

The Good News

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A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

A photograph showing the silhouettes of a family—a woman, a man carrying a child on his shoulders, and another child—walking away from the viewer along a sandy beach. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow and long shadows. The ocean waves are visible on the left side of the frame.

How Can You Help Restore the Disappearing Family?

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I'm writing this editorial while in Alaska, where two days ago a man showed me photos of some of the huge nuggets of gold unearthed here. One of these rocks, we joked, would ease our financial pain for a long time!

Thousands of prospectors are no longer flocking to Alaska, as they did in the gold rush days. But today, as throughout history, nearly everyone has been fervently searching for something even more precious.

We express it in many different ways, but we all know what it is. In the early 1970s, for instance, we related to singer Neil Young's pop ballad in which he used the metaphor of one seeking for this treasure—that of being deeply in love. "I've been a miner for a heart of gold," he sang.

Those finding their "heart of gold" hold riches in their hands. The love found in a great marriage and family life contains some of the greatest treasures we can ever experience—affection, support, fun,

The love found in a great marriage and family life contains some of the greatest treasures we can ever experience.

comfort, friendship, happiness, contentment. Those bonds profoundly mold our lives, sculpting how we think and what we become. And they deeply impact our children and succeeding generations.

But more and more people fail to strike it rich. Many sadly identify with Young's lyrics describing how this craving for such a relationship "keeps me searching for a heart of gold, and I'm getting old."

King Solomon understood this thousands of years ago. Although incredibly wealthy, he felt the futility of growing old and missing life's greatest treasures. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes contain his comments about family contentions and the longing for a joyful marriage relationship (Proverbs 21:9, 19; Ecclesiastes 7:26-28; 9:9).

This was a man who had taken an astounding 700 wives and still failed to fill the hunger in his heart. He failed to comprehend that the key to having these riches is found in obeying the laws of God that govern human relationships.

Discover these laws that God designed, and you have found the "mother lode" for happiness and successful relationships! Solomon's father David had found it.

"The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes," he wrote. "The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold . . . By them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward" (Psalm 19:8-11).

People today are increasingly ignoring and rejecting God, even trying to legislate out of existence fundamental principles of His laws that have stood for thousands of years!

How preposterous! Do we think we can dismantle the institutional laws of the One who created marriage and family and still expect to find the rewards we crave from those relationships?

The way of God is a gold mine, and it is wealth meant to be shared!

We are dedicated to helping you unearth and understand the treasures contained in God's Word. In this issue, for example, you will discover bits of His knowledge and wisdom that can deeply enrich your marriage and family life. These articles are just little glints of much more that we offer through our print publications and on our Web site, www.gnmagazine.org. We hope and pray that we can help you grow rich in your relationships with God and family!

—Clyde Kilough, Church president

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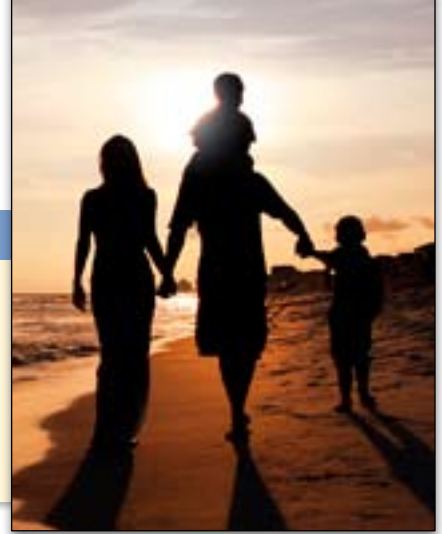
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How Can You Help Restore the Disappearing Family?

The state of marriage and family in the Western world is breaking down. Some have even concluded that marriage and family are destined to become obsolete. What about your marriage and family—are they endangered? What practical steps can you take to strengthen them?

by Jerold Aust

The American divorce rate today hovers at about 50 percent. It's not much better in other industrialized countries, many of which have divorce rates of around 40 percent.

If that weren't bad enough, almost 40 percent of births in the United States are children born out of wedlock. To add monetary insult to moral injury, these unwed mothers are costing U.S. taxpayers a staggering \$112 billion a year in welfare, health care, education, criminal justice, other federal, state and local government programs and lost tax revenue, according to an April 15, 2008, Associated Press report.

Clearly marriage and family—the basic building blocks of a civilized, moral, functional society—are in trouble.

Times have changed. So have our values. This all seems so normal to most affluent societies, yet divorce and family



love' anymore"?
Has your "I do"
become "I don't"?
What happens

to bring about such change? Why do those initial strong feelings that once attracted you to the other person so often fade away with time?

Dr. Patricia Love, a noted family and marriage therapist and relationship consultant, wrote an inspiring and practical guide that can teach couples how to improve and recapture the feelings and attraction they once had. Her 2001 book *The Truth About Love* describes the functions physiology and psychology play in creating lasting love.

There is a big difference between infatuation and love, she notes. "The brain is an incredible creation; it begins working long before your birth and doesn't stop until you fall in love," she writes somewhat tongue-in-cheek (p. 28).

Dr. Love then discusses infatuation, triggered by the "love molecule" or love cocktail. "The infatuation syndrome is truly an example of Mother Nature at her finest. All the predictable behaviors that accompany the falling-in-love experience are brought on by a naturally orchestrated, drastic change in brain chemistry," she observes.

"When you meet a strong candidate for

As marriage goes, so goes the family. And as goes the family, so goes society and civilization.

breakdown damage not only the couple, but also children, relatives and friends. Given both time and pressures from all directions, the divorce rate may rise even higher, and families might well become even more fragmented.

A change in marriage expectations

Obviously marriage and the family are in trouble. But why? Where and how did it start?

It helps to understand how courtship and marriage have evolved. Up until about a century ago, courtship was expected to lead to a marriage that produced children to provide enough labor to help the family succeed. Times were tough, and many hands were needed to provide security and sustenance.

In the early 20th century, courtship formalized and focused more on romantic

love than filling the needs of security and companionship. Parents still controlled the courtship environment, often requiring their sons and daughters to court in the parlor while they listened in an adjacent room.

World War II saw a shortage of men and an increase of automobiles; courtship and dating went public with minimal supervision. Dating values changed even more. Today young men and women believe that it's normal to engage in sexual activity before marriage, and parents either ignore it or apathetically accept it.

No matter the century, most human beings have not understood what infatuation or love is. It's helpful to understand our psychological and physiological makeup.

Is it infatuation or love?

In your marriage, have you ever said, "I still love him (or her) but I'm not 'in

love, your limbic system is flooded with a powerful chemical concoction—so powerful that scientists now believe that the euphoria of infatuations is a bona fide, altered state of consciousness. Symptoms include a delightfully positive attitude, increased energy, decreased need for sleep, and loss of appetite. Sound familiar? It's clear that what we call being in love could also be called being under the influence" (pp. 28-29).

Dr. Love describes how the "love cocktail" can overpower the amygdala—the brain's inhibition center—which warns you that what you are about to engage in is not smart and you could get hurt. "But the amygdala is no match for this hormonal hurricane," she explains (p. 29).

The resulting full-blown infatuation knows no fear, even to the point of ignoring alarming qualities in a person that could cause marriage problems for years to come. This isn't love, Dr. Love points out, but rather *infatuation*. There is a big difference between the two.

Although there are other aspects to consider as to whether a marriage

well-being and happiness of the other person.

Many people, failing to understand this, either enter marriage unprepared or, when those emotions later begin to fade away, decide their spouse wasn't "the right one" after all and choose to end their marriage.

The moral breakdown of the family

As marriage goes, so goes the family. And as goes the family, so goes society and civilization.

Today's media are often a terrible influence on marriage and family, feeding us a steady diet of hedonism and amorality (see "Before You Turn on the TV"). Too often media teaches us that bad is good and good is bad (Isaiah 5:20-21).

Many television situation comedies make light of marriage and family. They promote promiscuity, one-parent families, young men and women living together before marriage and same-sex relationships, among other things.

Our television sitcoms have evolved from the moral 1950s comedy series

Before You Turn on the TV

The 21st century is dominated by technological gadgetry that families of the mid-20th century could scarcely have imagined—cell phones, portable music and video players, laptop computers and much more.

But technology is a double-edged sword. It can and does help to improve man's lot by making life much easier, yet at the same time it can undermine the human values that promote good mental and physical health.

A good example of this is television. It can be both a benefit and a curse. It can benefit us when teaching people how to improve their lives. It is a curse when it advocates, subtly or openly, the basest of human behaviors. Producers of such debilitating programs provide such prurient entertainment to get rich quick; they prefer gold over the golden rule.

Dr. Phil McGraw, the famous television-show psychologist, advises: "Limit television-viewing time to ninety minutes a day for preschoolers and two hours a day for older children, since kids who watch a lot of TV suffer academically. However, make allowances for television content that is positive and educational" (*Family First*, 2004, p. 123).

Michael Medved, longtime film critic and author of several books on media and culture, laments that there seems to be no stopping the downward spiral of popular entertainment. He observes that "Hollywood ignores the concerns of the overwhelming majority of the American people who worry over the destructive messages so frequently featured in today's movies, television, and popular music" (*Hollywood vs. America*, 1992, p. 4).

Even as far back as some 16 years ago, an "Associated Press/Media General poll showed that 82 percent of a scientifically selected sample felt that movies contained too much violence; 80 percent found too much profanity; and 72 percent complained of too much nudity. By a ratio of more than three to one, the respondents believed that 'overall quality' of movies had been 'getting worse' as opposed to 'getting better'" (ibid.). Sadly, they've gone only downhill since.

Famous comedian, author and television-talk-show host Steve Allen wrote an outstanding book on the degradation of our culture and our common values. Its cover shows a young boy watching television. Captions on the cover indicate the messages television is teaching him: "Teen sex is okay," "Parents are stupid," "Violence doesn't hurt," "Profanity is cool," and "Morality doesn't matter." The very title of Mr. Allen's book shouts a warning to all parents: *Vulgarians at the Gate: Trash TV and Raunch Radio*.

So before you turn on the TV, read books like these. You and I are responsible for what goes into our children's heads and hearts. It's time to take control of your family's educational diet before entertainment media spiritually and morally starve your children on an immoral and amoral smorgasbord.

Today's media are often a terrible influence on marriage and family, feeding us a steady diet of hedonism and amorality.

is right between two well-meaning people, the "love cocktail" is a very heady drink to imbibe at the outset, overpowering otherwise obvious signals that can shipwreck a marriage.

To summarize: Infatuation is momentary, driven by emotions. True love, which includes a respect and genuine liking for another person, endures because it is driven by a genuine concern for the

Father Knows Best to salacious sitcoms like *Sex and the City*, about four New York female friends who constantly gossip about their sex lives.

Such distorted views warp many people's thinking when it comes to marriage and family. Many marriage and family problems stem from selfishness, misunderstandings and an unforgiving heart. Marital and family problems



develop because human beings too often demand their own way and want it now. Still there is hope. But it takes dedicated effort and cooperation to build a happy family, as Daniel and Susan discovered.

A rocky marriage faces a test

Daniel and Susan had been married for 15 years when they suddenly discovered their marriage and family were no longer happy and secure. They hadn't realized the effort it would take to maintain their original commitment. Within four years of their marriage, they were blessed with a baby boy and girl. But their ideal of marriage and family began to get lost along the way.

Daniel made his job the number-one priority in his life. Susan, meanwhile, was consumed by the time and effort the

was never meant to be without troubles, and they're better prepared to cope.

Daniel and Susan breathed new life into their marriage. They cultivated the romance they shared at the altar and renewed their mutual respect gained over 15 years.

Hope for fractured families

Daniel and Susan certainly aren't alone. Marriage and family problems come in all shapes and sizes. But much help is available too. Such books as Dr. Phil McGraw's *Family First* (2004) and Stephen Covey's *Living the 7 Habits* (1999) strive to promote good individual, family and marriage values.

Developing a good marriage and reinforcing good family values are

you can apply to strengthen your marriage and family?

1. Be more selfless and less selfish. All marriages and families experience selfishness. That's because each of us is selfish to some degree. You could say that we are naturally "wired" to be selfish to preserve and protect ourselves.

Problems develop when we desire something that we shouldn't have and we indulge ourselves in that desire. This overextends our normal selfishness that can protect us. Still, we can control our selfish desires with God's help (Romans 8:5-14).

Daily prayer and Bible reading can fill our minds with godly examples and ideas. Whatever we put into our minds and hearts is what we'll think about, and that can determine how we treat each other (Proverbs 23:7). Only God, through His Spirit in us, can help us overcome excessive



By prioritizing their marriage and family, couples can create a win-win environment for everyone in the family.

children took. Finally Daniel and Susan realized they had to change what they were doing if they were to improve their marriage and family.

First they agreed to stop arguing. Daniel reexamined his priorities and determined to *like* his job but *love* his wife. Susan resolved to love her husband and also her children. By prioritizing their marriage and family, they created a win-win environment for all.

Second, they determined to enjoy life *together*—as a family unit, not separately. They began looking for positive and good things in each other, overlooking the negative.

Though still not perfect, soon life for the entire family was much better. They've come to realize that the human condition

usually uphill struggles. Most people are unwittingly influenced by modern media and the culture around them to accept all kinds of bad ideas. It's simply what naturally happened when our societies replaced God and His Word with "anything goes" or subjective, "whatever seems right" philosophies.

Authors McGraw and Covey take a courageous stand in a world racing toward hedonism. You might want to read their books on how to improve your marriage and/or family condition. But be forewarned that their advice for your success demands *personal effort* on your part.

How can your family flourish?

What are some practical dos and don'ts

selfishness (1 Corinthians 2:12-15).

2. Marriage and family require sacrifice and service. According to the Bible, the very best life one can live is filled with sacrifice and service (John 15:13; Matthew 20:26; Luke 6:38). In a world of plenty, where many of the basic human needs are filled to some degree, this may sound crazy and archaic. Why sacrifice when you don't need to?

Now we're right back to the first point and human nature. We were designed to want and enjoy peaceful, happy relationships with others. But that lasting peace and happiness cannot come without effort on our part (James 3:18). The most powerful, mature and wisest act in the world is that of sacrificial service. Because of Jesus Christ's sacrifice, humanity can be saved and live forever (John 3:16-17).

In *100 Simple Secrets of Great Relationships*, psychologist David Niven gives us practical and down-to-earth guidelines on what scientists have learned about relation-

ships and how we can use them. On the subject of personal sacrifice he shares this:

“We recognize that having a long-standing healthy relationship is an achievement . . . It is certainly not always easy, and the rewards are not always immediately apparent, but sacrificing your immediate preferences and being committed to sharing, caring, and listening are mundane but heroic steps toward your lifetime relationship goal” (2003, p. 1).

In truth, if you want to enjoy your marriage and your family, you must *serve others*, which also sets a good example for everyone.

3. Stop doing anything that harms your marriage and family.

If you want to make your marriage and family better, you must first stop doing anything that’s harming them. Continuing the bad stuff produces only pain, suffering, resentment and anger.

The weaknesses we succumb to are symptomatic of our human nature (Romans 7:15-23). Each bad habit we unconsciously or unwillingly develop through repetition “carves a rut” in our thinking, one that’s very hard to avoid again under similar circumstances.

The Bible tells us we can overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). The idea here is to replace bad habits with good ones. That translates into overcoming—through God’s Spirit and His written truth.

4. Husbands and wives should be lovers. Perhaps you’ve heard the proverbial story of the husband who thought that when he told his wife he loved her at the altar that was good enough. He thought she should remember that time and not expect him to repeat it.

Needless to say, such an approach doesn’t cut it in the long run. Human beings need reassuring all the time. We are not robots. The wife’s need to hear her husband tell her he loves her and appreciates her never fades, ever. The same holds true for the husband. He constantly needs reassurance that he’s needed and respected, though he might appear to need no one. If he has a pulse, *he* needs attention. If she has a pulse, *she* needs attention.

Send her flowers. Call her and encourage her. Honor her with a candlelight dinner accompanied by romantic music. She’ll appreciate it; so will you. Wives, don’t forget to encourage your husbands; they need to know they are honored and respected.

