Bible and a recent book by pediatrician Meg Meeker, *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*.

The Bible contains timeless principles that, properly applied, will equip your daughter to succeed in our complex world. Dr. Meeker’s straight-talking book confirms their contemporary validity from a medical practitioner’s perspective.



No loving father can look into the eyes of his daughter without feeling a sense of pride that awakens protective instincts deep within him.

The good news, contemporary culture notwithstanding, is that you can have a significant influence on your daughter’s development and success. In fact, Dr. Meeker’s research and years of clinical experience confirm that you may well be the person who can have the *greatest* influence.

No loving father can look into the crib of his newborn daughter or gaze into her eyes in the years to come without feeling a sense of pride that awakens protective instincts deep within him. It can also arouse serious feelings of inadequacy at the daunting task at hand. Still, Dr. Meeker claims, and the Bible confirms, that it is a task that can be mastered—imperfectly perhaps but, even so, not without great positive influence.

A father’s role model

The Bible is a book about family relationships. It even describes salvation in familial terms: “I will be a Father to you, and you

shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:18).

God’s commitment to His family is eloquently articulated in what is perhaps the most-quoted passage in the Bible: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Fathers, if you want your daughters to be strong enough to face the many challenges of our contemporary world, then *you must so love your daughter as God loves you and be willing to give of yourself for her.*

Your daughter needs you to both *love her tender* and *love her tough*. Stated another way, you must be strong enough to protect her from her surroundings—and at times from herself—yet sensitive enough to hold and hear her when she needs your tender touch.

Tall order? Absolutely! Lofty expecta-

tions? Perhaps. Impossible in our contemporary world? I don't think so—and neither does Dr. Meeker nor the God who created the relationship in the first place.

What is God's plan?

In the very beginning God said, "Before a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they

standard but leaves no ambiguity about the fact that the relationship between a father and a daughter must be built on godly principles.

Paul undoubtedly knew the classic instruction in child rearing given by God through Moses around 1,500 years before: "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach

them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

The "words" referred to in this passage—summarized in the Ten Commandments—form the basis for a principled life that is at odds with our contemporary culture of lust and license. Nevertheless,

these timeless principles form protective boundaries for the family and the father-daughter relationship.

A key element in this passage is the instruction to the father that these principles should first "be in your heart." One of the ground rules of successfully instilling principles in your daughter without provocation is that you must be convicted of those principles yourself. If you stand for your principles, your daughter will consider you a hero. If you try to instill principles in your daughter of which you are not convicted, you become a hypocrite.

The power of a strong example

Dr. Meeker lists teaching your daughter *who God is* as one of 10 secrets every father should know about building a strong relationship with his daughter.

She relates an anecdote about Heather, a patient who stopped by for a checkup just prior to leaving for college. Heather expressed her excitement about learning Spanish so she could work at an orphanage. To Dr. Meeker's query about why Spanish, Heather responded:

"Now, Dr. Meeker, I know you're gonna

think this is kind of crazy and it might not make sense to you, but, well, you see, every morning, my dad and I were the first ones up in our house . . . My dad has really strong faith. That's why he got up so early every morning to pray and read the Bible.

"My dad's a happy man, but he's not one of these guys who talks to everybody. Sometimes he would talk to us about God, but mostly he liked to just live what he learned from his Bible reading in the morning. Anyway, every day I went off to school, I felt so good knowing that my dad had gone to his chair and, I'm sure, prayed for me that day.

"I can't tell you how good that felt. Somehow, I know that helping poor people, particularly poor kids, would make him really happy. I mean, he wants me to do what I want to, but I really want to be like him. He would do this. And, you know, Dr. Meeker, I want to know what my dad knows about God. I think that working in an orphanage might be a good way to do that" (*Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*, 2006, pp. 191-192).

This story illustrates the powerful influence a father genuinely committed to his principles can have on his daughter. This father either knowingly or unwittingly followed the instructions in Deuteronomy for teaching principles: "when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."

Dr. Meeker's observations from the course of her medical career confirm the effectiveness of this approach in the father-daughter relationship: "When she's in your company, your daughter tries harder to excel. When you teach her, she learns more rapidly. When you guide her, she gains confidence.

"If you fully understood just how profoundly you can influence your daughter's life, you would be terrified, overwhelmed, or both. Boyfriends, brothers, even husbands can't shape her character the way you do. You will influence her entire life because she gives you an authority she gives no other man" (p. 8).

According to Dr. Meeker, many fathers wrongly assume that they have little influence over their daughters, particularly during the teenage years. Nothing could be further from the truth. If your relationship is strong—and even if it is not—your daughter craves your attention and influence. Give it to her every single day.

Love her tender

You are the first man in her life, and as
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Secrets of Strong Fathers

Dr. Meg Meeker's book *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters* is filled with practical information on how you can build your father-daughter relationship. One of the best books available on the subject, it reveals 10 secrets every father should know:

- You are the most important man in her life.
- She needs a hero.
- You are her first love.
- Teach her humility.
- Protect and defend her.
- Teach and show her pragmatism and grit.
- Be the kind of man you want her to marry.
- Teach her who God is.
- Teach her to fight for what's right.
- Keep her connected.

These secrets come to life in dozens of anecdotes from her experience as a medical practitioner, including a hilarious account of her ever-protective dad slapping her with a curfew and telling her extremely nice new boyfriend he was not welcome when she was home on summer break from college as a premed student. It's well worth reading!

shall become one flesh"—for the purpose of filling the earth (Genesis 2:24). Mankind was created to build familial relationships, to have children and nurture those children with the express purpose of enabling God through Jesus Christ to bring many to glory—to salvation in His Kingdom (Hebrews 2:10).

God expects fathers to play a critical role in His great plan. The Bible unequivocally defines the family as a unit headed by a father and mother with the father occupying the primary leadership role.

The apostle Paul provides guidance that is essential in building a strong father-daughter relationship: "And, [you] fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, King James Version).

Teach principles, without provocation

Paul's admonition to use a child-rearing style that nurtures rather than provokes is especially important in building a strong father-daughter relationship. Further, it defines the Lord as the source for the "nurture and admonition." This sets a very high



How One of Today's 'Bad Guys' Ended the Scourge of Slavery

Two hundred years ago, Great Britain became the first major nation to abolish the slave trade. By the end of the century slavery had been abolished around the world. Here is the remarkable story of the abolition of the slave trade—and of its tragic return to plague the world.

There is no doubt about it—the slave trade was abhorrent. Millions of people were transported across the Atlantic in the most horrific of conditions, taken against their will and sold like cattle. Indeed, cattle were treated better than the victims of this despicable trade.

March 25 was the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade throughout the British Empire—marked throughout the month with commemorative events. One such event was held in Elmina Castle, Ghana, a castle built by the Portuguese in the late 15th century and used for the holding of slaves before transit to the New World.

The following day a service of thanksgiving was held in London, attended by Queen Elizabeth and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. The service was interrupted at one point by a man of African descent demanding the British monarch apologize for slavery.

Today it's popular to bash the West, and the major English-speaking nations in particular, and to blame them for many of the world's problems. In line with this, demands for an apology for slavery and reparations have been increasing in recent years.

Such demands overlook a crucial point.

Before the British parliamentary vote to abolish the slave trade, slavery was a fairly universal practice, as it had been throughout history. What Great Britain did, at a time when the slave trade was highly lucrative for all participants, was a totally radical, progressive and bold step. We can be thankful for the foresight shown by men like William Wilberforce, the leader of the antislavery movement.

Wilberforce's fight to end slavery is portrayed in the recent movie *Amazing Grace*. His friend John Newton, a former slave trader, wrote the famous hymn of that name following his repentance. He devoted the remainder of his life to serving others in an attempt to atone for his contribution to the slave trade.

In reviewing the 2005 book *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight*

to Free an Empire's Slaves by Adam Hochschild, African-American columnist Thomas Sowell wrote: "To me the most staggering thing about the long history of slavery—which encompassed the entire world and every race in it—is that nowhere

"The most staggering thing about the long history of slavery . . . is that nowhere before the 18th century was there any serious question raised about whether slavery was right or wrong."

before the 18th century was there any serious question raised about whether slavery was right or wrong. In the late 18th century, that question arose in Western civilization, but nowhere else."

The book, Sowell notes, "traces the history of the world's first anti-slavery movement, which began with a meeting of 12 'deeply religious' men in London in 1787."

It took 20 years for these men to achieve their goal of ending the slave trade. Sowell continues: "Even more remarkable, Britain [then] took it upon itself, as the leading naval power of the world, to police the ban on slave trading against other nations. Intercepting and boarding other countries' ships on the high seas to look for slaves, the British became and remained for more than a century the world's policeman when it came to stopping the slave trade" ("Today's 'Bad Guys' Ended Slavery," *Lansing State Journal*, Feb. 12, 2006.)

Noted French historian Alexis de Tocqueville described the decision of the British parliament to end the slave trade as "absolutely without precedent . . . If you pore over the histories of all peoples, I doubt that you will find anything more extraordinary" (quoted by Hochschild, p. 1).

Freedom, "a peculiar institution"

With this historic perspective, we can be thankful that, at last, after thousands of years of human history, a nation had the moral

conscience to do something about it—to end the trade in human beings.

What was the magnitude of Britain's undertaking? "At the end of the eighteenth century, well over three quarters of all people alive were in bondage of one kind or another,

not the captivity of striped prison uniforms, but of various systems of slavery or serfdom. The age was a high point in the trade in which close to eighty thousand chained and shackled Africans were loaded onto slave ships and transported to the New World each year. In parts of the Americas, slaves far outnumbered free persons.

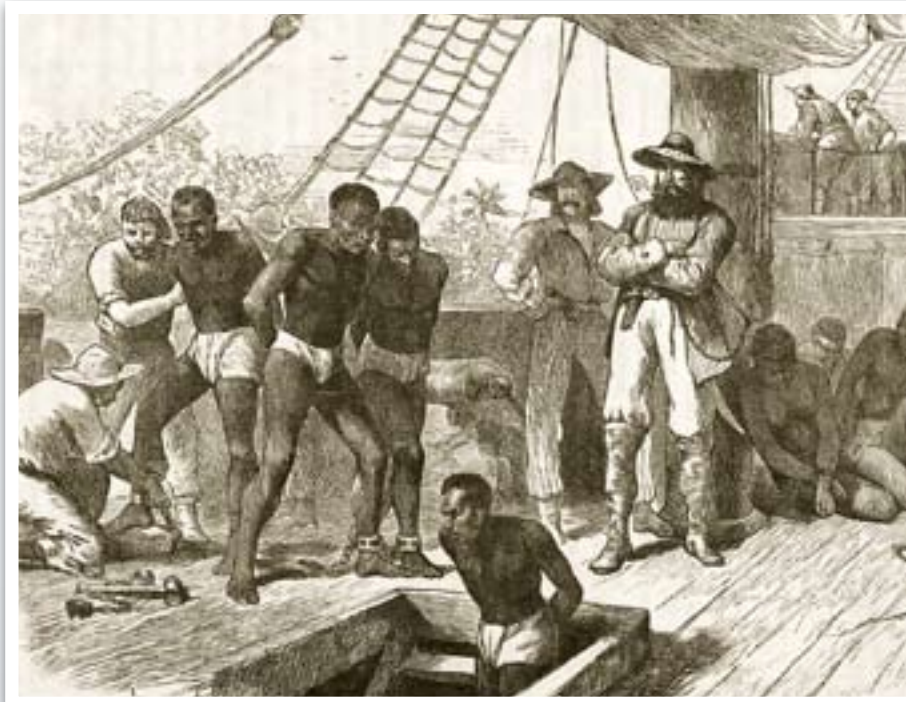
"The same was true in parts of Africa, and it was from these millions of indigenous slaves that African chiefs and slave dealers drew most of the men and women they sold to Europeans and Arabs sailing their ships along the continent's coasts.

"African slaves were spread throughout the Islamic world, and the Ottoman [Turkish] Empire enslaved other peoples as well. In India and other parts of Asia, tens of millions of farmworkers were in outright slavery, and others were peasants in debt bondage that tied them and their labor to a particular landlord as harshly as any slave was bound to a plantation owner in South Carolina or Georgia.

"Native Americans turned prisoners of war into slaves and sold them . . . In Russia, the majority of the population were serfs, often bought, sold, whipped, or sent to the army at the will of their owners. The era was one when, as the historian Seymour Drescher puts it, 'freedom, not slavery, was the peculiar institution'" (Hochschild, p. 2.)

Britain and the African slave trade

Slavery existed in Africa well before



In this illustration from around 1835, slaves are shackled before being put into the hold of a slave ship for transport from Africa to the Americas. Britain took the lead in abolishing the slave trade, outlawing it throughout the empire in 1807.

the arrival of the Europeans. “The Atlantic slave trade depended on the fact that most of the societies of Africa—chiefdoms and kingdoms large and small, even groups of nomads—had their own systems of slavery. People were enslaved as punishment for crimes, as payment for a debt, or, most commonly of all, as prisoners of war . . .

“Once European ships started cruising the African coast offering all kinds of tempting goods for slaves, kings and chiefs began selling their human property to African dealers who roamed far into the interior. Groups of captives, ranging from a few dozen to six or eight hundred, were force-marched to the coast, the prisoners’ hands bound behind their backs, their necks connected by wooden yokes. Along the coast itself, a scattering of whites, blacks and mulattos worked as middlemen for the Atlantic trade” (Hochschild, p. 16).

