

The Good News

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A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING



Breaking Free From Addictions

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Some of the people on my “most admired” list have been addicts—addicts who no longer justify and feed their addictions. *They changed.*

It invariably resulted from a series of agonizing crashes in life that brutally jolted them to conclude that the pain of continuing in addiction was worse than the pain of changing. So they admitted their plight, cried out for God’s help, accepted professional care and committed to a lifetime of overcoming their destructive habits. Every day may be a physical, emotional and spiritual struggle, but they stay clean.

I admire them because they inspire me. Living testimonies that even the most extremely difficult problems can be overcome are motivating and encouraging.

You see, *I* need to change. *You* need to change too.

Severe addictions are only the extreme states of destructive behavior. You don’t have to be such an addict, however, to behave badly

You don’t have to be such an addict to behave badly and hurtfully. All of us struggle with destructive habits and pulls.

and hurtfully. And all of us—no exceptions—struggle with various destructive habits and pulls.

Also on the “most admired” list, at the top, is the One who made it possible for each of us to change every one of our destructive habits.

The core concept of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which we strive to convey in *The Good News*, is the promise for the future that the world can, and will, change when He returns. The core concept of God’s way of life is the promise for the present that *you* can, and will, change when you turn to Him. Your life can be better *now* in the same ways the entire world will be made better after Christ returns.

This issue focuses in large part on helping those battling various addictions. Those without such struggles might scan the contents page and think, even sympathetically, “Well, I hope this helps some of those poor people—and thankfully I don’t have their problems.”

If you feel these matters are not relevant to you, at least read Jerold Aust’s article, beginning on page 18, about the greatest and most unrecognized addiction of all. It explains a common addiction we all share, and why we’re heading for a crash! Our collective bad behavior has led us, exactly as Jesus prophesied, to a precipice where human life can be literally destroyed, and it’s scary how itchy are the fingers on the trigger! Our individual bad behavior has led us, also as He prophesied, to eroding our relationships with God and each other.

We need to heed an old country proverb: “If you keep on doin’ what you’ve always been doin,’ then you’re gonna keep on gittin’ what you’ve always been gittin’!”

However, trying the same old superficial changes that we think will mend our lives—where we live, our governments, our jobs, our marital status, our philosophies, etc.—won’t work. Until we align our thinking, actions and character to conform to God’s, we will only continue to plod down the same weary path of history. But how?

For many addicts, only a structured intervention by friends and professionals helps them admit they need to change. For humanity at large, a structured intervention is coming when Jesus Christ returns. With His loving intervention we will confront the need and commit to change, and those who turn to God for help to stop doing what we’ve always been doing will start getting a new life!

But for you, dear friends, why wait until He returns to start changing? Why not begin now to make your life better? Change *is* possible!

—Clyde Kilough, Church president

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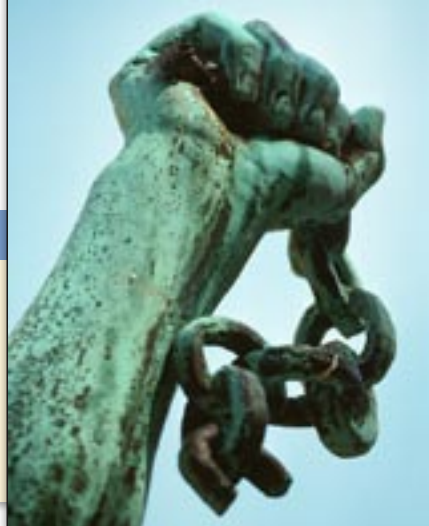
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Breaking Free From Addictions

The curse of addictions takes an enormous toll on people and society as a whole. Addictions take many forms and often are very destructive. How can a person break free?

by John Cafourek



“Hello, Joe?” It was Wednesday morning, and I was on the phone checking in with a client. “This is Joe,” a voice replied.

“Hi, Joe. How are you today? How’s your battle with drugs been going?”

“I guess I’m doing okay. I got a job since the last time we talked! I’m making about \$10 an hour. That’s not bad—considering my lack of education.”

“Last time we talked you said you had been completely off drugs for a few days. Have you been able to stay off all of them?”

“Well, I am mellowing out with a beer right now.” (It was just after 9 a.m. at the time!) “It helps me unwind and relax. But I’m really not drinking much. I still take a few hits [of marijuana] to get through each day, but nothing real serious.”

Joe is certainly no stranger to addiction. Now in his mid-50s, Joe’s problem with addictions began during his late teen years. His first two addictions were very common ones, tobacco (nicotine) and alcohol. It wasn’t long, however, before marijuana joined the list.

A few years later “crack” (cocaine) and “crank” or “speed” (methamphetamine) were added. Joe says he’s tried a bunch of other drugs as well, but he claims he isn’t really addicted to them.

The problem of denial

Addiction is a serious and growing epidemic. It’s no respecter of age, gender, ethnicity, economic level or anything else. The statistics are shocking. And amazingly, many who are addicted don’t seem to be aware of it.

Denial is a common defense mechanism. Dr. Patrick Carnes describes an all-too-common reaction:

“When Dan’s therapist told him that he was sexually addicted, he was outraged! He thought his therapist was exaggerating. Dan was certain his real problem was depression. He was simply down all the time, and he wanted to be happier. True, his life had left a trail of broken relationships and he had some sexual problems, but that was because he was so down all the time” (*Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction*, 2001, pp. 177-178).

While there are many different addictions, the underlying thought process reflects a striking commonality between most all of them.

The addictive agent may be sex, alcohol, tobacco, methamphetamine



virtually all addictions:

- Behavior motivated by emotions, ranging from craving to compulsion.
- Continuance of participation in the behavior regardless of adverse consequences.
- Loss of control over the behavior.

Addictions are often classified into two broad categories: substance abuse and behavioral “compulsions.” Obviously, not every person who has some difficulty or problem controlling either his or her use of a particular substance or behavior is presently addicted. However, since many addictions are progressive, what may be

Addiction is a cruel taskmaster. Feelings of shame, humiliation and personal failure can be overwhelming. It may seem totally hopeless, but it’s never too late to reach out for help.

(“meth”), cocaine, heroin, marijuana, sedatives, tranquilizers or hallucinogens such as LSD, PCP or ecstasy, or yet some other substance or behavior. Regardless of the specific agent, an addicted person often becomes very adept at denial. “Oh, I’m not addicted! I’m just going through a difficult time right now and need a bit of a boost. I can handle it.”

Regardless of our specific personal struggle, refusing to admit we need help is often clearly recognized by other people as denial.

What is addiction?

Definitions of addiction vary within medicine and psychology. Although there is no general agreement on an exact definition, Dr. Howard Shaffer, associate professor at Harvard Medical School and editor of the journal *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, identifies three distinctive behaviors that appear to be present with

just a problem at first can become exacerbated and ultimately develop into an addiction.

Smoking facts

One of the most prevalent addictions is to nicotine. Smoking is a major killer. Each year tobacco kills four times as many people as all other drugs, suicides, murders, accidents and AIDS put together.

Every six seconds a person dies from some kind of tobacco-related illness. Worldwide, 5 million people die prematurely every year as a result of smoking. In the United States alone, more than 400,000 people die from smoking each year while, in contrast, only 1,000 die from cocaine use.

Smoking can even be a gateway addiction. Smokers are about 14 times more likely to abuse alcohol, about 100 times more likely to use marijuana and about 32 times more likely to use cocaine.

The astronomical cost of alcohol abuse and addiction

Alcohol alone contributes to about 1.8 million deaths worldwide each year, with 100,000 of those in the United States. It is the third most common cause of death in developed countries, and the leading cause of disease and illness in some countries. About a third of alcohol-related deaths result from unintentional injuries.

Half of all U.S. traffic fatalities are related to the abuse of alcohol. The National Academy of Science estimates that alcoholism and alcohol abuse in the United States cost society \$40 to \$60 billion annually.

Currently, nearly 14 million Americans—1 in every 13 adults—abuse alcohol or are alcoholic. About 43 percent of U.S. adults—76 million people—have been exposed to alcoholism in the family.

It’s estimated that more than 3 million American teens between the ages of 14 and 17 today are problem drinkers. More than 60 percent of high school seniors report having been drunk. And 31 percent say they had had five or more drinks in a row during the last two weeks.

Understanding other addictions

In his book *Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction*, Dr. Patrick Carnes provides some important insight into identifying some of the common symptoms indicative of sexual addiction by comparing them with characteristics of other addictions.

“A way to understand sexual addicts . . . is to compare them with other types of addicts. A common definition of alcoholism or drug dependency is that a person has a pathological relationship with a mood-altering chemical.

“The alcoholic’s relationship with

Drug Abuse: A Major Health Problem

The 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, under the auspices of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, tracks drug use among those 12 years and older. It revealed:

- An estimated 20.4 million Americans ages 12 or older were current users of an illicit drug in 2006. This estimate represents 8.3 percent of the population.
- Among American teenagers, 42 percent have tried marijuana, 47 percent have tried cigarettes and 73 percent have tried alcohol by the time they finish high school.
- An estimated 73 million Americans—30 percent of the population 12 years and older—reported being current users of a tobacco product in 2006.

- Marijuana is the most widely used illicit substance in the United States. In 2006, 15 million people were current users of marijuana.
- Inhalant use is heavy among eighth graders, with 16 percent reporting use at least once in their lifetime. These drugs are particularly dangerous because they can damage the nervous system even after a single use, and they can be fatal.
- Almost one in four Americans (23 percent, or 57 million) had participated in binge drinking (having five or more drinks on the same occasion) within the previous 30 days in 2006. Among young adults ages 18 to 25, the rate was 42 percent.
- In 2006, an estimated 30 million Americans drove under the influence of alcohol and 10 million drove under the influence of illicit drugs.

alcohol becomes more important than family, friends, and work. The relationship progresses to the point where alcohol is necessary to feel normal. To feel ‘normal’ for the alcoholic is also to feel isolated and lonely, since the primary relationship he depends upon to feel adequate is with a chemical, not other people.

“Sexual addiction is parallel. The addict substitutes a sick relationship to an event or a process for a healthy relationship with others. The addict’s relationship with a mood-altering experience becomes central to his life . . .

“Addicts progressively go through stages in which they retreat further from the reality of friends, family, and work. Their secret lives become more real than their public lives. What other people know is a false identity. Only the individual addict knows the shame of living a double life—the real world and the addict’s world” (pp. 14-15).

The anatomy of addiction

How does addiction actually begin? Perhaps not surprisingly, it starts with the acceptance of delusional thought processes about oneself, allowing these to become rooted in one’s personal belief system. As a consequence, addiction stems from faulty core beliefs



would not value them as a person if everything about them was known, including their addiction.

They also believe that their choice, their agent of addiction, is their most important need. Obtaining this pleasure, or perhaps relief or distraction from pain, becomes life’s greatest obsession. The addictive agent or behavior begins to be viewed as the only thing that makes their isolation bearable. Consequently, faulty personal core beliefs become the anchor points for intensifying degrees of addiction.

Impaired thinking

Interacting faulty beliefs produce distorted views of reality. *Denial* leads the list. Ignoring the problem, blaming others and minimizing the behaviors become part of the addict’s defensive repertoire.

Arguments, excuses, justifications and circular reasoning abound in these

it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren” (James 1:14-16).

Help is available

Addiction is a cruel taskmaster. Feelings of shame, humiliation and personal failure can be overwhelming.

If we attempt to fight our battles all on our own, we are likely to make the struggle even more difficult. Family and friends can often provide support and honest feedback, both of which are very helpful. “Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

Seeking help from others is probably

Student Reports of Availability of Drugs

Percentage of high school seniors reporting they could obtain drugs easily in 2006:

Marijuana.....	84.9%
Amphetamines.....	52.9%
Cocaine.....	46.5%
Barbiturates.....	43.8%
Crack.....	38.8%
LSD.....	29.0%
Heroin.....	27.4%
Methamphetamine.....	26.7%
Tranquilizers.....	24.4%
PCP.....	23.1%
Amyl/butyl nitrites.....	18.4%

Source: Press release, “Teen drug use continues down in 2006, particularly among older teens; but use of prescription-type drugs remains high,” University of Michigan News and Information Services, Dec. 21, 2006.

Drug use in the general population

According to data from the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health:

- 112 million Americans age 12 or older (45 percent of the population) reported illicit drug use at least once in their lifetime.
- 14 percent reported use of an illicit drug within the past year.
- 8 percent reported use of an illicit drug within the past month.
- Data from the 2006 survey showed that marijuana and cocaine use is most prevalent among persons 18 to 25.

Slicing through the mental fog to both recognize and deal with denial and self-deception is essential to recovery and to breaking free from the powerful grip of addiction.

about oneself that affect how reality is perceived.

Each person develops a belief system that is the sum of the assumptions, judgments and ideas that he or she holds to be true. This belief system contains potent family messages about such matters as one’s value or worth, relationships, needs and sexuality. When these core beliefs become inaccurate or faulty, they have the potential to provide fundamental momentum necessary for the development of an addiction.

What are some of these irrational beliefs? Perhaps the most common is the perception of not being a worthwhile person. Addicts believe that other people

impaired thinking patterns. Amazingly, even consequences such as lost jobs, arrests and broken relationships are either overlooked or attributed to factors other than the addiction.

Slicing through this mental fog to both recognize and deal with denial and self-deception is essential to recovery and breaking free from the powerful grip of addiction.

Biblical insight illustrates how understanding the progressive mental process can help one recognize and reject impaired thinking. “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived,

not easy for most of us. Swallowing our personal pride and being willing to seek out and accept help from others can be especially difficult.

As a counselor attempting to help others,

I've often witnessed addiction's cycle of progressive devastation and destruction in a person's life. One man briefly described his gut-wrenching struggle with alcohol in a few heartfelt words: "Once I started drinking, I just couldn't seem to stop. It's been something like 20 years now. My wife divorced me, and then I lost my family too. After ignoring repeated warnings, I finally lost my job. I've really hit bottom. I guess I have nothing left to lose!"

It may seem totally hopeless, but it's never too late to reach out for help.

Battling pornography addiction

Sex sells! Pornography, one of the greatest sexual scourges afflicting human society today, is a \$57 billion industry. Porn revenue is larger than the combined

revenues of all professional football, baseball and basketball franchises! It also exceeds the combined revenues of the ABC, CBS and NBC television networks.

Overcoming an addiction to Internet pornography may require the use of special computer safeguards. For example, various software programs filter Internet content but still allow normal Web surfing. They can be used to block out offensive Web sites.

The person experiencing the problem should not be the one who installs this type of program, or he or she will easily know how to get around it. It is much better to have your spouse or some other trustworthy adult set up the software on your computer.

Three good ones are CyberPatrol (www.cyberpatrol.com), CyberSitter (www.cybersitter.com) and NetNanny (www.netnanny.com). They cost less than \$40.

The 12 Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

Step 1: We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step 2: We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step 3: We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

Step 4: We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step 5: We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Step 6: We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Step 7: We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Step 8: We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step 9: We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step 10: We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Step 11: We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

by the client to find a compatible match in values, approach and methodology.

One of the best-proven paths to recovery for a number of different addictions is the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), but adapted to some other particular addiction.

The 12-step program helps members restore their network of human relationships, especially in their family. Members are taught how to live the program, leaving behind their double life and its delusion and pain. Spouses and families are also given understanding and support through group meetings, such as those provided by Al-Anon.

National telephone hotlines are available to give help and advice for many of the myriad addictions that plague our societies today. Treatment programs, recovery programs and support groups can all be accessed to help break the vicious hold of

addictions. Help is available, and there really is hope for recovery for those who will reach out and seek it.

Spiritual help

As a counselor, I have become acutely aware of an additional source of help available to those who believe in a Higher Power. Battling a powerful addiction can make



Battling a powerful addiction can make us feel alone, vulnerable, weak and very weary. Those who seek Jesus Christ's help can tap into a spiritual source of strength and help.