5. Parents must dedicate themselves to creating a happy family. What parents invest *into* their families is usually what they’ll get *out of* their families. If you show respect and love to your children,

that’s probably what you’ll get in return. If you yell, curse, scream and threaten your children, your children likely will yell, curse, scream and threaten others, and maybe you.

Physically, there’s no closer relationship than family, other than marriage. When a marriage is happy, the family is usually also happy.

View your children as future members of God’s family. Parents are stewards of God (see Luke 16:1-12), looking after and loving His future sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6:18). For now, we as parents have the privilege to love and train them.

God created the marriage relationship and the family that comes from that unique relationship. The Bible tells us that we should rear our children in God’s way of peace and happiness (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:4). Happy families come from happy marriages. Parents with happy families are dedicated to that end.

6. Parents should set aside time for family discussions. When was the last time your family sat around the table or in the living room discussing important topics each family member faces each day? Some families enjoy uplifting discussions during the evening meal as they eat together.

If you want a healthier family, schedule specific times each week when the entire family can be involved in open discussions. Sit around the table and interact with each other about this most important group activity on earth, making your family the best one possible.

Family discussions can only improve your present condition, if you make up your mind to bring peace and happiness to your family. Act *now*. Set aside special times for open and reassuring family discussions.

7. Turn off the TV, take a walk or read a book. Ever wonder where peace in the home went, or has it always been noisy and confusing? Is that all you’re used to?

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), children in the United States on average watch about four hours of TV a day—well over double what the AAP recommends. It further recommends that children under age 2 should have *no* TV, computers or video games at all. During the first two years of a child’s life, when brain development is critical, TV can interfere with the learning, exploring and interacting that help young children develop necessary skills.

Some television can be a good thing—*in moderation*. Preschoolers, for example,

can get assistance learning the alphabet on education-oriented programming. Older children can learn about such things as wildlife and the world around them on nature shows. Parents can keep up with current events and learn a great deal through watching science and history programming.

Most teens today have never been without a TV. They cannot imagine what life is like without it. Television programming has been their teacher—along with video games, some of which, like TV, depict graphic violence, sexual themes, consumption of illegal drugs and profanity.

Such influences can create a rebellious spirit in your child. (One father said that when his nephew, whom he took in during difficult times for the teen, refused to obey him in the home, he took away the most important thing he could find—his door. That worked for them.)

Turn off the TV and take a walk together. Listen to the birds sing and think and talk about God and His creation. Turn off the TV and pick up a book instead. Try reading the Bible daily. Give your cognitive processes a break. Fill your mind with something moral and healthy.

The future of your family is up to you

If you want to improve your family’s future, put these helpful tips to use. Never lose sight of the fact that God created marriage (Genesis 2:23-24; Mark 10:6-9) and that He is creating a divine family He wants you to be part of (Hebrews 2:10; 1 John 3:1-2; Revelation 21:3).

His Word, the Holy Bible, details the path to marital and family blessings. But it is left for you to apply the instructions that make this all possible. Begin today to do your part to restore the disappearing family! **GN**

Recommended Reading

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



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Career, Home and Family: Can Women Really Do It All?

Family workloads have increased a great deal from several decades ago. Millions of moms work outside the home by choice or necessity. How can families handle the juggling act?

by Becky Sweat

It's 6:30 p.m. and Miranda Babcock, an information technology specialist, is totally exhausted. Her company's mainframe computer had crashed early in the morning, and all day long she was feeling the pressure to get the system up again.

She achieved success about 5:15 p.m.—and then immediately dashed out the door. She had stayed at work an hour later than normal. Thankfully her neighbor was able to pick up her 9- and 11-year-old sons from their after-school program, since she wasn't going to make it there in time.

But if that weren't bad enough, she was getting on the jam-packed Southern California freeways at the height of rush hour. It took her a 75-minute commute and a near collision before she finally pulled into her

"If I'm lucky," Babcock says, "I'll be done by 10 o'clock, so I can at least spend an hour relaxing . . . I really shouldn't stay up past 11; I have to get up tomorrow morning at 5:30 to get ready for work, and it'd be really great to get 6½ hours of sleep."

All in all, it's a pretty typical day. True, she doesn't always have to work overtime. But even on normal days when she leaves work by 4:15 p.m., that gives her just enough time to make it to her sons' school before closing time. Once she's picked them up, there are often errands to run—to the grocery store, dry cleaners, bank, post office, etc.—before heading home to make dinner.

In the evenings and on weekends, there's always plenty to do, from visiting her aging mother and attending school events to an

feel overwhelmed with having so much to do, never feeling like they are doing any one thing really well.

In some ways it's an old story. Women have been juggling work and family responsibilities since the late 1960s and 1970s when large numbers of women started entering the workforce.

"Primarily these were middle-class mothers, who were taking jobs outside the home for the first time," notes Pamela Stone, Ph.D., associate professor of sociology at Hunter College and the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City and author of *Opting Out?: Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home* (2008). In contrast, Stone says, low-income women had always had a tradition of working, usually doing a domestic job such as maid or nanny.

During the 1950s, no more than 20 to 30 percent of mothers (with children aged 18 or younger) were employed outside the home, and these were primarily poor women who needed to work to pay their bills. Very few middle- and upper-class women worked then; they didn't have to.

By the late 1980s, however, 70 percent of American mothers were employed outside the home, either full- or part-time. Since then, the numbers appear to have plateaued. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, three out of four households today have two working parents. The ratio is similar in most other industrialized nations.

Another statistic worth noting is that two thirds of married mothers with preschool-aged children are in the paid labor force.

Women have been juggling work and family responsibilities since they started entering the workforce.

driveway. Frazzled and drained, she trudged through the back door, greeted her kids and sighed. Now that she was home, all she wanted to do was put her feet up and rest.

But there was dinner to make, the boys wanted help with homework and the dog desperately needed a walk—ideally before her husband was due home from work around 7:30 p.m. when the family would eat dinner together. After that, she would have kitchen cleanup, bills to pay, paperwork from the kids' school to go through, lunches to pack for tomorrow and a mountain of laundry needing attention. Whew!

endless list of household chores.

The superwoman syndrome

Miranda Babcock is one busy woman! But as packed as her life seems to be, her story is not out of the ordinary. Millions of other women live the same kind of hectic lifestyle. They're scrambling to run two lives—one at home and one at work. They want to be good wives and mothers, but they also want to be intellectually stimulated by a challenging career or at least bring in a second income to help their households get by.

For some, it's a full, exciting life. Others



At least half of these women are going back to work within three to five months of giving birth. This is quite a shift from the 1970s and 1980s.

A generation ago most mothers waited until their children were in school before returning to work. Now most mothers of preschool-aged children work outside the home.

A heavier workload—for Mom and Dad

Once moms started going to work outside the home, their lives changed dramatically. Most found that although they were able to find fulfillment in their day job, they were still doing the majority of the housework and child care once they got home in the evenings. Still, men were starting to feel obligated to at least do some housework.

In his 1997 best seller *Time for Life: The Surprising Ways Americans Use Their Time*, University of Maryland sociologist John Robinson reported that American men were spending 17.4 hours per week on average doing housework and child care, while women spent 35.1. Many sociologists believe the gap hasn't changed much in recent years.

"Working moms are still doing most of the housework," says University of Chicago sociologist Linda Waite, Ph.D. However, she adds, "It's not as bad as it sounds—not when you take into account that men are working longer hours on their jobs than women are."

In her 2003 nationwide study of middle-class families, she found that husbands were working 48 hours a week in paid employment, and wives on average worked 37. Women also tend to take jobs closer to home, so they generally have shorter commutes—husbands averaging 45 minutes each way, wives 15 minutes one way.

Just looking at the averages reported by the studies mentioned here, when housework and child care hours are added to time spent on jobs and commutes, American husbands and wives are each working 70-plus hours a week—quite a jump from the 1950s when most husbands and wives had just one full-time "occupation" each.

Workloads of European parents have

increased, too. In 2007, researchers at Cambridge University surveyed working couples in the European Union and found the average working week for a woman in full-time employment to be 68 hours (including commuting, domestic work and child care). The average workweek for a man is 55 hours (including commute time and domestic work).

Today's mothers and fathers have to share the work of stay-at-home mom between them, and do that on top of their regular paid jobs.

Consider a typical American couple's work schedules in the 1950s. Back then, the husband probably had a 40-hour workweek, which was the norm during the 1950s and 1960s. Add to that the time the man spent commuting to work (which was about a third to half of today's commute times), home and car maintenance, yard work, errands, etc., and he still wasn't working more than 50 to 55 hours a week total. He wasn't also typically having to pitch in with the cooking and cleaning.

The stay-at-home mother, even if she was doing a lot of cooking and sewing, probably wasn't averaging more than 45 hours of work a week (although it is true that a mother's work is never done—it has always been a 24/7 on-call job).

This is not to say that the 1950s were the ideal necessarily; it only serves as a comparison to show how much more women—and men—are working today.

A factor that's added to the problem in recent years (and made mothers' busy workloads *not* just "the same old story") is that children's schedules have gotten busier too. Most middle-class parents have their children involved in a whole range of outside activities such as music and sports. This has impacted parents—and mothers in particular—in a big way.

This is quite a contrast from growing up just a generation ago, when children weren't involved in a lot of outside activities and families had more downtime, observes William Doherty, professor of family social science

at the University of Minnesota and author of *Putting Family First* (2002). "Now parents are busy all weekend shuffling their kids to all the different sporting events they're involved with," he says. "That's in addition to running errands or catching up on housework that didn't get done during the week."

What are the pluses?

But as stressful as it can be for a woman to work outside the home, many women find a lot of pluses. Most working women see their careers as personally fulfilling, or at least that's the kind of jobs they hope for. Women want to be able to help and serve others, be productive, solve problems, use their creativity, meet challenges and learn new concepts and skills. Even though a lot of these things can be achieved at home, having some additional growth opportunities outside the family unit can be much appreciated.

Stephanie Miller is a middle-school teacher in Wheaton, Illinois, and a mother of two children, ages 8 and 10. She gains a great deal of personal satisfaction from her work. "I love being around the students, helping them and encouraging them to do their best," Miller says.

While she works full-time during the school year, she doesn't feel her job interferes with family life. "I have basically the same workday schedule and days off as my kids do at their school, so I'm able to be home when they're home," she says. Even if she has papers to grade in the evening, she'll do it next to her kids at the kitchen table while they're doing their homework, so they're still "hanging out" together.

Leslie Crossman, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist with the Houston Independent School District and mother of three. Like Miller, her job allows her to be home when her kids are home. Ideally, she would have preferred to work in private practice, but she took the job with the school district so that she would have summer vacations free with her children.

Still, she's thrilled with her job. "My work is part of who I am," says Crossman, who is



also a licensed marriage and family therapist. “My children are always going to be my top priority. But if at all possible, I wanted to be able to keep working even after I became a mother. I wanted to use the degree I worked so hard to attain.”

Women who give priority to their family and spiritual life and who are still able to use and develop their other talents can remind you of the superwoman described in Proverbs 31. That biblical chapter shows a talented, industrious, innovative wife putting her God-given talents to use as a productive member of society, with support from her husband.

Of course, the extra paycheck for the family is also a huge motivator for wives to work. For some it may be to buy “wants” rather than “needs.” But these days, many households feel the need for two incomes just to get by financially. The costs of a home, utilities, taxes, car expenses, food, clothing and educational expenses are beyond the income ability of the typical one-income family.

And women at the lower end of the economic spectrum often cannot find a full-time job, so they work multiple part-time, unskilled jobs.

What about the minuses?

The main challenge working mothers face is getting so busy, worn-out and burned-out that they let more important priorities slide.

Says one working mother of two: “I have so much to do—my job as dental hygienist, a class one night a week, a household to run, meals to cook, I’m secretary for our parent-teacher association, and my husband and sons need my time too.

“I’m always staying up late every night trying to get everything done, which makes it that much harder to get up early in the morning when the alarm clock goes off. Lately, I’ll hit the snooze button, sometimes a couple of times, and there goes my prayer time for that morning! My days are so hectic that I’m often completely wiped out by bedtime, and so it’s hard for me to pray then too.”

Relationships with one’s spouse and children can suffer as well. Dual-income couples typically have less time together, which reduces the happiness and satisfaction of a marriage. These couples often don’t have enough focused time where they can talk and give each other their undivided attention. When they are together, it’s often when they’re rushing out the door to get to soccer meets or appointments—definitely not quality time.

Marital tension can result if the wife (or husband or both) feels like she’s doing more than her share of the housework. Regina of Easton, Pennsylvania, explains her situation:

“My husband works in mid-town Manhattan and has a two-hour commute each way by bus. He leaves the house at 6 a.m. and gets home close to 7:30 p.m. It’s a long commute, but he’s on the bus and can read and relax.

“I don’t leave for my job until 8:30, and get home by 5:30. So I’m the lone adult in the house during the two busiest times of the day—the morning rush to get the kids ready for school, and the after-school rush when the kids are hungry and cranky, and dinner needs to be made. All this extra work falls on me because I’m the only parent who’s home during these times. Yet I put in a full day at work too!”

Overwork may also leave mothers (and fathers) with limited time, attention or energy for their children. “Increasingly in our fast-paced society there’s just not enough of consistent, quality, interactive face time between parents and kids,” notes Gary Hill, Ph.D., director of Clinical Services for the Family Institute at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. “Yet that’s what kids today crave most.”

He links the “parenting deficit” to a variety of problems plaguing the country’s youth: moral decline, drug and alcohol use, promiscuity, anxiety, depression and teen suicide.

When it comes to children not yet of school age, there are particular issues with mothers working. That is, if you have to send them to day care so you can go to work, you are giving up precious time with them that you will never be able to reclaim.

True, there are low-income mothers who need to work to make ends meet. They may have no choice but to put their children in child care, because they have to work to pay the rent. But if at all possible, it’s best if mothers can stay home with their children when they are babies and preschoolers.

“Try to wait until your kids are in school before you return to work,” urges Isabelle Fox, Ph.D., a developmental psychologist in Sherman Oaks, California, and author of *Being There: The Benefits of a Stay-at-Home Parent* (1996). Countless studies have been done showing that very young children need this extra bonding time with their mothers.

“There is so much to miss out on if you are not ‘there’ to see your children on a daily basis at this young age,” Fox says. Many working mothers have bemoaned the fact that they missed out on seeing their baby’s first steps or hearing their first words—because they were at work while their child was at day care.

Relates one former working mom: “I used to drop my two girls, ages 1 and 3, off at day care at 7 a.m. and pick them up at 6 p.m.

every weekday. We would get home around 6:30, I would make dinner and they would go to sleep about 8 o’clock. I started thinking, ‘Hey, I’m only seeing my girls for two hours a day. If that’s all I was going to see them, then why did I even have kids in the first place?’ So I quit my job and put my career on hold. I’ll have plenty of time to work once my girls are older.”

Other “minuses” relating to a mom working relate to her own physical and emotional health. A woman who is overwhelmed with job pressures and household responsibilities may not have time for friends, leisure activities or even just some quiet time to rest and reflect. These are all things that help women rejuvenate themselves and regain some emotional peace. “Without downtime, stressors can get the better of us,” Crossman says.

Research shows that working mothers are more prone to stress-related ailments than stay-at-home moms. That’s because many working mothers try to cram too much into their schedules and do not have enough time to relax. Stress can weaken a woman’s immune system, making her more susceptible to illness. Working mothers typically do not get enough sleep either—and that is certainly something everyone needs.

Striking a balance

Considering all these factors, each family must make its own decision. Whether working outside the home is the right choice depends on the individual woman, how it’s impacting her family and what is required of her to do the job. What works for one woman might not for another.

But even the “Superwoman” types can’t truly do it all—have a successful career *and* do everything that a full-time homemaker would be able to accomplish. “You have to lower your expectations about what you’re going to be able to do,” Crossman says. “When you’re working and you have a family too, something is always on the back burner in terms of getting neglected.”

If Mom has to work late, she may have to miss her son’s baseball game. If she’s unable to stay late at work because of her daughter’s concert, she may feel like she’s letting down her employer. Mom may be thrilled about her raise, but feel frustrated that her house is a mess or she hasn’t had time to get caught up on many things.