And then William Wilberforce and his compatriots entered the picture. Driven by a resolute Christian morality, within a generation they persuaded the British government to outlaw slavery in 1807, when the slave trade was still enormously profitable. Playing a hugely important role, the British Royal Navy also served the cause, patrolling the coast of Africa for slave ships and freeing

slaves wherever they encountered them. By the end of the century, slavery was outlawed nearly everywhere.

Britain’s enthusiasm for ending the slave trade “led it to much greater involvement in African affairs. Additional colonies were acquired (Sierra Leone, 1808; Gambia, 1816; Gold Coast, 1821) to serve as bases for suppressing the slave trade and for stimulating substitute commerce.” This “contributed to the expansion of both its commercial and colonial empire” (*The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, Macropedia, “Colonialism,” p. 892).

Certainly, many British people profited from the slave trade before its abolition, but the British Empire became much wealthier *after* the trade was ended. The abolition of the slave trade advanced the growth of the Empire as the British people, descendants of biblical Ephraim, were receiving the birthright promise of becoming “a multitude of nations” (Genesis 48:19; and see our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*). Many of the peoples of the new colonies would later serve alongside Britain in both world wars.

After the abolition of the slave trade, it took another 26 years to end slavery itself throughout the British Empire. The end of

the four-year transition period coincided with Queen Victoria’s ascension to the throne, giving the new queen a prestigious boost at the beginning of her 64-year reign.

One runaway slave fleeing the United States settled just outside of Windsor, Ontario, and founded an institute for others who followed. Josiah Henson’s headstone bears a replica of Victoria’s crown, in appreciation of the freedom he found within the British Empire, whose head was Victoria, whom he later met while on a visit to London. His autobiography was the inspiration for Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

America follows Britain’s lead

A quarter-century later, America would also overturn its history of slavery. Some 365,000 mostly white males of British descent died fighting for the Union side in the American Civil War, enabling peoples of African descent to be free. No other nation sacrificed so many people for such a noble cause.

The United States, descended from the biblical Manasseh (again, see our free booklet), was to follow Great Britain as the world’s dominant power. A history of both nations, written by historian Angus Calder, is appropriately titled *Revolutionary Empire*. The two branches of the Anglo-Saxon “empire,” the British Empire and the United States, were a fulfillment of the promises made to the patriarch Joseph’s sons, by his father Israel (Genesis 48:15-19). They were to be a blessing to the world, as promised to their ancestor Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3).

It wasn’t only on the high seas that the British were stamping out slavery. Toward the end of the 19th century the British high commissioner for Northern Nigeria, Frederick (later Lord) Lugard, made it a priority when administering the 300,000 square miles of his territory.

“In the south were pagan tribes and in the north, historic Muslim city-states with large walled cities whose emirs raided the tribal territories to the south for slaves . . . His policy was to support the native states and chieftainships, their laws and their courts, forbidding slave raiding and cruel punishments . . .” Lugard was “following the explorer David Livingstone’s lead in fighting Arab slave raiders in eastern Africa”

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Hatred of America: A global disease

Americans don't like not knowing why they are hated around the world. Of course, the United States still has some nations as friends—chiefly among the English-speaking world, Israel and in parts of Northern and Eastern Europe. But the numbers are becoming fewer.

Harvard historian Niall Ferguson analyzes the subject well: "The best explanation is in fact the simplest. Being hated is what happens to dominant empires. It comes—sometimes literally—with the territory" (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Feb. 25, 2007).

Hatred sometimes doesn't make much sense. Professor Ferguson also writes: "Who hates America the most? You might assume it's people in countries that the United States has recently attacked—but it's not. It's the people in countries that are supposed to be America's friends, if not allies" (ibid.).

For example, according to the *Pew Global Attitudes Project*, Britons view former foes Germany and Japan far more favorably than America, in spite of the transatlantic partnership that has been of so much benefit to the modern world. A third of Britons even welcomed the success of Hamas in last year's Palestinian elections.

It also seems that those European nations who received the most help from the U.S. Marshall Plan following World War II are in the forefront of anti-Americanism. The current excuse is the war and insurgencies in Iraq. Both Germany and France lined up against America and Britain in opposing the war.

Indeed, "forty-eight percent of Germans think the United States is more dangerous than Iran, a new

survey shows, with only 31 percent believing the opposite" (*Der Spiegel*, March 29, 2007).

London *Times* columnist Rosemary Righter gave Europe a gentle rebuke: "It's open season on the



"Who hates America the most? You might assume its people in countries that the US has recently attacked. But it's not. It's the people in the countries that are supposed to be friends."

US, even in Britain . . . [But] at the age of 50, the EU should at last be able to shed its childish defensive attitude to the US. So, even, should France. For only by pooling the skills and talents of Europe and America, will the European Union achieve its true international potential" (March 21, 2007).

Those interested in the role and future of the United States should also request and read our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. This publication explains the important origins and the prophetic significance of the major English-speaking nations. (Sources: *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The Times* [both London], *American Thinker*, *Der Spiegel*.)

Strategic threats facing Israel: An update

Former Israeli general Uri Dromi sums up the current threats against the Jewish state. They mainly consist of Iran, Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah. Realistically, an Iran armed with nuclear weapons will pose a serious threat to the Arab world itself and potentially even to Europe. Yet the state of Israel is somehow viewed as the sole target of Iranian aggression.

General Dromi wrote: "The Syrian threat is closer to home, with a massive arsenal of SCUD missiles targeting most of Israel's territory . . . [Yet] the Syrian regime is extremely cautious and would not initiate an attack . . . [Of course] the Syrians are actively helping Hizbollah to rearm" (*The Jewish Chronicle*, March 2, 2007).

Israeli security warns that the Palestinians are preparing for yet another armed intifada by smuggling weapons into Gaza by way of Egypt. (Source: *The Jewish Chronicle* [London].)

Americans and Britons bored with monogamy

These days adultery is becoming big business in both America and Britain. According to the London *Times*, "Thousands of Britons have joined a [Web] site for the married but looking" (March 13, 2007).

"When Monogamy Becomes Monotony" (the popular label) began in early 2003 in North America and then jumped the Atlantic last year. The American site has more than a million members, and so far 13,000 Britons have signed up for the British counterpart. One man, a wealthy American, described his requirements this way: "I don't want a hooker. I want a nice girl who loves her husband." It's hard to believe anyone could actually say that.

Although 84 percent of Britons apparently believe that adultery is either always or mostly wrong, some

Germany debates the American missile shield

A proposed American missile shield to be built in Poland and the Czech Republic is designed as a radar system and missile battery to counter projectiles from rogue countries like North Korea and Iran.

Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said in a Dresden speech: "The missile defence system which is to be installed in Eastern Europe is politically extremely dangerous. It is viewed, rightly in Russia, and not only there, as an attempt to establish an absurd encirclement policy, a policy which is everything but in the interest of Europe" (*International Herald Tribune*, March 12, 2007).

Of course, Schroeder is on the Russian-owned Gazprom's payroll, acting as an advocate of Russian policy.



Current German Chancellor Angela Merkel walks a fine line on the issue. Publicly she has adopted a different view from Schroeder's, previously calling it a European and NATO matter.

"Merkel's private position on the shield, as it is described within the party, is that it's a good idea that would protect Germany against Iran."

But politically Merkel cannot afford to altogether ignore the rampant anti-Americanism now afflicting Germany, of which the former chancellor is the main spokesman. (Source: *International Herald Tribune*.)

seem to practice something different. Recent UK statistics show that nearly 25 percent of men and 15 percent of women have indulged in at least one full-blown extramarital affair. Some 61 percent of adulterous husbands and 45 percent of cheating wives claim that their affairs are unknown to their spouses.

Clearly those who indulge in such practices are breaking God's spiritual law governing marriage, as expressed by the Seventh and Tenth Commandments. The wrong use of technology has made it easier for these marital lawbreakers. What cheaters don't realize, however, is that God's law is self-enforcing. Eventually they will pay the penalty in unhappy marriages that often end in divorce.

Married readers who may be tempted to cross the line should request or download our free booklets *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* and *The Ten Commandments*. (Source: *The Times* [London].)



Anglicans and Catholics united under the Pope?

According to the London *Times*: “Radical proposals to reunite Anglicans with the Roman Catholic Church under the leadership of the Pope are to be published this year . . . The proposals have been agreed by senior bishops of both churches. In a 42-page statement prepared by an international commission of both churches, Anglicans and Roman Catholics are urged to explore *how they might reunite under the Pope*” (Feb. 19, 2007, emphasis added throughout).



Anglicans number about 78 million adherents worldwide—dwarfed, of course, by a billion Roman Catholics. Previously the Catholic Church was flexible on celibacy when it received married Anglican priests, who had left the Anglican fold over the issue of women priests. Open tolerance to homosexuality in the priesthood residing in a part of the American Anglican communion remains repugnant to Roman Catholics.

This news of potential unity breaks at the same time that “*Roman Catholicism is set to become the dominant religion in Britain for the first time since the Reformation* because of massive migration from Catholic countries,” especially from Eastern Europe (*The Times*, Feb. 15, 2007).

Watch what happens in the mainstream Christian churches. For useful background information that will help you understand their history, request or download our free booklet *The Church Jesus Built*. (Source: *The Times* [London].)

HPV infections on the rise among American women

“More than a quarter of U.S. girls and women ages 14 to 59 are infected with the sexually transmitted human wart virus, which causes most cases of cervical cancer,” according to researchers from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “That means human papillomavirus or HPV infection is more common than previously thought, particularly among younger age groups . . . Its prevalence was highest among those 20 to 24, with 44.8 percent infected, and nearly a quarter of teenagers aged 14 to 19” (Reuters, Feb. 27, 2007).

Some types of the virus can cause cervical, anal,

penile or other forms of cancer; others cause genital warts; others bring little or no harm and clear up within a few years. However, it’s a dangerous form of sexual Russian roulette.

“More than a quarter of U.S. girls and women ages 14 to 59 are infected with the sexually transmitted human wart virus . . .”

What you will not find in this report or most others is any recommendation to sexually active adults or teens that they should enjoy sex only within the marriage relationship as commanded in the Bible. Keeping sex exclusively within marriage is one sure way to avoid sexually transmitted diseases and the many complications that arise from them. (Source: Reuters news report.)

America and Europe hit by loss of bees

“Hundreds of millions of honeybees have vanished in 22 US states, leaving keepers financially crippled and jeopardising £8 billion [or \$16 billion] of crops that needed insects for pollination” (*The Times*, Feb. 19, 2007). This disappearance is attributed to Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), which causes swarms of bees to abandon their hives and die.

A later update appearing in the Feb. 27, 2007, *International Herald Tribune* expanded the figure



to 24 American states—nearly half the country. And America is not alone. “Bee-keepers in Poland, Greece, Croatia, Switzerland, Italy and Portugal have also reported heavy losses” (*The Daily Telegraph*, March 31, 2007). And the list keeps growing.

This is sobering news affecting agricultural production. According to Zac Browning, vice president of the American Beekeeping Federation, “Every third bite we consume in our diet is dependent on a honey bee to pollinate that food.” Bees do far more for us human beings than just produce honey. (Sources: *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* [both London], *International Herald Tribune*.)

Goals and problems of the next generation

“The views of young people today on politics, social attitudes and life goals are far different from their baby boomer parents,” says the Jan. 9, 2007, *USA Today* regarding a national survey of 18- to 25-year-olds.

“More than two-thirds (67%) believe immigrants strengthen American society; a quarter favor increasing legal immigration,” the article continues. In contrast, less than half (47 percent) of those ages 41 to 60 believe immigrants help society and only

16 percent say it should increase.

Younger people are evenly split over gay marriage (47 percent in favor, 46 percent opposed). Yet among those 25 and older, 64 percent are opposed and only 30 percent are in favor of gay marriage.

More than a third of today’s 18- to 25-year-olds (36 percent) have a tattoo; almost a third (30 percent) have a nontraditional body piercing (other than in an ear lobe) and a quarter have dyed their hair an unnatural color. Only 32 percent of this younger group attends church once a week, while 20 percent is religiously unaffiliated, atheist or agnostic. Still, 84 percent say their life is really good.

What are their goals compared to earlier genera-

tions? Today’s 18- to 25-year-olds aspire to be rich (81 percent) and famous (51 percent) contrasted against a 1967 group of college freshmen who thought it essential to develop a meaningful philosophy of life (86 percent).

In short, the younger age group has well absorbed the primary message directed to them in a lifetime of absorbing thousands of hours of popular media—*it’s all about me*. Young people who would like to aim higher in their goals and standards are invited to request a free subscription to *Vertical Thought*, from the publishers of *The Good News*, at www.verticalthought.org. (Source: *USA Today*.)

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 today’s 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.wmponline.org today!



Ellen fell asleep on the floor while breastfeeding in the middle of the night. She woke up later in her own bed, not really certain if she actually fed the baby.

Sally spent every evening for three months bouncing on her birthing ball, with her newborn son tucked in close to her chest—the only tactic that would curb his colicky crying.

Jeanine and Dirk looked at each other and, without speaking a word, simultaneously broke into a game of “rock, paper, scissors” to see who would change the diaper of their formerly constipated son.