All have free trials, so you can take each for a test-drive before you buy.

Breaking free

Breaking the hold of any addiction is very difficult. All forms of addiction are vicious because they further the inability to trust others. However, without help from others, the addict often fails to regain control because the addiction is self-perpetuating—it feeds on itself.

Also, many addictions are supercharged with social judgment, ridicule or fear. This makes seeking help especially difficult. Seeking professional help is often a wise decision, but special care should be taken

us feel alone, vulnerable, weak and very weary. Those who seek Jesus Christ's help in breaking free from an addiction can tap into a spiritual source of strength and help.

Jesus said simply, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Paul expressed the huge difference spiritual help had made in his life in his exultant words, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Don't allow addictions to wreak havoc and destruction in your life. Decide now that you will seek out the help you need. You *can* break free from addiction! **GN**

An Addict's Story: What's at the Root of Addictions?

What are the factors that can lead a person into addiction? Understanding those factors and how they reinforce each other is a first step to breaking free of many addictions.

I became an addict when I was 17 years old, although the pattern for addiction was set up in me long before then. At the time of writing this article, I have been free from my addiction for two years and I have every intention of remaining so.

For the purposes of this article, the exact nature of my addiction isn't important. What I want to address are four fundamental beliefs that, as identified by Dr. Patrick Carnes in his book *Out of the Shadows* (2001), underlie many addictions. These are:

- I am, at the core, a bad, unworthy person.
- Nobody could ever love me if they truly knew who I am.
- No one will ever be able to meet my needs; therefore, I must meet my own needs.
- The addictive agent is my greatest need.

Feelings of unworthiness rooted in childhood

These four beliefs are often at the center of the vortex that is an addict's life. It's important to know these beliefs are present to be able to help the addict to recover.

The first belief—I am, at the core, a bad, unworthy person—is often caused by childhood trauma in a dysfunctional family.

Dysfunctional behavior within a family includes emotional or physical abuse, such as making unfounded accusations, hurling insults, yelling or screaming, berating others, doling out arbitrary and inappropriate punishments, withholding affection, touching in a sexually inappropriate manner and assaulting others (physically or sexually).

These are common examples of abusive behavior that serve to establish the first belief. Even the less catastrophic of these, when directed at or witnessed by children over a protracted period of time, can have devastating effects on the beliefs children develop about themselves. The more catastrophic ones can have the same

The reliance on the addictive agent causes greater shame and self-hatred, which causes a deeper belief that no one could love the addict, which further entrenches the addict's conviction that he has to manage his own needs because nobody else can, which inevitably leads back to the addictive agent as the only thing the addict knows that can quell his emotional pain.

impact after a single instance.

Often these abusive behaviors occur when a parent is an addict or otherwise mentally unstable. The fallout of the parent's behavior can then spill over into the life of his or her child.

When this happens, the child takes on an identity of shame and unworthiness. These concepts are externally imposed and, for the immature mind of a child, the response over an extended period of time is to believe the negative feedback repeatedly heard and experienced. Eventually, a void develops in the heart and mind that begs to be filled.

Catastrophic feelings of rejection

The second core belief—nobody could love me if they truly knew who I am—has two sides.

First, this belief is the natural fallout of the first belief. When a child takes on an identity of shame and unworthiness, he comes to doubt that anyone could love

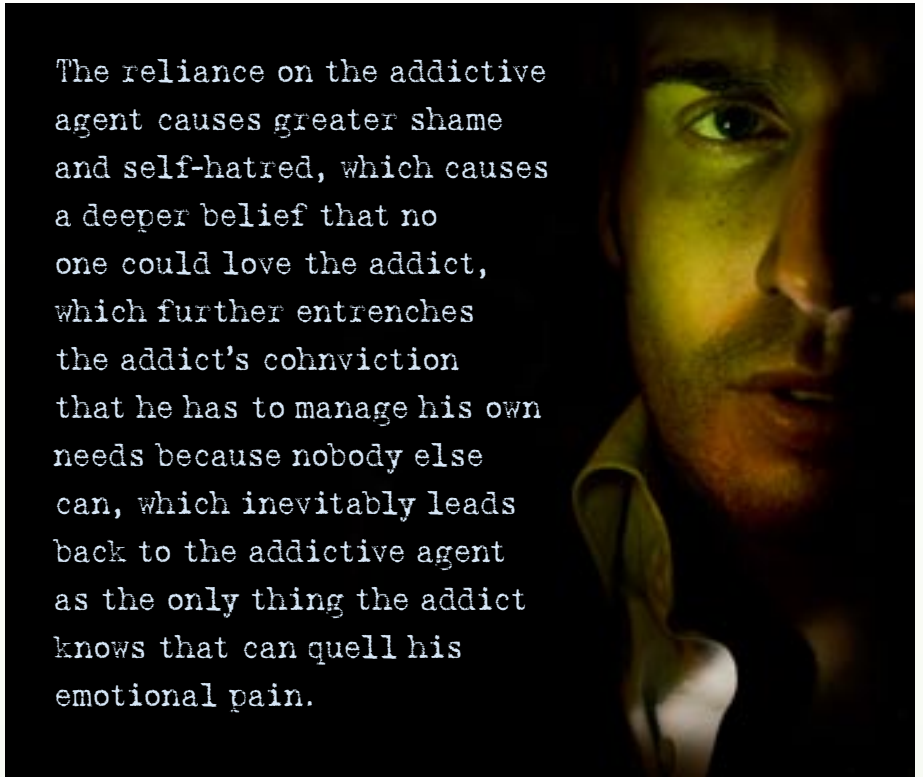
him. If his own parents don't appear to love him, he wonders who else would?

The child anticipates rejection. This belief then begins to color the child's interactions with others. There is the underlying feeling that "nobody would ever love me if they really knew me."

Second, once an addictive behavior takes hold, this belief is fed by that behavior. Addicts are convinced that if anyone really knew the nature of their addiction, there is no chance another person could truly love them.

This belief sets up a self-perpetuating cycle of addictive behavior that reinforces the belief. The cycle goes like this: Nobody could ever love me if they truly knew me; therefore, I need the addictive agent to deal with the pain of that reality, which reinforces the belief that nobody could love me (after all, who would love somebody who does what I do?).

Addicts don't think this way consciously, but this pattern repeats itself in an



unconscious way. It's a vicious cycle that is extraordinarily difficult to break.

Relying on self prevents seeking help

The third belief—no one will ever be able to meet my needs—follows naturally from the first two beliefs. Once one takes on an identity of shame and is convinced he is unworthy of love, it is a small step to project those beliefs onto everyone he encounters.

These beliefs lead to the person thinking, "No one outside of me is capable of meeting my needs; therefore, I have to rely on myself to do it."

Inside most addicts is an enormous preoccupation with self. It becomes a form of idolatry because the belief that "no one can truly meet my needs" inevitably influences the addict's perception of God.

The self-reliance and preoccupation feed the cycle of addiction to the point that, even in the face of adverse consequences, the addict will not stop his behavior. The belief that help is not found outside himself is strong. It prevents him from seeking the help he truly needs, so he remains trapped by his beliefs.

A dangerous void waiting to be filled

The fourth belief—the addictive agent is my greatest need—forms once the addict has found the agent that gives him or her the greatest moment of pleasure (relief and/or distraction from pain).

When a young person has the core beliefs I have described, he is a walking void needing to be filled. It is a physical law that nature abhors a vacuum. This is equally true in matters of the heart. The void will be filled by *something*, even if it is harmful.

Eventually, every person who becomes an addict stumbles upon his addictive agent of choice. That agent, once found, appears to salve the pain the addict feels inside. The addictive agent becomes an emotional and physical drug that the addict comes to crave.

The pleasure is short-lived and ultimately not fulfilling but the addict comes to believe that things will never be better than when he indulges in that addictive agent. It becomes his greatest need.

Addiction: a cruel trap

Once these four beliefs are in place, they are extremely difficult to dislodge because they feed on each other. Each interaction with the addictive agent (which most addicts know is wrong and are ashamed of)

fuels the four fundamental beliefs.

Reliance on the addictive agent causes greater shame and self-hatred, which causes a deeper belief that no one could love the addict, which further entrenches the addict's conviction that he has to manage his own needs because nobody else can, which inevitably leads back to the addictive agent as the only thing the addict knows will quell his emotional pain.

It is a cruel trap and one that Satan uses to great effect. He has perfected it for centuries. I can attest from personal experience that these things ensnare people, for I have been caught in the trap. Addicted people need healing and freedom.

What brings freedom from this dilemma? Because addiction is, in large part, a spiritual problem, the solution must be a spiritual one. It isn't a solution that occurs quickly or easily, however. I don't know of a single addict who has been instantly healed by divine fiat, so I don't think it's wise to expect that. For every addict that I've come to know, the path to freedom leads straight *through* the problem, not around it.

From my own experience, the first step to recovery is found in James 5:16: "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

In many cases an addict may have to do one of the hardest things he can imagine (because he is certain that it will lead to the rejection he expects) and that is to confess to trustworthy people everything he has done in his addiction—*everything*—then the healing can begin.

Through the prayers and support of loving people, the addict can begin to challenge the core beliefs about himself. By making himself accountable to people who care, he can replace his wrong thoughts and actions with right ones.

Ultimately he can get to the point where he trusts in the love of others and he can then believe in the love God has expressed for all of us. At that point, the addict is in a position to break the grip the addictive agent has had on his life.

The road I have just described is a long one but, for the addict, there are no shortcuts. The purpose of this article is not to provide a comprehensive solution plan for addicts. Rather, it's to help addicts, or people who care about them, to understand the beliefs underlying most addictions—beliefs that must be rooted out for recovery to take place. **GN**

Who's Behind The Good News?



Who's behind *The Good News* magazine? Many readers have wondered who we are and how we are able to provide *The Good News* free to all who request it. Simply put, *The Good News* is provided by *people*—people from all walks of life, from all over the world.

But those people have a common goal: **to proclaim the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all the world as a witness and to teach all nations to observe what Christ commanded** (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).

We are dedicated to proclaiming the same message Jesus Christ brought: the wonderful *good news* of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 8:1). That message truly is good news—the answer to all the problems that have long plagued humankind. Through the pages of *The Good News*, various booklets (also free) and our radio and TV programs, we show the biblical answers to the dilemmas that have defied human solution and threaten our very survival.

We are committed to taking that message to the entire world, sharing the truth of God's purpose and plan for us as taught by Jesus Christ.

The United Church of God has congregations and ministers around the world. In these congregations believers assemble to be instructed from the Scriptures and to fellowship. For locations and times of services in your area, contact us at the appropriate address on page 2. Visitors are always welcome.



For additional information, visit our Web site:

www.ucg.org

Nations around the world gang up on America

Late last year, Harvard historian Niall Ferguson labeled America as “the nation that fell to earth.” In terms of dwindling domestic and international support, the war in Iraq has many parallels with Vietnam. In addition, what is currently occurring elsewhere on the international stage greatly augments the overall problem.

Russian President Vladimir Putin recently traveled to Iran and concocted a pact with five countries bordering the Caspian Sea. This pact states that no other country should interfere militarily or politically in the affairs of this Caspian bloc of nations. Some observers understand this pact as a clear warning that the United States should not carry out any military action against Iran.

In turn, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been invited to Moscow for further talks. Only a short time ago the Iranian president was allowed to vent his anger against America from the UN headquarters in New York City. As *U.S. News and World Report* editor-in-chief Mortimer Zuckerman observed, “Iran’s president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, came to America to stick his thumb in our eye and deliver a sanitized version of ‘Death to America!’ and ‘The Holocaust Never Occurred!’” (Oct. 8, 2007, emphasis added throughout).

Russian aid to Iran is nothing short of astonishing. For example, it is a massive supplier of arms to Tehran, including a \$700 million air-defense system.

Naturally both Russia and Iran oppose the eastward expansion of NATO. Iran is counting on both Russia and China to oppose any future sanctions from the UN Security Council.

According to *The Guardian* (Oct. 12, 2007), a resurgent Sino-Russian political embrace is already well under way: “Moscow and Beijing are closer now than in the Communist period . . . They have frustrated Western hopes for sanctions or other tough action on disputes ranging from Burma and Darfur to Iran. They are blocking a solution on Kosovo.” Tensions between Russia and

America are clearly on the rise, alarmingly so.

Another diplomatic setback has been a cooling of the normally stable Anglo-American alliance. The new British prime minister, Gordon Brown, is no Tony Blair. Increasingly Britain is being sucked



into Europe with more concessions of British sovereignty in the offing. Brown has agreed to the new EU treaty without giving the British people a referendum. Yet only an independent Britain can fully

stand shoulder to shoulder with America as new and more deadly challenges to Western civilization present themselves.

In 1940 Winston Churchill warned that unless the English-speaking countries triumphed over Nazism, the world would “sink into a new dark age.” How much more would this be the case if the West should fail in its war on terrorism? America and Britain eventually prevailed in two world wars in the last century. Yet our present century is not without its own civilizational showdowns. Recent trends showing America and Britain gradually being boxed into a corner should deeply concern us all.

Most do not understand the importance of the origins of the English-speaking peoples around the world. The historic and prophetic implications will yet prove to be enormous. To understand just how, request or download our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *Financial Times* [all London], *U.S. News and World Report*.)

Newest Middle East peace proposal in jeopardy

According to a report from Jerusalem published in the *International Herald Tribune*, “ Hamas has now sent hundreds of its fighters, most of them to Iran . . . Israel is watching as Hamas, in control of Gaza, is building an army there on the model of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon—constructing positions and fortifications.” Some of their longer-range rockets are being held in reserve for future action against Israel.

Almost simultaneously, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (standing beside Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas) called for a Palestinian state as an integral part of the solution to the overall conflict. She continues her periodic meetings with both Israeli and Palestinian leaders. The United States will host a Middle East conference in November designed to put the peace process back on track. It was reported by *The Economist* that “diplomacy has yet another fleeting chance.”

But the realism of *U.S. News and World Report* editor-in-chief Mortimer Zuckerman must be taken seriously. He wrote, “A renewed push to find an Israeli-Palestinian solution faces some

profound problems as the head of Iran reminded us last week [in his UN address].” Mr. Zuckerman pointed out that the Iranian president’s purpose was “to undermine the legitimacy of the state of Israel.” This farseeing editor reminded us about “the refusal of the Palestinians to this day to acknowledge the right of Israel to exist.”

Yet the League of Nations in 1922 and the United Nations in 1948 supported a Jewish homeland. Winston Churchill stated that “the Jews are in Palestine by right, not sufferance.”

Mr. Zuckerman noted the Palestinian use of religion to achieve their political purposes. He recalled that “it was Arafat who invoked the

“ Hamas has now sent hundreds of its fighters, most of them to Iran . . . Israel is watching as Hamas, in control of Gaza, is building an army there on the model of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon—constructing positions and fortifications.”

Islamic terms of jihad and shahada . . . It was Arafat who introduced children to radical Islamic thinking so that they could become terrorists and suicide bombers.” He also observed that the Palestinians “wish

to rule not just in the

West Bank and Gaza, but in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa” (“Denial and Hope in the Mideast,” Oct. 8, 2007).

Before the biblically prophesied peace finally comes to this troubled region, the future will prove far more crisis-prone than even the troublesome past. To truly comprehend both its historic and prophetic significance, request or download our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *The Times* [London], *USA Today*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *International Herald Tribune*.)

American-Turkish relations on the edge

Turkey, a longtime U.S. ally, is on the point of hindering American plans and intentions in Iraq. A large-scale Turkish incursion into northern Iraq to thwart Kurdish rebels may be imminent. Clearly it would complicate Washington’s plans in that strife-torn country.

At this crucial time of policy differences between the United States and Turkey, the Democratic Party-controlled House of Representatives tried to formally condemn the World War I-era massacre of Armenians by Turks as genocide. However valid the facts may be, the timing is highly inopportune. So President Bush has asked the House to think again. These are not the easiest days for American diplomacy.