There are going to be tradeoffs with Mom working. If the worst is that she may not have time to clean her house as well as she’d like, or she’s serving her family spaghetti sauce from a jar rather than homemade, that’s probably okay. But if Mom has to be away from

The Day Care Dilemma

As dual-career parents head to work, they commonly drop off their preschool-aged children at day care facilities—places where employees are among the lowest-paid and least-trained in all industries. Yet parents trust these facilities to take care of their most precious resource—their children.

The problems with most day care facilities are well known. While studies show that *high-quality day care* does not seem to harm children, other studies have found a correlation between the amount of time a child spends in day care with his or her later aggression and disobedience in school.

Health is another problem for children in day care. Parents often bring sick children to day care—where they infect others—because they can't or don't want to take a day off work. Further, when mothers work outside the home, their children often measure less ready for school—in other words, they are developmentally delayed.

Day care studies are always done with the assumption that what is being provided is high-quality day care. But all day care is not high quality. Why? Poor pay and demanding conditions are two of the major problems.

Child-care facilities with large numbers of children are simply unable to provide the sustained, personal, one-on-one attention that is so necessary for the healthy development of children.

Why have Americans embraced such changes that harm children? According to psychologist

Robert Evans, who also worked as a teacher, it is because of rampant individualism. We think of “the individual as the basic unit rather than the family itself” (*Family Matters: How Schools Can Cope With the Crisis in Child Rearing*, 2004, p. 128).

“Rampant individualism” is a nicer way of describing the human perspective than what Paul wrote regarding the outlook people would have in the last days. Of this time, Paul wrote that “men will be lovers of themselves . . .” (2 Timothy 3:2). Rather than focusing on what is best for our children and best for society, Paul said people would focus on their own perceived needs and wants.

“What’s missing from too many American households is, as journalist Caitlin Flanagan puts it, ‘the one thing you can’t buy—the presence of someone who cares deeply and principally about that home and the people who live in it; who is willing to spend [time] thinking about what those people are going to eat and what clothes they will need for which occasions’” (Evans, p. 137).

Economic needs are commonly cited as the reason children are placed in day care facilities. The reality, however, is that many times most of the money earned ends up being spent on the day care itself and eating out because no one has been at home to prepare a meal.

Even though true financial gains can sometimes be obtained, a commendable number of parents have now given their children’s needs the highest

priority and are choosing a lower standard of living so they can have a higher standard of family. While some mothers remain at home with their children to accomplish this, others are finding work when their husband is at home with the children or doing work that can be done from home.

The suffering being experienced by so many today is reversible. We and our children do not have to be victims. Being a good parent means putting our children’s needs ahead of our own desires. If you have children, why not give them what they want and need—a positive, encouraging home where they are taught God’s standards by both of their parents living together in peace?

(Excerpted from our free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. The Bible has much to say about coping with the pressures and



demands so many families face today. This booklet highlights the biblical keys to a happy, successful marriage and family, setting out some of the fundamental steps you can take and practical things you can do to better manage the daily

demands of family and career. It also explains the spiritual significance of marriage and family that reflects a much greater plan and purpose—that every human being eventually become part of God’s divine family. For your free copy, visit www.gnmagazine.org/booklets.)

home 12 hours a day to take that job promotion, or send her toddler to day care so she can climb the career ladder, those are trade-offs she probably shouldn’t make.

It’s also important to consider Dad’s perspective in all this. If Mom’s going back to work, Dad’s going to have to pick up some of the slack at home. She needs to know how much of the household responsibilities he’s willing—and able—to take on.

Some men are already working 50+ hours a week and may not have a lot of extra time to help out around the house. Other husbands really like cooking and maybe they’re high-energy people themselves, so they’ll jump right in and take on a lot of the domestic duties—without being nagged.

You have to know how much you and your family can handle. Chances are, even the Proverbs 31 woman knew her limits. While she did have outside business pursuits, she didn’t let things hinder her spiritual life or physical health or let her family responsibilities slide. She probably wasn’t gone from home 50 or 60 hours a week, either. Keep in mind, too, that she had servants to help out with the housework, which most middle- and

lower-income women today do not have.

For many mothers, the ideal in terms of working is probably part-time. This is enough to provide some outside fulfillment and boost the household income, but it’s not so much that it takes away from the family or a woman’s personal life.

A 2007 study by the Washington, D.C.-based Pew Research Center shows that 60 percent of working mothers say part-time work would be their ideal. Similar results were found in a 2006 survey conducted by the United Kingdom’s Office for National Statistics. They surveyed working mothers and found that half wanted to combine bringing up their children with a part-time job. Only 6 percent wanted to work full-time.

However, desirable part-time jobs that offer decent pay are not easy to find. So while many women would like to work part-time, they are basically “forced” to work full-time because they need a job that pays decently and provides health insurance. And if you want to work in one of the professions like business management, law, finance or medicine, not only is it difficult to find part-time work in these fields, it’s also hard to find

positions where you aren’t expected to work 50 or 60 hours a week.

All this creates a huge burden on women who are trying to find a way to balance a career with family responsibilities. Much *could* be done to make things easier for families, such as job sharing (where two professionals fill one position), health benefits for part-time workers (especially a problem for low-income workers, who may only be able to get part-time jobs), telecommuting and paid family leave.

So what does a woman do if she either needs or would like to work? Can a woman combine a career and family and not short-change either? With the right job opportunity and a supportive husband and children, a woman may be able to manage quite well with a full-time job and still have a smooth-running household.

With time becoming ever more precious and family finances getting tighter and tighter, it’s important to keep your priorities straight and pray that God will help you make the right decisions about how you use your time. Your family is counting on you to make wise decisions! **GN**

Brussels planning takeover of British armed forces?

Plans for a European army (in place of NATO) simply won't disappear and continue to resurface from time to time. The European Parliament is now considering proposals for setting up EU forces under EU command.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said at a May 5 security policy conference in Berlin that he favored the establishment of a European military force and that he wanted moves in this direction to be sped up. He also noted that the EU treaty currently being ratified by EU member states allows a group of member states to work together toward establishing a common defense policy.

According to Shadow Conservative Defence Secretary Liam Fox, Brussels should not get in the way of British forces in Afghanistan and other areas where EU policy could potentially undermine NATO. Dr. Fox stated: "This is another example of the EU getting involved in an area in which it has no business. NATO must maintain its primacy in European defence. Anything less, including a Euro army, is simply unacceptable" (*Daily Express*, June 5, 2008).

In the same article Geoffrey Van Orden, British Conservative policy spokesman concerning Defense in the European Parliament (EP), plainly stated the



following: "This [Euro] report is a manifesto for an EU takeover of our armed forces—the greatest prize for the federalists and their ambition to create a state called Europe" (ibid., emphasis added throughout). Van Orden is a member of the EP.

The European Union wants to consolidate its powers, moving forward as quietly as possible on many fronts—eventually making Europe into one country with the present nation-states redrawn on the political map and reduced to the status of provinces—with a powerful Germany at the center of it all.

The *Daily Telegraph* reported that "there is rich symbolism in the fact that the former Conservative Central Office in Smith Square, Westminster, is to be renamed 'Europe House', as the new London

million Muslims would die—since well over a billion would remain—if Israel would no longer exist.

But is such a calculation reasonable or close to accurate?

Anthony Cordesman, former director of intelligence assessment for the U.S. secretary of defense and currently a top analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, offers a different and profoundly disturbing view—that an Israel-Iran nuclear war would devastate the region and the entire world economy.

He believes that Israel, being a more advanced and organized society, could conceivably survive a nuclear exchange while losing 200,000 to 800,000 citizens within 21 days, but Iran would face 16 to 28 million dead in the same time frame and no longer survive as an organized society (*United Press International*, Nov. 22, 2007).

The difference, he points out, is that Israel is presumed to have better antimissile defenses and more warheads with vastly greater explosive yields (up to 10 times as powerful) with far more accurate delivery systems. He notes that the Iranian capital of Tehran, with its 15 million inhabitants packed into a basin surrounded by mountains, is a "nearly ideal nuclear killing ground."

Sex and the City: Life imitates art

Sex and the City was a U.S. cable TV mainstay for several seasons as it tracked the life and loves (numerous sexual encounters) of four fictional single New York women. No sooner had the series gone off the air than plans started for a feature-length movie sequel.

It's ironic timing that the week after the movie hit U.S. theaters, a city health department study found that more than one in four adult New Yorkers (26 percent) are infected with the sexually transmissible disease genital herpes. That's considerably higher than the already-high national rate of about 19 percent (nearly 1 in 5).

Herpes causes painful sores in some of those infected by it, although most show no recognizable symptoms. In New York the herpes rate is higher among women, blacks and homosexual men. Those infected by genital herpes have double the risk of contracting HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. (Source: Associated Press, June 9, 2008.)

headquarters of the European Commission" (June 1, 2008). Indeed there is—the European Union marches on! (Sources: *Daily Express*, *The Daily Telegraph* [both London], euobserver.com.)

What would an Israel-Iran nuclear war mean?

Iran and Israel have exchanged threats and counter threats regularly in recent years. The difference is that Iranian leaders threaten Israel with total annihilation and Israel usually responds by saying that it will take the necessary steps to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons—the existence of which would give Tehran the means to destroy the Jewish nation.

This latest news emerged from Shaul Mofaz, a former defense minister in the Israeli cabinet and one of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's deputies. He is privy to private defense plans in the Israeli government and is a participant in the security cabinet. He clearly stated, "If Iran continues with its programme for developing nuclear weapons, we will attack it" (*The Irish Times*, June 7, 2008, emphasis added). He said these words to the Hebrew daily *Yediot Aharanot*.

In December 2001, then-Iranian president Hashemi Rafsanjani expressed the logic, as he saw it, of a nuclear attack on Israel—that such an attack would eliminate the Jewish state, but Israel in return could only temporarily set back the Islamic world. He believed it would be worth starting a war in which 15



Israel, Cordesman says, would need a "reserve strike capability to ensure no other power can capitalize on an Iranian strike"—meaning Israel would have to target such "key Arab neighbors" as Syria and Egypt. While a Syrian attack on Israel with chemical and biological weapons could kill another 800,000 Israelis, an Israeli nuclear attack on Syria would kill up to 18 million and finish Syria as a nation. A similar attack on Egypt would kill tens of millions of Egyptians.

Other damage from such a war would include major population centers in the region, the Suez Canal, ports, refineries and oil-producing centers. While it would not be Armageddon for the human race, he says, it would be for the global economy, marking the end of the Oil Age, globalization and world economic growth and prosperity. "The only way to win is not to play," he concludes.

The stakes are indeed high in the Middle East, and Bible prophecy reveals that the region will see devastating warfare that will shake the entire world to its core. To learn more, request our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. (Source: *The Irish Times*, United Press International.)

California court approves gay marriage—what does it mean?

On May 15, 2008, four justices of the California Supreme Court dealt a huge blow against marriage and family by approving same-sex marriage, overturning the expressed desire of millions of state voters. Beginning June 16, thousands of homosexual couples across the state began obtaining marriage licenses on which the words “Party A” and “Party B” replaced “bride” and “groom.”

The court decision overruled a 2000 state ballot initiative, approved by Californians by a 61-39 percent majority, defining marriage as only between a man



and a woman. To their credit, clerks in some counties protested the ruling by refusing to perform marriage ceremonies altogether rather than officiate for homosexual couples.

Writing for the minority that opposed the court’s ruling, one

justice stated that the court “simply does not have the right to erase, then recast, the age-old definition of marriage, as virtually all societies have understood it, *in order to satisfy its own contemporary notions of equality and justice*” (emphasis added throughout).

Another justice wrote in a dissenting opinion that the court’s decision “does that which it acknowledges it should not do: *it redefines marriage because it believes marriage should be redefined.*”

What’s really behind the push for gay marriage? Advocates admit that it’s really to further a homosexual agenda to transform society.

As one homosexual same-sex marriage proponent wrote: “A middle ground might be to fight for same-sex marriage and its benefits and then, once granted, redefine the institution of marriage completely, to demand the right to marry not as a way of adhering to society’s moral codes but rather to debunk a myth and *radically alter an archaic institution.*”

“Being queer is more than setting up house, sleeping with a person of the same gender and seeking state approval to do so,” wrote another. “Being queer means pushing the parameters of sex, sexuality and family, and in the process, *transforming the very fabric of society* . . . We must keep our eyes on the goals of providing true alternatives to marriage and *radically reordering society’s view of reality.*”

After the court decision was announced, an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Web site gloated: “We won the marriage case in California. No need for hyperbole here; *this is big* . . . [Gay] marriage in California will transform the discussion of marriage nationwide . . . The fact that California is marrying same-sex couples *will put considerable pressure on the rest of the country to recognize those marriages* . . . Cultural change in California is usually a preview of *what is to come in the rest of the United States* . . . This was a *prize of inestimable value.*”

Clearly the California court decision has major implications for the rest of the country. As one gay activist wrote: “The sheer number of [homosexual]

couples who will marry (and divorce, it is California, after all), will forever change this debate. It will cause a legal mess, as many of these married couples—often with children—migrate to [other] states.”

Underlying this reality is the fact that California has no residency requirement for a marriage license. Georgetown University government professor Clyde Wilcox noted that many homosexual couples will come to California to marry, then return to their home states and sue to have their marriages recognized. Thus the legal and moral chaos is likely to quickly spread throughout the nation. (Sources: Associated Press, Cybercast News Service, WorldNetDaily, ACLU Web site.)

Irish Republic rejects EU treaty

The British government failed to keep its promise to its citizens to have a referendum to either approve or disapprove the Lisbon Treaty—which in reality is just a papering over of the already rejected European Constitution, since the actual contents are about 98 percent the same. But to give the Irish citizens their due, the Republic of Ireland conducted a public referendum on the Lisbon Treaty as required by its constitution—and they rejected it.

All 27 member states have to ratify the treaty. Only the Irish Republic has democratically held a referendum of its citizens. This Irish rejection is in spite of strong verbal pressure brought by Brussels and Irish politicians on the electorate.

One commentator had stated that “the prospect of a no vote in the Irish referendum next month on the European Union’s Lisbon Treaty is something too dreadful to contemplate in Brussels and most other capitals of the EU member states” (*Financial Times*, May 30, 2008). Yet leading up to the vote, Irish newspapers were full of protests by a few courageous politicians and journalists pointing out the flaws in the treaty.

The Irish citizenry took the matter much more seriously than most Europeans. In fact, most European citizens know little about the terms of the Lisbon Treaty and what it portends for the future. An article by Jamie Smyth, European correspondent for *The Irish Times*, bore this title: “Citizens of Europe United in Ignorance of the Treaty” (June 6, 2008).

As he noted later in the text, “The gap between

Europe’s citizens and what they know about the Lisbon Treaty is a big one.” This ignorance enables the European Union to slowly take national sovereignty by stealth.

Yet citizens in the Irish Republic have stood in the gap. One observer stated, “The people of Ireland have shown enormous courage and wisdom in analyzing the facts presented to them and making the decision they have” (BBC News).

Some opposed the treaty because it could threaten Ireland’s traditional military neutrality. “This treaty will increase militarization and neoconservatism of Europe,” said Treasa O’Brien, who voted in Cork. “I’m pro-European, but the EU started as an economic system. The treaty will turn the EU into a super-state, and that was not its original intention” (*The Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 2008).

As explained in our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*, Europe is destined to become exactly that—the heart of a new economic and military superstate.

What happens next remains to be seen, since the treaty requires approval by all 27 EU nations to take effect. Presumably the treaty will be slightly reworked and put to another vote. Indeed, the treaty is already a largely cosmetic revision of the EU constitution rejected by French and Dutch voters in 2005. Some are calling for a “two-speed Europe,” wherein ratifying countries can start implementing the treaty. Of course, that violates the requirement of unanimity. In any case, despite the temporary setback, be sure that Europe’s leaders will find a way to continue the process of political union. (Sources: *Financial Times*, *The Irish Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, BBC News.)

How Can You Make Sense of the News?

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





What's Behind the Growing Food Crisis?

Growing shortages around the world are driving up the price of food. For hundreds of millions this could lead to hunger or starvation. What's behind the global food crisis, and how can it be resolved?