Having a newborn is nothing short of an adventure that many new parents describe as “the best and the hardest days of our lives.”

The most challenging issues in a baby’s first year center around 1) crying, 2) sleep issues and 3) breastfeeding.

In gathering information for this article, I interviewed a panel of experts—at least a dozen parents from our childbirth classes with children under one year of age. Most agreed that crying, sleep and breastfeeding topped their lists, and that first-year parenting impacted them beyond their expectations.

Jeanine said: “I’ve always heard that the first year of marriage is the most difficult. I actually think it’s the first year of your first child’s life. What a ride! I had no idea.”

I’m not sure anything can really prepare you for what the first year of parenting is really like—each child is different, so even for the same parents it can be a different journey every time. But if I could pass along a precious pearl of wisdom, it’s this: *What you do in the first year lays the groundwork for successful parenting and marriage in years to come.*

Parenting with the end in mind

It can be really hard to see the big picture when you’re suffering from extreme sleep deprivation on top of a hormonal roller-coaster ride. But that’s part of the job of being a parent. While you are in your first year of parenting, it’s important to ask yourself, “What do I want my child to be like two, five, 10 or 20 years from now? What do I want my marriage to be like then, too?”

The goal of parenting is to bring up our children to responsibly enter the adult world, and eventually God’s Kingdom, with a mature, godly perspective (“... nourish them in the instruction and admonition of the Lord”—Ephesians 6:4, Young’s Literal Translation). God has a job for your child. Your job is to teach and train him or her and nurture his or her gifts and talents.

This is “your” child for a time, but it’s important for Mom and Dad to focus on what God, your child’s Creator and heavenly Father, is doing regarding his or her eternal life. It requires respect for your child, even as you provide authority and leadership. Everything you say or do—or neglect to say or do—will teach your child in some way, and will influence your child’s view of what God (his or her ultimate Father) is like.

When your child looks at you, will he or she see a reflection of

God? Because of you, will your child learn that God is reliable, consistent, patient, deeply loving, worthy of respect and always accessible?

Work as a team

Brain growth occurs at its most rapid rate from eight months gestation through the first years of life. During this time, children are like little sponges, soaking up information through all of the five senses, as well as through attitudes and relationships.

As one of my parent experts, Shantelle, advised: “Take time to teach your baby. Yes, they will lie around a lot and act as though they don’t know what is going on, but they are smarter than we think!”

As for practical tidbits, there is no lack of information, and a wide variety of approaches, on how to deal with breastfeeding problems, nursing strikes, colic, diapers, nap times, bedtime rituals, separation anxiety, and on and on.

The practical issues of parenting overwhelmingly dominate—and at times frustrate—new parents’ lives. Much of the information is apparently conflicting. It’s important that both parents talk about these things together and decide on a team approach.

Supporting each other and working together are essential. God the Father and Jesus Christ are in total agreement on how to rear the spiritual children in the family of God, and it’s vitally

“I’ve always heard that the first year of marriage is the most difficult. I actually think it’s the first year of your first child’s life. What a ride! I had no idea.”

important that Mom and Dad also work together as one.

If parents disagree, who does the child learn to follow? Neither—rather, he or she will learn to play the two against each other or will learn to disregard and disrespect authority (even “loving” authority) because it is too confusing and conflicting. Parents should learn to get it right during this first year—as it’s much harder to do so later. This is when good parenting habits are born.

Family addition affects your marriage

When the hard work of parenting is over, what will be left? Will you have a strong, loving marriage bound even tighter by successfully building a family together? Will your friendship have grown deeper, with memories of joy and laughter?

Will you have a platform of teamwork and respect on which to build the next phase of life as a twosome once again? Ellen reminds herself “how important my relationship with my spouse is, he must come first . . . He’ll be there in 18 years; my child won’t be.”

How Your Free Subscription to *The Good News* Has Been Paid

The Good News is an international magazine dedicated to proclaiming the true gospel of Jesus Christ and to revealing the biblical solutions to so many of the problems that plague humanity. It is sent free of charge to all who request it.

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We are grateful for the generous tithes and offerings of the members of the Church and other supporters who voluntarily contribute to assist in this effort to proclaim the true gospel to all nations. While we do not solicit the general public for funds, we welcome contributions to help us share this message of truth and hope with others.

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Let's get practical. Marriage can take a hit when "couple life" changes to "family life." It seems there is little time or energy left for each other. Because the needs of baby take priority in the sense of requiring immediate, spontaneous attention, the needs of the couple often get relegated to "later."

How can a couple stay close? The solutions these parents offer demonstrate an abiding devotion to their children while keeping the needs of the couple as an overarching priority, lovingly and maturely integrated as you build your family together.

Jen offered this insight: "We have had to remember always to treat each other with love, even on four hours of sleep, which is not easy. That is what has brought us together as a family in the first place, and that will keep us together."

Clint said: "Sandy and I have been perpetually emotionally exhausted . . ." They advised developing a support network among family, very close friends and church community, so you can go out on regular dates.

For some, "family dates" are the answer—especially in those early months when moms and babies are quite literally inseparable "bosom buddies," and it would actually create stress, rather than relieve it, to take mom away from her baby.

Your Child's First Year: What Can You Expect?

So now you're a new parent. What adventures and surprises does the next year hold for you, your mate and your child? How can you build a foundation for future family success?

by Nancy Capo

A regular, early bedtime has been a lifesaver for many couples, who work together to get the children to bed by 7:30 or 8 p.m., then spend "couple time" on the sofa or in the bedroom. Even so, sheer exhaustion is a big factor during the first year. Dads particularly need to be patient and understanding. Dad may get the kids down at 8:00 and find Mom is snoring at 8:05. No joke!

Advice from others

As a new parent, you'll probably find that others will offer you advice. Jeanine's suggestion? "Absorb all the unsolicited advice you can fathom and process it with your husband later. It saves everyone's feelings (this is more difficult than it sounds when your body is just oozing hormones) and you will actually gain some valuable insight should you choose to sort through it all later."

Most issues are really to be decided between you and your spouse with due consideration toward others; however, keep your eyes, ears and heart open to the wisdom that comes from other parents' research and experience.

Parenting in your baby's first year is one of the most intense experiences of your life—yes, intensely stressful. But the moments of pure bliss seem to melt away the stress if you snatch them up and capture them in your heart.

You will watch your baby sleep, not able to pull yourself away—not just yet. You will nurse your baby and hear her sweet sighs of contentment with every breath. You will place your finger in his palm, his tiny fingers wrapping around yours in a surprisingly tight grip.

Singing soothing lullabies, dancing in the living room, rocking at midnight while all is quiet—these are moments you'll cherish.

Your biggest joys will be his



or her newest accomplishments—his first smile, her first laugh, his first tooth, her first word, his first step.

This year is full of firsts for you too—most importantly, your first steps toward building the marriage and family God has in mind for you. **GN**

Recommended Reading

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



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it at www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

The European Union: Blessing or Modern Tower of Babel?

A union of 27 nations with nearly half a billion people should not be carelessly underestimated. Yet the lofty ideals of the EU founding fathers and those of Europe's current leaders should sometimes be taken with a grain of salt.

by John Ross Schroeder

Those in the political and business world generally hold one of two contrasting views of Europe. One view is that the continent is increasingly fading away. Many political leaders view China and India as the next superpowers—not the EU. Some observers state that the European Union is underperforming in a globalized world, thinking the EU is falling behind in industrial performance and far too slow in developing new technologies.

The introduction to a March 26, 2007, *Newsweek* article stated: “As the European Union celebrates the 50th anniversary of its founding Treaty of Rome, the pundits agree: Europe is in terminal decline. It is a continental-size museum dropping into the dustbin of history.

“*This picture is especially popular in America.* As U.S. skeptics tell it, the Old World (save for Britain, naturally) is finished. Economies are stagnant. Technological and entrepreneurial energy have passed to Silicon Valley and Bangalore. Politicians are powerless in the face of sclerotic social welfare systems” (Andrew Moravcsik, “The Golden Moment,” emphasis added throughout).

“The world is bipolar, and the other pole is Europe”

The author of the *Newsweek* article, Andrew Moravcsik, does not agree with this negative assessment of Europe. After all, he is the director of the European Union Pro-

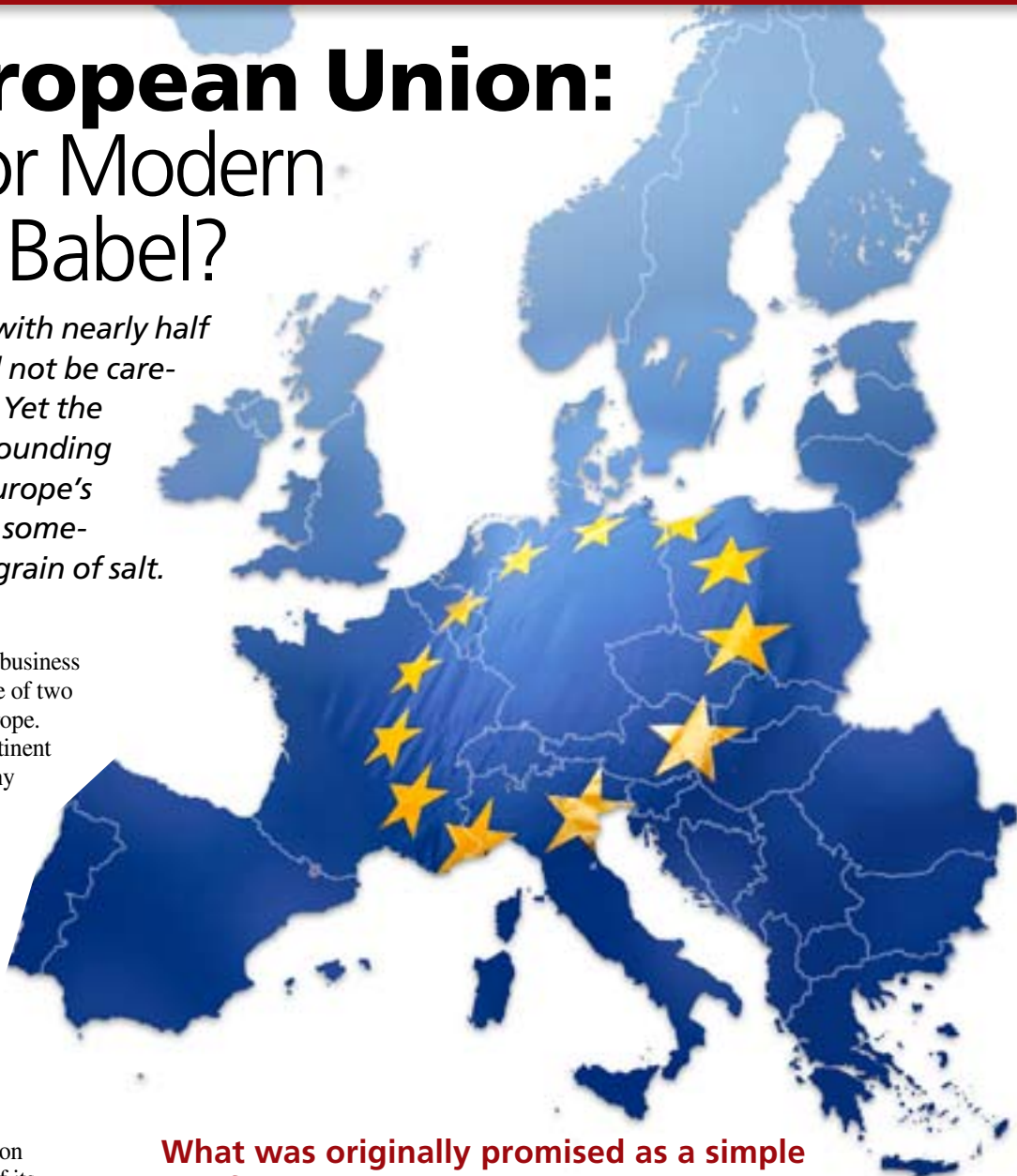
What was originally promised as a simple union of economic cooperation would inevitably become political, strategic and military.

gram at Princeton University. He thinks of Europe as “*the quiet superpower.*” To him, “the world is bipolar, and the other pole is Europe.” Moravcsik believes that the EU uses (and will use) civilian and diplomatic power far more effectively than the United States.

Futurologist Jeremy Rifkin is quoted in the article as saying, “The American Spirit is tired and languishing in the past,” and it is Europe that will provide leadership for a world in disarray. According to this line of thinking, U.S. military might is not working in today’s complex world while Europe’s emphasis on diplomacy, led by Germany and France, is in the process of gradually renouncing arms as a means of solving the periodic crises that threaten global stability.

Berlin is a leader in this new thinking. Longtime writer Gerhard Marx and I traveled to Berlin to report on the official commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, the founding document of the EU. Not far behind London, Paris and Rome, the city of Berlin is now the fourth-most-visited city in Europe. Since the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989, this city has come a long way. It has been restored as the capital of Germany and is once again at the heart of European culture.