Stark implications of Israeli strike against Syrian reactor

According to *The New York Times*, "Israel's air attack on Syria last month was directed against a site that Israeli and American intelligence analysts judged was a partly constructed nuclear reactor, apparently modeled on one North Korea had used to create its stockpile of nuclear weapons fuel, according to American and foreign officials with access to the intelligence reports" (Oct. 14, 2007).

A somewhat similar Israeli raid on Iraq took out the Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981, putting a sudden halt to Iraqi nuclear efforts. Yet since the Syrian reactor apparently would have required some years to actu-



ally produce bomb-grade plutonium, this latest raid was seen by one senior Israeli official as intended to "re-establish the credibility of our deterrent power."

Some American officials saw it as a clear signal to Iran. Several months earlier another senior Israeli source had said, "We are the product of a Holocaust in Europe and we will do everything . . . to prevent another holocaust recurring in Israel. If the Americans do not act, then we will act" (*The Sunday Times*).

What is also highly disturbing is the desire for nuclear weapons in several Middle Eastern nations, a somewhat natural reaction given the current Iranian threat. The year 2006 was labeled "The year of the nuke" by *Newsweek* in terms of increased nuclear proliferation around the globe.

Most countries say they want to avoid a nuclear Armageddon. The late Ronald Reagan wrote in his diaries while still U.S. president that "we have to do all we can . . . to see that there is never a nuclear war" (quoted in *Scientific American*, October 2007). However, a few rogue countries and suicidal terrorist groups seem inclined to provoke the unthinkable. (Sources: *The Sunday Times* [London], *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Scientific American*.)

Birth control pills for 11-year-olds?

Controversy and confusion surrounded the decision by King Middle School in Portland, Maine, to offer birth control pills to children as young as 11, without their parents' knowledge. Oral contraception and condoms have been available for years in Portland's high schools, but extending this policy to middle schools is seen by some as encouraging underage sexual activity.

This practice is also viewed as possibly covering up sexual and other forms of abuse in families. It also provides the potential for a pregnant 11-year-old child to be diagnosed and then to have an abortion without parental awareness or consent.

Some parents were ambivalent or even favored the school's independently operated clinic taking over this important aspect of child care. However, others are worried about the long-term health issues resulting from taking oral contraception at such an early age and the potential for future psychological difficulties when children and young teenagers become involved in sexual relationships or have abortions—all without parental knowledge or counsel.

On Oct. 19, the principal of King Middle School published a letter on the school's Web site explaining the rationale for the decision: "To prevent pregnancy the Health Center needs to have contraception as an option when a student admits being sexually active. Contraception would only be prescribed in rare cases after counseling about abstinence and postponing sexual behavior was not productive. Every effort is always made to encourage the student to join with her parents in making this decision."

This all appears to be treating the effects of a problem and not the root causes. Surrounded by a culture that no longer allows children to be children, is it possible that a child of 11 or a teenager of 14 or 15 would even recognize that she or he was being *coerced* into sexual activity?

Without a strong moral society or, failing that, strong family values in setting a right example of abstinence before commitment (commitment *within* a biblical marriage), how are children to learn what is right and what is wrong where sexuality is concerned?

For information on God's purpose for marriage and families, request or download our free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. (Sources: *Detroit Free Press*, *The New York Times*, King Middle School Web site.)

Staph infections proving more deadly than the AIDS virus

Both *The Washington Post* and the Associated Press (AP) recently highlighted the emergence of a drug-resistant staph germ that is greatly increasing fatalities. *The Post* stated that "a dangerous germ that has been spreading around the country causes more life-threatening infections than public health authorities had thought *and is killing more people in the United States each year than the AIDS virus.*"

According to the AP, "more than 90,000 Americans get potentially deadly infections each year from a drug-resistant staph 'superbug,' the government reported in its first overall estimate of invasive disease caused by the germ." These infections, in both mild and invasive forms, "affect 46 out of every 1,000 U.S. hospital and nursing home patients."

Most staph cases tend to be relatively mild skin

infections, but invasive infections that enter the bloodstream can easily become deadly. Apparent overuse of antibiotics has severely limited the effectiveness of countermeasures. Hospital and nursing home patients, mostly senior citizens, are the main victims, but deadly staph infections also strike the very young.

The Post further stated: "Studies have shown that hospitals could do more to improve standard hygiene to reduce the spread of the infections." The AP report concurred, suggesting that "the results underscore the need for better prevention measures curbing the overuse of antibiotics and improving hand-washing and other hygiene procedures among hospital workers." So biblical hygienic and cleanliness ordinances set forth in the Bible are up-to-date even in our modern world.

According to Bible prophecy, the four horsemen of the apocalypse will ride in ever-increasing intensity. The pale horse signifies disease epidemics. For further understanding, request or download our free booklets *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* (Sources: *Associated Press*, *The Washington Post*.)

How Can You Make Sense of the News?

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





400 Years After Jamestown: Where Did the Bible Go?

In recent decades the British and American peoples have increasingly turned away from the Bible. Few can even remember when the Word of God was revered in our nations, but only a century ago it was considered the source of the “ennobling ideals” that united both nations.

The Bible was missing. I searched through the sanctuary. It must be somewhere. After all, it was a church.

I finally gave up and asked a female volunteer if she knew where the Bible was. She explained that it had been moved to an anteroom and that I could find it there. She added that she did not approve of it being moved.

I finally did locate it in a glass case that was hardly noticeable. That Bible, so much a part of the history of the church, had been relegated to a side room, signifying its reduced importance in the fabric of the church and of the nation as a whole.

The Bible in question was presented in 1907 to the president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, by Britain’s King Edward VII on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the founding of the colony of Virginia. The Bible and the lectern on which it had rested, now devoid of any copy of the Scriptures, had been presented to Bruton Parish Church in Colonial Williamsburg by the president himself.

Times have changed

The dedicatory message from the king read: “This Bible is presented by His Majesty King Edward the Seventh, King of Great Britain and Ireland & Emperor of India to the church of Bruton, Virginia, a shrine rich in venerable tradition of worship, in solemn memories of patriots and statesmen and in historic witness to the oneness of our peoples.

“The King will ever hope and pray that the ties of kinship and of language and the common heritage of ordered worship and of ennobling ideals may through the saving faith in our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ revealed in these sacred pages, continue to unite Great Britain & America in a beneficent fellowship for

setting forward peace & goodwill among men. MCMVII [1907].”

How times have changed in just a century! The public reverence for the Bible shown by both the king and the president 100 years ago is sadly lacking in our nations today!

Before visiting Colonial Williamsburg,

“Only in England was the Bible in any sense a national possession . . . Englishmen carried their Bible with them—as the rock and foundation of their lives—overseas . . . Beyond the shores of [Britain] it fortified the spirit of the pioneers of New England.”

my wife and I had toured Jamestown, site of the first permanent English settlement in the New World. While there we had visited a replica of the original settlement, which included a church building.

In the church our guide asked us if we had heard of the King James translation of the Bible. As soon as the question was raised, people in our group started wandering off looking at other things. The musketry display was of particular interest. The significance of the King James translation of the Bible in the history of early America seemed of no interest to most of those touring Jamestown that day.

The most significant book in history and an inspiration for the settlers of Virginia and the later colonies of New England is now of little interest to the general populace. Yet without this book the United States would not have come into existence.

Historic importance of the Bible

It’s no coincidence that the settlement in Jamestown and the publication of the King James Bible coincided. Those first settlers already had Bibles in their possession, translations that went back as far as John

Wycliffe in the 14th century, the first man to translate the Scriptures into English.

But in the year the settlers sailed to Jamestown, the greatest English scholars were engaged in translating the Bible from ancient Hebrew and Greek texts into a new “Authorized Version,” which was to become the most influential book

ever published. Named after the king who authorized the translation work and who himself understood the ancient languages from which the Scriptures were to be translated, the Bible is known to Americans as the King James Version.

In a recent historical account of how we got the English Bible, the American historian Benson Bobrick wrote: “Only in England was the Bible in any sense a national possession . . . Englishmen carried their Bible with them—as the rock and foundation of their lives—overseas . . . Beyond the shores of Albion [Britain] it fortified the spirit of the pioneers of New England, helped to shape the American psyche, and through its impact on thought and culture eventually spread the world over, ‘as wide as the waters be’” (*Wide as the Waters*, 2001, p. 12).

The book’s title is taken from a poem about John Wycliffe (1330-1384), the father of the English Bible. Wycliffe was condemned by the Roman Catholic Church as a heretic. By order of Pope Martin V, his bones were to be exhumed and removed from consecrated ground. His remains were disinterred and burned,



At his inauguration as first president of the United States, George Washington took his oath of office with his hand on the Bible, then added the words "So help me God." Every president since has followed Washington's example.

and his ashes cast into a river.

Bobrick relates how Wycliffe's favorite verse was Philippians 2:12, which admonishes each person to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." This was a revolutionary concept in Europe where for centuries people had been taught that salvation was only possible through the Catholic Church and its priests. Wycliffe is credited with laying a foundation for religious freedom and for the Anglo-American democratic systems that also emphasize individual responsibility.

Historic importance of the Bible

King Henry VIII legalized the publication and distribution of the Bible in 1537.

"By royal injunction, the Lord's Prayer and the 10 Commandments in English were to be taught sentence by sentence on Sundays and holy days throughout the year; at least one sermon on the Gospel was to be preached every quarter . . . ; and every parish church in England was to 'set up in some convenient place' a copy of the English Bible accessible to all as 'the very lively Word of God'" (Bobrick, p. 151).

Throughout the kingdom, copies for public use and edification were soon chained to lecterns in the vestibules of church buildings—six of them in St. Paul's Church alone.

The publication of the Bible was received with great enthusiasm. "It was

wonderful to see with what joy the book of God was received," wrote an early biographer of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, ". . . not only among the learned sort . . . but generally all England over among all the vulgar and common people; with what greediness God's Word was read, and what resort to places where the reading of it was.

"Everybody that could bought the book and busily

read it; or got others to read it to them, if they could not themselves; and divers[e people] among the elderly learned to read on purpose. And even little boys flocked among the rest to hear portions of the Holy Scriptures read" (quoted by Bobrick, pp. 151-152).

In their enthusiasm for the Word of God, "crowds sometimes assembled in the church vestibules during Sunday service and eventually the king found it necessary to issue a proclamation (in April 1539) forbidding the reading of the Bible aloud at such times" (p. 152). "In his famous last speech to Parliament the king complained, with tears in his eyes, that the Bible was being 'disputed, rhymed, sung and jangled in every ale-house and tavern'" (p. 160).

It's striking to note in stark contrast the total lack of enthusiasm for the Bible today. The enthusiasm described here for God's Word was displayed recently upon publication of the latest Harry Potter book. Even many Christians showed a marked preference for the latter over the former!

A president's words of warning

When did all this enthusiasm for God's Word change? "It did not cease for 350 years: 1900 was the first year in which religious works (at least in England) did not outnumber all other publications" (Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence*, 2000, p. 10).

The title of the book cited here is insightful. The enthusiasm for the Bible led to the rise of the English-speaking peoples, the "dawn" of our civilization, while the rejection of the Bible in more recent times has led to the present period of "decadence," defined as the rejection of all the values on which our civilization was built. Such decadence can only precede an inevitable fall.

As noted earlier, "Englishmen carried their Bible with them" everywhere. That sentence reminds me of the title of author James Morris' first volume of his history of the British Empire: *By Heaven's Command*. People believed they were given a divine responsibility to take Christian civilization, the Bible, the rule of law, parliamentary democracy and free trade to the rest of the world. This fulfilled ancient prophecies about Abraham's descendants through the tribe of Joseph being a blessing to the world (Genesis 12:3; Micah 5:7).

The Bible was to continue to be an inspiration for the English-speaking peoples. In 1789 George Washington took his oath of office and kissed a Bible opened to Genesis 49-50, "passages that include Joseph's dying reminder that God had promised the Israelites a new land" (Paul Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880*, 1999, p. 41).

Then "at the end of the oath he added the words 'So help me God' . . . Every president since Washington has repeated this same appeal to God" (Mark Beliles and Stephen McDowell, *America's Providential History*, 1989, p. 174).

In his inaugural address, the first ever in the history of the United States, Washington clearly had the Bible's promises in mind when he said: "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency . . .

"We ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained" (ibid., p. 175).

Continued on page 17

Can You Break the Cycle of Generational Dysfunction?

Often some of our deepest personal problems are rooted in something we can't control—dysfunctional family behavioral patterns that came before us. But we can control our choices, and each of us can choose life and good things!

by Greg Thomas

In 1974 American singer and songwriter Harry Chapin recorded a song titled “Cat’s in the Cradle.” The song is about a father who is too busy to spend time with his son, instead offering vague promises to spend time with him in the future.

In time, the boy grows up to become a man very much like his father, focused on career and other personal pursuits at the expense of family relations. As the father grows old and finally has time to look back on his life, he deeply desires to get to know his adult son and have a meaningful relationship with him.

Sadly, the father comes to realize that his son is absorbed with the same materialistic priorities he had, and so a close relationship will never happen. The last verse concludes with this sad line: “*And as I hung up the phone it occurred to me, he’d grown up just like me—my boy was just like me.*”

Family influence passed down

This song reminds us of the universal influence one generation has on another. Family traits are often passed down from parents to children, and this cycle has been repeated for thousands of years.

Some of these traits may be positive and beneficial—like nurturing skills, valuing hard work or education. However, negative and destructive behavior is *also* passed down within families.

When God calls us and opens our minds to follow His way of life, we may not be fully aware of how our new relationship with Him will not only change us individually, but can also have a wonderful influence on our descendants, impacting future generations.

Many people selfishly live only for today. They don’t understand or appreciate how one member of a family can impact other members. The Scriptures often remind us that it’s important to *think generationally*.



When God calls us and opens our minds to follow His way of life, we may not be fully aware of how our new relationship with Him can not only change us individually, but also have a wonderful influence on our descendants.

Consider God’s instruction in the Ten Commandments that “I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Exodus 20:5-6).

It’s easy to believe from this scripture that God simply punishes those who disrespect Him and blesses those who love Him. But God is not a vengeful and angry Father who intentionally punishes great-grandchildren for the sins committed generations earlier by others.

A better way to understand this scripture is to realize that *family dysfunctions and their consequences are passed down from parents to children and from generation to generation*. Curses are the result of breaking God’s law, and many sins are perpetuated in the next generation by the poor

example of the previous generation.

Repeating patterns of mistakes

Each human family has its own culture, including unique strengths and weaknesses. Some of these may be the result of genetic inheritance. For example, some families have a history of significant musical or athletic accomplishments passed down from parents to children, to grandchildren and even great-grandchildren.

Even though it takes great skill development to be an excellent musician or athlete, a certain *natural* endowment is inherited from birth. Modern science has also discovered that our genetics may even predispose us to certain diseases.

Other strengths and weaknesses within an individual family culture are the result of its *environment* or *choices*. This includes values, priorities and decision-making skills. When negative choices and

a bad home environment become deeply entrenched within a family culture, individual members can become self-destructive and unknowingly pass on these traits.

Some of us come from family backgrounds of defeatism, divorce, pessimism, selfishness, greed, anger, addictions and laziness. Unless we break this curse, these traits may be passed on to our children. One's dysfunctional personal behavior becomes a *model* or example to the next generation, and the cycle can be repeated over and over again.

Timothy Was Blessed for His Mother's and Grandmother's Faithfulness

The apostle Paul reminds us that even one parent or grandparent can have great influence on a family.

Timothy had the benefit of being taught the faith of God by his mother and grandmother. Paul reminded him, "I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also" (2 Timothy 1:5).

Notice that only these two female caregivers are praised and acknowledged for the excellent example they provided at home to young Timothy.