My wife and I had stayed at the old City Hotel in Kumasi many times during Ghana's troubled years some 25 to 30 years ago. Now the new Golden Tulip Hotel had refurbished its predecessor and we wanted to see what it was like. It was certainly aimed at a wealthier clientele. Just sitting in the reception area required a payment of \$5 unless you were a resident.

The dining room was empty, but the food display was among the best we had ever seen in Africa. Featured was an all-you-can-eat buffet for 28 Ghanaian cedis. With the new cedi now worth more than a dollar, that meant the cost of dinner per person was \$30, or the equivalent of the average Ghanaian's monthly income.

I was reluctant to partake of the generous spread before us, but friends who accompanied us were insistent and offered to pay. Even then, we all felt rather guilty, so we agreed that the two men should have the buffet, while the two ladies would eat off the à la carte menu, which offered meals at half the price. That way, the evening came to a total of less than \$100 for four, still a great deal of money in a comparatively poor, third-world country.

One of the great ironies of our contemporary world is that while the number of people starving has never been greater at 800 million, the number who are overweight is even greater, at 1 billion.

Reminders of famine

During dinner we remembered the famine in Ghana 25 years earlier, when a buffet like the one set before us would have been unthinkable. Then we had struggled just to survive.

There were long periods when the only foods available were coconuts and green oranges. People lost weight rapidly. I remember the gap between men's shirt collars and their necks increasing by the week as the food supply worsened.

We remembered the difficulty of giving bones to our dog when human beings wanted the bones to suck out the marrow. We remembered also our cat that disappeared.

We later learned it had been killed and eaten. We remembered also the badly contorted and burned body of the man within yards of our home, killed for trying to break into a neighbor's home for food.

The national newspaper even reported the sale of human meat in the marketplace. It was an awful time. We were and remain thankful that Ghana's economy has improved

Farming is the most essential of all jobs. Yet most governments do not give agriculture anywhere near the priority it should have.

considerably since then and that now most people have enough to eat.

That is not the case for the nations around Ghana. During our stay in April, neighboring countries were experiencing food riots. Food shortages had pushed up the price of basic foodstuffs, especially rice, which is a staple throughout West Africa. CNN International, a London-based news channel, highlighted the global food crisis every day of our stay.

Our visit coincided with a UN conference in Accra, Ghana's capital. Delegates for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development came from around the world to discuss the global food crisis. As is so often the case with these elaborate, extensive and expensive conferences, little was achieved. It crossed my mind that the basic problem was summed up in the delegates themselves—not one of them seemed likely to actually get their hands in the soil and grow some food themselves.

Prejudice against farming

Prejudice against farming is a major problem in Africa. During the famine in 1982-83 I started a farm just outside of Accra for the members of the church congregation I was pastoring. They needed food. It wasn't available. The simple solution was to grow it ourselves, so we leased land and started to farm.

Some men protested that farming was beneath them. Farming is looked down on in much of Africa, and arguably around the world. This certainly contributes to the global food crisis.

For years farmers in poorer countries have been migrating to the cities. Most governments have favored urban dwellers over the people in rural areas, fearing riots and revolution in the capital, not social unrest in distant farming areas. So they often kept the price of food low in the cities, at the expense of the farmers.

Ghana's 1982-83 famine, like the severe

food shortages in the summer of 1979, was largely man-made, as the government introduced controlled prices on food that made food production uneconomical.

Zimbabwe, once the breadbasket of Africa, now suffers severe food shortages due to the expulsion of the commercial farmers from the land. The commercial farmers were of European descent. They farmed on a large scale like their North American, British and Australian fellow farmers. When the government seized their land and gave it to political cronies of the president, food production plunged dramatically. The number of hectares farmed dropped from 9 million to an estimated 300,000 in the space of just a few weeks!

Compounding the problem in most African countries is that rural areas usually lack basic facilities. Whereas electricity is often available, plumbing is nonexistent. Clinics and schools are usually lacking, both being much more readily available in the big cities. Improvements in these areas would keep more people on the land.

Farmers under considerable pressure

But the biggest problem is highlighted in a new book by Raj Patel, currently a visiting scholar at the UC Berkeley Center for African Studies. His book *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*, begins with a chapter on the profession that has one of the highest suicide rates in the world—farmers. His book notes that in many countries, suicides among farmers are much higher than for the rest of the population. The



Haitians demonstrate in Port-au-Prince on June 4 against the growing social breakdown caused by food prices and violence. In Haiti food prices have doubled in three years, sparking riots there as they have in many other nations.

cause comes down to one word: *debt*.

Subsistence farmers eking out a meager living from a small plot of land can only improve their situation by borrowing money, often at very high rates of interest. When they can't pay the money back, faced with losing land that has been passed down through the generations, they despair and some take their own lives.

Even in wealthier countries there is a sense of humiliation and failure among farmers who have inherited their land from fathers and grandfathers, going back centuries in some cases. When they realize they can't make ends meet, some of them likewise choose to end their lives.

The basic problem is this: *Agriculture is not a priority in much of today's world.*

This doesn't make any sense. After water, the other crucial thing that everybody needs is food. Farming is the most essential of all jobs. Nothing else truly matters as much. Yet most governments do not give agriculture anywhere near the priority it should have.

This is not the way God intended it to be.

When the Israelites went into the Promised Land, each of the tribes was allotted land to farm. This land was then divided up for each family. It was an agrarian society. As the country developed, some people became tradesmen or went into other careers. But the country remained primarily an agrarian society.

As it was in Israel and Judea, so it was in most nations—until fairly recent times.

Industrialization, especially since World War II, has progressively encroached on agriculture. Millions of acres of farmland have been gobbled up by development, devastating food production at a time when the world's population is increasing dramatically.

Advances in agricultural science (fertilizers, pesticides and high-yield crops) have enabled food output to nearly keep pace, but we are now reaping the negative consequences of this.

The skyrocketing price of oil has pushed up the price of fertilizers and delivery of crops and processed food. There is also concern about the environmental damage caused by the use of artificial chemical fertilizers and pesticides. One of the possible consequences of the latter is the decline in the number of bees, which will further negatively affect food production.

World's fisheries depleted

It's not just the land that is negatively affected by these developments. According to a National Geographic special recently shown on many U.S. public television stations, 90 percent of commercially important fish are gone, and productivity of the world's ocean fisheries is declining. This, too, is impacting the land, as the documentary showed.

In Ghana, for example, the wildlife population in Mole National Park is constantly impacted by the national fish supply. Before the construction of the Volta Dam shortly

after independence, Ghana had an abundance of fish. The dam has had a negative impact on fish stocks at a time when the population has been rising fast.

Statistics kept at Mole show that when fish are plentiful the wildlife thrive, but when fish are scarce, the wildlife population is depleted. In the last four decades, elephants have declined by 70 percent, hippos by 50 percent and lions by 80 percent.

With a shortage, fish also become expensive and people instead eat what is usually referred to as "bush meat." This can be anything from deer to grasscutter, a large rodent that is commonly offered for sale at the side of the road. There are problems with diseases associated with some of the meats that come directly out of the bush.

Human actions affect food supplies

Weather is an obvious factor in global food supplies. Droughts and poor weather last year affected three of the world's four major wheat producers—Australia, Canada and Ukraine, leading to dramatic increases in the price of wheat. If that weren't bad enough, a worrying new fungal infection threatens as much as a quarter of the world wheat harvest.

This year it's floods that are the problem in the U.S. corn belt, with fields either under water or too soggy for plowing or planting.

But human actions and government policies also play a major role in food pricing and availability. For example, European countries and the United States often give large subsidies to farmers, badly skewering the playing field against third-world food producers.

Raj Patel explains why some of the small-scale farmers in poorer countries cannot compete with farmers in the United States, Canada and Australia. Through free trade agreements, often signed with industry in mind, local farmers are driven out of business. They simply can't compete.

"Notwithstanding an initial spike, the real price of corn for Mexican farmers has fallen continuously since NAFTA [the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement] began . . . The method farmers chose to face the falling price of corn was to grow more of it, to generate an income to meet the rising prices of all the things they couldn't provide for themselves. Although free market thinking assumes that farmers can invest in other crops, the reality was that few had the necessary resources in order to be able to switch.

“Lacking money, technology and access to distribution networks, already relegated to the poorest quality soil, without irrigation, and with indigenous corn so well suited to these conditions, there was little else farmers could do. As a result, after NAFTA, the farmers that could increase their production did so” (pp. 49-50).

Consequently, the price keeps going down and the suffering of people in the rural areas worsens. Many in Mexico head north to the United States. Also, urban dwellers do not benefit from the lower price of corn—food processing companies do!

Free trade also can leave countries at the mercy of other nations. For example, Australia has been a major rice producer. Through free trade agreements, a great deal of this rice was sold to Asian nations at a much lower price than local farmers could produce it. And now that the Australian rice crop has been reduced by 98 percent due to drought, the result is severe shortages of rice around the world. Even in the United States, some of the big food stores have had to ration it.

Making things worse across Africa is foreign food aid. When food is given out free, why bother to grow any? Farmers who do grow food find their selling price lowered as a result of the food aid. Additionally, food aid breeds corruption. It is often used, as in Zimbabwe, to gain political advantage—the food is given out to supporters of the ruling party and denied to opponents.

It also enables the unscrupulous to make lots of money. During Ghana’s famine, we often found sacks of wheat, corn and rice for sale at exorbitant prices in the marketplace despite bearing the words: “NOT FOR SALE. Donated by the people of the United States of America.”

The list of contributory factors to the rising price of food seems endless. Even the U.S. federal government deficit contributes. Reckless overspending has led to a fall in the value of the U.S. currency around the world. Lower interest rates have exacerbated this problem. This has led to food inflation, with too much money chasing too few goods.

As many commodities are priced in dollars, speculators have been able to push up the price of food along with oil and other commodities in high demand. Notes *U.S. News and World Report*: “The weak dollar has led to high commodity prices as pension, hedge, and index funds have bought oil, gold, and agricultural futures as a hedge against inflation” (Marianne Lavelle and Kent Gar-

ber, “Fixing the Food Crisis,” May 19, 2008.)

Of course, government policies can often have far-reaching, unforeseen consequences. A major factor in the recent rise of U.S. food costs is the federal government’s decision to mandate and subsidize billions of gallons of ethanol as a replacement for gasoline.

The resulting 30 million tons of corn converted into vehicle fuel in 2007 drove up the cost not only of corn, but also of beef, pork, chicken, eggs, milk and cheese—from animals that consume corn—as well as almost every other agricultural crop when acres long used for other crops were converted to corn production. This year a third of the U.S. corn crop is slated to be used in biofuels, a near 50-percent increase over last year, and will likely drive up food costs even further.

Famines foretold for the future?

Serious famines have plagued mankind throughout history in different parts of the world. And yes, there will be more in the future. The book of Revelation foretells a time of serious famine that will come upon the world.

One of the infamous four horsemen of the Apocalypse in Revelation 6 clearly represents famine: “So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, ‘A quart of wheat for a denarius; and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and the wine’” (verses 5-6).

Since a denarius was a day’s wages at the time (see Matthew 20:2), this prophecy is describing a time when an entire day’s work will buy only enough wheat for one good meal or enough barley for three meals, but with nothing left for oil or wine. In comparison, in the United States the average family spends about 10 percent of its income on food; in many third world countries it’s already up to 90 percent. This prophecy shows a time is coming when the cost of food will no doubt create great upheaval.

I cannot read these verses in Revelation without remembering an incident in Ghana involving an American couple there for a brief period during the country’s time of food shortages.

They were millionaires in California where the two normally lived. But in Ghana during that painful time, when the lady spilled some sugar on the floor while serving tea, she carefully swept it up and put it back in the sugar bowl. “If you had told me

back in the States that I would ever do that, I’d have said you were crazy!” she said. But when food is scarce, you can’t afford to waste any. Such a time is prophesied to come on the whole earth.

With the threat of global food shortages set to worsen and global food stocks at their lowest in decades, it’s a good time for heads of government to read the story of Joseph in the biblical book of Genesis.

Joseph was the 11th of 12 sons. His brothers sold him into slavery. Eventually, Joseph rose up to be the prime minister of Egypt, second only to the pharaoh.

What gave Joseph this position of prominence is that God used him to explain a dream the pharaoh had, a dream that predicted seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph as prime minister had the task of building up food stocks during the seven years of plenty to prepare Egypt, the greatest nation in the world at that time, for the seven years of want. You can read an account of this in Genesis 41.

What the world needs right now is another Joseph—a wise leader who can see what’s coming and act on it!

We need much more than another UN conference where delegates stay at the best hotels in the capital cities of third-world countries. What we need now is for each and every nation to look carefully at its own situation, at its own food needs, and set in action policies that will encourage farmers to grow enough food to feed themselves—with some to spare, so that reserves can be built up as in ancient Egypt when the patriarch Joseph was given insight by God to avoid a catastrophic famine.

More than anything, though, we need to remember and turn to our God, Creator of the land from which all our food comes and the One who controls the weather that can bring either famine or great abundance. **GN**

Recommended Reading

What does Bible prophecy reveal about the end time? Are we in it or near it? Can we know for sure? What prophetic indications would tell us? What will happen in the end time, anyway? You need to know the answers! Download or request our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* today!



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Courageous Olympic Moments—and the Race We Run

The world's greatest athletes pit their skill and strength against others in the Olympic Games. Past Olympics inspire us with stories of great conviction and courage. These games should also inspire us with their reminders of crucial aspects of the Christian life.

by Mario Seiglie

Berlin, Germany, 1936: This was supposed to be the Olympics that showcased Adolf Hitler's boast of Aryan supremacy in athletics. He wanted to show the world how the German "master race" would excel in athletic prowess—to the detriment of the other races. Tragically, in just three year's time, this mindset would help trigger the catastrophe of World War II.

However, Jesse Owens was quite the opposite of what Hitler had in mind about the supposed master race. An African-American, he was the son of a poor sharecropper and the grandson of a slave. He was definitely not a pampered Aryan athlete or part of an elite group.

Yet during those Olympics, and in spite of the psychological pressure exerted against him, he did the seemingly impossible. He blew past all the track and field competitors—including all those of Aryan stock—and won four gold medals!

He became the fastest human being on earth—and proved it by winning the 100-meter sprint, the 200-meter dash, the 400-meter relay team race and the long jump. It was a feat unequalled for 48 years until another African-American, Carl Lewis, was able to repeat it in 1984.

What a courageous achievement in front of the assembled hostile leadership! Hitler had definitely been humiliated.

Montreal, Canada, 1976: The men's gymnastic competition was a close contest between the Soviet and Japanese teams. The overall team score on the last day would determine the winners. Then disaster struck the Japanese team. Shun Fujimoto, one of the key gymnasts, shattered his kneecap during the floor competition.

The pain was excruciating, yet taking pain medicine would disqualify him. He could not be replaced, and withdrawing would most likely mean they would lose. On top of this, Shun had to get a high score on the rings for the team to have a chance at winning the gold.

As he was helped up to reach the rings, the pain was shooting from his injured knee. Yet he knew the worst was still to come. At the end of his performance, he would have to do a flip and then land some seven feet below—all with a broken kneecap!

Not wanting to disappoint his team or his nation, he gritted his teeth and withstood the pain. He swung one final time from the rings, flipped in the air and made a clean landing on both feet—and then his injured knee buckled. But he remained standing and was given a fine score. His team won the gold medal, largely due to Fujimoto's courage in the face of seemingly unbearable pain!

Atlanta, United States, 1996: The U.S. and Russian women's teams were in hot pursuit of the top position in the gymnastic team competition. On the final day, American Kerri Strug badly wrenched her ankle on the vault jump. She still had a second vault to do—but could she?

She was determined not to let her team down. Gritting her teeth, the 18-year-old successfully performed her second vault—although at the cost of a broken ankle. But her team won the Olympic gold!

The Isthmian Games

These are just a few examples of courageous moments in Olympic history. The 2008 Summer Olympics will be held in Beijing, China. There the world will surely witness more such thrilling performances of courage under fire.