Mr. Marx and I met at Berlin’s new central railway station. This impressive *Hauptbahnhof* opened in advance of the World Cup in May 2006. No other train station of such major proportions has been constructed



in recent history. This is where many thousands of European rail passengers either change trains or disembark to visit the city. This highly functional, multileveled building features some 80 modern retail shops open from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Rome would have dearly loved to have hosted these anniversary celebrations and festivities, but Berlin prevailed. Germany



Germany, the economic powerhouse leading the European Union, is a fascinating mix of new and old. The Reichstag in Berlin, left, is the home of the German parliament. Berlin's new train station, right, is a modern architectural marvel.

exercises the current presidency of the European Union.

Until late 1989 this city symbolized the divisions afflicting the European continent. A forbidding communist-built barrier ran right through the middle of Berlin, separating the peoples of Europe, East from West. Now, nearly 18 years later, the capital city appears symbolic of a new unity growing on much of the European continent.

"The Berlin Declaration"

The celebrations culminated with a formal report called "The Berlin Declaration" signed by Angela Merkel (chancellor of Germany) for the Council of the European Union, Hans-Gert Poettering, president of the European Parliament, and Jose Manuel Barroso (of Portugal), president of the European Commission.

It proffers some interesting ideals—if only Europe could live up to them in the long run.

"Thanks to the yearning for freedom of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe, the unnatural division of Europe is now consigned to the past. *European integration shows that we have learnt the painful lessons of history marked by bloody conflict* . . .

"We, the citizens of the European Union, have united for the better . . .

"We are striving for peace and freedom, for democracy and the rule of law, for

mutual respect and shared responsibility, for prosperity and security, for tolerance and participation, for justice and solidarity . . .

"We can thus shape the increasing interdependence of the global economy and ever-growing competition of international markets according to our values . . .

"We are committed to the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the world and to

ensuring that people do not become victims of war, terrorism and violence . . .

"With European unification a dream of earlier generations has become a reality."

These are certainly idealistic sentiments. However, the Bible plainly states that "the [human] heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9, New International Version). Romans 8:7 adds that "the mind-set of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit itself to God's law, for it is unable to do so" (Holman Christian Standard Bible). Unless we are truly converted Christians, we human beings are lawless by nature and do not really know the way to peace (Romans 3:17).

Regardless of good intentions, can Europe fly in the face of these biblical truths in the long run?

Fifty years of progress, prosperity and peace

Mr. Barroso praised the progress of Europe in his Berlin speech. "Let us recognise 50 years of achievement, peace, liberty and prosperity, beyond the dreams of even the most optimistic founding father of Europe. In 1957, 15 of our 27 members were either under dictatorship or were not allowed to exist as independent countries. Now we are all prospering democracies. The EU of today is around 50 times more prosperous . . .

"The enlarged European Union gives us not just economic but also a political and strategic dimension . . . Size matters in today's world." This statement is well worth noting since "strategic dimension" is most probably a euphemism for the military dimension. We must ask the question here: How long can an economic giant like the EU remain a relative military dwarf?

German Chancellor Merkel stated in her official Berlin speech: "A common Foreign and Security policy is therefore absolutely vital . . . Europe needs to be able to act, to act more effectively than it can at present . . . The founding fathers of Europe knew that in the long run the economic and the political world could not be kept separate . . . For we know that we must always renew the political shape of Europe in keeping with the times."

What was originally promised as a simple union of economic cooperation would inevitably become political, strategic and military.

Recognizing Europe's Christian dimension

Early in her speech Chancellor Merkel added an important aside: "And if I may make a personal comment, I would add that this view of the individual is for me also part and parcel of Europe's Jewish-Christian heritage." Earlier in the year *Newsweek* quoted the German chancellor as saying, "We must give a soul to Europe; we have to find Europe's soul" (Jan. 29, 2007).

A *Jewish Chronicle* article critical of Dr. Merkel, written by a Liberal member of the British Parliament, stated that "the German Chancellor is suggesting injecting a Christian clause into the European constitution . . . [She] has reignited the argument about whether the EU should 'do God,' saying: 'We need a European identity in the form of a constitutional treaty and it should be connected to Christianity and God, as Christianity has forged Europe in a decisive way'" ("God and Politics Don't Mix. Merkel Should Know That," March 23, 2007).

Bible prophecy clearly foretells that religion will play a decisive future role in a world-dominating union to come, a union grounded in the general geographic sphere of the ancient Holy Roman Empire of Europe.

A babel of languages no longer a problem

As a press representative of *The Good News*, I attended the final media conference hosted by the signatories of "The

Continued on page 21

Do You Know the Real Secret?

Could you be affected by a popular but deceptive New Age teaching? What's at the heart of *The Secret* and *The Law of Attraction*? Does the Bible offer any insight and guidance?

by Howard Davis

“**H**ave you heard *The Secret*? It is the most important secret for human beings to hear. It holds the keys to human success and understanding why you are here. It is the secret of the most powerful force in the universe. It is the basis for what has been,

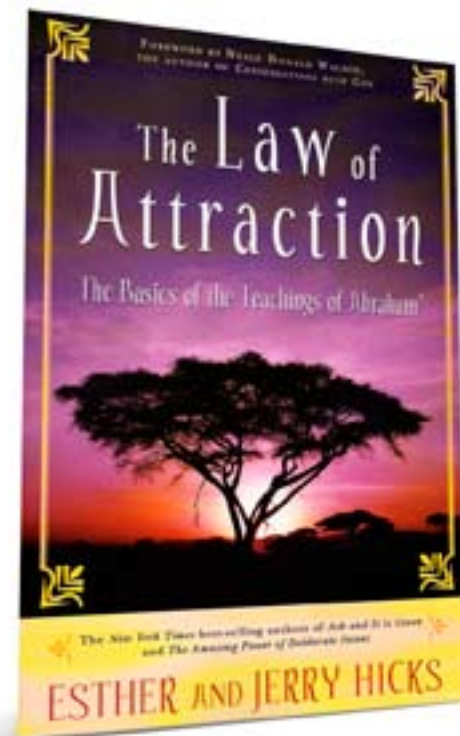
and in magazines and newspapers.

Many millions have been swayed by the seductive philosophy that you will achieve wealth, greatness or health *simply by wishing it so*.

That's right. All the hype is based on the teaching that there is a secret basic law in the universe that says you can have anything you want by wanting it badly enough. Through total and focused desire on what you want, you will automatically attract it to you. That's the law

is directly contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the law of God (Matthew 22:37-39; Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18) and, in fact, is a never-ending source of evil.

Single-minded pursuit of one's selfish desires leads a person to damaging outcomes—distorted values, antisocial



In religious terms, self-absorption with money and power is all about loving self above God or neighbor. This psychology is directly contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the law of God and, in fact, is a never-ending source of evil.

of attraction, the secret that is “the greatest power in the universe.”

Demons in Hollywood's Garden of Eden

Advocates claim that the law of attraction has the absolute scientific validity of any physical law, as real and unchangeable as gravity. “These Laws are absolute, they are Eternal, and they are omnipresent (or everywhere)” (Esther and Jerry Hicks, *The Law of Attraction*, 2006, p. 20).

Oprah Winfrey said on her program that she has always believed and practiced *The Secret*. But only in the fantasy world of Hollywood-influenced media can this old New Age idea be taken as scientific truth—that your personal thoughts, positive or negative, are the ultimate reality behind the universe.

Real life has never worked that way and never will. In religious terms, self-absorption with money and power is all about loving self above God or neighbor. This psychology



behavior, self-will, arrogance and often isolation, loneliness and self-destruction. These destructive values lie at the core of the dangerous “law of attraction” fad.

Medical science finds the claims of the movement ridiculous. Stephen Barrett, a retired psychiatrist who operates Quackwatch.com, a Web site devoted to exposing quackery and health fraud, says: “There is no evidence that thinking can modify disease other than occasional relaxation exercises. Thoughts have nothing to do with physics. They are talking about a concept of energy that cannot be measured.

“The energy involved in physics can be measured in a number of different ways,” Dr. Barrett notes. “There is nothing real about what they are talking about. They are talking about imaginary energy. The idea of

what is and what will be.”

Sounds interesting, doesn't it? Statements like these from the “law of attraction” marketing campaign are exploding through American and global media. In only a few months it has already become a hugely successful effort, selling millions of tapes, books and DVDs.

It's a promoter's dream come true. Almost out of nowhere, the strange and powerfully seductive teachings of the DVD movie and book *The Secret*, and the book *The Law of Attraction* (promoted by psychics Esther and Jerry Hicks), are appearing everywhere. They've been seen worldwide on Oprah Winfrey's hugely popular TV talk show and on Larry King's CNN show. They've been featured in a myriad of other TV and radio programs,

a secret remedy is a classic quack claim.”

This is not merely harmless quackery, however. The impacts of *The Secret* on mental health can be seriously damaging.

It can foster abnormal and obsessive thinking. These can generate destructive emotional responses as life inevitably has its sustained trials and drawbacks. Taken to its logical conclusions, a person can develop a profound disconnect with reality.

The most prominent book in this marketing blitz, *The Law of Attraction*, explains that every negative experience, accident, mishap and influence in a person’s world are the product of his own thinking.

“Nothing merely shows up in your experience. You attract it—all of it. No exceptions . . . We must still explain that only you could have caused it, for no one else has the power to attract what comes to you but you. By focusing upon this unwanted thing, or the essence of it, you have created it by default” (p. 30).

Where do you think this most unscientific—some would say crazy—idea came from? Esther and Jerry Hicks, the authors of *The Law of Attraction*, have convinced their believers that their ideas came from a cluster of supernatural spirits collectively calling themselves “Abraham.”

The Hicks claim these spirits communicated the law of attraction to them through channeling—an abnormal or alternate state of mind by which some communicate with evil spirits. (This practice, incidentally, is condemned in the Bible in the strongest terms—see Deuteronomy 18:10-12 and Leviticus 20:27.)

In *The Law of Attraction*, these spirits have done a job worthy of the devil’s deceptions in the Garden of Eden.

Jews caused their own Holocaust and blacks their own slavery?

Let’s consider the claim that your thoughts cause all the good and all the evil in your life. If this idea is wrong even once, the entire idea unravels. It would show the law of attraction to be nothing more than a dangerous falsehood that lays the foundation to rationalize, and even justify, evil.

Consider. Following the logic of this idea, 6 million Jews would have brought extermination on themselves in the Holocaust because they attracted their own annihilation by their negative thoughts.

According to this idea, a four-year-old rape victim attracted lifelong trauma through wrong thinking.

According to this idea, the hospital patient given HIV-contaminated blood attracted

AIDS by bad thoughts.

By the law of attraction, these people are the ultimate evildoers because they caused their own suffering through negative thoughts—even if they didn’t consciously think they had them.

In reality, all of these situations are not caused by negative thinking, but by external evil or chance events unrelated to the thinking of the victim.

If you apply this mode of analyzing human experience to history, you come to more ludicrous conclusions. The Romans must have thought better thoughts than all the nations they brutally murdered, pillaged and enslaved. For centuries each of the

development of human rights are reversed by the perverse logic of the law of attraction. There is no need for legal protections against evil because evil is destined for those who end up suffering from it.

This thinking is unbalanced and narcissistic. Taken to extremes, it can be symptomatic of personality disorders if believers treat others by the logic flowing from the false premise.

It’s astonishing that so many leading figures in mass media are unable to discern the distortions of reality, even the dangers to mental health, lying at the heart of this bizarre doctrine that more and more resembles a cult religion.

Beware *The Law of Attraction*'s False Premises and Twisted Logic

Here are the 10 occult teachings of the legion of spirits calling themselves “Abraham” promoted by the media and the authors of *The Law of Attraction*:

- You are a physical extension of that which is nonphysical.
- You are here in this body because you chose to be here.
- The basis of your life is freedom; the purpose of your life is joy.
- You are a creator; you create with your every thought.
- Anything that you can imagine is yours to be or do or have.

- You are choosing your creations as you are choosing your thoughts.
- The universe adores you; for it knows your broadest intentions.
- Relax into your natural well-being. All is well. (Really it is!)
- You are a creator of thoughtways on your unique path of joy.
- Actions to be taken and money to be exchanged are byproducts of your focus on joy.
- You may appropriately depart your body without illness or pain.
- You cannot die; you are everlasting life and you are the god of your universe.

millions of black slaves must have deserved their bondage because of their negative thoughts. Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. must have deserved to be assassinated and the American colonists must have deserved “taxation without representation” because of their negative thinking.

The Secret turns social justice into an absurdity. Worse, the law of attraction reverses many of the great spiritual truths of the Bible: Abel deserved to be murdered by Cain for his bad thoughts; the Israelites deserved to be subject to slavery and the genocide of their newborn sons in Pharaoh’s Egypt; Jesus deserved His own crucifixion and His followers deserved to be murdered for believing in God’s forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

This is an abuser’s thinking, and it is evil. By this doctrine, the victims of evil and abuse are the cause of their own abuse. The logic is that if you are victimized, brutalized or oppressed, it’s your fault, not the oppressors. Two thousand years of the

Imagine what happens when believers in this idea begin to have negative things happen in their lives—as we all do. Will they open themselves up to enormously neurotic and abnormal perceptions about their own thinking, saying to themselves that they are not positive enough? This process can lead to a legion of psychological and mental disorders as the individuals disconnect life’s real experiences of ups and downs from objective thinking.

The ultimate bottom line in the movement is that all people should open themselves up to occult experiences like Esther and Jerry Hicks. This is a serious threat to the mental health of people.