His father was a gentile and not a believer in Jesus Christ (Acts 16:1-3). Yet, beginning with Timothy's grandmother Lois, and then on to his mother Eunice, they were able to make a difference in teaching Timothy as a boy, after which he would grow up to be one of the early ministers of the Church and a faithful companion and coworker alongside Paul.

This was achieved in spite of the negative influences of living in a gentile nation and in a home with an unbeliever. The positive choices Lois made certainly benefited her descendants.

Often this continues until someone realizes that he or she can be the one to *break the cycle* and make a difference. By developing a meaningful relationship with *God* we will not only become more enriched and fulfilled, but we will also benefit many others, including our own descendants.

Abraham's amazing example

A number of biblical passages show us

why we should all think generationally. Perhaps the most striking is the example of Abraham.

Abraham was an obedient "friend of God" (James 2:23). He rejected the pagan sinful culture of his family line and chose to live a new and positive way of life. At God's request Abraham left that environment and even his own family to follow the course God set for him. In doing so he would become known as "the father of the faithful."

Because of Abraham's willingness to abandon the sinful habits and practices of generations, God made specific promises to him about the future of his descendants. God told him, "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered" (Genesis 13:16).

Some of Abraham's descendants formed the core of what are now known as the major English-speaking nations and many other nations. (To learn more about this fascinating topic, request or download our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

God further told Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

Almost 2,000 years later Jesus Christ, a direct descendant of Abraham, would be born to atone for all sin and offer eternal life to all mankind. The entire world came to be blessed through Abraham because of his willingness to break with the patterns of past generations and embark on a new way of life revealed by God.

David, a man after God's own heart

Another example of how powerful and important a *personal* relationship with God is can be seen in God's expression of love for King David. Paul is recorded as quoting God in a powerful sermon by proclaiming, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will." From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus" (Acts 13:22-23).

Jesus Christ was a descendant of King David, and both of them were physical descendants of Abraham. But did David's personal relationship have a positive effect on any of his other direct descendants? Did this *personal relationship* between God and David have benefits for David's great-grandchildren and beyond?

Let's move forward in history to about

50 years after David's death to a significant time in Judah's survival as a nation.

Abijah (also spelled Abijam) was the great-grandson of King David, but wasn't faithful to God's law. Scripture records that he "did all the same sins his father before him had done. Abijah was not faithful to the LORD his God as David, his great-grandfather, had been" (1 Kings 15:3, New Century Version).

At first glance we might expect Abijah to be severely punished for his sins, and perhaps others along with him. Yet the very next verse tells us something quite different: "Because the LORD loved David, the LORD gave him a kingdom in Jerusalem and allowed him to have a son to be king after him. The LORD also kept Jerusalem safe" (verse 4, NCV).

More than 50 years after David died, God showed one of his descendants *mercy* because of the faithfulness of his great-grandfather! God said in effect, "I am not doing this for you, Abijah, but because of the *relationship* I had with your great-grandfather David, I will show mercy to you."

Did David's relationship with God benefit any of his other descendants?

Many generations later King Hezekiah lay dying while the nation was being threatened by powerful Assyrian armies. The king fervently prayed to God for deliverance and the prophet Isaiah was sent to him with this message:

"Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father [ancestor]: 'I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. And I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and *for the sake of My servant David*'" (2 Kings 20:5-6).

More than 250 years after David died, God here showed *mercy* to his descendant because of David's personal relationship with God. Notice that God even identifies Himself as the "God of David" and proclaims that He will both heal Hezekiah and protect the nation for "the sake of My servant David."

Again, God says in effect, "Hezekiah, I am not doing this just for your sake! I am doing it because of My relationship with your ancestor David." Do you see what a powerful influence just one individual can have, impacting his or her descendants for generations? Do you realize that *you* can be the Abraham or David in your family, setting a pattern that may bless your

descendants generations from now?

A shocking example from history

How powerful can the generational influence of parents be on their own family and descendants? In 1874 a member of the New York State Prison Board noticed that six members of the same family were incarcerated at the same time. The board did some research, looking back a few generations to try to find the original couple who initiated this tragic family legacy.

They traced the family line back to an ancestor born in 1720, a man considered lazy and godless with a reputation as the town troublemaker. He was also an alcoholic and viewed as having low moral character. To make matters worse, he married a woman who was much like himself, and together they had six daughters and two sons.

Here is what the report revealed about the approximately 1,200 descendants of this couple who were alive by 1874:

- 310 were homeless.
- 160 were prostitutes.
- 180 suffered from drug or alcohol abuse.
- 150 were criminals who spent time in prison, including *seven for murder*.

The report also found that the State of New York had spent \$1.5 million—a shockingly high number at the time—to care for this line of descendants, and *not one* had made a significant contribution to society.

Sadly, we can see by this example how the harmful dysfunctions of parents can be passed down from generation to generation.

A refreshing contrast

In contrast, another family heritage was studied involving a couple who lived about the same time. This second family study began with the famous preacher Jonathan Edwards, who was born in 1703. A deeply religious man, he lived a life of strong moral values and became a minister and a dedicated family man.

He married a deeply religious woman named Sarah who shared his values, and

together they had 11 children. Eventually, Jonathan Edwards became the president of Princeton University. Here is what researchers discovered about the approximately 1,400 descendants of Jonathan and Sarah Edwards by 1874:

- 13 were college presidents.
- 65 were college professors.
- 100 were attorneys.
- 32 were state judges.
- 85 were authors of classic books.
- 66 were physicians.
- 80 held political offices, including three state governors.
- 3 were state senators.
- 1 became vice president of the United States.

What a difference it makes in the kind of example and values that are passed down to the next generation! Strong moral values can indeed bring blessings and opportunities for generations yet to be born!

Rooting out weakness and sin

Many scriptures confirm that family cultures can be destructive. You and I are also a product of our own family's heritage going back for many, many years! Some of the weaknesses we have are a result of them being passed down *directly* to us by our parents' or grandparents' personal examples. In some cases a family sin may go so far back that no one now knows where it began!

A responsibility we all have is to root out these weaknesses and set a better example for our own children and grandchildren. This commitment to overcome our weaknesses and change our lives can also richly benefit our siblings, cousins, nieces, nephews and other extended family members.

Studies show that families tend to reproduce their own culture and dysfunctions for generations. For example, selfish parents produce selfish children. An alcoholic parent is likely to produce alcoholic children. Spousal abusers often produce

children who grow up and abuse *their* spouses or are abused *by* their spouses.

Parents with negative lifestyles and attitudes tend to produce offspring who are unproductive and discouraged. Research has demonstrated that approximately 90 percent of people incarcerated in the United States have had either a parent or close family member in jail before.

Habitual problems may go back for generations in your family, but you can be the Abraham or David in your lineage! You can be the one to make better choices and break the curse of generational dysfunctions in your family!

We need to recognize what is happening and make a conscious decision to, with God's help, create a new, *positive* family heritage.

God told the people of ancient Israel that He loved them and wanted them to be a *better* people by obeying His commandments. He wanted both them and their descendants to be happy and blessed. Through Moses He pleaded with them to make the right choices and proclaimed, "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore *choose life*, that *both you and your descendants may live*" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

My own father's sad story

I've had a personal interest in this subject for a number of reasons. My own paternal grandfather immigrated to the United States from Britain around 1905. My family and I don't know exactly what kind of a family culture he came from, but it was certainly negative, as reflected in his poor parenting skills and lifestyle.

When his sons reached about 13 years of age he would force them to leave home and start supporting themselves. My father was put into this position, and it had serious consequences. Even though he grew up to become a skilled tool and die maker, he also became an alcoholic who was isolated from his entire family.

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Because of emotional and other abuse, my mother divorced my father when I was a small boy. My father became transient to avoid paying child support, and not until his senior years did he have any kind of a relationship with his children or grandchildren. Sadly, he ended up taking his own life after spending his last years alone in a small, dilapidated trailer home he owned.

In spite of this I was fortunate for two reasons. First, my mother remarried, this time to a fine man who modeled excellent values and a strong work ethic. So I was blessed to have a good stepfather as a male role model. But more importantly, God called me to His truth and way of life as a teenager, greatly helping me to make positive choices as a young man.

That was more than 35 years ago, and since then my wife of 33 years, our three daughters and our grandchildren have been greatly blessed because someone *chose* to break a family cycle of negativity and addictions. Moreover, blessings flowed from the gift of having a supportive and faithful wife who also loves God and His way of life. A family receives special favor when both parents live as “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Peter 3:7).

Your choices aren't yours alone

The choices and decisions we make don't just affect ourselves, but also our children, grandchildren and future generations yet unborn.

Have you considered that you never really make a choice alone? It's been said that you are always taking your parents *and* your children with you throughout your life. In other words, *most decisions* you make are affected by the deep personal influence of your parents. On the other hand, *your* lifestyle choices and major decisions will also affect future generations of your family.

Even if you lack the personal desire to

overcome serious problems for your own sake, *do it for your family*. Think *generationally* about how your behavior will benefit or harm your descendants.

God's Word has shown us that He may have mercy on others because of the life we live. If you're struggling with a serious problem, why not decide to stand in the gap and be the Abraham in your family! Make the choices now that will let others years from now see the changes you made personally and say, “*Here is where it all turned around!*”

We read earlier in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 30 that we literally have the ability *to choose blessings or curses*. Dysfunctions and sins that are allowed to continue may be passed down for generations. Yet we have also seen that God will *bless* the descendants of those who love Him.

You can put a stop to it

If you have a family legacy of negativity, addictions, poverty, divorce, greed or selfishness, *you* can be the one to put a stop to it. All of us are dealing with issues from our family histories. Sometimes we must confront problems that go back many generations.

The good news is that we don't have to do this alone. God offers us the help of His Spirit so we can put a stop to these destructive habits and make life even more productive for our descendants. God's Spirit within us can literally change our lives as we move away from sinful habits toward a new, spirit-led nature (Galatians 5:19-25).

Some personal problems are so entrenched that we need to be humble enough to ask for help. Don't be hesitant to contact a minister or health-care professional if you continue to struggle with a problem and realize you need additional support. There is no shame in asking for help and encouragement from others!

When we are faithful and have a deep relationship centered on obedience to God, He will not deal with our descendants like someone who doesn't have a godly heritage. You may look at your family tree and not like what you see. However, beginning with you a new family tree can be planted that blesses everyone around it with the fruit of God's Spirit, including joy, faithfulness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Think *generationally* in your life. How you live today and the kind of relationship you have with God can affect your descendants for generations to come and make their lives better! Why not become the Abraham in your family? **GN**

Bible

Continued from page 13

Today it's fashionable to deny the role the Bible played in the foundation of the United States. Although America's founders were of many different denominations, this was the one book that influenced them all. They were clearly all familiar with the Bible's promises or Washington would not have referred to them in his inaugural address. They knew the promise of blessings made to ancient Israel if they obeyed God and the inevitable curses that would come on the nation if it turned away from God.

Will we listen?

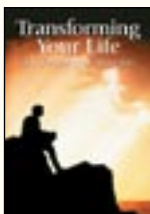
People can deny the importance of the Bible. Churches can even remove the Scriptures from their sanctuaries. But the fact remains that God's Word is just as relevant today as it was when George Washington became the first president of the United States more than 200 years ago.

The Bible being opened to verses about Israel's future was prescient—revealing blessings for the modern descendants of ancient Israel (the American and British-descended peoples, the nations of northwestern Europe and the Jewish state of Israel). Washington was also well aware of the Bible's *warnings* to Israel—applicable to the same nations. If they want to *continue* to receive God's physical blessings, they need to return to God and His laws.

The increasing problems that challenge the English-speaking nations are the direct result of turning away from the laws of God. Do we have the wisdom to listen to the words of George Washington, who foresaw the inevitability of failure for his new country if it chose to reject the laws of God and hide the Scriptures in a corner? **GN**

Recommended Reading

How can you begin the process of changing, of breaking the old patterns of sin and dysfunction that enslave us and hold us back? God offers us help. Request or download our free booklets *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* and *You Can Have Living Faith*. Also download or request *Making Life Work* to discover some of the Bible's most time-tested advice on how to get your life in order. All are yours free for the asking!



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How did the United States rise from a lowly backwater colony hugging the eastern seaboard to become the most prosperous and powerful country history has ever known? How did an isolated island nation off the coast of Europe build the greatest empire the world has ever seen? Does Bible history shed any light, and does Bible prophecy reveal what lies ahead? You need to read our eye-opening booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. Request or download your free copy today!



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The Greatest Addiction of All

Most people know about common addictions to drugs and alcohol. These are difficult enough to face and manage. But the one addiction that is greater than all others is unrecognized by most people. Thankfully, it can be overcome.

by Jerold Aust

"I can't get in trouble. I'm a celebrity," boasted Lindsay Lohan on the night she was arrested for driving under the influence with a suspended license and carrying cocaine (*Los Angeles Daily News*, Aug. 5, 2007, p. 1).

The newspaper article cited here is a sad commentary on the imperious actions of some famous personalities who sometimes do what they want simply because they *can*.

Interestingly, the article's headline asks, "Have We Lost Our Way?" It assumes that we once knew the right way to live and have merely strayed from it. But it assumes wrong. Drugs and alcohol impair good judgment. Yet a greater addiction, more widespread than any other, distorts true values—and most don't realize that they have it.

Research into addiction

In the introduction to their book *Addiction* (2007), John Hoffman and Susan Froemke write of their first encounter with various addictions and attitudes toward them. As laypersons, they were researching and preparing to produce a series on addictions for a major cable TV channel. "Neither of us had an in-depth knowledge of the subject," they say (p. 14).

"Addiction, as it turns out, is a problem that is messy—riddled with misconceptions, profoundly lacking in nationally recognized treatment standards, and highly stigmatized. Conversely, we also came to realize that although the science of addiction is relatively new, tremendous shifts in attitudes are occurring," they write.

The authors note that addiction is a chronic (ongoing) brain disease. "A vivid contributor to this change in attitude is the fact that science now gives us the ability to see inside the brains of addicted people. We can see that the addicted brain is different; that it is altered. With brain research has come great advances in the medical treatment of addiction and the promise of even more effective treatments on the horizon."

Hoffman and Froemke attended the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in New York City in 2004, which included a comprehensive seminar on addiction. They learned how medications can help control the cravings of alcoholic addiction.

"But the turning point in our education occurred at the standing-room-only lecture of Nora Volkow, MD, on 'The Addicted



Like other common addictions, human nature—the selfish way of human beings—is highly and dangerously addictive.

Brain.' We learned how drugs erode the voluntary acts of an individual. Volkow's vivid explanation of how the brain's ancient reward pathways are hijacked due to the spikes of the brain chemical dopamine through repeated drug use was eye-opening" (p. 15).

The "Go!" system

In chapter 2 of Hoffman and Froemke's book they address how addiction is a brain disease. One fact is clear: "Drugs and alcohol change the brain—they change its structure and how it works" (p. 55).

The authors show how the brain works emotionally and logically through the

dopamine pleasure pathway, the *go* system, and the prefrontal cortex, the *stop* system, respectively.

Under the subheading, "'Go!': The Dopamine Pleasure Pathway," they write: "Research has shown that all drugs of abuse directly or indirectly activate the brain's pleasure pathway, the intricate network that controls and regulates our ability to feel pleasure.

"When we experience something good—lovemaking, a good meal, a beautiful sunset—our brain experiences a surge in the level of the neurotransmitter dopamine. We feel warm, calm, and happy. After awhile, dopamine returns to a baseline level, and we go about our lives, looking forward to the next pleasurable experience.

"We look forward to the next time because the experience is logged into the brain's limbic system, which, in addition

to being the center for pleasure and emotion, houses key memory and motivation circuits. This is what the brain's dopamine pathway does; it records both the actual experience of pleasure and ensures that the behaviors that led to it are remembered and repeated. In between pleasurable events, there is a quiet period when the neurotransmitters return to their baseline levels" (pp. 58-59).