Almost 2,000 years ago, a man writing a



American sprinter Jesse Owens gave one of the greatest performances in Olympic history at the 1936 Berlin games when he won four gold medals.

letter to the early Christians in the Greek city of Corinth also recalled some Olympic-type moments. This man was the apostle Paul.

He had lived at Corinth for a year and a half and knew of the people's great enthusiasm for these Greek athletic games. In fact, Corinth hosted a type of Olympics called the Isthmian games, held for all Greek athletes every two years—the first year after the Olympics and the year before the next Olympics. The term "Isthmian" refers to Corinth being on an isthmus, a narrow body of land between two seas.

The inhabitants of the great commercial center of Corinth were justly proud of all the fanfare that accompanied these athletic contests. Athletes from all over Greece participated in the games that were second in

importance to only the Olympics—and they had already been held for more than 500 years! They reveled at the great Isthmian moments of triumph and courage, knowing how their heroes were revered for decades—perhaps even centuries.

Paul, however, wanted the Christians in Corinth to concentrate on a different type of competition—an even greater one than the Isthmian or the Olympic games. This was the *spiritual* competition they were engaged in with its final reward of the Kingdom of God, and Paul emphasized the importance of finishing the race with a victory.

Paul’s words to them are still applicable to all of us as the 2008 Olympics approaches and, more importantly, as we likewise fight the Christian fight and run the spiritual race to God’s Kingdom, hoping to one day cross the finish line.

“Don’t you realize that in a race everyone runs,” Paul stressed, “but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27, New Living Bible).

Let’s consider four principles from this passage that help us successfully run the spiritual race set before us.

The need for discipline

Paul notes that “all athletes are disciplined in their training.” He compares Christians to the runners and boxers of the Isthmian games. Those who competed in these games limited themselves to a sparse diet and trained rigorously. They toiled for seemingly endless hours to toughen their bodies so they could withstand the grueling competition.

Of all the events, boxing was the most brutal. The God’s Word translation of 1 Corinthians 9:27 says about the spiritual fight, “So I box—but not as if I were just shadow boxing. Rather, I toughen my body with punches and make it my slave . . .”

In those days the boxer wrapped his knuckles with leather straps. When the Romans took over the competition, the wrapping included lead, iron and even spikes! Sometimes athletes boxed up to four hours at a time—a contest that ended only when a competitor was either knocked out or he signaled defeat by raising his index finger.

At times, Christians can also face grueling trials. Paul warned his fellow minister



This huge stadium at Aphrodisias in Turkey seated some 30,000 spectators. Perhaps the best-preserved stadium from the time of the Roman Empire, it testifies to the popularity of athletic contests at the time the apostle Paul wrote his epistles.

Timothy that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). Persecution can take many forms, including open hostility, economic hardship, verbal beatings or humiliations for trying to follow God’s laws. Much sacrifice is required. Some believers have been imprisoned; many have even lost their lives.

This is why Paul says: “Training the body helps a little, but godly living helps in every way. Godly living has the promise of life now and in the world to come” (1 Timothy 4:8, GWV).

When Paul mentions “training,” he had in mind the gymnasium, a common feature in Greek cities of the day. There an athlete would spend time exercising and strengthening his body to prepare for the upcoming games.

In contrast, Paul tells us our priority should be on exercising and developing our *spiritual* life above and beyond the *physical* life. Paul is not against physical exercise because he points out that it brings some temporary benefits. However, the training of the *spiritual* life—which includes the discipline of daily prayer, Bible study, meditation and occasional fasting—should be a priority because it has both temporal and eternal benefits.

No doubt about it—our spiritual performance largely depends on our spiritual conditioning!

The need to understand and follow the rules

Paul also writes, “I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it

should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9: 27, NLB)

Before participating in the games, athletes in Corinth vowed they would follow the rules in their training and not cheat to try to win the crown.

Paul states, “If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules” (2 Timothy 2:5).

We have probably heard some of the sad stories from Olympic history where athletes were disqualified for violating the rules. They might have been the swiftest or the strongest—but they neglected to obey the rules and were banned from the competition.

In the Christian race, we must also obey the rules—which in this case means keeping God’s spiritual laws! When a young ruler asked Jesus Christ what he needed to do to inherit eternal life, Christ answered him, “If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17).

We should become familiar with God’s commandments—including both their physical and spiritual dimensions. Then we should learn to appreciate each one and apply them with God’s help. The more we practice them, the better results we get—and it’s all for our own good and for the benefit of those around us.

The need to learn from defeat

The Today’s English Version translates Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 9:27 as: “I harden my body with blows and bring it under complete control, to keep myself from

being disqualified after having called others to the contest.”

No athlete wins all the races or contests during his lifetime. In baseball jargon, it means no one bats 1,000. The only spiritual athlete who never lost a contest was Jesus Christ! For the rest of us, we have to learn how to handle failure and not give up. It means dealing with our sins and mistakes and becoming more resolved to overcome them.

Michael Johnson, the only Olympic champion to have won both the 200-meter and 400-meter races in the same Olympics, said in his book *Slaying the Dragon*: “I know that I would not be the runner I am today if it weren’t for a string of losses dating from my first year in college to my disappointing performance at the Barcelona Olympics.

“It was a harrowing, bitter time that threatened to define me as someone who couldn’t win the big race. But my reaction was the force that tempered my strong dedication and led directly to my performance in the 1996 Olympics. I am stronger because of those losses. Without the awful taste of Barcelona in my mouth, who can say how furiously I would have gone after both the 200 and the 400 in Atlanta?” (1996, p. 50).

Paul said of his mistakes: “Brethren, I count not myself to have laid hold of the prize; but one thing I do, forgetting the things behind, and stretching forth toward the things before, I press on toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14, Living Oracles New Testament).

Paul learned from his mistakes, left them behind and rededicated himself to improving and overcoming. That’s the best any of us can hope to do.

The need to persevere with our eyes fixed on the goal

Paul uses another illustration of a runner who focuses on the finish line. He says, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it” (1 Corinthians 9:24).

Unlike the modern Olympic games where runners-up are awarded a prize, in the ancient games only the winner received a crown. There were no second- or third-place awards—so coming in first meant everything!

In the Isthmian games, those who won the competition were awarded a wreath of wild celery or of pine as the prize. Paul called it a “perishable crown” that was insignificant compared to winning the “imperishable crown” of eternal life (verse 25).

Never give up!

A paraphrase of Hebrews 12:1-2 tells us: “Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we’d better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in.

“Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he’s there, in the place of honor, right alongside God” (The Message).

Remarkably, even when Paul was awaiting his execution in Rome, he still had in mind the Isthmian metaphors of the boxer and the runner to describe his disciplined Christian life. He knew he was about to gloriously conclude his boxing match with the world and his spiritual race.

He wrote to Timothy: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

One of the archaeologists who excavated in Corinth, Oscar Broneer, described Paul’s words this way: “The words in Greek have a more distinctly athletic flavor. To bring this out this passage might be rendered: ‘I have competed in the good athletic games; I have finished the foot race, I have kept the pledge (i.e. to compete honestly, with reference to the athletic oath).

“‘What remains to me is to receive the crown of righteousness, which has been put aside for me; it will be awarded to me by the Lord, the just umpire, on that day’ (an allusion to the last day of the games when, presumably, the prizes were handed out to the winners)” (“The Apostle Paul and the Isthmian Games,” *Biblical Archaeologist*, 1962, p. 31).

Yes, now at the end of his life, the discipline had paid off. Paul was a winner and he no longer feared being disqualified. He was about to cross the finish line.

So the coming Olympics is not only a great athletic event—it can also serve as a reminder to us of our spiritual race as we strive to enter God’s Kingdom.

The reward that awaits us is greater than that any Olympic champion ever received—if we apply the principles given by Paul and are able to triumphantly finish our great race! **GN**



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Joy: Foundation for a Positive Life

Jesus said to His disciples, “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11). That sounds almost too good to be true! How can we experience this fullness of joy?

by Don Hooser

Wouldn't you like to experience deep and enduring joy? Wouldn't you like to be *joy-full*? Please be assured—you can.

The world has a woeful shortage of joy and a surplus of fear, worry, discouragement and depression. Even the “pursuit of happiness” and obsessive pleasure-seeking do not bring deep and lasting joy.

Let's first understand the difference between *joy* and *happiness*. Happiness is an emotion, and God never intended for people to be in that emotional state all the time. There is “a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance” (Ecclesiastes 3:4).

Biblical joy—the true joy—comes from filling the spiritual void with good relationships, primarily an intimate relationship with the One who is pure joy. Jesus put it this way: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit” (John 15:5). That fruit includes *much joy!*

The Bible speaks much more often of joy than of being happy. “Hap” means *chance* and is the root of several words—*happen*, *happening*, *haphazard* (dependent on mere chance), *hapless*, *happenstance* (a chance circumstance) and *happy*.

Happiness is a glad feeling that depends on something good *happening*. God wants you to experience happy times (as long as God approves of what is happening). But His greater desire is that you have unconditional joy. Jesus said His joy would “*remain in you*” and “*your joy no one will take from you*” (John 15:11; 16:22, emphasis added throughout).

Think of joy as a strong foundation that supports a variety of healthy emotions, including happiness. The long-range evidence of joy is general gratitude, contentment, optimism, a sense of freedom and other positive attitudes.

Joy looks out and up, not inward

A common mistake is to think that *getting* something will make you happy. We tell

ourselves, “*If only . . .*” But joy and happiness come much more from *giving* and *servicing* than from *getting*.

The apostle Paul reminded his listeners that Jesus Christ had taught this very thing: “There is more happiness in *giving* than in receiving” (Acts 20:35, Today's English Version).

To grow in joy, we must resist not only self-pity but also being self-centered and self-absorbed. For joy to flourish, we must focus on loving others and especially on loving God.

Joy is largely composed of *gratitude*—gratitude for the wonderful things God *has done* for us and His “exceedingly great and precious *promises*” for our future (2 Peter 1:4). Gratitude produces joy (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). And our gratitude should be for other people's blessings as well as for our own (Romans 12:15).

Try to follow this biblical formula: Add to your life gratitude, humility, forgiveness, faith, hope, patience and love. Take away resentment, anger, fear, worry, materialism, greed, jealousy, complaining and pride. The result? Joy!

Joy is spiritual, supernatural and essential

God is joyful—far more than any human being ever was! It's tragic that many people think of God as somber and stern rather than cheerful and smiling with a great sense of humor. He is enjoying His creation, and especially the delightful anticipation of many new “sons of God” (Romans 8:14, 19).

True followers (imitators) of God will be joyful also. Psalm 68:3 says, “Let the righteous be glad; . . . let them rejoice exceedingly.” God desires that we serve Him “with



Joy is largely composed of gratitude—gratitude for the wonderful things God has done for us and His “exceedingly great and precious promises” for our future.

joy and gladness of heart” (Deuteronomy 28:47).

Paul spoke of the “joy of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 1:6). It is through His Spirit that God shares and communicates His joy.

And when Paul lists the “fruit of the Spirit,” joy is *second*, preceded only by love (Galatians 5:22-23). If we are filled with godly love, won't that produce joy? Of course it will.

Being second in the list surprises many people who mistakenly think joy is spiritually unimportant. Some religious people even *shun* joy, at least subconsciously, thinking that pious people should instead

be *solemn*. A few even choose asceticism, which God abhors.

Joy is a major topic in the Bible. In the King James Version, “joy” appears 158 times and “rejoice” 198 times (not counting other variations such as *joyful, joyfully, joyous, jubilant, happy* and *glad*).

Rejoice is the verb form of joy, meaning to feel or have *joy!* Clearly there is great emphasis in the Bible on *feeling and expressing joy*. That explains why the Bible also emphasizes prayers and songs that praise (celebrate) God (James 5:13; Colossians 3:16-17).

Joy is not optional. The Bible repeatedly *commands* us to rejoice! The most emphatic exhortation is in Philippians 4:4, where Paul says, “*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*”

Is it wrong to have sorrow?

The Bible describes two kinds of sorrow. “For *godly sorrow* produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but *the sorrow of the world* produces death” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Those who have joy frequently experience godly sorrow at the same time. It can be the sorrow of repentance toward God. Those who feel the worst about their sins feel the greatest joy about their forgiveness and God’s amazing grace.

Another example is *mourning* over the suffering of others while having the joy of knowing that God will eventually solve all problems (Matthew 5:4).

Worldly sorrow is generally self-pity or a victim mentality. While one indulges in worldly sorrow, it’s virtually impossible to have either godly sorrow or joy.

Isaiah’s prophecy said Jesus would be “a Man of sorrows”—sorrows over mankind’s sins and suffering (Isaiah 53:3). Yet He was also prophesied to be “anointed . . . with the

oil of gladness more than [His] companions” (Hebrews 1:8-9; Psalm 45:6-7). And indeed, Christ had great joy and also experienced great sorrow (John 17:13; Matthew 26:37-39).

Grieving is a healthy response when a loved one dies. However, if we believe the truth of the resurrection, we also have comfort and joy because we know our loss is only temporary. The grief is much more painful for those “who have no hope” in a resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

Joy because of trials?

God’s joy continues to flow through His people even during their suffering because of their rock-solid hope. They know that all suffering is limited to this short life, and the time will soon come when “there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying” (Revelation 21:4). They “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2).

We also have good reason to rejoice *because of* our trials when we understand how God is using those trials to help us build godly character. “And we know that all things [even severe trials] work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

More specifically, Paul wrote that “we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Romans 5:3-4, New International Version).

James wrote, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance”—perseverance in remaining faithful to God (James 1:2, NIV).

And because Christ suffered for each of us, we should have a special joy when we are

persecuted for our faith. Jesus said, “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:11-12).

The number one key to joy: God’s Spirit

Supreme joy is God’s nature and character! We see proof everywhere in God’s creation—birds singing, animals leaping, flowers blooming, brooks babbling and the sun shining! Many people would be less depressed if they would spend more time outside. God “gives us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17).

Since God is exceedingly joyful, His servants should also be joyful! Sadly, many who claim to be His disciples are austere, sour and dour. But take note of Luke’s description of true disciples: “And the disciples were *filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 13:52).

How can we be filled with joy and the Holy Spirit? “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [forgiveness] of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38).

What then? Our unique joy begins because Christ lives in us (Galatians 2:20). He tells us to “rejoice because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). We then have an intimate relationship with the One Psalm 43:4 calls “God my exceeding joy.” In His presence “is fullness of joy” (Psalm 16:11).

God’s Spirit is a tree of life, producing life-giving fruit (Galatians 5:22-23). That fruit includes great joy.

Jesus prayed for His followers “that they may have *My joy* fulfilled in themselves” (John 17:13).

He also teaches us to pray for joy and for all our needs. As He tells us in John 16:24, “Ask, and you will receive, *that your joy may be full!*” **GN**

Paul’s Example of Joy—Even in Persecution and Prison!

Joy comes not from what happens *to* us, but *how we respond*—the kind of attitudes we have *about* those experiences. We need not feel like helpless victims of circumstance.

No matter what predicament we are in, we should ask ourselves: How does God want me to *view* it and *feel* about it? Then we can *choose*—with His help—to have that frame of mind.

A good illustration of this is the apostle Paul’s life. If anyone in history could be excused for wallowing in self-pity and thinking “woe is me” because of frequent severe hardships, it would be Paul (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

Before God called him, Paul was hard-hearted and angry, persecuting and executing Christians. But after his conversion, he was transformed into a loving and joyous person—partly because he understood the magnificent generosity of God’s grace and mercy.

Ironically, of all the books of the Bible, among the most joyful are the “prison epistles”—letters written by Paul while enduring an imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:16-31). They are the books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. A man whom we would expect to *need* encouragement was *giving* encouragement!

Paul referred to his intense suffering as “light affliction” compared with the “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” that awaits God’s servants at the resurrection (2 Corinthians 4:17; see also Romans 8:18). What a great attitude!

Paul wrote, “I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content” (Philippians 4:11). Contentment is a large part of joy.

Paul didn’t tell us to rejoice only when the going is pleasant and easy. He said, “Rejoice always” (1 Thessalonians 5:16).

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

Arizona
Prescott ch. 13, Sun 5 p.m.; Sat 3:30 p.m.
Prescott Valley ch. 13, Sun 9 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
Tucson ch. 73, 98, 120, Sun 8 a.m.; Sat 8 a.m.