Mainstreaming the occult

Practitioners of the New Age occult, such as Esther and Jerry Hicks and other channelers, deliberately suspend the critical thinking and judging capacity of the brain and empty their minds into a receptive trance. These psychics knowingly open themselves

up to be used as mouthpieces by spirits.

Jerry Hicks said he and his wife learned to channel after being convinced of the existence of supernatural spirits through Ouija board messages.

Your Bible, however, says that such “familiar spirits” who speak through psychics are demons—fallen spirits who lie. The Bible also calls the person who channels them a witch or medium. During the Old Testament period, such a person who knowingly consorted with evil spirits was condemned to death.

The spirits calling themselves “Abraham”—actually a group of demons—want your

mind to immediately absorb the point of view they express. Here is what “Abraham” says to the reader:

“It is always an interesting experience to explain to our physical friends those things that are of a Non-Physical nature, because everything that we offer to you must then be translated through the lens of your physical world. In other words, Esther receives our thoughts, like radio signals, at an unconscious level of her Being, and then translates them into physical words and concepts” (*The Law of Attraction*, p. 19).

The analogy of radio signals reminds

many Bible students of Ephesians 2:2 where Satan is called “the prince of the power of the air.” His influence goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden where the serpent told Eve, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4-5).

She was attracted to the fruit, seduced by the original version of the demonic law of attraction. There is a twisted logic at the foundation of the law of attraction. It is contrary to actual human experience and directly contradicts the statements of God, Jesus Christ, the prophets and the apostles in the Bible.

To believe the doctrines of the demons who “revealed” the law of attraction, you have to start by leaving your brain at the door, much as Eve did as she conversed with the serpent. It was a counterfeit and a lie. Adam and Eve *did* die. And so do all who sin—all of us. There is only one solution, one way out of death, and that remains a mystery to the world at large even after Jesus Christ proclaimed it.

The real secret—the mystery of the Kingdom

Almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ brought His announcement of the Kingdom of God, creating a sensation with His ministry.

“Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14-15).

With spectacular miracles, He turned water to wine, fed thousands with only a few fish and loaves of bread, healed many of tragic illnesses, raised Lazarus from the dead and proclaimed that a new realm of existence is coming for humanity. If anyone in history has shown the way for people to have eternal life, it is Jesus Christ.

But He promised that the way to the Kingdom of God would be a secret, a mystery except to His disciples—and they would be very few.

He told His disciples: “It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given . . . Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand” (Matthew 13:11, 13).

He also said there would be many counterfeits, including religious teachers

Seven Truths From Jesus Christ About the Real Secret: The Kingdom of God

Christ said the real secret of the universe, on which all of the past, present and future depends, is the Kingdom of God. Explaining His famous parable of the sower, He called descriptions of the way to enter the Kingdom of God and its principles “mysteries”—secrets or hidden truths most people don’t understand (Matthew 13:11).

What are these great truths, these mysteries so few understand?

1. Human beings can be converted and raised up “at the last day” (John 6:40) to enter the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

What Jesus meant was that we will live as children in a divine family with the Father and Son forever. Surprisingly, this will begin right here on earth. To learn more, request or download our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.

2. Christ treated all of Scripture, which at that time consisted of what we call the Old Testament, as the Word of God—revealing the real secret. He said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). In other words, the secrets of God are revealed in the Word of God, the Bible, and nowhere else. To learn more, request or download our free booklet *Is the Bible True?*

3. The law of God holds the key to the Kingdom of God. The law of God, summarized in the Ten Commandments, is the basic law of the universe. The law of God will bring true success. To learn more, request or download our free booklet *The Ten Commandments*.

4. The goal in life is to develop the character of God by conforming to Christ—not your human heart. Following your own inclinations apart from God will lead to death (Jeremiah 10:23; 17:9; Romans 8:7; Proverbs 16:25). Your greatest goal is not the selfish ambition to attract all the physical wealth and everything else you desire. To learn more, request or download

our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?*

5. Satan counterfeits and misrepresents spiritual truths and deceives mankind.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus said, “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart” (Matthew 13:19). Anyone who believes in “the law of attraction” will not be able to understand and receive the truth about the Kingdom of God. The apostle Paul said the devil’s teaching and spiritual control of the world would blind most from understanding the Kingdom of God and how man enters it through following Christ’s teachings (2 Corinthians 4:4). To learn more, request or download our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*

6. God has given us the keys of overcoming—the spiritual process of conversion. It starts by giving up the kind of lifestyle of self-absorption laid out in the teaching of *The Secret* and *The Law of Attraction*. To enter the Kingdom of God, you have to give up the natural priorities of the self, sacrificing the self to be transformed into a new being with eternal life. Jesus Christ promises good things will come to each of us abundantly if we live a life of giving to others, not getting for ourselves. To learn more, request or download our free booklet *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.

7. God will give us every good thing—but only in the coming Kingdom of God can we receive the glorious reward that will be greater than anything we can imagine in this life today. Jesus Christ’s teaching is summed up in this: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). God wants you to inherit the Kingdom of God—the greatest secret in the universe that will transform you and all who choose to think, believe and act on it.

It’s good news, and it’s free. The real secret is what this magazine is all about.

claiming to act in His name.

The basic premise of *The Secret* and *The Law of Attraction* is that you already have eternal life and will have everything you desire in this life without a need for conversion or obedience to the law of God. This constitutes a counterfeit religion and faith directly contradicting biblical truth.

Jesus Christ defined the thoughts and behavior necessary to enter the Kingdom of God and taught His disciples that there are distinct differences between good and evil, negating the premise of *The Secret*.

He condemned materialism, saying, “You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). He said following Him is the only way to eternal life (John 11:25). Furthermore, He said of the dos and don’ts of the Bible, “If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17).

Jesus did *not* say you can have anything you want if you want it badly enough since you are ultimately your own god. He did not say man automatically has eternal life.

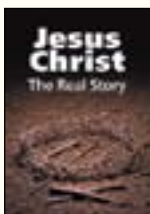
Furthermore, the teachings and example of Jesus Christ provide the greatest possible repudiation of every idea of the law of attraction. He continuously taught against evil. He labeled evil what it was—the rotten fruit of the ways of Satan, a liar and murderer from the beginning (John 8:44).

Jesus said that we should seek first God’s Kingdom and His righteous way of living and that all of our needs will then be ultimately taken care of (Matthew 6:33).

There is a reason “wishful thinking” means a focus on how we want things to be that is unrealistic. Don’t be caught up in false hopes and spiritually perverted solutions that lead down hopeless paths. Serve the living and all-powerful God. Pray to Him in faith and live your life according to His will. Then *He* will ultimately fulfill your needs and desires—beyond your wildest wishes and imaginings. **GN**

Recommended Reading

Would you like to understand the real secret of God’s plan and the One who makes it possible for you to have eternal life, Jesus Christ? Who was He, really? What did He teach? Why did the crowds both love Him and hate Him? What was His mission? Why did He have to die? Will He come again and, if so, why? You need to understand the answers! Request or download your free copy of *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*.



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European Union

Continued from page 17

Berlin Declaration”—Chancellor Merkel, Professor Poettering and Mr. Barroso. Many hundreds of journalists attending in the press building could hear immediate translations in their own languages. When Mr. Barroso spoke in English, Dr. Merkel and Professor Poettering donned earphones and listened to a simultaneous translation into German.

All of the major speeches were printed and freely available in English and other languages. Europe is a place of many tongues, but many citizens speak several languages and competent translators are available in abundance—some waiting on a long list of potential employees in the EU. Clearly, different languages are not the problem they once were in Europe.

Is the European Union a modern Tower of Babel? Most of its leaders and proponents seem to see the EU as a definite blessing for mankind. They simply do not envision what the Bible foretells in the books of Daniel and Revelation.

Excepting their leaders, probably many of those who began to build the ancient Tower of Babel did not fully understand where that enterprise would eventually lead, had not God intervened. Notice the biblical account:

“Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there . . . They said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth’” (Genesis 11:1-4, NIV).

A far-seeing God knew what would eventually happen. “But the LORD came down to see the city that the men were building. The LORD said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language, so they will not understand each other’” (verses 5-7, NIV).

Only now in this present modern age are we seeing the massive potential of human beings come to fruition. It was prophesied that at the time of the end knowledge and transportation across the earth would greatly increase (Daniel 12:4).

The motives of European leaders seem coated with aspirations for many good things that would help humankind immeasurably. But where is this powerful union really

headed in the long run? Will it eventually turn out to be a modern Tower of Babel?

Original intentions and future reality

It is appropriate here to recall a prophecy of Isaiah: “Woe to the Assyrian, the rod of my anger, in whose hand is the club of my wrath! I send him against a godless nation [the house of Israel], I dispatch him against a people who anger me . . . *But this is not what he intends, this is not what he has in mind, [yet] his purpose is to destroy, to put an end to many nations*” (Isaiah 10:5-7, NIV).

Leaders of nations do not always understand their own minds and motives. Many can be self-deceived. So God can use one nation—or a coalition or alliance of nations—to punish others because of their transgressions and violations of His law. Will the Creator use a final union of nations or groups of nations in Europe to punish the modern nations descended from ancient Israel—even if the perpetrators don’t have any intention of doing so now? Our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* shows the location and prophetic identity of the posterity of Israel today.

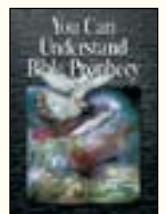
You have to put a number of biblical prophecies together properly to comprehend where Europe is really headed. It takes time, study and effort to understand the significance of these events.

According to the Holy Scriptures, the end result of efforts to unify Europe will not be a friendly group of democratic nations that will bless mankind in countless ways. Instead these efforts will lead to the rise of a new superpower led by a powerful dictator who will institute an unrivaled period of global tyranny and turmoil.

Yes, a modern Tower of Babel is coming in Europe—one that is going to work together in unity for a while—and you need to be armed with spiritual knowledge of how to cope with what lies ahead! **GN**

Recommended Reading

To understand more fully the stark implications of a coming time of unparalleled global turmoil, request or download the free booklets *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* And to understand how this will affect the major English-speaking nations (and why), request or download *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*, also free for the asking.



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The Role of a Watchman: What Does It Mean for You?

The Bible uses the role of a watchman to describe the work of a prophet among God's people. Is there more to this symbolism than many have understood? The role of a watchman is vital to a full understanding of the work of God in the end time.

by **Beyond Today** host **Darris McNeely**

God said to the prophet Ezekiel, “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me” (Ezekiel 3:17).

Here is one of the most intriguing metaphors used by God in all of prophecy. It is repeated in chapter 33 for emphasis, and sets the stage for the prophet’s ministry to the divided houses of Judah and Israel.

Just what was the role of a watchman to an ancient city? How does God use the role of a watchman to warn and teach? What does it mean for the work of God today as this world comes to a prophetic crossroads?

It’s vital you understand the answer to these questions as events grow increasingly tense in a rapidly changing world order.

A key figure

In the ancient world of agrarian societies, large watchtowers were placed overlooking the fields. There, in the weeks the crops were ripening toward harvest, men would stand watch, guarding the fields from animals or from thieves who would make off with the crops. With the community’s basic food stores at stake, the watchman’s role was critical to the townspeople.

We also find several references in Scripture to a watcher mounting the city walls in times of stress to survey the scene outside the fortifications. He was situated on a spot from which he could monitor the approaches to the town. If a threat appeared, he would sound a warning and the town would shut its gates and prepare for battle.

You can also imagine the watcher stand-

ing vigil at other times, observing the daily life of the city. He could see much of the activity in the streets and markets. He knew the people, their work, their habits and their lifestyles. If his position was near the city gate, he could also observe the business of the city transacted by its officials (see Ruth 4:1-12).

No wonder God uses this role to illustrate the job of the prophets He sent to comment on society’s behavior, as well as to deliver messages of warning and instruction.

Prophets set as watchmen

Focusing on the Old Testament prophets helps us understand the full meaning of the symbolism of a watchman. There may be more than you have noticed before.

We noted at the outset Ezekiel 3:17, where God told the prophet to warn Israel of its sins and His impending punishment, saying, “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me.”

Notice it is *God’s* message, not Ezekiel’s message or any other prophet’s message. It is always God’s message delivered *through* the human instrument.

The warning comes from God in language phrased to fit the situation and designed



In ancient times watchmen would use a watchtower like this one, still in use today in the hill country of central Israel, to watch and warn of approaching danger.

to bring people to repentance. Let’s keep this point firmly in mind.

Continuing: “When I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul” (verses 18-19).

The prophet had the duty to deliver the sobering message: Unless the citizens of

Israel and Judah acknowledged their sins, turned from them, repented and began again to obey God's law, they would die in their sins. Regardless of how individuals responded to the warning, if they heard the message, the prophet had done his job and was no longer responsible. Only if the prophet did not deliver the admonition would he be judged along with the wicked.

Verses 20-21 explain another aspect. If a righteous person turned to sin, he would suffer the penalty, but the prophet would also be held liable for not giving him instruction. If the prophet gave adequate warning, instruction and positive teaching, the righteous could understand the consequences of turning from the right path. This could help motivate him to stay firm to the faith, a choice that would vindicate the prophet's work.

You get the sense here that a part of the prophet's message was showing the people how to live and maintain their faith. It was not just a strident message focused only on pointing out their problems. If the goal is to get people to turn back to the Word of God, then the message must also show the benefits of doing so. It must show the positive, better way of life God desires His people to live.