The "Stop!" system

Hoffman and Froemke then address the "Stop" system. Under the subheading "'Stop!': The Brain's Brakes," they write: "In addition to the 'Go!' system, the brain

also has a built-in 'Stop!' system: the prefrontal cortex sometimes referred to as the seat of sober second thought.

"With this system, we pull all the information together, weigh it, examine the risks and consequences, and strategize the next move. Is this a good idea? Is this illegal or immoral, or will it make me sick? Will I be able to drive safely, will I be too hung over to get to my job in the morning?"

"When things are working right, the 'Go!' circuitry and the 'Stop!' circuitry really are interconnected and are talking to each other to help you weigh the consequences of a decision and decide when to go or not to go," says Childress [Anna Rose Childress, a research associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine]. 'It's not that they're separable. They're interactive. They're interlinked at all times.'

"With addicts, however, 'it is as though [the systems] have become functionally disconnected. It is as though the 'Go!' system is sort of running off on its own, is a rogue system now and is not interacting in a regular, seamless, integrated way with the 'Stop!' system,' Childress says.

"Drugs of abuse directly activate the pleasure pathway, but recent research shows that addiction also involves the same pathways that manage memory and learning; that is, the addictive process moves in, undoes or weakens what the brain knew before, and then teaches it something else entirely" (pp. 60-62).

It certainly appears that there's more to common addictions than we once assumed and that the discoveries of how thinking pathways can be altered might also correlate with the greatest addiction of all.

The Bible on the greatest addiction

Human willpower is weak of itself, but it's made much weaker because of human nature. God says that even at our best we human beings are "altogether vanity"—empty (without fulfillment) or transitory (Psalm 39:5, King James Version).

Human nature is simply our tendency to do what comes naturally, what *we* think is best. In practice this usually means "looking out for number one," following the path of least resistance and doing whatever feels good.

What most people don't know is that this can be the greatest addiction of all, as well as the most dangerous. It is most dangerous because at the end of human life, with an unchanged, unrepentant attitude toward

human nature, there is nothing left but death (Romans 6:23; Hebrews 6:4-8).

Human nature is at the root of humanity's problems—from jealousy, to lying, to deception, to hatred, to violence, to seeking power over others and to war, just to name a few of our ignoble traits. Human nature, being selfish and self-serving, often blindly repeats itself in evil acts that are harmful to self and others.

Notice how your Bible describes human nature: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9, New International Version). God uses the term *heart* for the motivation, attitude, logic and emotion of the human mind. And as He says here, the heart is incurable of itself; it cannot be cured or set right of itself.

God knew the limitations of human beings. He lamented in Deuteronomy 5:29,



Notice how your Bible describes human nature: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

"Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" They didn't have the right heart, and neither do we without His help.

The apostle James, half-brother of Jesus Christ, elaborated on the motivations of the human heart and the results: "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you

ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:1-5).

War comes from human nature, not God's nature. The Bible tells us that Cain was the first human murderer; he killed his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8). Since then, human beings have been killing one another by the thousands and millions.

Like other common addictions, the selfish way of human beings that is a part of our nature is highly and dangerously addictive.

How does human nature work in us?

Human nature, because it is highly motivated to please the self, often leads us to sin. Human nature first surfaced in Adam and Eve, both of whom sinned in the Garden of Eden—Eve through Satan's deception and Adam without deception (Genesis 3:6; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14).

Human beings have been sinning ever since. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). The impulses and drives of our human nature are a powerful, underlying and pervasive force. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Sin can become an addictive, destructive force. Paul told Christians of their former way of life: "Because of your human weakness, I am speaking as a man: You once gave the members of your body to be slaves to moral impurity, and to more and more sin . . ." (Romans 6:19; Simple English Translation).

Those who function by way of their human nature alone cannot understand or

obey God. Often deceived by their own nature and by sin, they ignorantly assume there is no other way to act.

As Paul explains: "For those whose lives are according to the flesh [human nature] think about the things of the flesh, but those whose lives are according to the Spirit, about the things of the Spirit. For the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set of the Spirit is life and peace. For 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" (Romans 8:5-7, Holman Christian Standard Bible).

Continued on page 25

What's Behind the Magnetic Pull of the Christmas Season?

Millions observe Christmas because it's a feel-good time with holiday music filling the air, brightly decorated trees, Santa Claus for the children and family togetherness. But does the Christmas season have a strong, commercially motivated magnetic pull that goes unnoticed by most?

by Jerold Aust

Justin and Dena were married shortly before Christmas. They had grown up in families that celebrated the Christmas holidays. This was a special time for them with thoughts of falling snow, a glowing fireplace, holiday songs and colorful gifts placed around the well-decorated tree. The winter holiday season was exciting and alluring, as it is to millions.

They badly wanted to invite their families for a sumptuous Christmas Day dinner and the traditional exchanging of gifts. Everything seemed to work out all right except they were short of money to pay for the obligatory gifts. So they went shopping armed with their credit cards.

As they shopped around from store to store, the atmosphere of the music, colorful gifts and inviting decorations lured them into spending much more than they could reasonably afford.

Then in late January, the bills started coming in. They had precious little money set aside to pay them. They struggled to keep enough food on the table, pay the house rent and make the car payment. They realized too late they had succumbed to all the Christmas advertising—ending up with a painful financial hangover.

Could this story also describe your circumstances?

Christmas is big business

Those Christmas bells chiming during the holiday season might be likened to cash registers ringing up millions of dollars in retail sales. Christmas is very big business and is thought to be great for the national economy. But has anyone thought to ask whether this type of wild spending is really in people's best interests, either now or, more importantly, for their long-term spiritual well-being?

Should we be buying gifts others frequently don't want or need with money we don't have? It's a logical question.



Every year a Christmas advertising onslaught influences a largely unsuspecting public to spend, spend and spend some more.

Yet people will defend observing Christmas by countering that it's a celebration honoring Jesus' birth. If that's true, why buy gifts for others and not Jesus Christ? Is Christendom behind the presumptive trappings of a pre-Christmas season or is it being promoted by secular businesses for their own gain?

Purdue University professor Richard Feinberg understands the commercial value of the Christmas shopping season. He found the retail forecast of the 2004 Christmas season to be at least 75 percent of yearly profits. He predicted that 2006 Christmas holiday shopping would total an incredible \$450 billion or more in America. Barring an economic downturn, it could be even higher this year.

Ironically, Christmas is so popular that millions of atheists and people of other religions celebrate the holiday. Why don't people, those who claim to be Christians or otherwise, resist the commercial aspect of the season?

What's behind the magnetic pull of Christmas?

Clearly the Christmas season has a strong magnetic pull, but most people don't fully realize it or know how powerful it is. Every year a Christmas advertising onslaught tries to influence the public to spend, spend and spend some more.

Some sociologists and social critics research and analyze why groups unknowingly do what they do. We'll focus on two.

Noted American journalist and best-selling author Vance Packard wrote a number of thoughtful books about how business advertisers motivate and manipulate the public. His groundbreaking 1957 book *The Hidden Persuaders* explores the use of consumer motivational research and other psychological techniques, including what he calls *depth psychology* and subliminal tactics by advertisers to induce desire for products.

As Packard explains, his book is about "the large-scale efforts being made,

often with impressive success, to channel . . . our thought processes by the use of insights gleaned from psychiatry and the social sciences. Typically these efforts take place beneath our level of awareness” (p. 3). Packard was ahead of his time in describing advertising methods still commonly used today.

His book continues: “The use of mass psychoanalysis to guide campaigns of persuasion has become the basis of a multimillion-dollar industry. Professional persuaders have seized upon it in their groping for more effective ways to sell us their wares—whether products, ideas, attitudes, candidates, goals, or states of mind . . .

“The sale to us of billions of dollars’ worth of . . . products is being significantly affected, if not revolutionized, by this approach . . . Two thirds of America’s hundred largest advertisers have geared campaigns to this depth approach by using strategies inspired by what marketers call ‘motivation analysis’ . . .

“What the probers are looking for, of course, are the *whys* of our behavior, so that they can more effectively manipulate our habits and choices in their favor” (pp. 3-4).

Writing about a Chicago research firm that conducted psychoanalytically oriented studies for merchandisers, Packard states: “Motivation research . . . employs techniques designed to reach the unconscious or subconscious mind because preferences generally are determined by factors of which the individual is not conscious . . .

“Actually in the buying situation the consumer generally acts emotionally and compulsively, unconsciously reacting to the images and designs which in the subconscious are associated with the product” (pp. 7-8).

With far more technological advances than Packard could imagine in 1957, marketers and advertisers have a much greater capacity for influencing people to unthinkingly buy more and more during the Christmas season and at other times.

Manipulating our behavior

Dr. Robert Cialdini, a professor at Arizona State University, may be the most cited social psychologist in the world today. His book *Influence: Science and Practice* (1993) is a staple text in the academic world.

Cialdini writes: “It is odd that despite their current widespread use and looming future importance, most of us know very little about our automatic behavior patterns.

Perhaps that is so precisely because of the mechanistic, unthinking manner in which they occur . . . They make us terribly vulnerable to anyone who *does* know how they work” (p. 9).

Do we imagine that today’s advertising gurus don’t know about human behavioral patterns?

Cialdini states: “Our automatic tapes usually develop from psychological principles or stereotypes we have learned to accept. Although they vary in their force, some of these principles possess a tremendous ability to direct human action. We have been subject to them from such an early point in our lives, and they have moved us about so pervasively then, that you and I rarely perceive their power. In the eyes of others, though, each such principle is a detectable and ready weapon, a weapon of automatic influence” (p. 10).

Observing Christmas because “everyone does it” is a trigger feature. Other triggers include the music, the lights, the decorations and the sentimental store displays, each of which can cause us to respond automatically—rendering us nearly helpless as we part with our money. But do we really honor God by uncontrolled spending during the Christmas season?

How should we honor Christ?

You can research the entire Bible and nowhere will you find Christ instructing His followers to remember His birthday. (However, He did teach them to remember His death through observing the annual Passover service—see Matthew 26:26-30 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.)

The Bible itself never mentions Christmas, nor does it instruct Christians to observe the holiday.

The reason becomes obvious when we understand the holiday’s distinctly non-Christian origins. “Christmas has its origin in two ancient pagan festivals, the great Yule-feast of the Norsemen and the Roman Saturnalia. The Saturnalia involved the wildest debauchery. Naturally it came under heavy censure from the early Church and despite the fact that Jesus Christ and the saints gradually replaced pagan deities, it was long considered completely out of character with the Christian ideal.

“However, the festival was far too strongly entrenched in popular favour to be abolished, and the [Catholic] Church finally granted the necessary recognition, believing that if Christmas could not be suppressed it should be preserved in honour of the Christian God.

“It was only in the 4th century that 25 December was officially decreed to be the birthday of Christ, and it was another 500 years before the term Midwinter Feast was abandoned in favour of the word Christmas” (*Man, Myth & Magic*, 1983, Vol. 2, “Christmas,” p. 480). Even secular history speaks the truth about the origins of Christmas.

God gave ancient Israel His annual Holy Days and festivals to observe (Leviticus 23). Though few realize it, they embody God’s spiritual blueprints for the salvation of all humankind.

Jesus showed how people could act “righteously” without being truly righteous: “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:7-9). This clearly applies to much of modern Christianity.

Jesus Christ honors those who honor Him: “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor” (John 12:26; compare 1 Samuel 2:30).

The Father honors Christ’s disciples with eternal life: “*Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life [eternal life], and may enter through the gates into the city [the New Jerusalem from heaven]*” (Revelation 22:14).

If you still choose to observe Christmas apart from Christ and the Bible’s injunctions, then know that vested commercial interests have already planned to use your deeply embedded associations with Christmas, working the trigger features already conditioned in you over many years.

Indeed there is a great magnetic pull during the Christmas season, but it has nothing to do with the real Jesus Christ. **GN**

Recommended Reading

To learn how pagan holiday celebrations were passed down to today and how they pale into insignificance when compared to the truth of God, request or download *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?* Discover the truth about Jesus Christ and His practices in our free booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*. Both booklets are yours free for the asking!



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

Television Log

All channels and times listed are for cable TV unless stated otherwise. For additional information and the most current airing times, or to download or view programs online, visit www.beyondtoday.tv.

UNITED STATES

Alabama
Athens ch. 2, Sundays 8:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 7 p.m.
Decatur ch. 2, Sundays 8:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 7 p.m.
Scottsboro ch. 2, Sundays 8:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 7 p.m.

Arizona
Prescott ch. 13, Sundays 5 p.m.; Saturdays 3:30 p.m.
Prescott Valley ch. 13, Sundays 9 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
Tucson ch. 73, 98, 120, Sundays 10 a.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m.

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

California
Alamo ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.; 2nd & 4th Mondays 9:30 p.m.
Berkeley ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
Clayton ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mondays 9:30 p.m.
Concord ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mondays 9:30 p.m.
Danville ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mondays 9:30 p.m.
Dublin ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
El Cerrito ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
El Sobrante ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
Emeryville ch. 26, Sundays 8 a.m.
Eureka ch. 10, Fridays 8 p.m.
Fremont ch. 29, Tuesdays 6:30 p.m.
Hayward ch. 28, Tuesdays 10 p.m.
Hemet ch. 3, Fridays 2:30 p.m.
Hercules ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
Lafayette ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mondays 9:30 p.m.
Livermore ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
Marin County ch. 26, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Martinez ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mondays 9:30 p.m.
Modesto ch. 26, Thursdays 8:30 p.m.; Fridays 6 p.m.

Monrovia ch. 16, 98, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays 4:30 p.m.
Moraga ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.; 2nd & 4th Mondays 9:30 p.m.
Novato ch. 26, Tuesdays 9:30 p.m.
Oakland ch. 26, Sundays 8 a.m.
Orinda ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.; 2nd & 4th Mondays 9:30 p.m.
DCA cable link, Thursdays 10 a.m.
Ch. 56, Sundays 6 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Ch. 26, Sundays 9 p.m.
Petaluma ch. 26, Sundays 8 a.m.
Piedmont ch. 26, Thursdays 12 midnight
Pittsburg ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mondays 9:30 p.m.
Pleasant Hill ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
Redding ch. 11, Sundays 11:30 a.m.
Richmond ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
Rossmore ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.; 2nd & 4th Mondays 9:30 p.m.
Ch. 18, Thursdays 6 p.m.
Ch. 19, Sundays 3:30 p.m.
Ch. 18, 19, 23, Mondays 5 p.m.
Ch. 29, Sundays 11 a.m.
Ch. 15A, Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.
Ch. 26, Thursdays 4:30 p.m.
Ch. 15A, Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.
Ch. 72, Sundays 7:30 p.m.; Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
Ch. 6, Thursdays 4:30 p.m.
Ch. 20, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.
Ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mondays 9:30 p.m.

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

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

Hawaii
Hilo ch. 53, Sundays 10 a.m.; Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Lanai ch. 13, Fridays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 7 a.m.
Maui ch. 52, Fridays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 7 a.m.
Molokai ch. 13, Fridays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 7 a.m.

Idaho
Boise ch. 11, Wednesdays 7:30 p.m.

Illinois
Arlington Heights ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Bartlett ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Brookport ch. 2, Sundays 2 p.m.
Buffalo Grove ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Chicago ch. 36, times vary
Des Plaines ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
East St. Louis ch. 18, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.
Elk Grove Village ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Glenview ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Golf ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Hanover Park ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Hoffman Estates ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Lincolnwood ch. 2, Sundays 2 p.m.
Metropolis ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Morton Grove ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Mt. Prospect ch. 17, Sundays 10 a.m.
Naperville ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Normal ch. 20, Sundays 6 p.m.