Arkansas
Fayetteville ch. 18, Sun 10 a.m.; Wed 6 p.m.; Sat 9 a.m.

California
Alamo ch. 26, Thu 7:30 p.m., 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.

Anaheim (west) ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Berkeley ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.
Clayton ch. 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.
Concord ch. 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.
Costa Mesa ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Cypress ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Danville ch. 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.
Dublin ch. 26, Fri 4 p.m.
El Cerrito ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.
El Sobrante ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.
Emeryville ch. 12, Fri 8 p.m.
Eureka ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Fountain Valley ch. 29, Tue 6:30 p.m.
Fremont ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Garden Grove ch. 28, Tue 10 p.m.
Hayward ch. 3, Fri 2:30 p.m.
Hemet ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.
Hercules ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Huntington Beach ch. 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.
Lafayette ch. 26, Fri 4 p.m.
Livermore ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Los Alamitos ch. 26, Tue 10:30 p.m.
Marin County ch. 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.
Martinez ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Midway City ch. 26, Thu 8:30 p.m.; Fri 6 p.m.
Modesto ch. 16, 98, Tue, Thu and Sat 4:30 p.m.
Monrovia ch. 26, Thu 7:30 p.m., 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.
Moraga ch. 29, Tue 6:30 p.m.
Newark ch. 71, Tue 9:30 p.m.
Novato ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.
Oakland ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Orange ch. 26, Thu 7:30 p.m.
Orinda ch. 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.

Palo Cedro ch. 56, Sun 6 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Pasadena ch. 26, Sun 9:30 a.m. & 3 p.m.; Sat 2:30 p.m.; Wed 6 p.m.
Petaluma ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.

Piedmont ch. 26, Thu 12 midnight
Pittsburg ch. 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.
Pleasant Hill ch. 26, Fri 4 p.m.
Pleasanton ch. 11, Sun 9 a.m.
Redding ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.
Richmond ch. 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.
Rossmore ch. 18, Thu 6 p.m.
Sacramento ch. 19, Sun 3:30 p.m.
San Diego (North) ch. 18, 19, 23, Mon 5 p.m.
San Diego (South) ch. 29, Sun 9:30 a.m.
San Francisco ch. 15A, Wed 4:30 p.m.
San Jose ch. 26, Thu 9 p.m.
San Rafael ch. 15A, Wed 4:30 p.m.
Santa Clara ch. 72, Sun 7:30 p.m.; Sat 10:30 a.m.
Santa Rosa ch. 6, Thu 4:30 p.m.
S. Pasadena ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Stanton ch. 20, Thu 9:30 p.m.
Verdugo Hills ch. 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.
Walnut Creek ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Westminster ch. 43, Fri 1 p.m.

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

Georgia
Cornelia ch. 4, Sun 6:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.

Hawaii
Hilo ch. 53, Sun 10 a.m.; Thu 7:30 p.m.
Lanai ch. 13, Fri 7 p.m.; Sat 7 a.m.
Maui ch. 52, Fri 7 p.m.; Sat 7 a.m.
Molokai ch. 13, Fri 7 p.m.; Sat 7 a.m.

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

Illinois
Arlington Heights ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Bartlett ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Brookport ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.
Buffalo Grove ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Chicago ch. 36, times vary
Des Plaines ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
East St. Louis ch. 18, Sat 5:30 p.m.
Elk Grove Village ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Glenview ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Golf ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Hanover Park ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.

Hoffman Estates ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Lincolnwood ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Metropolis ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.
Morton Grove ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Mt. Prospect ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Naperville ch. 17, Sun 10 a.m.
Niles ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Normal ch. 20, Sun 6 p.m.
Northbrook ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Palatine ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Park Ridge ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Prospect Heights ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Rolling Meadows ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Roseville ch. 6, Sun 9 a.m.
Schaumburg ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Skokie ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Streamwood ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Wheeling ch. 6, Sun 9 a.m., 8 a.m. & 5 p.m.
Wilmette ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.

Indiana
Evansville ch. 3, Sun 9:30 p.m.
Bloomington ch. 7, Mon 5:30 p.m.; Tue 6:30 p.m.
Evanston ch. 57, Sun 9 a.m.
Ft. Wayne ch. 99, Tue 8:30 p.m.
Valparaiso ch. 3, Sun 9:30 p.m.

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

Kentucky
Berea ch. 5, Fri 9 & 9:30 p.m.
Owensboro ch. 52, Sun 8 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Paducah ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.
Richmond ch. 5, Fri 9 & 9:30 p.m.

Massachusetts
Boston ch. 22, 23, 83, Sun 7 a.m.; Wed 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.
Cambridge ch. 22, 23, 83, Sun 7 a.m.; Wed 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.
Greenfield ch. 5, Sun 11:30 a.m.
Northampton ch. 17, Tue 4 p.m.; Wed 10:30 a.m.
Westborough ch. 33, Wed 10 p.m.; Thu 7 a.m.
Worcester ch. 13, Thu 10 a.m.

Michigan
Ann Arbor ch. 17, Thu 4:30 p.m.
Grand Haven ch. 22, Mon 4 p.m.
Grand Rapids ch. 25, Tue or Wed 11 a.m.
Kalamazoo ch. 19, Sun 8:30 a.m.
Midland ch. 3, Fri 5:30 p.m.
Mt. Pleasant ch. 3, times vary
Petoskey ch. 2, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Fri 5 p.m.
Traverse City ch. 2, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Fri 5 p.m.
Ypsilanti ch. 17, Thu 4:30 p.m.

Minnesota
Albert Lea ch. 6, Sun 9:55 a.m.
Austin ch. 6, Sun 7 p.m.
Bloomington ch. 16, Wed 10 p.m.; Thu 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.
Brooklyn Center ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.

Brooklyn Park ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Burnsville ch. 14, Mon, Wed & Fri 4:30 p.m.; Sun, Tue, Thu & Sat 4:30 a.m.
Centerville ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Circle Pines ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Eagan ch. 15, Sun 6:30 a.m.; Mon 12:30 a.m.; Tue 9:30 p.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Thu 3:30 p.m.; Fri 12:30 p.m.; Sat 9:30 a.m.

Eden Prairie ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Edina ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Golden Valley ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Ham Lake ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Hopkins ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Inver Grove Hts. ch. 15, Sun 6:30 a.m.; Mon 12:30 a.m.; Tue 9:30 p.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Thu 3:30 p.m.; Fri 12:30 p.m.; Sat 9:30 a.m.

Lexington ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Lino Lakes ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Litchfield ch. 10, Sun 2 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 1 p.m., 7 p.m.; Wed 1 p.m., 3 a.m., 8:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.

Maple Grove ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Minneapolis ch. 75, Mon 6:30 p.m.
Minnetonka ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
New Hope ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
New Ulm ch. 72, Sun 5 p.m.; Thu 10 a.m.; Fri 7 p.m.

Plymouth ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Richfield ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Robbinsdale ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Rochester ch. 10, Sun 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.
St. Charles ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.
Spring Lake Park ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Wabasha ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.
Willmar ch. 8, Thu 11 a.m. & 8 p.m.; Sat 5 p.m.

Winona ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.

Missouri
Cape Girardeau ch. 5, Sun 7:30 a.m.; Tue 6 p.m.; Thu 12:30 p.m.; Fri 7:30 p.m.
Jackson ch. 5, Sun 7:30 a.m.; Tue 6 p.m.; Thu 12:30 p.m.; Fri 7:30 p.m.
Jefferson City ch. 3, Wed 6 p.m.
Poplar Bluff ch. 54, Tue 4 p.m.
St. Louis ch. 18, Sat 5:30 p.m.
Springfield ch. 26, Sun 8:30 a.m.; Wed 7 p.m.; Sat 8:30 a.m.

Montana
Billings ch. 7, Sun 6 p.m.; Sat 11 a.m.
Helena ch. 11, Sun 3 p.m.
Missoula ch. 7, Sun 11 a.m.

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

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

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

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

New York
Binghamton ch. 4, Thu 5:30 p.m.
Bronx ch. 70, Mon 3 p.m.
Brooklyn ch. 56, 69, Sun 10 a.m.
Canandaigua ch. 12, Sun 2 p.m.
Manhattan ch. 57, Sun 7 a.m.
Olean ch. 6, Thu 9:30 p.m.
Oneonta ch. 23, Mon 6 p.m.; Wed 9 p.m.
Queens ch. 35, Tue 8 p.m.; Thu 3 p.m.
Woodbury ch. 56, Sun 10 p.m.; Thu 4:30 p.m.
Queens ch. 20, Sun 8 a.m.

North Carolina
Asheville ch. 20, Sun 1 p.m.
Burlington ch. 5, 10, Sun 10 a.m.
Charlotte ch. 21, Sat 2 p.m.
Durham ch. 8, Wed 7:30 a.m.
Greensboro ch. 8, Mon 10:30 & 12:30 a.m.
Hickory ch. 3, Sun 7 p.m.
Mebane ch. 5, 10, Sun 10 a.m.
Raleigh ch. 22, Tue 6:30 p.m.

North Dakota
Bismarck ch. 12, Sun 2:30 p.m.
Fargo ch. 12, Tue 10:30 a.m.
Ohio ch. 15, Sun 9:30 a.m.; Mon 11 p.m.
Akron ch. 23, Sun 7 p.m.; Wed 7 p.m.
Athens ch. 21, Tue 7 p.m.; Wed 12:30, 4:30 & 8:30 a.m.; 2:30, 6:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Brunswick ch. 4, Sun 11 a.m. & 8 p.m.; Mon 8 p.m.
Cincinnati ch. 18, Sun 10:30 a.m.; Tue 10 p.m.; Thu 11 p.m.; Sat 6:30 a.m.
Cincinnati (Union Twp) ch. 8, Sun 2:30 a.m.; Tue 9:30 a.m.; Wed 11 p.m.; Sat 2:30 p.m.
Dayton ch. 12, Mon 3:30 p.m.; Sat 11:30 p.m.
Defiance ch. 5, Sun 12 noon; Thu 6 p.m.
Fairborn ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Greenview ch. 3, Thu 8 p.m.
Oberlin/Wellington ch. 12, Sun & Sat 9 a.m.
Springfield ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Trotwood ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Urbana ch. 1, daily 6 a.m., 10 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Vandalia ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Wash. Court House ch. 3, Wed 2 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m.
Xenia ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.

Ohio
Akron ch. 15, Sun 9:30 a.m.; Mon 11 p.m.
Athens ch. 23, Sun 7 p.m.; Wed 7 p.m.
Brunswick ch. 21, Tue 7 p.m.; Wed 12:30, 4:30 & 8:30 a.m.; 2:30, 6:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Cincinnati ch. 4, Sun 11 a.m. & 8 p.m.; Mon 8 p.m.
Cincinnati ch. 18, Sun 10:30 a.m.; Tue 10 p.m.; Thu 11 p.m.; Sat 6:30 a.m.
Cincinnati (Union Twp) ch. 8, Sun 2:30 a.m.; Tue 9:30 a.m.; Wed 11 p.m.; Sat 2:30 p.m.
Dayton ch. 12, Mon 3:30 p.m.; Sat 11:30 p.m.
Defiance ch. 5, Sun 12 noon; Thu 6 p.m.
Fairborn ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Greenview ch. 3, Thu 8 p.m.
Oberlin/Wellington ch. 12, Sun & Sat 9 a.m.
Springfield ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Trotwood ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Urbana ch. 1, daily 6 a.m., 10 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Vandalia ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Wash. Court House ch. 3, Wed 2 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m.
Xenia ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.

Oregon
Eugene ch. 29, Tue 2 p.m.
McMinnville ch. 11, Sun 5:30 p.m.; Wed 8 p.m.
Medford ch. 15, 95, Sun 5 p.m.
Oregon City ch. 21, Mon 8 p.m.
Portland ch. 22, Sun 7:30 p.m.
Salem ch. 23, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Fri 2 p.m.; Sat 11:30 a.m.
Woodburn ch. 11, Sun 9 a.m.

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

Rhode Island
Entire state ch. 14, Fri 10:30 a.m.

Texas
Austin ch. 11, Mon 8:30 p.m.
Dallas ch. 148, 74, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 9:30 p.m.
Del Rio ch. 19, Sun 9 a.m.; Wed 5 p.m.
El Paso ch. 15, Mon, Fri, Sat 1 p.m.
Fort Worth ch. 28, Tue 5:30 p.m.; Thu 1 p.m.
Houston ch. 17, 98, Sun 1:30 p.m.
Longview ch. 26, Tue 2 p.m.; Wed 10 p.m.; Fri 12:30 p.m.; Sat 9 p.m.

Virginia
Charlottesville/ Albemarle County ch. 13, 14, Wed 10 p.m.

Hampton Roads ch. 71, 74, Sun 10 a.m.

Washington
Everett ch. 77, Wed 5 p.m.
Kennewick ch. 13, Sun & Tue 8:30 p.m.
Olympia ch. 22, 29, Sun 9 a.m.; Thu 10:30 p.m.
Seattle ch. 23, 77, Sat 5:30 p.m.
Vancouver ch. 11, Sun 11 p.m.; Mon 5 p.m.; Sat 11 a.m.

West Virginia
Morgantown ch. 3, Mon, Wed & Fri 3 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m.

Wisconsin
Eau Claire ch. 12, Thu 6:30 p.m.
Kenosha ch. 11, Sun 2 p.m.
Madison ch. 14, Sun & Mon 7:30 p.m.
Milwaukee ch. 4, Sun 12:30 p.m.
Stevens Point ch. 96, Mon 2 p.m.; Tue 7 p.m.; Wed 2 p.m.
Wausau ch. 3, Mon 5 & 9:30 p.m.; Tue 10 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.
West Allis ch. 10, Sun 8:30 a.m.; Sat 9 a.m. & 14, times vary

CANADA

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

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

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

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

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

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

Northwest Territory
The Christian Channel Northwstel ch. 226, Sun 8:30 a.m.

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

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

Radio Log

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Louisiana
New Orleans 870 AM/105.3 FM, Sat 9:30 p.m.

Montana
Helena 101.9 FM, Mon 8 p.m.; Fri 8 p.m.; Sat 8 a.m.

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

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

Ohio
Cincinnati 550 AM, Sun 6 a.m.

Oklahoma
Tulsa 740 AM, Sun 8 a.m.

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

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

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



What's the Answer to a Better Life?

Do you feel like the problems of your life have reached a dead end and there are no solutions? No matter how hopeless your life may appear, you can have hope for something better. But you can't solve today's problems with the same old solutions; you'll simply arrive at the same old problems.

by **Beyond Today** host Gary Petty

The gaunt, pale young man explained to me that he was dying. He was sure his illness was punishment from God for his sins. We discussed God's forgiveness, but he had resigned himself to the belief that his sins were so terrible God wouldn't forgive him.

The young man told me doctors claimed his illness wasn't a result of a virus, as he thought, but due to his own imagination. He wouldn't admit it, but it seems unresolved feelings of guilt were literally making him sick.

Feelings of guilt

Guilt is the anxiety you experience because you think you've done something wrong. Some people are overwhelmed with guilty feelings even to the point of emotional breakdown. Others seem to feel no guilt at all no matter how despicable their actions.

The things that make us feel guilty are often determined during our childhood. An emotionally unbalanced family can create strong feelings of guilt in one member when the wrong behavior is actually the responsibility of another. This is common in cases involving adult sexual and physical abuse of children. Many times the abused child will develop overwhelming feelings of guilt when the actual guilt belongs to the adult.

Guilt feelings are manipulated by advertisers to get us to buy products. Husbands and wives are made to feel inadequate if they don't buy expensive gifts for their spouse. Moms and dads are led to believe that they're bad parents if they don't get their children the latest toys, fashions or gadgets.

Who decides what's right and wrong?

This system of thought that makes you



feel guilty is called *your conscience*. The natural development of your conscience is a mixture of conflicting concepts based on natural consequences, society, religion, education and family background.

There are times when you *should* feel guilty because you actually *are* guilty of doing something wrong. But where do you find an absolute definition of right and wrong?