Was the message delivered?

Did Ezekiel deliver this warning message to Israel? Consider this. Ezekiel was among the captives from the nation of Judah taken to Babylon during the first siege of Jerusalem in 597 B.C. He was a contemporary of Daniel. The nation of Israel, the northern 10-tribe kingdom, *had been taken away captive into Assyria and Media more than 120 years earlier.*

The house of Israel was to hear the message, but their sins had already caused them to go into captivity. They had *already* been punished. It leaves us with the question: Is there to be a *future* fulfillment of this prophecy? Was it intended to go to the modern descendants of the house of Israel living in different lands at a future time?

The answer is yes! However, the explanation requires more detail than we can cover in this article. (We present it in our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. Request or download your free copy at www.gnmagazine.org/booklets/US.)

The question then is, *when* would these prophecies apply to Israel? And when would they be delivered? Ezekiel was among the Jewish captives near Babylon,

and we have no indication he went to the northern tribes of Israel in his day (at that time migrating northwest from Assyria and Media) to give this message. The answer must be that God's message *has a direct application to the modern descendants of these ancient people.*

What will the watchman say?

Let's look closer at what a watchman is to do by bringing in what Isaiah tells us about those who would preach the gospel of peace.

The role of a watchman is not limited to speaking only about the sins and problems of the society. The watchman was also charged with proclaiming good news about salvation.

Notice this in Isaiah: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!' Your watchmen shall lift up their voices, with their voices they shall sing together; for they shall see eye to eye when the LORD brings back Zion.

"Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem! For the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isaiah 52:7-10).

To Jerusalem and the land of Israel God says the watchmen will hold a vigil day and night for the peace of the people. "I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, and give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

"The LORD has sworn by His right hand and by the arm of His strength: 'Surely I will no longer give your grain as food for your enemies; and the sons of the foreigner shall not drink your new wine, for which you have labored. But those who have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD; those who have brought it together shall drink it in My holy courts.'

"Go through, go through the gates! Prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway! Take out the stones, lift up a banner for the peoples! Indeed the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the world: 'Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Surely your salvation is coming; behold,

His reward is with Him, and His work before Him'" (Isaiah 62:6-11).

Here we see the watchman role given to a group of people charged with a prayer vigil for the well-being of Israel. These people, by their presence and their prayers, seek to keep the city from suffering the ravaging effects of evil.

These passages in Isaiah paint an image of godly people who are given unique vision into the world of today and the world to come. They understand the universal application of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. They see that God will bring that Kingdom to earth and will offer salvation not just to Israel, but also to all nations. They see the reuniting of the tribes of Israel in the Promised Land as the beginning of the times of restoration of all things spoken of by Peter in Acts 3.

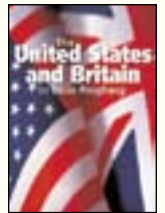
But they also have insight into the world at the end of this age. They see the dark gathering clouds on the world's horizon that spell the end of Satan's reign as the god of this world and author of all its evil. This leads them to mount the "walls" of society and shout a warning to any who will hear. To say: "God is sovereign. He will bring a time of judgment on the world to prove that He alone is God. All other gods erected by people to hide His truth will be destroyed."

This message includes teaching that will show any who listen the way to personal peace. It will show the true teaching of God and the way to salvation. It is also a message of how one can choose to escape the time of judgment God will bring on the world.

In part two of this article, we will look at those who make up this godly group of "watchmen," how they view this world and what it means for you. **GN**

Recommended Reading

The United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and other English-speaking peoples have played a major role in modern world history. Does Bible prophecy have anything to say about them? Several relatively minor nations are mentioned in end-time prophecy. Are the major English-speaking nations left out, or do we just not understand their prophetic identity? To see what the Bible says about the role they will play in the future, request or download your free copy of *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.



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Jesus, Paul and the New Covenant

Did Jesus and the apostle Paul agree on how Christians should regard the Old Testament? Or, as is commonly believed, did Paul radically change the religion that Jesus Christ established?

by Roger Foster

Modern historians and theologians generally regard the apostle Paul as the founder of a distinct branch of Christianity that eventually converted most of the Roman world. They present Paul as having the courage to cut Christianity loose from its Jewish roots by depicting the New Covenant as a *replacement* for biblical law.

Is that view of Christian doctrine accurate? Did Paul's teachings really differ from the teachings of Jesus and His original 12 apostles?

These are crucial questions! Answered one way, they challenge the validity of nearly all of today's Christian denominations. Answered in the opposite way, they challenge the validity of Paul as a true apostle of Christ.

For anyone desiring his sins to be covered by the blood of Christ, nothing could be more important than finding the correct answers to these questions.

The key to understanding the teachings of both Jesus and Paul is to rightly understand the New Covenant that Jesus instituted by His death when He became mankind's sacrifice for sin. Even a slight misunderstanding of that covenant's *intent* and *purpose* is sufficient to confuse and bewilder most individuals.

So let's get it right!

The promised New Covenant

Notice the promise of this New Covenant given by God through the prophet Jeremiah more than 500 years before Jesus was born:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put *My law in their minds*, and *write it on their hearts*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My

people" (Jeremiah 31:31-33, emphasis added throughout).

This promise, directly quoted several times in the New Testament, is not about abolishing old laws to create less stringent standards for defining righteousness. It is about *where* existing laws of righteousness are *to be written*—in the heart of God's people. It is about reshaping the character of people so they, from the heart, can truly become the people of God.

That change of heart begins with and includes the descendants of Israel and Judah. It is not a promise aimed exclusively at gentile converts. In fact, gentiles become heirs of that promise only if they, through Jesus Christ, are reckoned *as the children of Abraham*.

It was Abraham—known then as Abram—who received the special messianic promise that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). As Galatians 3:29 explains, "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The problem in the Old Covenant

Where was the problem in God's covenant with Israel? Most theologians and religious leaders teach that the problem was with the laws, and therefore Jesus needed to abolish them. But does this view agree with what the Bible itself says? "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because *finding fault with them*, He says: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah . . .'" (Hebrews 8:7-8).

God found fault *with the people*—the ancient Israelites (except for a few specially selected servants). Though they had received His righteous laws, they had not yet received a righteous heart. *That* was the fault or weakness in their agreement, not the laws themselves.

The promise to them through a New Covenant was that, at a future time, God would change their hearts so as to enable them to *obey*—with heartfelt sincerity—

the laws they had already received.

The manner in which that promise would be fulfilled God made plain through the pen of Ezekiel: "I will give you a *new heart* and put a *new spirit* within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put *My Spirit within you* and *cause you to walk* in My statutes, and you will *keep My judgments and do them*" (Ezekiel 36:26).

To live up to everything God was teaching them, they needed God's Spirit *in them*—not just in those prophets who were their teachers.

So the purpose of the promised New Covenant is to make the power of God's Spirit available to all who desire *to obey* Him. By receiving the spiritual strength and power to practice God's teachings from the heart, men and women could become truly pleasing to Him.

Jesus speaks out regarding God's law

Hebrews 8:6 tells us that Jesus Christ "has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established *on better promises*." The intent of His ministry and mission was to make those "better promises" possible.

Yet Jesus knew that His sin-bearing role would be used by some to grossly misinterpret the reason for His first coming. He realized that His sacrificial death for us—which eliminates the need for animal sacrifices and ritualistic ceremonies that had merely foreshadowed His death in our place (Hebrews 10:1-10)—would be twisted out of context as implying the entire body of Old Testament law also was no longer necessary.

He warned His disciples not to fall for that distorted reasoning. Therefore He spoke plainly!

"Do not think that *I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets*; I have not come to abolish them but to *fulfill* them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

"Anyone who *breaks one of the least*

of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least [by those] in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great [by those] in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19, New International Version).

The meaning of “fulfill”

The word “fulfill” here in Matthew 5:17 is often interpreted incorrectly as meaning abolished. This is absolutely inaccurate. The Greek word translated “fulfill” used here is *pleroo*, meaning “to make full, to fill, to fill up . . . to fill to the full” or “to render full, i.e. to complete” (*Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2002, Strong’s number 4137). Jesus came to *enhance and complete*, not to abolish, God’s law.

In Matthew 5:18 He says even more plainly that He did not come to destroy, rescind, nullify or abrogate the law: “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or tittle will by no means pass from the law till *all is fulfilled*.” Here a different Greek word is used and translated “fulfilled”—*ginomai*, meaning “to become, i.e. to come into existence . . . to come to pass, happen” or “to be made, done, finished” (*Thayer’s*, Strong’s number 1096).

Jesus likens the continuance of God’s law to the permanence of heaven and earth. He is showing that God’s spiritual law is immutable, inviolable and indestructible. It can only be fulfilled, never abrogated. Jesus came to complete or finish that law, to make it perfect by showing its full spiritual intent and application.

Continuing in this chapter, Jesus expands and enhances the spiritual purpose and intent of several specific commandments. Until the ultimate completion of God’s plan to provide salvation for humanity comes to pass—that is, as long as there are still fleshly human beings—the physical codification of God’s law in Scripture is necessary. This, Jesus explained, is as certain as the continued existence of the universe.

Jesus Christ stated clearly that keeping the commandments of God is essential to receiving eternal life. One person asked Him directly, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” Jesus answered just as directly: “If you want to enter into life, *keep the commandments*” (Matthew 19:16-17).

All of Christ’s apostles followed His example. One of His apostles, John, wrote: “Now by this we know that we know Him, *if we keep His commandments*. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His

commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3-4). Paul likewise taught that “*keeping the commandments of God is what matters*” (1 Corinthians 7:19).

What must Christians obey?

Other remarks by Jesus and His apostles make it plain that the entire Bible—the Scriptures of the Old Testament and the New Testament—are included in the New Covenant as guidelines for Christian learning and behavior. Jesus explained, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4).

Paul confirms that he held the same conviction. He explained that “*all Scripture* is given by inspiration of God, and is *profitable* for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). Christians must learn from “all Scripture” if they are to live properly by the teachings of the New Covenant. None of the Old Testament Scriptures are irrelevant!

However, in the above passage Paul uses the word “*profitable*” for a reason. He was careful not to misrepresent what is *required* of new converts.

He explains first that everything in the Old Testament Scriptures is *profitable* for living under the New Covenant. But some symbolic aspects of the Sinai Covenant are *no longer required* of Christian converts. Those symbolic aspects are clearly defined in the book of Hebrews. They are “concerned *only* with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation” (Hebrews 9:10).

They were the sacrificial and ceremonial regulations that symbolically represented the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the cleansing of humanity’s transgressions of God’s laws. They looked forward to His death as payment for our sins. It is His sacrifice

that cleanses us from our guilt.

Therefore, those ritualistic washings and animal sacrifices are no longer necessary. But understanding what they symbolized is still very profitable. Therefore, not even a word or part of a word is to be ignored in the reading of the Old Testament Scriptures. All of it is instructive. Why? So “that the man of God *may be complete, thoroughly equipped* for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17).

Administrative considerations

The government of ancient Israel was a theocracy. Therefore, the Old Testament contains statutes that regulate how Israel’s judges were to administer punishments to evildoers in a society that had not received God’s Holy Spirit and where spiritual forgiveness was primarily anticipated through symbolism rather than actual. For some offenders the Israelite officials were told, “And you shall stone him with stones until he dies . . . So all Israel shall *hear and fear*, and not again do such wickedness as this among you” (Deuteronomy 13:10-11).

Paul explains that such administrative statutes are still instructive, providing their application now is “not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:6). Instead of criticizing the administration of such punishment in ancient Israel, Paul refers to that “ministry of death” for capital sins as “glorious” (verse 7).

Then he adds this question: “Will not the *ministry of the Spirit* be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious [the administration of capital punishment under the Sinai Covenant] has no glory now *in comparison* with the surpassing glory [forgiveness of sin by Christ’s sacrifice under the New Covenant]. And if what was fading away [the requirement that such sinners be put to death] came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!” (verses 8-11, NIV).

Forgiveness of sin through Christ’s sacrifice (as distinct from condoning sin) is a major part of the New Covenant. Therefore, transgressions must be dealt with under the New Covenant according to the person’s repentance. Those who repent—who turn to God to seek to obey Him with their whole heart—receive mercy instead of justice with its implied condemnation.

However, that divine mercy applies only to those who become Christians through repentance. For those who do not repent,

Recommended Reading

This article only scratches the surface of how the teachings of Jesus and Paul are twisted, misinterpreted and misused by so many. But we have good news for you! Our newest publication—*The New Covenant: Does It Abolish God’s Law?*—is fresh off the press. In its pages we cover in detail the true biblical teaching on the New Covenant to help you make sure your spiritual journey is on the right biblical track. Request or download your free copy today!



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Paul explains that they should fear judgment not only from God, but also from whatever civil authority is over them.

“For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer” (Romans 13:3-4, NIV).

The principle is plain. Civil authorities still have God’s approval for punishing wrongdoers.

Therefore God expects obedience to law, both biblical and civil (so long as it doesn’t contradict God’s law, Acts 5:29), from those who want to please Him. The apostle John makes this very clear: “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4, NIV). Then he adds: “No one who lives in him [Christ] keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin [that is, as a way of life] has either seen him or known him” (verse 6).