Northbrook ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Palatine ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Park Ridge ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Prospect Heights ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Rolling Meadows ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Romeoville ch. 6, Sundays 9 a.m.
Schaumburg ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Skokie ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Springfield ch. 4, Fridays 3 a.m., 11 a.m. & 8 p.m.
Streamwood ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Wheeling ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Wilmette ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.

Indiana
Bloomington ch. 3, Sundays 9:30 p.m.
Elkhart ch. 99, Mondays 4:30 p.m.
Evansville ch. 7, Mondays 5:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 6:30 p.m.
Ft. Wayne ch. 57, Sundays 12 noon
Valparaiso ch. 99, Tuesdays 8:30 p.m.

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

Kentucky
Berea ch. 5, Fridays 9 & 9:30 p.m.
Hopkinsville ch. 23, Wednesdays and Fridays 11 a.m.
Owensboro ch. 52, Sundays 8 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Paducah ch. 2, Sundays 2 p.m.
Richmond ch. 5, Fridays 9 & 9:30 p.m.

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

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

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

Rochester ch. 10, Sundays 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.
St. Charles ch. 20, Sundays 2 p.m.; Wednesdays 3 p.m.
Spring Lake Park ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Willmar ch. 8, Thursdays 11 a.m. & 8 p.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Winona ch. 20, Sundays 2 p.m.; Wednesdays 3 p.m.
Wabasha ch. 20, Sundays 2 p.m.; Wednesdays 3 p.m.

Missouri
Cape Girardeau ch. 5, Tuesdays 6:30 p.m.; Thursdays 1 p.m.; Fridays 10 p.m.; Sundays 8 p.m.
Jackson ch. 5, Tuesdays 6:30 p.m.; Thursdays 1 p.m.; Fridays 10 p.m.; Sundays 8 p.m.
Jefferson City ch. 3, Wednesdays 6 p.m.
Poplar Bluff ch. 54, Tuesdays 4 p.m.
Springfield ch. 26, Sundays 8:30 a.m.; Wednesdays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 8:30 a.m.
Ch. 18, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.

St. Louis
Montana
Billings ch. 7, Sundays 6 p.m.; Saturdays 11 a.m.
Helena ch. 11, Sundays 3 p.m.
Missoula ch. 7, Sundays 11 a.m.

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

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

New Jersey
Newark ch. 19, Sundays 7 a.m.

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

New York
Binghamton ch. 4, Thursdays 5:30 p.m.
Brooklyn ch. 56, 69, Sundays 10 a.m.
Canandaigua ch. 12, Sundays 2 p.m.
Catharine ch. 57, Sundays 7 a.m.
Manhattan ch. 6, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.
Olean ch. 23, Mondays 6 p.m.; Wednesdays 9 p.m.
Oneonta ch. 35, Tuesdays 8 p.m.; Thursdays 3 p.m.
Queens ch. 56, Sundays 10 p.m.; Thursdays 4:30 p.m.
Rochester ch. 15, Tuesdays & Thursdays 8 a.m.
Woodbury ch. 20, Saturdays 9:30 a.m.

North Carolina
Asheville ch. 20, Sundays 1 p.m.
Burlington ch. 5, 10, Sundays 10 a.m.
Charlotte ch. 21, Saturdays 2 p.m.
Durham ch. 8, Wednesdays 7:30 a.m.
Greensboro ch. 8, Sundays 10:30 & 12:30 a.m.
Hickory ch. 3, Sundays 7 p.m.
Mebane ch. 5, 10, Sundays 10 a.m.
Raleigh ch. 22, Tuesdays 6:30 p.m.

North Dakota
Bismarck ch. 12, Sundays 2:30 p.m.
Fargo ch. 12, Tuesdays 10:30 a.m.

Ohio
Akron ch. 15, Sundays 9:30 a.m.; Mondays 11 p.m.
Athens ch. 23, Sundays 7 p.m.; Wednesdays 7 p.m.
Brunswick ch. 21, Tuesdays 7 p.m.; Wednesdays 12:30, 4:30 & 8:30 a.m.; 2:30, 6:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Cincinnati ch. 4, Sundays 11 a.m. & 8 p.m.; Mondays 8 p.m.
Cincinnati (Union Twp.) ch. 18, Sundays 10:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 10 p.m.; Thursdays 11 p.m.; Saturdays 6:30 a.m.
Cleveland W. suburbs ch. 8, Sundays 2:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 9:30 a.m.; Wednesdays 11 p.m.; Saturdays 2:30 p.m.
Dayton ch. 21, Sundays 11:30 a.m.; 12, Mondays 3:30 p.m.; Saturdays 11:30 p.m.
Defiance ch. 5, Sundays 12 noon; Thursdays 6 p.m.
Fairborn ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Greenview ch. 3, Thursdays 8 p.m.
Oberlin/Wellington ch. 12, Sundays & Saturdays 9 a.m.
Springfield ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Trotwood ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Urbania ch. 1, daily 6 a.m., 10 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Vandalia ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Wash. Court House ch. 3, Wednesdays 2 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.
Xenia ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.

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

Pennsylvania
Pittsburgh/Moon Twp. ch. 14, 21, Sundays 11 a.m. & 2 p.m.
York ch. 16, Sundays 8:30 p.m.; Mondays 4:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.

Rhode Island
Providence ch. 14, Fridays 10:30 a.m.

Texas
Austin ch. 11, Mondays 8:30 p.m.
Dallas ch. 148, 74, Sundays 12:30 p.m.;

Del Rio ch. 19, Sundays 9 a.m.; Wednesdays 5 p.m.
El Paso ch. 15, Mondays, Fridays, Saturdays 1 p.m.
Fort Worth ch. 28, Tuesdays 5:30 p.m.; Thursdays 1 p.m.
Houston ch. 17, 98, Sundays 1:30 p.m.
Longview ch. 26, Tuesdays 2 p.m.; Wednesdays 10 p.m.; Fridays 12:30 p.m.; Saturdays 9 p.m.

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

Washington
Everett ch. 77, Wednesdays 5 p.m.
Kennewick ch. 13, Sundays & Tuesdays 8:30 p.m.
Olympia ch. 22, 29, Sundays 9 a.m.; Thursdays 10:30 p.m.
Seattle ch. 29, Thursdays 9 a.m.
Vancouver ch. 11, Sundays 1 p.m.; Tuesdays 3:30 p.m.; Thursdays 12 noon; Fridays 8 p.m.

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

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

CANADA

Nationwide
Vision TV, Sundays 11 p.m. (PST)
Star Choice Digital Channel 399, Sundays 10:30 a.m. (EST)

Alberta
The Christian Channel Telus ch. 158, Sundays 8:30 a.m.

British Columbia
The Christian Channel Telus ch. 158, Sundays 7:30 a.m.

Manitoba
The Christian Channel MTS ch. 21, Sundays 9:30 a.m.

New Brunswick
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sundays 11:30 a.m.

Newfoundland and Labrador
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sundays 12 noon

Northwest Territory
The Christian Channel Northwestel ch. 226, Sundays 8:30 a.m.

Ontario
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sundays 10:30 a.m.
The Christian Channel Cogeco ch. 186, Sundays 10:30 a.m.

Saskatchewan
The Christian Channel SaskTel ch. 282, Sundays 8:30 a.m.

AFRICA AND EUROPE

The Omega Channel, INSAT 10, orbital position 68.5 degrees east, frequency 12682MHz, 11 p.m. daily (CAT)

Radio Log

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

Nationwide
Internet Radio live365.com, Sundays 8:30 a.m. (PST)

Alabama
Birmingham 1070 AM, Sundays 7:30 a.m.

Arizona
Douglas 930 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
Globe 1240 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
Sierra Vista 1470 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
Tucson 940 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.

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

Florida
Jacksonville 690 AM/106.5 FM, Sundays 7 a.m.

Indiana
Ft. Wayne 1190 AM, Sundays 10 a.m.

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

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

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

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

Ohio
Cincinnati 550 AM, Sundays 6 a.m.

Oklahoma
Tulsa 740 AM, Sundays 8 a.m.

Texas
San Antonio 550 AM, Sundays 6:30 a.m.

Washington
Seattle 770 AM, Sundays 7:30 a.m.

West Virginia
Wheeling 1170 AM, Mondays 11 p.m.; Fridays 8:15 p.m.



Are We Living in a '9/10' Economy?

Global financial markets were rocked recently following rising defaults affecting mortgage-backed securities. What does this mean for the world's money supply and confidence in Western financial institutions? Are we on the verge of a major upheaval in the world economy?

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

On Sept. 11, 2001, Islamic terrorists attacked America, and overnight everything changed. The signs and warnings of such an attack were there the day before (9/10), but were ignored, misunderstood and glossed over by those charged with protecting the security of the nation. Had they been properly analyzed and acted on, the tragedy could have been averted.

But it wasn't, and much has changed for America and the West since that fateful day. Now come signs of a looming financial crisis that could completely change the global economy and have a dramatic impact on America's role as the world's dominant economic power.

Subprime lending crisis

The world's financial markets experienced a crisis caused by falling confidence in what is called the "subprime lending market." Banks, brokerage houses and mortgage lenders in America and Europe were stung by the rising defaults on risky loans made to home buyers of limited means on reckless terms.

Many buyers took out loans on the gamble that housing prices would continue to rise. Lenders extended credit to them on a gamble that the buyers would not default on the loans. These adjustable loans, often with low initial interest rates that can rise sharply, were made to many people who weren't really able to afford owning a home at the inflated prices in many areas.

These mortgages were then resold to other financial institutions that offered the potential for high returns to investors willing to take a high risk.

That risk was spread among many to the point that no one could really identify where the risk was. The result was fear in the markets, and the money that banks needed to do daily business began to dry up.



Many people who took these loans and were unable to pay have suffered the loss of housing, money and their credit rating. Many thousands who worked in mortgage lending have lost their jobs as companies shut down or reorganized this part of their business. The Federal Reserve quickly took steps to lower interest rates and to loosen the money supply. At the time of this writing, the dive has leveled off and markets seem to be returning to normal.

A worldwide system

Even if you neither had a subprime mortgage nor work in the industry, could this crisis affect you?

The Western world's financial markets have created a major problem that threatens the bedrock of global finance. The system is so precarious that it threatens the financial security of all citizens, regardless of their exposure to financial markets. You may be completely free of debt and still be impacted by this latest trouble.

Foreign investors have taken on hundreds of billions of dollars of American

debt. In essence, they are the ones who have borne the risks; they have financed the unrealistic housing boom and irresponsible consumer spending of recent years.

China is one of the major creditors that hold this debt. This can work as long as America is the major market for goods made in China. But one report says that soon the European Union will become China's largest export market.

Now we have seen significant default in a major segment of the American economy. The confidence other nations have in the American economy has been shaken. And confidence is a key ingredient of financial markets. When confidence is lost in a currency, all the "good money" flees to other currencies thought to be more secure. No one backs a loser in the high-stakes game of global finance.

For this and other reasons, the Western economies have a real problem that could lead to some major corrections, thus impacting jobs, income and growth in America and Great Britain. America has fewer dollar reserves than other emerging nations such as India, and the United States has the largest trade deficit in the world. Britain has the world's third-largest trade deficit.

There exists the potential for an unprecedented financial meltdown. Many experts see this problem and predict a major shift in investment toward other nations that seem to be healthier and a better investment.

An approaching fiscal hurricane

America faces a number of financial challenges beyond this most recent subprime issue. The coming retirement of the baby boomer generation will swamp the Medicare and Social Security system in the coming decades. The money promised to fund these programs is not there, and the cost of these entitlements will overwhelm the federal budget.

In 2008 the leading edge of the boomer generation will begin retirement. Those covered by Social Security are expected to grow to *69 million* by 2020. By 2030 Social Security spending as a share of the budget will rise to *40 percent*. These obligations will have to be borne by fewer workers.

America's health care is facing its own crisis. Medicare's prescription drug coverage, which took effect in 2006, is expected to cost more than \$700 billion over 10 years. By 2050, expanding at current rates and adjusted for inflation, the whole Medicare program is expected to cost *\$2.6 trillion*. That is the size of the *entire* federal budget today.

Budget deficits another problem

Add continuing budget deficits to this. The American government spends hundreds of billions of dollars more than it brings in. In recent years increased tax revenues have helped keep the national debt from growing as fast as it did in 2003 and 2004.

Some economists argue that deficits don't matter, especially since they are a small percentage (less than 3 percent) of the entire national economy. Given the enormous size of the economy, this can be managed. Funds have been easily borrowed from foreign investors, such as China, to postpone a day of reckoning. But what happens if the day comes when other nations do not want to lend or invest on the same terms as in the past?

China holds more than \$1 trillion. What would happen if China chose to dump those dollars on the world market? This would cause a devaluation of the dollar and loss of confidence in the U.S. economy.

Of course, it is in China's short-term interest not to see the dollar devalued. They would lose their investment, and the resultant slump in the American economy would harm the Chinese economy. But it would be a mistake to think this could not change—indeed, China has already threatened similar actions.

What if OPEC decided it would no longer price its oil in dollars but instead switched to the euro? Such a move would lead to higher fuel prices in the United States. Some oil-producing countries want to see this change. If confidence in the American economy took a serious hit, the movement toward such action could accelerate.

No matter how one looks at America's national economy, the fact is it has generated an enormous amount of debt—more than this generation, or future ones, can ever hope to comfortably repay.

For now the country prints more paper strips with colored ink, calls them dollars and puts them out to creditors with the hope they will continue to have confidence in the American government and its economic policies. The day that changes will see Americans and many other nations paying a lot more for the basics of life we have come to take for granted.

Living beyond its means

The United States has written checks that cannot be cashed. It is shielded temporarily from the consequences by political leadership that appears unwilling to face the moral and fiscal consequences of greed, indifference and self-indulgence.

And the fault does not lie just with leadership. Every citizen must come to see his or her role in creating a society that cannot pay its bills and chases after the gods of consumerism and mammon while others finance our extravagance.

Both the nation and many of its citizens have been living beyond their means for too long. Other countries see this and are beginning to take steps to try to protect themselves from market volatility caused by this behavior.

Last December the European Central Bank raised its key interest rate in the wake of a declining dollar. This made the euro more attractive to international investors. The decline in the value of the dollar was seen as a threat to the European economy.

In the wake of the recent crisis in credit markets, interest rates could rise again to keep liquidity strong and confidence high. Jean-Claude Trichet, the president of the European Central Bank, keeps a close eye on potential risks and "concerns regarding possible uncontrolled developments triggered by global economic imbalances" ("How Dangerous Is the Dollar Drop?," *Der Spiegel*, Dec. 12, 2006).

Isaiah the prophet said of ancient Israel,

in a message that resonates into our modern world: "Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity . . . They have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel . . . The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness it" (Isaiah 1:4-6).

Unless the United States as a whole understands and accepts the root causes of its current dilemma and its people come to deep, heartfelt repentance, Americans will stumble blindly forward till a day of accounting is required for the great sin of forgetting where our blessings originated.

It is a trait of the descendants of Jacob to forget the source of their wealth and abundance. God foretold this when He brought the tribes of Israel into the land of promise. "So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build . . . then beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deuteronomy 6:10-12).

That is why I ask whether we are living in a 9/10 economy. The signs of economic change have been in front of us for many years, but we go blindly on as if nothing will change.

This current crisis will likely stabilize. But because the fundamental problems remain, unless there is significant change a worse crisis will follow. Obviously, greed is an underlying factor in all facets of the subprime crisis. God is ever merciful, but there will be a day of judgment if America does not repent.

Don't let complacency lull you to sleep when it comes to world events. *The Good News* will continue to keep you informed. **GN**

Recommended Reading

The United States and other English-speaking nations have played a major role in modern world history. What does Bible prophecy say about the role they will play in the future? Our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* explains this subject in much greater depth. Request or download your free copy to understand what lies ahead and to gain greater insight into the trends that threaten the stability of our world.