One of the most popular stories from the teachings of Jesus Christ is the occasion when a group of people brought to Him a woman who had committed adultery. In that society adultery was a serious crime condemned by the Ten Commandments, and the men wanted to stone her. Jesus told the crowd, "He who is without

sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first" (John 8:7).

Many people stop here as if that's the end of the story. How many times has adultery, theft, cheating, lying or worse been excused by someone quoting Jesus' words "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone" as though that negates the sin. The reasoning is that God's forgiveness erases not just personal guilt, but any standards of right and wrong. And without standards, no one would have the right to judge anyone else.

But the last words of Jesus to this woman are often ignored. He told her, "Go and sin no more" (verse 11). Christ knew and taught that there are absolute standards of right and wrong. He told the woman

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

caught in adultery to choose the right and stop doing the wrong.

God's forgiveness doesn't erase your personal responsibility to know the difference between good and evil and to choose the good. God's forgiveness frees you from your destructive ways of thinking and acting so you can learn the ways that lead to a better life.

If you really want to change your life, you must accept that you have committed crimes against the standards of God and that you are guilty before Him. Before your life can get better, you need God's forgiveness and then you must "go and sin no more."

Instead, here's what we often do: When confronted with our moral guilt, many of us try to "plea bargain" with God. The reasoning goes something like: "Sure I've done a few wrong things, but I've never killed anybody. I'm not as bad as most people."

The great flaw in this reasoning is that this would be like going before a court of law and presenting a defense based on, "Since I haven't murdered anyone, you must forgive my armed robbery."

In truth, none of us have a defense before the Righteous Judge of the universe. Without His forgiveness all of us are subject to the penalty of absolute, moral law. Before you can experience God's forgiveness, you must first admit that you are guilty before His standards of morality. This is the basis of the biblical concept of *repentance*.

A lesson about God's forgiveness

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who took on Himself the penalty of our guilt, is central to the Bible's message of salvation. This truth is often ignored in the slick, entertainment-driven postmodern Christianity where the message is to just feel good about yourself.

Conviction of your wrong way of living and thinking, and receiving God's forgiveness, are the first steps in creating a new conscience, a new way of thinking. Because of God's forgiveness you can experience freedom from those nagging guilty feelings and have a personal relationship with your Creator. Then your old concepts of right and wrong based on society and family must be changed to conform to the reality of how life actually works.

Jesus told a parable of a young man who left home and wasted his inheritance on booze, wild women and partying without any consideration of the consequences. One day he found himself wishing he could eat from a pig trough with the

pigs. He'd lost his money, his family and friends and his self-respect.

The young man decided that it would be better to return home and hire on as a laborer than to continue in his self-destructive lifestyle. When he arrived home, he told his father, "I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21). The young man expected his father's wrath. Instead, his father was ecstatic because his son gave up his self-destructive ways and returned to his family.

This is how God looks at you. No matter how deep the pit, how hopeless life seems, how many wrong deeds you've committed, God wants you to admit your mistakes and receive His forgiveness and blessings.

Ask for God's help to turn your life around

If you're struggling with guilty feelings, ask God to help you understand what you should really feel guilty about and then ask for His forgiveness to remove the burden of guilt. Jesus proclaimed: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

The apostle Paul captured what it really means to be a Christian when he wrote, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). If you want to go through life living by the standards of "If it feels good, do it," then this message isn't for you. But if you are sick and tired of making the same mistakes, then your life *can* change.

If you long for deep spiritual fulfillment, then the Creator wants to transform your life. Your Father wants you to return home to take your place as His child. He's waiting for you to take the first step! **GN**

Recommended Reading

Are you looking for help to turn your life around? Where do you turn? How do you take the first step? We're here to help! We've put together the biblical answers in an eye-opening booklet. Download or request your free copy of *The Road to Eternal Life*. Take the first steps toward turning your life around!



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

www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

Are You a Slave to Debt?

Millions have allowed themselves to become enslaved to a harsh taskmaster—debt. Are you one of those caught in this trap? What can you do to break free?

by Howard Davis

Joe is 32 years old, handsome and muscular, in his second marriage and burdened by an overly abundant stack of monthly payments. His wife is a stay-at-home mother of two who hopes to complete graduate school.

They live in what they consider an embarrassingly small, 700-square-foot, run-down house, but they both make up for the lower-class image away from home by driving two late-model cars with payments of \$400 and \$500 a month. Joe also pays \$550 in monthly support for a child from his first marriage.

Sound familiar? Joe is a consumer debt addict, and his story is just one example of America's growing debt tragedy. It is repeated in different forms many millions of times in the world's wealthier economies. Many of these people don't see it now, but there is a way out.

Digging into the debt hole

Joe's story of debt started when he graduated at age 23 with a \$40,000 college loan, which is still unpaid. He recently signed a loan for a newer Harley-Davidson motorcycle because his old bike was "too bumpy." And so he took on \$3,700 more debt.

Joe says he needs a better bike so he can get away by himself for an eight-day trip (which he'll finance using his credit cards). He says he needs to clear his mind so that he can come back to tackle his burden of debt, his challenged marriage and his career, which seems like it's going nowhere even though he works 16 hours a day.

Joe senses a need for change. He wants to escape from his bondage of debt, and so he is taking on \$6,000 more debt (including lost wages) for his trip. He thinks this next debt-financed experience will help him successfully deal with his already overwhelmed life.

You might think this decision is irrational. But Joe really believes he needs to get away. He thinks he won't enjoy his escape except on a new bike because his emotionally driven logic deceives him. Joe does

Like all people, we can let a few bad choices shackle us to a burden of debt. But there is a way out.



not understand that his dubious "solution" to his debt problem is fueled by a terrible habit that has firmly entrenched itself in his character. Like all destructive habits, it has turned into his greatest enemy.

Like countless others, Joe looks impressive on the outside, but is desperate on the inside. He reasons and acts like an addict, and he is not alone in his debt lifestyle. It is an addiction that is destroying the happiness, freedom and even the future of millions of people.

Do we have tendencies that make us candidates for this addiction? Like all people, we can let a few bad choices launch us into a downward spiral.

Fantasy and the debt addiction cycle

To escape from debt addiction, Joe must

start by facing the realities of his motivations. Debt addictions often have roots in emotional problems. Joe must realize how his fantasies have crippled his capacity to make sound financial decisions; only then can he make progress.

The next step is deciding to do whatever it takes to escape the addiction. Overcoming any addiction is not easy, but it can be done and the rewards are great. Financial stability does exist beyond debt, but the change requires a complete mental makeover, including a new set of personal values based on reality.

Addictions typically start with a fantasy. In drug addiction, the addict is looking for a "fix"—a dose that will deliver an experience people desire, covet, lust after and feel they need. The "fix" becomes so real,



compelling and powerful that they indulge. As long as the addict is in his fantasy experience, it feels right. But the fix is only a temporary illusion of achievement, pleasure and success.

Behind debt addiction is an inevitable cycle. The euphoria of acquiring new things leads to a sense of edgy emptiness only relieved by another debt-financed fix. Enough is never enough. Wise King Solomon observed this phenomenon 3,000 years ago when he wrote these words now found in the Bible: “The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing” (Ecclesiastes 1:8).

Experiencing more and more pleasure will ultimately not give anybody the true success that brings happiness. As Jesus Christ said: “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the first and love the second, or he will be devoted to the first and despise the second. You cannot serve God and Money” (Matthew 6:24, Revised English Bible).

Materialism will not satisfy or bring inner peace because true happiness doesn't come from having more *stuff*. Christ warned, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15).

Wrestling with debt addiction: Seven steps to escape

If you're overwhelmed by debt, in most cases you can't blame others for being the victim. You made choices. Regrettably, a debt-financed lifestyle was a bad choice. It's possible you never completely understood the internal processes at work that created the debt addiction and you were never taught how to avoid debt. If you are addicted and feeling the pain it causes, you *can* find a way out, but there is only one way that really works.

Freedom from debt addiction requires a complete change in motivation, from mental and physical pleasures of consumption to building character. Today's world is structured to seduce us into the

fantasy of promised rewards through debt. The feelings of desire and bad ideas they arouse are the ultimate source of a debt addiction.

But the good news is that there is a way to escape the debt trap! Overcoming an addiction always begins by shattering denial patterns. It starts by admitting you have a problem. But this is just the first of seven steps necessary to lead a debt-free life.

Step One: Declare spiritual war on fantasy

Facing up to debt addiction as a form of slavery is the greatest requirement to motivate and sustain the process of gaining financial freedom. A person has to want to overcome his own deception and live in reality. He has to declare total war on the problem and its origin in his thinking and behavior. Here, the Bible works as the greatest tool for spiritual warfare—a mirror. It allows you to clearly see through your addiction.

The Bible reveals the inner motives that lead to true success. The values it contains are far superior to human values and, if followed, will lead to financial freedom and blessings. The Bible provides correction to put an addict's life back on track.

“The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender,” says Proverbs 22:7. The term for *servant* used here is actually *slave*—a person without freedom. Being a slave to the lender means you are not really free, and you are subject to someone else in a way God never intended.

In God's dealings with men and women throughout the Bible, He shows His will and authority to make us free in every way, and He encourages us to use our freedom to care for others and develop our character. God did not design human beings for the servitude of financial debt, nor is a man or woman really satisfied while in the slavery of debt. As long as a person is constantly worried about paying bills, he cannot be free.

Overcoming any addiction is a profoundly spiritual process, a form of spiritual wrestling to see reality and act on it. It takes muscle, speed, agility and experience to win a wrestling match. But if Joe is going to defeat his problem, he must wrestle with spiritual issues. Successful wrestling requires the strength of muscle applied against a demanding opponent.

Steps two through seven show how to develop the muscle and character to overcome the opponent, and the process starts by confessing distorted thinking.

Step Two: Educate yourself to develop your vision of victory

To paraphrase a biblical proverb, without vision people perish. It takes a vision of victory, as well as a game plan with techniques, strategies and knowledge, to win a battle and war.

If you have a debt habit, read books about overcoming debt and achieving financial success. Challenge your habits with knowledge. This develops a vision of success with insight into how it can be achieved.

Write out a plan of financial goals for your life, both for the short term (the next year) and long term (the next five years or more). Study, think about and be creative in finding ways to save, and place priorities on real needs, not fantasies or desires. Start saving now. The vision should have a victory goal to eliminate all debt. Have a firm timeline.

Step Three: Change to a new lifestyle today

Develop a mental hunger for financial success by making lifestyle changes today. Make coffee at home in your own coffee pot at 10 cents a cup instead of buying a \$1 cup at the gas station or coffee shop.

A triple café mocha cappuccino once every three days can add up to \$400 a year, and that amount triples if you buy one for a spouse and teen daughter. It all adds up to hundreds, and even thousands, of dollars each year.

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

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

Your subscription is provided by the voluntary contributions of members of the United Church of God, an International Association, and our extended worldwide family of coworkers and donors who help share this message of hope with others.

We are grateful for the generous tithes and offerings of the members of the

Church and other supporters who voluntarily contribute to assist in this effort to proclaim the true gospel to all nations.

While we do not solicit the general public for funds, we welcome contributions to help us share this message of truth and hope with others.

The United Church of God, in accordance with responsible financial stewardship, is audited annually by an independent accounting firm.



Some people spend more eating only 25 percent of their meals out (at triple or more the cost of staying at home) than they spend on the rest of their food budget. Why buy a \$20 meal on a credit card and take 18 months to pay it off at 18 percent interest when you can cook a \$6 meal yourself at home? Cut all unnecessary costs from your spending. Instead learn to spend more time with family, do no-cost leisure activities and shop used stores rather than buying everything new.

In a very short while, buying new things on credit will seem like robbing from yourself, and you'll hate it—and rightfully so.

Step Four: Replace bad debt habits with good character-building habits

If you are a typical adult, chances are you might need to get more exercise, read more to develop your mind and learn to be a better husband, wife, parent, friend or neighbor. Nobody is perfect, so become a student of God and learn to be more like Him. As Jesus said, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Make a list of 10 to 20 things you can do each month that don't cost anything—and then *do them*. This allows you time to get your exercise, help your family and volunteer. Replace getting and debt buying by giving your time and effort to others, and it will come back multiple times as blessings. All the while, you will be moving toward financial freedom.

As Christ said, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom" (Luke 6:38).

Step Five: Have a slash-and-burn debt strategy with the No! habit

To get relief, take a look at all existing payments and consider selling anything associated with a big payment. In Joe's case, his two cars with \$400 and \$500 payments could be replaced with two cars with \$100 payments.

This could save him more than \$8,000 annually, money he could then use to pay off other debts. He could also save substantially on car insurance by having older cars. These savings alone would almost pay off all his debt in five or six years.

Look at all your outgoing expenses and be totally honest. If you are making payments on anything you could sell to get out of debt, sell it *now*. Learn to say *No!* to yourself with pleasure, and relish the financial freedom it will give you.

Use your relationship with God to get out of debt and ultimately find an endless future of freedom in His Kingdom!



Step Six: Resist the debt culture

Materialism is the core of the debt culture, and it motivates many people's lifestyle choices. People are choking in debt and all the personal problems it causes because of inverted values that place fantasy and egotism above reality. Sadly, it is all caused by human nature, which is so susceptible to lust. Face and reject the culture, and turn from all its lies.

The Bible explains how to overcome our vulnerable nature and the self-absorbed materialism in the world: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it" (1 John 2:15-17).

The love of physical things does not produce happiness, no matter what all the advertisements say.

Step Seven: Pursue true spiritual happiness

The book of Hebrews says, "Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have" (Hebrews 13:5). Every one of us is created in the image of God with a virtually limitless potential for creativity, accomplishment, growth and happiness. The earth is a beautiful place if we have the right values and can learn to be content with our physical possessions.

Real contentment comes from building

character, achieving worthy goals and having rich and rewarding relationships. It also comes from the freedom of owning what is yours and being content with that. Life is good when people love you because you have given to them, been a friend, helped, loved and shown by example that you care.

Ultimately, real joy and contentment come through knowing life's great purpose and fulfilling that purpose day by day through a personal relationship with our loving God. Again, the book of Hebrews says, "For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5).

Make God your partner. As Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). Use your relationship with God to get out of debt and ultimately to find an endless future of freedom in His Kingdom! **GN**

Recommended Reading

In our uncertain times when so many people struggle with debt, we could all use sound guidance on our finances. Who wouldn't like time-tested advice on handling money—especially when it's free? We've prepared an important booklet, *Managing Your Finances*, to help you better manage your household finances and budget. Download or request your free copy today!



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

www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

“Can Israel Survive?”

This article certainly captures the volatile nature and precarious political arena now facing the modern state of Israel. The entire region has always been a powder keg of conflicted ideologies, but never more than at present. The article clearly explains the enormous obstacles confronting the Jewish people in their quest for peace. As always, *The Good News* sees past the seemingly unsolvable problems of this present age and highlights the peaceful future God’s Kingdom will bring. Let us all pray, “God speed those days.”

W.P., Amarillo, Texas

“Armageddon: The End of the World”

I want to thank you for the special [introductory] edition of *The Good News*—another exceptional publication. The best article is about Armageddon. It’s good to watch how the Lord is moving in the background to bring about the fulfillment of His prophecies. It’s nice to know who’s really in control. I want you to know how effective your literature is. We’ve used it to witness to those searching for the truth everywhere we go. So your hard work and dedication is making a big difference in people you will never know or hear from.

W.C., Delta, Colorado

“God, Goths and Emos”

I just finished reading your article “God, Goths and Emos” and I am really upset. I have had a wonderful walk with our Lord for over 12 years now. What I find fault with is that you assume that based on someone’s appearance you can decide where they stand with our Lord, which is very incorrect.

I wear black, love corsets and have had hair color every shade of the rainbow. I also listen to Christian music, teach a Sunday school class and lead a fulfilling life for my Savior. God made me a unique person and I not only accept this, I also use it to do good work for Him. There are many who feel lost and need to be saved, but assuming someone is lost due to how they dress is nothing more than judging those who are not like you.