While Christians do stumble and fall into sin at times (1 John 1:7), they are to be, as Jesus was in His human life, “striving against sin” (Hebrews 12:4)—thus, struggling with all their might, with God’s help, to remain obedient to Him.

Beware of distortions of Paul’s writings

Jesus Christ and all of His apostles, including Paul, taught the same. They all regarded the Old Testament Scriptures as the foundation of the Christian way of life. But Paul’s writings have been greatly misinterpreted from the first century until this day.

For that reason Peter warns us to beware of distorted applications of Paul’s writings. Here is Peter’s warning: “Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him. *He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction*” (2 Peter 3:15-16, NIV).

Those who have accepted the distortions of Paul’s letters have derailed themselves from the truth. That is partly why modern Christianity is so divided and typically becoming more and more like the world rather than coming out of it. **GN**

Slavery

Continued from page 11

(*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, Macropedia, “Lord Lugard,” p. 176).

Slavery returns to Africa

Sadly the story doesn’t end there. Once again, five decades after Britain gave its colonies independence, slavery is back in every single African nation, according to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

“The trafficking of human beings is a problem in every African country, says UNICEF,” states an April 23, 2004, BBC News article. “The report, which covers 53 African nations, says children are the biggest victims in what is a very complex phenomenon. It describes how they are forced into slavery, recruited as child soldiers or sold into prostitution. In Africa, children are twice as likely to be trafficked as women.”

The report “found that 89% of the countries had trafficking to and from neighbouring countries, but 34% also had a human trade to Europe . . . Of the countries surveyed, 26% said trafficking was taking place to the Middle East.” Sadly, few voices are being raised in Africa calling for an end to this despicable trade.

The trade in human beings, which includes the sex trade, is now estimated to be the biggest business in the world, accounting for a full 10 percent of the world’s total commerce. The biblical book of Revelation foretells an end-time trading system that includes trafficking in “the bodies and souls of men” (Revelation 18:13).

Clearly, the world is long overdue for another William Wilberforce and another nation to take the initiative in ending the modern-day slave trade as Great Britain did 200 years ago. **GN**

Recommended Reading

How did Great Britain and the United States rise from minor players on the world stage to dominate the globe for much of the last two centuries? Believe it or not, their astounding rise to prominence was foretold long ago—in the pages of your Bible! However, only a few understand the biblical keys to discerning their identity in Bible prophecy. You need to learn the surprising truth of the origins of the major English-speaking nations—as well as what lies ahead for them. Request or download your free copy of *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.



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The Good News On the Web

If you like *The Good News* magazine, you’ll love *The Good News* Web site at www.gnmagazine.org.

You’ll find past issues of *The Good News*, each packed with articles about world trends and events, family and social issues, prophecy in the news and *The Good News’* eye-opening, in-depth perspective of the Bible.

There’s much more too. Explore our large library of booklets covering a wide variety of biblical, family and social issues and themes. Take a look at our publications in other languages—Spanish, German, Italian, French and Dutch (and feel free to share them with a friend overseas).



Use our search tool so you can find material on any subject you want—marriage, family, biblical teachings, current events, prophecy, you name it. Feel free to download all these to your own computer so you can study them in depth, or request your own printed copies to be mailed to you.

While you’re there, be sure to take a look at our companion publication *World News and Prophecy*. This eye-opening newsletter will help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy, giving you a perspective you won’t find anywhere else—the perspective of God’s Word.

Discover a wealth of information today!

www.gnmagazine.org

Dad Card

Continued from page 9

such you will hold a place held by no other. Expressing love in word and in deed is paramount in building a strong relationship. Time and physical contact are very important to your daughter.

Jesus Christ took time and made physical contact with the children who came to Him: “Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ And He laid His hands on them and departed from there” (Matthew 19:13-15).

From the time your daughter is young, she craves your affection. This continues as she grows up: “Fathers often assume that their teenage daughters want to be left alone and don’t want to be hugged. This is not true—in fact, it couldn’t be more wrong. She needs your touch during these years even more than when she was five . . . Just be dad: be confident, defend her and be supportive, and don’t back away from hugging her” (p. 96).

Your love must also be articulated in words and symbolic gestures. Dr. Meeker suggests writing notes expressing your pride and love. As with physical affection, this becomes even more important during the teenage years leading to adulthood.

In my case I pondered long and hard how I might effectively communicate my support and feelings to my soon-to-be teenage daughter.

Finally, I came up with a plan. I took my daughter to a nice restaurant on her 13th birthday to present her with a “coming of age” gift I had acquired after considerable thought. It was a heart-shaped gold locket attached to a gold necklace that was hers to wear. It came with a matching gold key that I would keep.

Her heart, I told her, was very precious and needed to be protected. In the coming years as she would grow into an attractive young woman, I explained, men and boys—some good and some bad—would begin competing for her heart. The locket was there to remind her of the value of her heart and that I held the key to it for her protection. When the right guy came along, I assured her, he would be courageous enough to come ask me for the key.

To my delight, the presentation had its desired effect—she loved it. Three years later I augmented our symbolic

agreement with a diamond and a poem. Other jewelry came and went, but the necklace with the heart-shaped locket became a permanent part of her wardrobe—worn every day through high school and college into adulthood.

Expressions of affection and support are precious opportunities fathers cannot afford to miss because they build a relationship that will be able to weather the stormy seasons that are sure to come. However, when difficult times do come, the strong relationship will carry the day.

Love her tough

The difficult part of being a father is to know how and when to love your child tough—but that also is part of your job and your daughter expects and needs it. She needs to know that you will be there during hard times, puberty, bad attitudes and all.

There are times when she will test your resolve—you are her dad and you must have her best interest at heart and protect her from herself and her peers. You must provide enough freedom for her to learn and enough protection to keep her from irreparable harm.

Dr. Meeker relates the story of another patient, 16-year-old Chelsea, who wanted to go to the movies with her 17-year-old boyfriend. Her father wisely told her that she could go but that she would have to answer some questions for him. He asked her what she would do if her boyfriend asked her to go to the drive-in instead. She would go, she responded.

What if he pulled two six packs out of the trunk. Would she drink? Would she ride with him if he got drunk? No, she said, she wouldn’t drink and she would call for a ride home.

How many beers would it take to make Tom unable to drive? “‘Come on, Dad,’ she said, ‘It’s not hard to tell: maybe six or seven beers.’ Chelsea’s answer, [her father] admitted, caught him off guard. She had given all the right answers all along. Then, bingo, [with her wrong answer] he was reminded she was sixteen, and that meant he needed to move in the fences. Loving Chelsea meant no drive-in, no beer, but one movie at the theater, and then straight home afterward” (pp. 54-55).

This example shows that even good kids need guidance as they navigate the path from adolescence to adulthood. Often the right course of action, as was the case with Chelsea’s father, is not popular.

The strength of the relationship you have built will carry you through when tough

decisions are necessary to protect her and keep your principles intact. As Dr. Meeker explains:

“Defending her in a toxic culture is challenging when she is eight, nine, and ten. The challenges can intensify as she grows older. Notice that I said ‘can.’ This is because I’ve found that girls whose parents are reasonable, firm in their guidelines, and not overbearing understand early on that their parents are on their side and ‘get’ what is going on in their world. That minimizes battles over movies, clothes, and the rest” (p. 99).

Use your “dad card” wisely

Your daughter needs a “dad card” that symbolizes your unconditional commitment to her. It will endow her with the confidence and character to succeed in life.

It is a daunting task and one that can only be mastered by playing the “dad card” available to *you*—a strong relationship with your loving Heavenly Father, the God of the universe. Paul urges us—fathers included—to go “boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

It is a card you cannot afford *not* to play. Only God can teach you fully how to be the right role model and pass on His principles without provocation. Only He can give you the love, both tender and tough, that will endear you to your daughter so she will feel secure and protected even when battle lines are drawn. Only He can enable you to have the wisdom and balance required for the important task of building and sustaining your relationship with your daughter.

Reach out to God, study His Word and act on your paternal instincts. Your daughter will thank you for it on the day she needs to play the “dad card.” **GN**

Recommended Reading

The Bible contains a treasure trove of practical, helpful ways husbands and wives can build closer, stronger families and marriages. Beyond that, it also offers many crucial principles for proper parenting to help couples bring up happy, healthy, well-adjusted and successful children. You’ll find much of this timeless guidance

in our free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. 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

“Is There Really a Spirit World?”

Thanks so much for the article on the spirit world. I found it very informative, and I was able to get a better understanding. With so many conflicting theories on the spirit world, it is good to know that all you have to do is look into the Bible for the truth.

E.M., Gaithersburg, Maryland

“Christians Who Don’t Celebrate Easter”

It’s been almost a year since I started reading this magazine, but this last issue had a writeup on celebrating Easter. I cannot agree completely. Yes, the pagan culture of having Easter bunnies or Easter eggs needs to be dismissed. But we human beings who believe in the risen Lord surely need to honor and celebrate the day our Lord rose on. It might not be mentioned in the Bible, but I am sure that when we rejoice in Christ’s resurrection and observe a special day for it, all the angels and the entire universe would stand for it.

T.J.A., Internet

We are told more than once in the Bible not to add or take away from God’s instructions. Deuteronomy 12:29-32 warns us not to mix the religious observances of pagans with the true doctrine of God. Besides, Jesus Christ was not resurrected on Easter Sunday morning. He was crucified on a Wednesday and rose late on the weekly Sabbath day during the biblical Feast of Unleavened Bread. (See the next letter and the response.)

Why not observe the proper period of holy time according to the instruction of the Bible and God’s calendar rather than following the conflicting errors of mainstream church tradition? To understand much more fully, request or download our free booklet God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind.

Three days and three nights

This letter is about the full three days and three nights that Jesus was in the grave before the resurrection (Matthew 12:39-40). Thank you for clearing up a question that has bothered me since I was a child. I had asked questions with no good answers and accepted it as a mystery of God. You have explained it so clearly that I cannot believe that I did not figure it out for myself. What I want to know is how this mistake got started. Surely the early Church had it right. Did they celebrate the Lord’s Supper on Saturday and when did it change? For what reasons would the three days and three nights be condensed like this and the changes made?

S.F., Burnsville, Minnesota

Briefly, the early Church celebrated the Lord’s Supper (or more properly the Passover) on the biblically mandated 14th of Nisan of the Hebrew calendar, which falls on different days of the week in different years. To understand why mainstream Christianity turned away from the Bible in their time and manner of observance, request or download our free booklets The Church Jesus Built and Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?

“America at a Dangerous Crossroads”

Your editorial and the articles are fascinating. We are, and have been, at a dangerous crossroads. I participated in World War II. Then President Truman fired General MacArthur before he could finish the job in Korea. During the Cold War I did not worry about a possible attack from the Soviets or war with them. We so far outpowered the Soviet Union that comparisons were ridiculous and their leaders knew it. Our military forces contain patriotic, heroic Americans. But a force in this country has been trying to destroy America for a long time and they are winning. Is this God’s will or is He trying to tell us something?

P.D., Fairfield, California

You’ll find a little-understood biblical perspective on these issues in our free booklet The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy.

Readers write from Palestine and Dubai

Many, many thanks for what you are doing and for the awesome booklets that you have sent me. I wish that I had read them a long time ago as they have opened my eyes to real life. They helped me a lot to grow more in spirituality, love and, of course, in my Savior Jesus Christ.

J.N., Ramallah, Palestine

Through the Web site your organization has been brought to my attention. This was a very happy moment because I had been looking for a way to explore the Holy Bible—to know this hidden treasure and get understanding and knowledge. The first booklet I happened to read was *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*, and it inspired me very much.

S.J.U., Dubai

The Good News

I am a wife to a wonderful husband as well as a mother of four small children. I am taking a moment to thank you for the wonderful magazine you have put together. *The Good News* is the most spiritually uplifting magazine I have ever read. It helps to relieve my stress and makes a bad day good again. Since I’ve started reading *The Good News*, it has helped me grow spiritually and understand the Bible more than I did before.

E.G., Amarillo, Texas

We have to say that this publication is marvelous. It matters not one jot what is argued about theologically—and we all have our own opinions and interpretations. But what remains important is prophecy and the signs of the age we are in and how we can be fearless for the future. *The Good News* addresses all of this, for which we are very grateful. The material you send me is now viewed by two families and will be used in a home church. At the moment we are heavily committed to our own ministries, but wherever God leads we will follow.

C.J., England

Bible Study Course: pure excellence

I am taking your *Bible Study Course* and have found it to be of pure excellence, presenting the doctrines and teachings of Jesus Christ with purity and showing His divine authority. All your presentations are of equally good quality. I am currently on lesson number 8.

N.J.R., Rosharon, Texas

What must Christians do?

I have been serving God for over five years and have always believed in obedience to Him as essential to salvation. Many of the things your magazine teaches make sense to me, but how do you reconcile the book of Galatians with your teaching that Christians must keep the law (the Ten Commandments and the Holy Days, etc.)? It seems that Paul is attacking this very notion. And yet the rest of the New Testament tells us what kinds of people are condemned: fornicators, drunks, liars and thieves—basically people who break God’s law. How are we supposed to understand the book of Galatians?

M.H., Internet

Request or download our new free book The New Covenant: Does It Abolish God’s Law? It addresses and explains the basic principles that govern our relationship with God and shows how to understand the book of Galatians in this overall context.