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www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

Greatest Addiction

Continued from page 19

Influences on human nature

The biggest influence on human nature comes from Satan, the great enemy of God and all of humanity. He is “the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Ephesians 2:2, NIV), the one who presents himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) while in reality he is the source of spiritual darkness and blindness.

Another powerful influence on our nature is the world around us. That, too, is largely shaped according to Satan’s influence. He is “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4), a powerful being who “deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9).

Certainly Jesus knew the root of human nature, saying: “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44).

God wants us to change

The big question that most people would want answered is, If God knows how bad human nature is, why would He allow us to have it?

As the Creator, God is ultimately responsible for all things, good and bad, though He does no evil and did not create evil. Satan is the instigator of the evil that dominates human nature, not God, and he will ultimately be held accountable for deceiving human beings and holding humanity captive to his corruption and confusion (2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 20:1-3; Isaiah 14:12-15).

As mentioned, human willpower is weak and human nature weakens us even more. Jesus knew this, saying, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41).

God wants us to overcome our human nature by Christ living in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot reach our ultimate destiny of being part of the family of God without this process.

This process includes believing faith as demonstrated by godly works (James 2:17-26). God gives eternal life to those who are forgiven of sin through Christ and, with His help, overcome their sinful nature (John 3:16-17; Revelation 2:26).

God is transforming imperfect human

beings who have human nature into His perfect immortal sons and daughters (1 Corinthians 15:42-53). Human beings who repent and submit to this change from the addictiveness of their human nature prove to God that they want His way of life forever.

They overcome their selfish nature through the power of God’s Spirit enabling them to live by His Word. Having done this throughout the remainder of their physical lives, these human beings are changed into



We must always seek help from above. God has provided the necessary help for us to overcome our sins, this world and the devil.

spirit beings, actual divine children of God (Hebrews 2:10).

God knows that when people come to fully understand the wicked depths of their human nature and its terrible effects, they can choose to turn to Him for His help to overcome the unceasing downward pulls of human nature. God is pleased to give to such people His gift of eternal life. For when we honor Him in our weakened human condition, He knows that we will remain faithful later in a divine condition.

Overcoming with God's help

The first thing we can do to overcome this greatest addiction of all—being led by our self-centered human nature—is to recognize and admit that we have this nature and that we cannot save ourselves from what it leads to—death (1 John 1:5-10).

However, we cannot fully overcome our human nature until God the Father draws or calls us (John 6:44) and gives us His

help. When we respond to the Father’s call, we have an opportunity to repent of our sins, be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Beyond this initial change, we must always seek help from above. God has provided the necessary help for us to overcome our sins, this world and Satan the devil. If we remain faithful and endure to the end, we can live in God’s world to come as part of His everlasting Kingdom (Mark 1:14-15).

We can win against the greatest addiction

Humankind is readily susceptible to all kinds of addictions, such as those to drugs and alcohol, because of the weaknesses of the flesh and rebellious human nature. God gave us freedom of choice (Deuteronomy 30:19). But we must prove to Him that we want *His* way above *our* way so He can give us eternal life, all made possible through Jesus Christ’s death and resurrected life (Romans 5:10).

Reading and studying God’s Word, with His Holy Spirit, helps to wash our minds from wrong and sinful habits (Ephesians 5:26). Additionally, the knowledge and acceptance of Christ’s shed blood covering our sins help cleanse our consciences from past dead works (Hebrews 9:14).

The greatest addiction can indeed be

overcome—in fact, it *must* be. The apostle Paul strove to control his entire mind and body for fear that, after he preached to others, he could lose the battle against his own human nature (1 Corinthians 9:27).

The headline mentioned at the beginning of this article asked, “*Have We Lost Our Way?*” As pointed out, this assumes that we once knew our way, that our way was right and that we have now strayed from it. God would not agree.

The greatest addiction affects all humanity. Sin is the pleasurable root of it (Hebrews 11:25). Human nature can be overcome. “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:1).

Take great courage. You *can* overcome the pulls of your human nature, the greatest addiction of all, with the help of Almighty God in Christ (Hebrews 4:15-16; Romans 8:28, 31, 37-39). **GN**

...And Children Are From Pluto

If men are from Mars and women are from Venus, sometimes it seems children are from even farther out. What can parents do to improve interplanetary relations?

by Mike Bennett

A few years back a popular book said men and women can't communicate very well because men are from Mars and women are from Venus. It was an interesting concept that helped many people focus on the differences between men and women that affect how we relate to one another. The image of aliens from different planets was a powerful one, if too stereotypical. Still, anything we can do to help us understand each other is good.

Along the same lines, if men are from Mars and women are from Venus, sometimes it seems children are from Pluto—even harder to understand (consider the gross humor, the computerese, the strange music, etc.).

Sometimes kids seem too swayed by crass commercialism and materialism. (Marketers of products such as toys, clothing and music seem to know how to speak their language and push their buttons—but often they should be ashamed of themselves.) Other times young people seem to really see this world's problems and solutions more clearly than adults.

We can learn a lot from these creatures from Pluto. Jesus Christ took time for children, and even said we are to be like them. They are a gift, on loan from God. They really are out of this world!

But to learn from them, we must start by learning to communicate with them—learning their language.

I used to work for a company that published information about languages and technology. My shelves at work were filled with software to help people learn Spanish, Japanese, Swedish, Vietnamese—but nothing on Pluto.

The software contained audio, speech-recognition playback, full motion video, interactive sessions and games. There are many ideas about the best way to learn a language. But still the biggest factors are the desire of the student and the time spent listening and speaking. If you really



is the most important person in the world in his parents' eyes" (1977, p. 55).

More than a century ago, the book *Gentle Measures* by Jacob Abbott recommended, "I think there can be no doubt that the most effectual way of securing the confidence and love of children, and of acquiring control over them, is by sympathizing with them in their childlike hopes and fears, and joys and sorrows—in their ideas, their fancies, and even in their caprices."

And more than 3,000 years ago Moses wrote: "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7, New International Version).

Quality vs. quantity

Learning a language and communicating takes time. Years ago there was a big

If men are from Mars and women are from Venus, sometimes it seems children are from Pluto—even harder to understand.

want to understand these aliens from Pluto, you'll make progress.

Focused attention

Over the years, a lot has been written about rearing children. A few years back a good book was published titled *How to Really Love Your Child* by Dr. Ross Campbell. It stressed the importance of giving our children love through eye contact, physical contact and focused attention.

"What is focused attention?" Dr. Campbell wrote. "Focused attention is giving a child our full, undivided attention in such a way that he feels without doubt that he is completely loved. That he is valuable enough in his own right to warrant parents' undistracted watchfulness, appreciation, and uncompromising regard. In short, focused attention makes a child feel he

debate about spending quality time with kids versus quantity.

The debate seems to have died down, partly, I'm afraid, because parents are too busy and burned out to feel they can do either. But sometimes we have to make changes to allow both kinds of time.

Quality time is still important. When my children were younger, most nights I didn't get home from work till after 7 p.m., and they needed to be in bed by 9. The time was pretty packed with getting supper on the table, eating, cleaning up, sometimes playing a short game, getting ready for bed, brushing and flossing teeth, brushing hair, reading a story and a Bible story and praying.

It went by fast, and there wasn't always a lot of time for talking. But if I sat in front of the TV instead of reading to the

girls, I think it would have widened the rift between the planets. As it was, some nights after the glass of water and tucking in came the deepest discussion of the day (much to my wife's chagrin as she knew they needed their sleep!).

Quantity time is important too. I know I need it. A couple of minutes on the phone doesn't cut it when I'm on a trip. One of the hardest times of my life was when I took a job five or six weeks before the rest of the family could join me. Maybe people from Venus and Pluto can survive that, but this Martian was at wits' end.

Planetary-alignment time

There's a lot more to rearing Plutonians than spending time, talking and listening. But it's a start.

Every year 50,000 people in Spokane, Washington, put on jogging shoes and run about 7.5 miles in a race called Bloomsday. I'll never forget the year my 8-year-old daughter Heather and I "ran" it together. Over the previous couple of months we had the chance to train together a few times (not nearly as many as we wanted because of sickness, business trips and a busy life).

I'll always treasure those times. We may not have done a lot of running, but walking and talking about the things on her mind gave me a much greater grasp of what things are like on Pluto.

We didn't set any speed records in the Bloomsday "race" itself—though Heather did take off like a bullet when she saw the finish line! But far more rewarding than finishing the race itself was spending the time together beforehand. As a parent I've learned to look for and appreciate such opportunities to do a little cosmic engineering—moving Mars and Pluto just a little closer to each other. **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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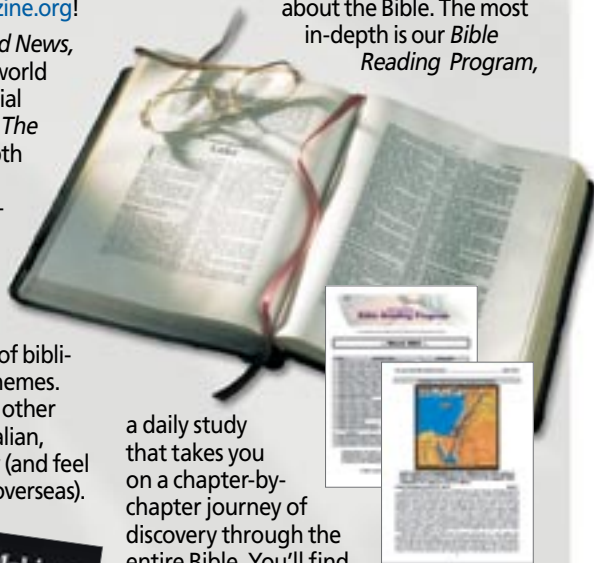


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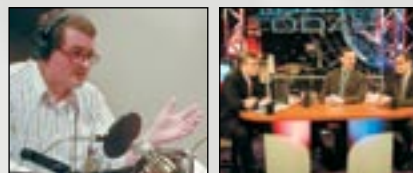
While you're there, be sure to take a look at our sister publications, *Virtual Christian Magazine* (available only on the Internet at www.vcmagazine.org) and *World News and Prophecy*. You'll

find them filled with helpful, eye-opening articles much like those you enjoy in *The Good News*.

Our sister Web site, www.ucg.org, is packed with an astounding amount of information about the Bible. The most in-depth is our *Bible Reading Program*,



a daily study that takes you on a chapter-by-chapter journey of discovery through the entire Bible. You'll find a monthly reading schedule (with archives for previous months), enlightening commentary for each chapter, supplementary reading and graphic aids such as charts and maps to open up your understanding of the Scriptures as never before.



You can also listen to or download Bible studies, sermons and radio and TV programs done by many of the *Good News* writers. We hope you'll visit us today to discover what you've been missing!

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“The Pope: Other Christian Faiths Defective”

I read with interest the article on page 12 of the September-October *Good News*, “The Pope: Other Christian Faiths Defective.” It is the same type of statement given out by the Roman church recently. A lot of the doctrines that are formulated by Rome are not found in the teachings of the early Church and are not found in the Bible. I think it is about time that the Roman church got its own house in order before implying that other Christian doctrines are not valid.

R.C., Portsmouth, England

I thought the [*Good News*] magazine was good, but I am Catholic. My beliefs do not coincide with all that is written in your magazine. I realized this after reading one of the articles about Easter. I discussed the article with my pastor and he said it did not go along with our Catholic beliefs. Therefore, I think that spreading the Word of God (as your magazine does) is great for those who don't know God. But I do believe in Jesus Christ. Therefore, so as not to confuse anyone in my household, we will just receive other literature that goes along with our beliefs.

L.B., Lexington, Texas

We also believe in Jesus Christ. He had to address why His doctrine did not coincide with the beliefs of various religious groups of His day. For example, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection and thought they could stump Him with a question about it (Matthew 22:23-28). Jesus pointed out that the Scriptures themselves should be the source of our beliefs, not humanly devised teaching or tradition. He said to them: “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (verse 29; compare Matthew 4:4).

Both Peter and Paul obtained their beliefs directly from the teachings of Jesus and from the Scriptures (2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:15-17). We encourage our readers not to simply accept what we say, but to follow the example of the Bereans, who “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Don't believe what we or others say the Bible teaches—read it yourself and believe what the Bible itself says.

Booklets help our readers

Thank you for sending me your booklets *Does God Exist?* and *Is the Bible True?* I don't know who wrote them, but they are the most clearly informative publications I have read in a long, long time. I am enclosing a small check to you to aid in sending more booklets to me and others. I know that you have always sent these freely to anyone who might request them, but your work is so important to the whole world.

E.R., Glendale, Arizona

I read the booklet titled *Who Is God?* at a time when I was getting really confused because I was hearing so many things (monotheism, Mormonism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam) and I didn't know what was the truth. I read your booklet and I cried! Something just felt right and I can't explain it.

Reader, New Zealand

I'd like to thank the United Church of God and all the authors who contributed to *Making Life Work*. I reside in the East Coast area of North America. There are great human relationship and employment problems here. *Making Life Work* takes readers step-by-step to successfully deal with the trying times of life. Each person must be willing to walk with God through each situation. Without His presence we will come to [faulty] human solutions. Your booklet helped me to seek out God's help for these trying times.

Reader, Internet

Please send me *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest* and *God's Holy Day Plan*. Thank you for sending me *The New Covenant: Does It Abolish God's Law?*—an excellent book that answered so many questions and my reason for requesting the above two booklets.

P.H., New Milton, England

Which day is the Sabbath?

I'm a science teacher (biology and chemistry). After reading many issues of *The Good News*, I was shocked to find out that I have followed ungodly

practices. Now my main worry is which day one has to observe based on the Fourth Commandment?

K.S., Internet

*As our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest* explains, the Bible instructs us to observe the weekly Sabbath from sunset Friday evening to sunset Saturday evening.*

The way to peace for Israel?

Surely the way to peace in the world is by discussion and dialogue, not death and destruction. Israel would achieve this by engaging with the Palestinians and giving up its nuclear weapons. America should become less pro-Israel in its foreign policy.

J.H.G., Isle of Man

*Please read the *World News and Trends* feature about Israel on page 10 and the second question and answer on page 29 of this issue.*

Readers in the army

I am greatly appreciative of the work you have done. It is an awesome feeling to see others bring forth the reality of Scripture in context. I just wanted to tell you to keep up the good work!

R.S., U.S. Army

Thank you for posting sermons on the Internet. I am currently stationed in Iraq. Your Web site is great and wonderful, a source to help me understand the situation and the country I'm in. Please keep all of us soldiers in your prayers.

D.B., U.S. Army

Australian renewal responses

Thank you for the letter regarding the subscription renewal. I would be grateful to continue receiving *The Good News*. May I also have another of the current edition? I have given mine to a work colleague who was interested in it. Please accept the enclosed cheque as a contribution.

Reader from Melton South, Victoria

Please find enclosed my renewal for your publications and a cheque for support of your excellent work in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. Your magazine is very informative and very much appreciated in these times of world turmoil.

Reader from Spearwood, West Australia

Bible Study Course

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks for exposing me to such a wonderful course. Actually nothing is so rewarding in this world as studying the Word of God. The study manuals are so powerful that one can't stop glancing through them each passing day. What is more, your wonderful literature received so far has actually reshaped my life through the Holy Spirit. I have built a wonderful library with the booklets received so far. May the good Lord richly bless you.

B.O.S., Manchester, England

Finding the right Church

I came across your Web site and I just love it. I've gotten more answers to questions from your Web site than from anywhere else. I've been looking for 56 years. I've always been skeptical toward churches. They just didn't feel right in their beliefs and teachings. My question is: Is there a true Church here in Sioux Falls, South Dakota? What is the name of the Church? You can respond back to me by e-mail.

G.T., Sioux Falls, South Dakota

*Yes, we have a congregation in Sioux Falls and we have sent you the telephone number of our pastor. In the meantime, you may wish to request our two free booklets *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 ginfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).