C.W., Bossier City, Louisiana

Thank you for your comments. We are sorry if the article appeared to judge people based on their appearance. The purpose of the article was to show that God does care about all people, and that He has a way of life that truly answers the pain and alienation felt by so many today. The article was attempting to make the point that no counterculture or lifestyle but God’s can address the hopelessness and meaninglessness that plague our world.

God is certainly more interested in the way that we think and behave morally than our clothes and hair. Jesus Christ states that we are not to judge by outward appearance (John 7:24). That said, we do honor God by wise choices in clothing and hairstyles. Both the apostles Paul and Peter tell us that a godly woman should dress herself modestly and seek to avoid extremes of fashion (1 Timothy 2:9; 1 Peter 3:3).

It is not wrong to wear black. But always wearing black clothes and makeup that many associate with glorifying darkness or to shock others is not appropriate. The Bible advises us to avoid worldly patterns of life (Titus 2:12; 1 John 2:15-17), instead imitating the sterling example of Jesus Christ (1 John 2:5-6).

“New Discoveries Challenge Darwin’s Deceitful Theory”

I just wanted to let you know that the articles “New Discoveries Challenge Darwin’s Deceitful Theory” and “Where Do the Dinosaurs Fit?” are so very well written. They have helped me redirect my efforts into studying more about the creation and our Creator. My mind is so finite that I can hardly begin to wrap these brain cells around the immensity of a mere blade of grass, much less the entire universe. But the writer made it simple for me to understand how the Darwinists have to remain atheistic or they will have to admit they have been hornswoggled all of these years. Your articles have rekindled my quest for more solid evidence that I can share with the many nonbelievers I know.

B.A., Marietta, Georgia

Education in America

Thank you so much for the literature that you provide. I read every one of your items. I also write letters to the editors of local newspapers from information that

I have received through your publications. One of the issues I think that needs to be stressed as often as possible is the secular public education system. Is there a greater threat to this nation than the type of education that our youth are receiving? Evolution has been proved to be impossible, but is still taught as fact in our schools. Truly the dumbing down of America has come to fruition.

H.W.H., Shawnee, Oklahoma

Truth in biblical education

I send a profound thank you for all the inspiration, booklets and sermons that this long-time subscriber has received over the years. In this country, students learning to practice law are taught to ask the question *qui bono*—“who benefits?”—when seeking the truth at a human level. When the real truth is sought by a deeper study of God’s incomparable laws in both Old and New Testaments, I believe the answer is so very clear.

G.N., Banchory, Scotland

Helpful booklets and literature

I just wanted to let you know that I really appreciate the booklets that I have received. They are a great help in understanding the Bible. I read and re-read them and enjoy them more than any I have received from others. I am letting my friends know about these booklets.

S.H., Greenfield, Indiana

I just wanted to pause and thank you for sending us the excellent reading materials regarding a variety of topics. I find your publications extremely well supported and clearly presented. You have been a blessing to me and my wife as we search for how best to honor and please our Lord and God.

O.S., Cleveland, Ohio

Letters from around the globe

Thank you for your fascinating booklets and *The Good News* magazine. I would very much like to read *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* and *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. I know I can read them online and download the pdfs, but my kids are beginning to read freely now and I want these booklets lying around the house.

M.D., Estonia

I just wanted to thank God for such inspiring magazines and booklets from the United Church of God. The work that you are doing is very good for people like me. I’m only 20 years old. I am so touched with all of your literature.

C.M.S., South Africa

I am grateful to God who led me to read one of your booklets that caused me to subscribe to *The Good News*. Having received these magazines, I have really come to know that God is the only key to overcoming worldly problems. I want to especially commend your efforts in sending out these booklets to readers all over the world. May God in his infinite wisdom continue to give you every moral and spiritual enablement as you labor in His vineyard.

S.A.N., Lagos, Nigeria

I’ve been a *Good News* subscriber since 1998, and I do thank God for this wonderful ministry. My life has never been the same since. It has become much more Bible-oriented. I just finished reading one of your amazing booklets, *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

As an English-language professor at a municipal institution, I always set aside a little time to discuss your articles with my students. I used to have many doubts about many things, but as I proceeded reading your Scripture-based articles, I started to see things from God’s perspective. My prayer is that your insightful, thought-provoking, God-inspired free literature may be translated into the Portuguese language, so that thousands of Brazilians (and other Portuguese-speaking peoples) can learn what the true gospel of Jesus Christ is all about.

P.S.C., Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Thank you for your kind comments. We have begun translating some of our booklets and articles into Portuguese, available online at www.ucg.org/portugues.

Thank you for informing me about the renewing of my *Good News*



Q: I would like to know why I was put on this planet because I'm fed up with my life.

S.H., Leicester, England

A: We have all at one time or another felt a degree of frustration with our particular circumstances. You are certainly not alone in that respect.

While we do not know the precise situations that are causing you to be very distressed with your life, we do offer you our empathy and our prayers that your circumstances will improve. Sometimes we may be the victims of "time and chance" (Ecclesiastes 9:11), while at other times we may suffer at the hands of others or because of things that are our own fault because of our own choices or actions. Whatever the cause, we are easily burdened with the stress of the situation and the resultant feelings of hopelessness.

The question of why we were put on this planet contains within it an underlying question: *Who* put us here? The answer points us to the purpose of life itself.

Many people have wondered if there really is a God or whether we, this planet and the universe itself, are just a chance occurrence—without purpose and thus without hope beyond any fleeting pleasures. But if God exists and the human race is His creation, that knowledge has important implications. It allows us to view our personal circumstances from a more positive perspective. You may wish to request or download our free booklet *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*

Yet there is another underlying question to consider: If an all-powerful, holy and kind God—who takes a personal interest in His whole human family—really exists, then why does He allow circumstances that cause some in His human family to become so distressed with life itself?

There may be several reasons, but it is not because our Creator is disinterested in His human family or malevolent towards it. Nor is it because He is capricious. Our free booklet *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* provides rational and insightful answers.

On a personal level, what can we learn from being distressed with our lives? Our frustrations should encourage us to seriously address some fundamental questions: Does God exist? And if so, what is our relationship with Him and what does He want it to be?

King David, ancient Israel's hero-king, was a paragon of faith. Yet even he asked: "How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?" (Psalm 13:1-2, New International Version throughout).

At that particular time, David was very distressed and dealing with many problems. Yet he continued to look to God to provide him with hope. He still relied on God for the solution: "Look on me and answer, O LORD my God . . .

I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me" (verses 3-6).

In realistically reviewing our lives, we are likely to see that not everything has been negative. In any case, we need not be void of all hope. The Scriptures contain the records of many individuals whose lives changed for the better through divine help.

The biblical story of Ruth is but one encouraging example. She was the wife of one of two Jewish brothers who had come with their mother and father to live in the land of Moab. After a few years, the father and then the two brothers died, and their widowed mother Naomi prepared to return to Israel.

Ruth, now a widow herself, chose to accompany her mother-in-law to what was for her a foreign land and culture. Her reason for doing so is striking. She told her mother-in-law: "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

In the midst of difficult circumstances, Ruth and Naomi had hope through their belief in the God of Israel. Ruth, although not a native-born Israelite herself, found fulfillment and joy and ultimately became a direct ancestor of Jesus Christ through her marriage to Boaz. God the Father and Jesus Christ provide us with additional perspective regarding our personal sufferings, promising us the hope of future glory in the family of God.

The apostle Paul writes: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.* And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, [which] he has given us" (Romans 5:1-5, emphasis added throughout).

You may find our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* very helpful. It covers in greater detail the subject of life's greater purpose and meaning.

As Paul wrote to the Colossians: "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, *growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might* so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light" (Colossians 1:10-12).

Paul's aptly written words provide us with great encouragement for the present along with the hope of a glorious future destiny beyond the present constraints of our human lives.

subscription. I have been blessed by it not only to know things like Christianity and a Christian worldview, but it has also helped my spiritual growth, leading me to live a Christ-centered life. I appreciate you and your ministry for making truth available to all, even in Asian countries.

K.K.D., Nepal

Donations are welcome

I am interested in contributing donations to the United Church of God, as I feel that you do a lot of good work. I do find your literature very helpful, informative and inspiring. Do you mail out donation forms for this purpose?

J.S., Levelland, Texas

Donations are gratefully accepted and envelopes can be mailed to you and to any who wish to contribute to the work of the Church. Donations can also be made online at www.ucg.org/donation.

I just wanted to thank you for all the magazines and the free booklets that you have sent me time and time again. I would like to start giving my tithes, but I don't know where to send them.

L.A., Frenos, Texas

In the United States, tithes and offerings may be mailed to The United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, Ohio 45254-1027. International addresses are found in the right-hand column of page 2 of any issue of The Good News. If you would like to know more about tithing, please request our free booklet What Does the Bible Teach About Tithing?

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

Situation Ethics = Pig + Lipstick

Would you ever kiss a pig? What if the pig were wearing lipstick? From a distance it might look a little better. But when you got closer, you'd find the same dirty, smelly pig.

by Barry Korthuis

You're probably wondering what ethics has to do with swine and makeup. Granted, it's a strange picture. But it is a good way to understand the code of conduct most people have embraced today. Before we get to the pig and lipstick, let's consider a little background on ethics.

Ethics means the principles that determine morality and acceptable conduct. Everybody has ethics, whether they consciously think about their ethical principles or not.

Today people often make decisions on the basis of *situation* ethics—a belief that instead of accepting absolute, unchanging standards, decisions should be made according to the situation. Situation ethics claims that loving people is more important than rules. Thus, rules can be broken as long as the motive is love.

If situation ethics makes sense to so many people, how could it be wrong? And what could be bad about basing our decisions on love? After all, if love is our motive, isn't that enough?

Here comes the pig

Sometimes the simple continuation of a line of reasoning can help us understand whether such reasoning is sound. Let's assume two people are invited to kiss a pig.

Susie says, "No way. Absolutely not. I don't kiss pigs no matter what they smell or look like."

Bob says, "It all depends. I might if someone bet me money to do it. Of course, it would have to be enough money to make it worthwhile and the pig would need to look good. Hopefully, it just had a bath and might even be wearing lipstick."

This imaginary conversation colorfully illustrates the difference between someone who has absolute values and someone who decides according to the situation.

Susie doesn't care whether the pig has had a bath and is wearing lipstick or not. She doesn't care if someone offers her money to kiss the pig. She has a personal rule that she is simply not going to kiss pigs.

In contrast to Susie, Bob isn't sure how he will decide. It will depend on the circumstances.

To be realistic, we have to understand that some decisions aren't really ethical decisions. They are just personal preferences. Deciding on our favorite dessert is just a personal choice. Ethics is different because it encompasses morality and acceptable conduct. Ethics includes God's instructions. And when it comes to God's commandments, we need to be careful not to use situation ethics.

So what's wrong with situation ethics?

Situation ethics encourages people to pick and choose which of God's laws to follow. It allows people to lie to avoid hurting someone else's feelings. It allows people to break God's laws if they think the result will be good.

But God doesn't let humanity decide what is truly right and wrong. In Matthew 5:17-19 Jesus Christ states that we need to keep all of God's laws. Consider verse 19: "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least [by those] in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great

in the kingdom of heaven.”

Though situation ethics claims to be based on love, it really ignores God’s definition of love. In John 14:15 Jesus says, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

God’s commandments aren’t arbitrary. He gave them to us as a guide to a happy, healthy life. When we break His commandments, we can face tough consequences. Consider what could happen if you lied to protect one of your friend’s feelings. What would happen if your friend found out? Would it hurt your friendship? Would your friend ever trust you again?

We human beings have, as one of our greatest limitations, the inability to see the ultimate results of our actions. This is one of the big reasons God tells us not to rely on our own judgment. In Proverbs 3:5 we read, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.”

Situation ethics is just another way of rejecting God’s law. By dressing it up with concepts like love and consideration, some try to make it look better—like putting lipstick on a pig.

When someone rejects God’s absolute truth, he is not looking past the lipstick. The pig looks pretty good, at first. But those who love God and want to do His will can see the pig for what it is—a pig.

People who rejected situation ethics

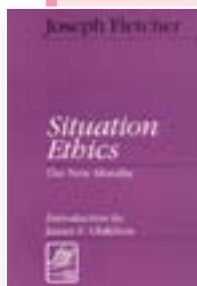
In Daniel 6, some men in the Persian ruler Darius’ administration got him to sign a decree forbidding people to worship anyone besides him for a short period. Daniel refused to compromise and was thrown in the lion’s den, where God miraculously saved him.

We see another example in 1 Samuel 24, where David, whom God had declared Israel’s next king, refused to harm the reigning king, Saul, when he had the chance—even though Saul was trying to kill him. David didn’t compromise God’s law forbidding murder even though Saul wasn’t following the same instruction.

God’s way leads to an abundant and happy life. He wants each of us to succeed, and He gives us an outline for a successful life. We have a choice. Either embrace God’s way or prepare to kiss the pig. **GN**

The Founder of the Situation Ethics Movement

Joseph Fletcher, an Anglican theologian, developed situation ethics in the 1960s after critiquing legalism and antinomianism. Legalism is the belief that there are fixed moral laws that must always be obeyed. Antinomianism is the belief that there are no fixed moral principles and that ethics should be spontaneous.

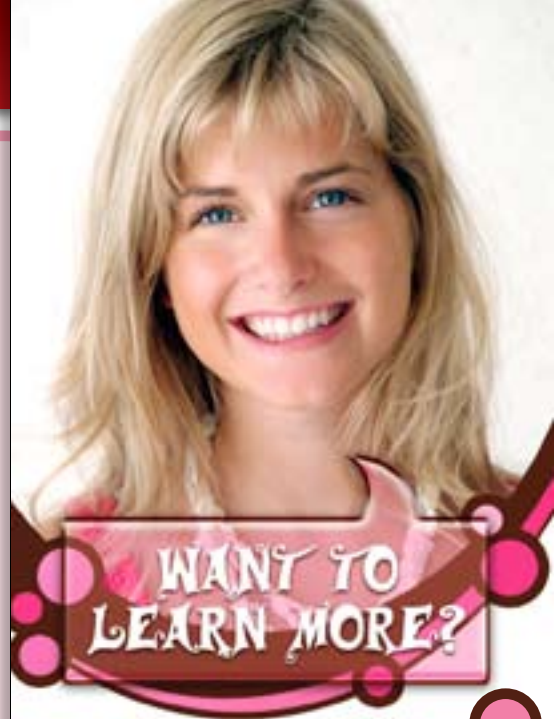


Fletcher believed that neither legalism nor antinomianism provided a sound basis for ethics and advocated “situationism” as a compromise. His book, *Situation Ethics*, was the centerpiece of his critique and founded much of the modern situation ethics movement.

According to Fletcher, decision-making should be based on the circumstances of a particular situation, and not on fixed law. He believed that truth is relative and that love is the only absolute. Thus, he believed that as long as love is the intention, the end justifies the means.

Ironically, Fletcher claims he founded his model on a biblical statement found in 1 John 4:8: “God is love.” Yet he apparently didn’t realize that the same book says commandment keeping shows our love for God (1 John 5:3) and that God never approves of law breaking. Indeed, such conduct is sinful (1 John 3:4).

What eventually happened to Fletcher? His conclusion that God’s Holy Word wasn’t enough to guide a person’s decision-making led him to become an avid supporter of euthanasia and abortion. He died in 1991 an atheist.



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

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

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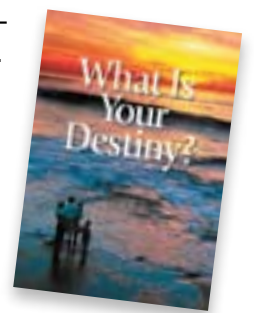
Why?

Does life have a purpose? Does it have real meaning? Is life anything more than a brief span on earth, with nothing but eternity on either side of this physical existence?

This is the question of the ages, a riddle that has challenged human beings since they came to be: Why am I here? Why do I exist?

Thousands of years ago, the biblical King David looked up into the night sky and wrote down his thoughts regarding man's relationship to his Creator: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?"

David wondered about the purpose of man just as we do today. Every one of us was created for a purpose, but few understand what that great purpose is. Our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* will help you understand the incredible truth about why you were born! For your free copy, visit our Web site or contact any of our offices listed on page 2.



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