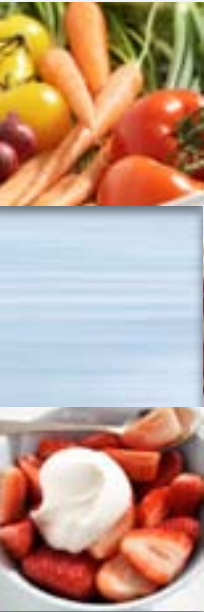
Wants to worship God in church

Thank you so much for the mail that arrived today. I prayed again this morning to find the truth. I really want to worship God in a church. But I am very reluctant to join another church organization. I know that there are many false religions in the world, but I am desperate to find the truth. Your literature has made me very happy. I am longing to continue reading it and find out more. Please can you tell me if there is a church in my area practicing the truth?

R.A., Stoke on Trent, England

We have sent a list of ministerial telephone numbers in England. Two of our free booklets provide helpful background material in guiding your steps. The titles are The Church Jesus Built and This Is the United Church of God.

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).



Fitness or Fatness: What's Your Plan?

We generally take care of our cars, but most people don't have much of a plan for their health. With so much working against us, how can we choose fitness?

by **Amanda Stiver**

In your driveway sits the car of your dreams. You get in, start the engine, pull onto the road, scrape a tree, hit the curb, grind gears and leave the emergency brake on all the time. Worst of all, you fill your car with diesel at the station instead of the gasoline it was designed to use.

Sound crazy? If you were willing to spend a great deal of money on a car, you would certainly protect your investment by treating the car with the greatest care. What about your body? It is the physical vessel that carries you through life. Do you treat it with as much care as you would a new car?

More often than not, we may neglect the needs of our physical bodies. We fuel them and exercise them inappropriately.

Here's the grim picture. The United States has long battled an obesity epidemic. Now other countries (including China) are also feeling the effects of excess. Eight percent of 10- to 12-year-olds in China's cities are obese and an extra 15 percent are overweight, while 18.8 percent of American children between 6 and 11 are overweight (Calum MacLeod, "Obesity of China's Kids Stun Officials," *USA Today*, Jan. 8, 2007).

Merging into fitness

The great thing is that the human body is incredibly complex and renewable. It can repair itself—if we give it the right fuel and tools. So are we fit or are we fat? If we are fit, great! If we aren't—it's time to make a plan.

How much we weigh and how fit we are isn't determined by one meal or one day of jogging halfheartedly out to the mailbox and back. It takes years of bad habits to make a person unhealthy and gain excess weight. Reversing the process likewise takes a good chunk of time—to reinstitute good habits and see them through until they bear the fruit of a healthy body.

God created the human body, and He grants us the use of one of these amazing creations for the duration of our physical lives.

An optimistic attitude is a tool to long-term change. A daily habit of positive thinking can help keep us on track to make healthy food choices and fulfill our physical activity goals. Our thoughts are the foundation of our actions, but making the shift to upbeat thinking requires motivation. There are a lot of good

reasons for becoming fit, and one of them shows up in the mirror every time we look in it.

Looking good is a confidence booster, especially when meeting your peers at school or in the workplace. It is a major motivation in today's society, but sometimes it overshadows a more important concept: that we take care of what God has given us.

God created the human body, and we are granted the use of one of these amazing creations for the duration of our physical lives. God designed some very specific fuel to feed human bodies. He gave spiritual and physical guidelines for right living that are recorded in the Bible. Treating God's creation with respect is a huge motivation to developing a fit body.

Being sick or just feeling bad in general can also be great motivators to turn around. The worse we feel, the less we are able to enjoy the life God intended us to have. Under these conditions, we all want to feel better. Sometimes

circumstances out of our control dictate our health, but there are many things we can do to make a difference.

Snooze, chew, move . . . repeat

Our daily habits have a huge impact on our overall health. They can determine how much weight we gain or lose,



Sometimes circumstances out of our control dictate our health, but there are many things we can do to make a difference.

how well our muscles are developed, the state of our digestive system and our mental function.

An often overlooked but critical habit is sleep. Sleep is so essential that without it we would go crazy. It is the time when our bodies reconstruct and clean up to allow for growth and healing.

The endocrine system of hormone glands needs sleep in order to recover from the fast-paced, manic society in this digitized, computerized, overconnected world. Lack of sleep also interferes with the chemicals that tell our bodies when we are full.

The second important daily habit concerns what we put into our mouths. God is specific about the diet He planned for us. Rex Russell, M.D., in his book *What the Bible Says About Healthy Living: Three Biblical Principles That Will Change Your Diet and Improve Your Health*, developed three excellent principles of eating:

“1—Eat only substances God created for food. Avoid what is not designed for food.

“2—As much as possible, eat foods as they were created—before they are changed or converted into something humans think might be better. [In other words, avoid foods that have been overprocessed to the point that they have lost much of their nutritional value.]

“3—Avoid food addictions. Don’t let any food or drink become your god” (p. 29).

Good things to eat include eggs and clean meats listed in the Bible, fresh fruits and vegetables, unrefined grains and oils, nuts, pure dairy products with natural cultures and minimally processed sweeteners like honey, maple syrup or cane juice. Eat these foods in moderate amounts to satisfy hunger, but not to excess. Believe it or not, food can become an idol if we put it before obeying God’s commands to be moderate in all things and to treat the bodies He’s given us with respect (1 Corinthians 9:25).

The third crucial habit is physical

activity. Exercise conditions the muscles in our bodies to work efficiently. It also keeps our internal organs fit and helps stabilize moods! There are thousands of types of exercise from speed walking to team sports. Exercises like calisthenics and weight training also develop greater strength. The most critical element of exercise is doing it on a regular basis.

Compel yourself to be physically active by making an appointment with a friend or family member to walk/jog/run/swim or do something several times a week. Or sign up and pay for an exercise class. You’ll be motivated to go so you won’t waste your money.

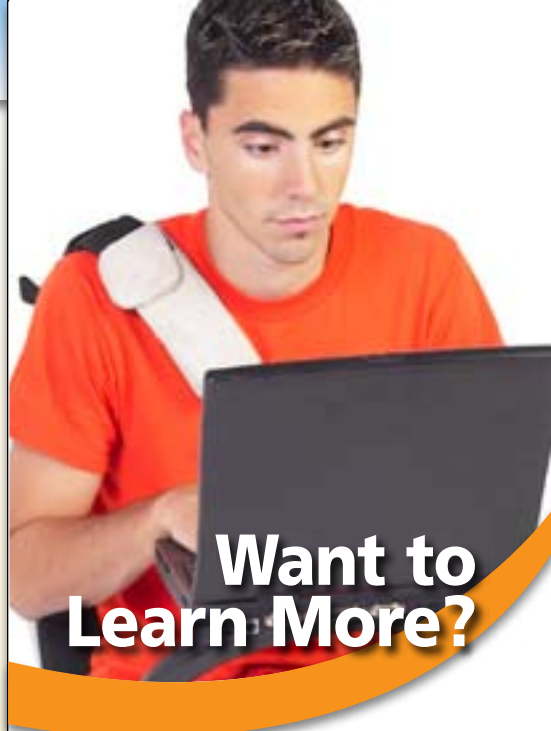
Above all, pick an activity you enjoy. If sumo wrestling isn’t your thing, you won’t be doing it often. Set a reasonable goal. Achieving it builds confidence along with increased fitness and keeps you focused.

Plan and action

Getting support and direction for your plan to become fit will lead to success. When we want to be truly motivated to make changes in our physical health, we need to call on God. After all, He designed our bodies, so He knows how they work best. We can pray to Him for guidance to find the right resources.

Search for information. Glean it from books, friends and family, the Internet, professional nutrition counselors, athletic coaches and even school. Compile your information and be wise. Toss the ideas that sound strange and keep what’s good. Focus on the small changes you can make daily. Get enough sleep, eat the right food and get needed exercise through physical activity. Start small, pick three changes and stick to them. Maintain a positive attitude and seek God’s help to see you through.

Remember: It may take a while to get fit, but you can eventually turn your health around. You can look and feel better than ever before. Take care of your car *and* your body! **GN**



Want to Learn More?

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

This magazine is specially written for our younger *Good News* audience. Each issue is packed with helpful insight and eye-opening articles to help today’s young adults get the most out of life—both now and in the future.

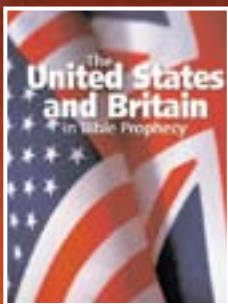
You’ll uncover lots of fascinating facts, meet many interesting people, discover what’s really going on behind the scenes in our world, learn answers to your questions and find practical, down-to-earth guidance on all kinds of subjects.

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What's Ahead for the United States?

"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven . . . We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God . . . We have become . . . too proud to pray to the God that made us." — Abraham Lincoln



Is the world's most powerful nation—the United States of America—overlooked in Bible prophecy? Why are relatively small powers like Egypt, Syria and Lebanon mentioned, but no nation recognizable as the United States

can be found? What about other major English-speaking nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia?

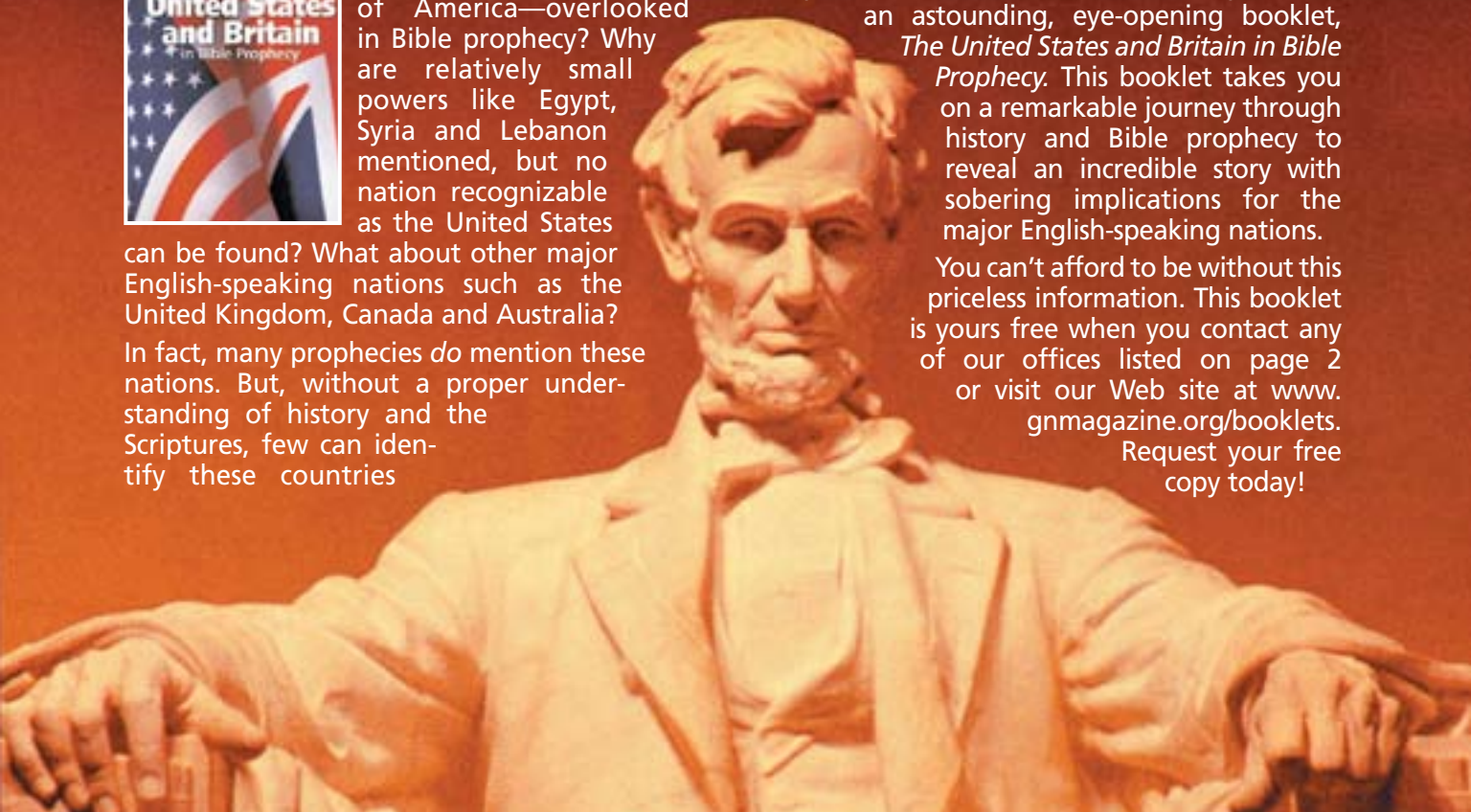
In fact, many prophecies *do* mention these nations. But, without a proper understanding of history and the Scriptures, few can identify these countries

and understand what lies ahead for them.

The publishers of *The Good News* have produced an astounding, eye-opening booklet, *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. This booklet takes you on a remarkable journey through history and Bible prophecy to reveal an incredible story with sobering implications for the major English-speaking nations.

You can't afford to be without this priceless information. This booklet is yours free when you contact any of our offices listed on page 2 or visit our Web site at www.gnmagazine.org/booklets.

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