Q: I firmly believe in the Creator, but I am very doubtful about whether that Creator cares about His creation. I must say that it is in a very poor condition at the moment, but again that may be part of the master plan, which is way beyond me. My problem—rather selfishly—is me. I cannot see how a God of love can allow such cruelty and nastiness in the world. Have you any literature that could convince me otherwise?

I.F.R., Internet

A: You are not alone in your concerns. Since they cannot be extensively addressed in this limited space, we will recommend some publications as you suggested. However, we can offer a brief reply here.

Noted British historian Paul Johnson wrote, "I suspect that the problem of evil drives more thoughtful people away from religion than any other difficulty." Author Richard Harries stated that "the most overwhelming objection to belief that there is a wise and loving power behind the universe is the existence of so much pain and anguish in the world."

Many people believe that if God is truly motivated by love and mercy, He would be bound by His own character and principles to prevent suffering. Why then doesn't He intervene to forestall suffering before it happens or ban evil altogether?

To understand, it's helpful to consider several crucial factors.

At creation God gave our first parents, Adam and Eve, a great and wonderful gift—*freedom of choice*—and for a very good reason. Without that freedom to choose, we would be little more than robots. However, Satan the devil misled Adam and Eve into using that freedom to reject God's way of life. And as "the ruler of this world" (John 14:30) and "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4), the devil has continued to blind mankind ever since.

Another vital factor is that God created a cause-and-effect universe, governed by both physical and spiritual laws. Much suffering stems from breaking these laws.

In addition, God has a great master plan and purpose for humankind. The Creator wants to transform the human family into His Kingdom, the God family. But a transformation of mind is essential for us to build the divine character necessary for entrance into His eternal family. To achieve this, God first had to give human beings freedom of choice. They would have to *willingly* choose wisely to enter the Kingdom of God, learning to reject the wrong and embrace His right values instead.

In the Bible He urges human beings to make right decisions according to His will (Deuteronomy 30:19), but He allows us to make wrong decisions that bring suffering and sometimes tragedy, not only on ourselves but on others as well. As a loving parent would do, God sometimes, for our own spiritual growth and development, permits us to learn painful lessons from experience.

Yet His wonderful master plan will free all of us who are willing from the ultimate consequence of our own wrong choices—eternal death. God gave His own Son, allowing Him to be crucified so that we could be forgiven our sins and inherit everlasting life in His Kingdom (John 3:16). Upon repentance, water baptism and the receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-39), people could gradually begin to partake of God's divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

Scripture foretells the return of Jesus Christ to save mankind when our actions will have brought the human race to the brink of extinction (Matthew 24:21-22). He will rule over the entire world, establishing the reign of the Kingdom of God. With the resurrected saints, He will guide mankind for a thousand years in what is called the Millennium, an unprecedented time of peace, prosperity and happiness (Revelation 20:4).

It is important to realize that God is not calling everyone to salvation now. Following the Millennium, the Bible foretells a future general resurrection

(verses 5, 12). At that time all those who have died without truly understanding what God is offering will have their opportunity for salvation.

No one who truly desires to follow God's ways will be left out. Afterwards God the Father will then come to live among His people—now His immortal spirit family—and from then on all death, all suffering and all tears will be at an end forever (Revelation 21:1-4).

For Christians now, as the apostle Paul explained in his letters, suffering is a part of the process of building the holy, righteous character of God. Christ has already suffered for us, the just for the unjust (1 Peter 3:18). So "if indeed we suffer with Him [Christ], . . . we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:17-18).

For more on all this, request or download our free booklets *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* and *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. You may also want to request our free 12-lesson *Bible Study Course*. The fourth lesson is titled "Why Does God Allow Suffering?"

Q: What connections are there between Israel and what's happening on the world stage? Are we supposed to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and why, or rather how, does this help us as Christians?

P.T., Manchester, England

A: Your questions link together well. Near the end of this age of human misrule, the Bible tells us that the ultimate battle between God and rebellious man will take place in the Holy Land—the area of the present state of Israel. The Hebrew prophet Zechariah tells us that God "will gather all nations to battle against Jerusalem" (Zechariah 14:1-4).

One important prophetic condition that had to exist before the return of Jesus Christ concerns the presence of the modern state of Israel in control of Jerusalem for an appointed time. (For the details, see the chapter "God's Framework for End-Time Prophecy" in our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*)

The coming culmination of all world crises, centered in the Middle East, precedes the second coming of Jesus Christ and His awesome victory over all nations (Revelation 11:15). Christ will then rule as King of Kings from Jerusalem, the future capital city of the world, beginning His millennial rule on earth (Revelation 20:4).

Today the nation of Israel is often the focus of world attention. And we should be watching this region for the conditions that may precipitate end-time events (Mark 13:32-37; Luke 21:34-36). To understand the intriguing historic and prophetic details, request or download our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.

Replying more specifically to your second question, nearly 3,000 years ago King David instructed us to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:6). As we can see from regular news flashes, the whole world is being affected by continuing conflicts in and around the Holy Land. It is to this region of the planet that world statesmen look and hope for a road to lasting peace, however elusive that goal appears at present.

Recall that Jesus instructed Christians to pray, "Your Kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10). Only the Prince of Peace, the coming true Messiah, can bring us lasting world peace (Isaiah 9:6-7). Jerusalem is where the rule of Christ and His Kingdom begins. From that specific location it will spread over the entire earth. Praying this prayer of David helps Christians keep their focus on the coming Kingdom of God.

To comprehend the whole panorama of biblical prophecy and its intimate connection to Jerusalem and the Middle East in general, also request or download our free booklet *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*.

The God Debate

Can atheists “prove”
there is no God?

by Doug Horchak

Recently, two of the world’s most vocal atheists published books to defend their claim that there is no evidence for God’s existence. Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*) and Christopher Hitchens (*God Is Not Great*) have presented their best arguments for their position that God does not exist and that religion poisons the world. Ironically, their own books provide much “evidence” to the contrary.

So what are their claims? Let’s consider their reasoning and conclusions. Common arguments by atheists against God include:

- **Comparing the God of Israel to all gods through history.** In the minds of atheists, all gods take on the same value. Whether it is Zeus, Thor, Baal, Vulcan, Vishnu or the God of the Bible, there is no difference in their eyes. They conclude that all gods have been humanly contrived to accommodate the social and psychological needs of man.

- **Discrediting the notion of God because of violence done in His name.** As atheists evaluate history, they often note how many times violence, genocide, killing, rape, murder and war have happened in the name of God. Whether the Spanish Inquisition, the Crusades or the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and Africa, these types of violence are commonly cited as the hypocrisy of religion and a result of belief in God. Atheists conclude that there could be no benevolent, loving God behind this.

- **Claiming errors and duplicity of Scripture.** Many atheists deny the existence of the Judeo-Christian God based on alleged discrepancies of the Bible. Examples of biblical disagreements they cite include issues related to history, science, the teachings of Jesus, death, murder and war. If the Word of God—the Bible—contradicts itself, they reason, the book cannot represent the mind of an omniscient God.

- **Showing that paganism is in mainstream Christianity.** Both Dawkins and Hitchens cite the fact that, although mainstream Christianity claims its origins from Jewish forefathers and the writings of the Bible, much of its doctrine, ceremony, images and worship have their origins in pagan practices actually condemned in the Bible. They correctly note that the origins of Christmas and Easter (mainstays of many churches) come from Babylon, Egypt and Greece—not the true Creator God of the Bible.

Atheists point out that these practices are hypocritically borrowed from earlier pagan religions. If the forms of worship are this flawed, they reason that claims by these same worshippers that God really exists must likewise be hypocritical.

- **Asking who designed God.** When trying to debunk intelligent design (a movement of scientists claiming that the complexity of systems enabling all life to exist cannot be adequately explained by Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution), atheists fall back to what they believe is the mother of all questions: Who designed or created God? In answer to Christians saying that God is the original cause of all things, they want to know who created Him. Since there is no acceptable answer to this question (at least to them), they believe that there clearly can be no God.

- **Concluding that Darwinism must be true!** Atheists believe that there is only one answer to the origin and development of life: that of Darwinian evolution. Most professors, teachers and scientists in the fields of zoology, anthropology and biology believe and teach this theory as fact. Atheists see this instruction by educators as further proof that there is no God.

When atheists make sense

You might be shocked to know that some of the observations from which atheists argue make perfect sense! When you consider the obser-

ventions and knowledge of religion and history that avowed atheists embrace, it is easy to see why they struggle with believing in a Creator God! Much of the historical evidence of religion, biblical interpretation and deeds done in the name of God discredit religious people's efforts to justify their belief in God. Some facts to consider:

- The many gods in varied cultures through history do not represent the true God. These "gods" are, in fact, fictional and do not, nor have they ever, existed.

The Bible tells us that people, having the physical creation before them, are truly "without excuse" when it comes to knowing that God exists.

- The varied practices, doctrines and historic acts of Christians through the ages (in the Middle East, Europe, America and around the world) are confusing and hypocritical.

- The confused and often contradictory interpretations of the Holy Bible by so many denominations, sects, groups and individuals are mind-boggling. These individuals have misrepresented the Bible!

- Many of the practices that began in the church of Rome in the second and third centuries were borrowed from the pagan customs of the pre-Christian world. The observance of Christmas, Easter, New Year's Day and even worship on Sundays is not taught in the Bible!

A missing dimension, once again

The fact is, we do live in a world that is confused about virtually everything—including God, science, morality, religion and the Bible! While many people (like Hitchens and Dawkins) assume that the history of mankind and religion represents a God-centered worldview's best shot—actually, the opposite is true! The history of mankind generally represents *man's rejection of God*. Human history doesn't represent God at His best, but man at his worst!

For nearly 6,000 years man has been devising his own view of morality and life—which includes various forms of religion (including Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.). What we see in the practice, teachings and history of these religions is too often generated and designed solely by human beings—not by God at all!

Jesus Christ told His disciples nearly 2,000 years ago that, as time went on, the masses would be deceived by many claiming to be His true representatives. He said:

"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5, King James Version).

Put another way, the vast majority of the world's religions and religious leaders would be *counterfeits*. The result is that millions of people have been deceived by Satan the devil—the real ruler and god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 12:9).

While there are as many views of the meaning of the Bible as there are religious

sects, even this confusion was foretold by God! The written history of the God of Israel is unlike the accounts and historic writings referring to any other deity in human history. In the writings of the Holy Bible, God is referred to as transcending the physical realm, including the many gods conceived in the human mind. The gods of images and human imaginations are nothing compared to the invisible, all-powerful God of the Bible!

Evidence of a Creator

The Bible tells us that people, having the physical creation before them, are truly "without excuse" when it comes to knowing that God exists (Romans 1:20).

Interestingly, while the modern intelligent design movement acknowledges that the creation truly was created, a majority of educators deceptively decries the concepts of irreducible complexity and design inference as non-science. Even so, a large and growing body of scientists and educators today realizes that this complex universe could not exist without some intelligence behind it!

In more than one place in the Bible, God tells us that "the fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalms 14:1; 53:1). And yet, some of these same "fools" that have sadly rejected the idea of a loving, omniscient creator God do have a clear understanding of the hypocritical, confusing and often violent history of mankind and its many religions.

Their fundamental error is that they attribute such confusion and chaos in man's history to the best the idea of God can offer, when, in fact, man's sordid past (and his immediate future) are the result of man's rejecting the true Creator. **GN**



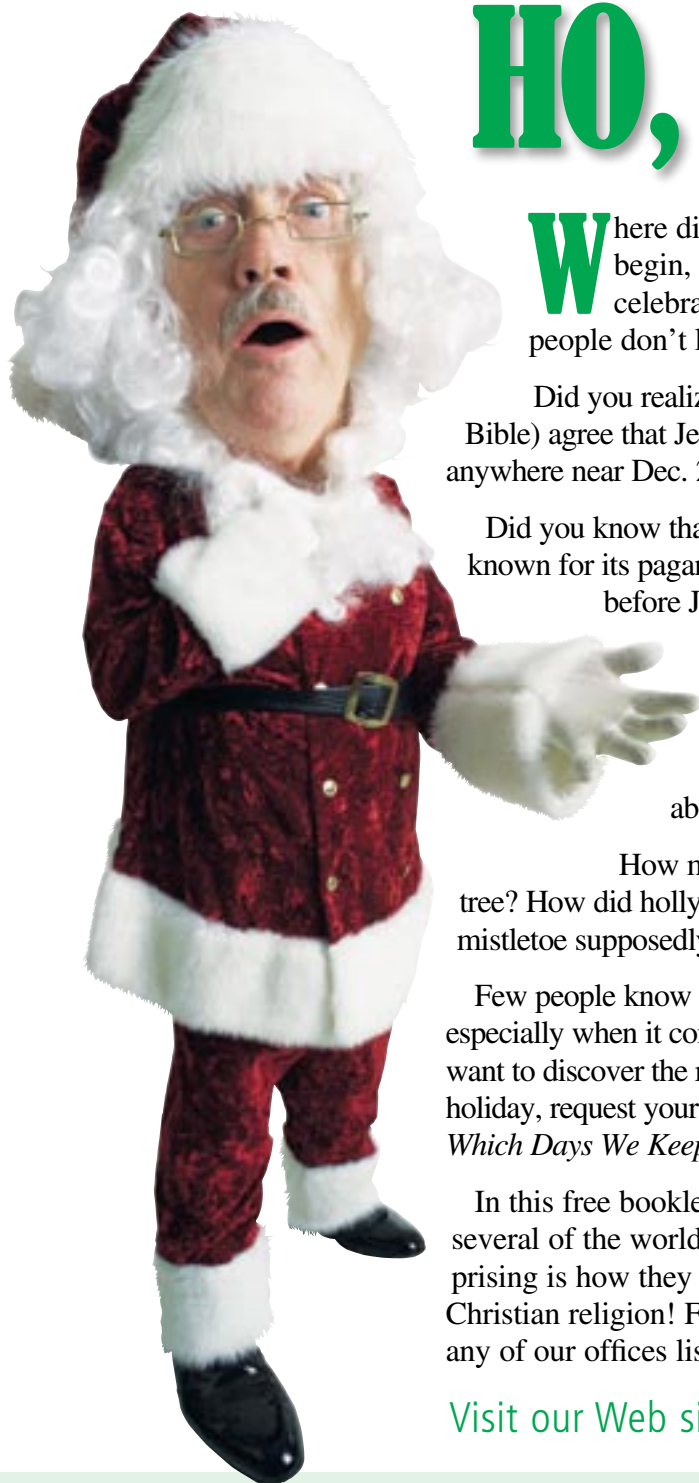
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HO, HO, HOAX!

Where did the Christmas holiday come from? How did it begin, and why? Does it really honor Jesus Christ and celebrate His birth, or is there more to the story that most people don't know?

Did you realize that historians (and the Bible) agree that Jesus Christ wasn't born anywhere near Dec. 25?

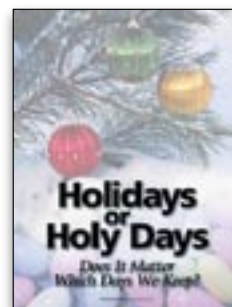
Did you know that this particular date was well known for its pagan religious celebrations long before Jesus Christ was born?

What does a jolly old man in a fur-trimmed red suit (who supposedly lives at the North Pole and is assisted by elves!) have to do with the birth of the Son of God? And what about reindeer and a flying sleigh?

How much do you know about the origin of the Christmas tree? How did holly come to be connected with the holiday, and why is mistletoe supposedly good for kissing?

Few people know why they believe or do the things they do—especially when it comes to their religious beliefs and practices. If you want to discover the real facts about the strange history of this popular holiday, request your free copy of *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?* This eye-opening booklet is waiting for you!

In this free booklet you can discover the shocking truths about several of the world's most popular holidays. Perhaps even more surprising is how they came to be connected with Jesus Christ and the Christian religion! For your free copy, visit our Web site or contact any of our offices listed on page 2.



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