



# The Good News

May-June 2006

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

## Where Have All The Fathers Gone?

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## The Missing Father



**W**hile reading this issue's lead article—"Where Have All the Fathers Gone?"—I was reminded of a poignant story of a child whose father was gone when he was born, circumstances having put him in a position where he would not be with his family for an unspecified time.

Growing up, the child discovered his father was somewhat of a "mystery man." Everyone seemed to know at least something about him. Many often spoke of him, and no one lacked an opinion about him! Yet, since he had never known him, the child's perception of his father was shaped only by the views of others.

As commonly happens, the famous tend to both attract false friends and create real enemies, and both groups tend to distort their stories.

Depending on the source, the child could hear that his dad was a soft old teddy bear or a tough old grouch. Some claimed he was

### Sometimes the boy even heard his dad's name cursed. The cruelest rumor whispered around, though, was that his dad was dead.

the greatest; others dismissed him as cold, uncaring. Mild critics grumbled that someone with his clout should have done a lot more for everyone; the harshest pointed accusing fingers, blaming him for nearly everything that went wrong.

Sometimes the boy even heard his dad's name cursed. The cruelest rumor whispered around, though, was that his dad was dead.

Even people who said they worked for him gave mixed messages. Some said he set standards so high no one could possibly reach them, but still, you'd better not step out of line. Others seemed relieved he was gone and set about doing things in the business however they wanted.

All things considered, the child was at once fascinated, mystified and conflicted by everything he heard about this person who seemed to be larger than life, yet personally unknown.

Then, years later, he stumbled upon an unread bundle of letters from his dad. In utter amazement he unfolded page after page of stories about things his father had done, his feelings about his family, his hopes and plans, what they would do when he came back, what he had been through, even descriptions about what he was really like. It was as though he had sensed what people would say and wanted to reassure his child how he really was and what had really happened.

This discovery differed drastically from what the child had been told, and his life changed dramatically. He learned how to contact his dad and began looking forward to personally meeting him.

Where is their relationship now? I don't know. You'll have to answer that because . . . *you* are the child, and God is the Father.

He didn't want to be gone from our lives, but God's Word is clear: If He is distant from us, it is because *we*—all humanity—*left Him*.

For us, in our relationship with our heavenly Father, the question is, "Where have all the children gone?" You, too, can discover His letters—they're in the Bible. The good news is that He will be meeting us face to face, and here in *The Good News* we want to help you get to know Him better and build the right relationship with Him.

Paul told the Greeks, regarding their "unknown God," that they "should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might . . . find Him, though He is not far from each one of us . . ." (Acts 17:27-28).

We should too!

—Clyde Kilough, Church president

# The Good News

May-June 2006 Volume 11, Number 3 Circulation: 407,000

*The Good News* (ISSN: 1086-9514) is published bimonthly by the United Church of God, an International Association, 555 Technecenter Dr., Milford, OH 45150. © 2006 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. Periodicals Postage paid at Milford, Ohio 45150, and at additional mailing offices. Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., publishers) unless otherwise noted.

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Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement Number 40026236.

Canada return address: *The Good News*, 2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, ON N8T 3B7.

Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to *The Good News*, Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027.

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# Where Have All the Fathers Gone?

*A devastating epidemic is leaving a trail of broken hearts and broken dreams in its wake. What is this tragic outbreak? It's the epidemic of disappearing fathers, who are sorely needed.*

by Mario Seiglie

**A**s soon as they heard the door open, the two young girls jumped up and began yelling, “Daddy’s home, Daddy’s home!” No longer quietly sitting with Mommy, their heartbeats were now racing and their eyes widened, anticipating playtime with their father.

Soon he was tossing them up and down, and they squealed with laughter when he acted like a big bear. Their mother sat by, watching with delight and amusement, ready to calm things down should the horsing around get too rough.

Who would’ve thought such a scene could be in danger of disappearing?

### Disappearance of the intact family

Sadly, it’s come to the point in many countries that fewer children than ever will have the opportunity to grow up in a home with both a father and a mother. According to the latest statistics, only *a third of the children* in the United States will reach age 18 with both biological parents living at home.

“Fatherlessness is the most harmful demographic trend of this generation,” warns social historian David Blankenhorn. “It is the leading cause of declining child well-being in

this society. It is also the engine driving our most urgent social problems, from crime to adolescent pregnancy to child sex abuse to domestic violence against women” (*Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem*, 1995, p. 1).

With U.S. divorce rates hovering just below 50 percent and the resultant single-parent households alarmingly on the rise, it’s no wonder that only a minority of kids can count on living with both Mom and Dad. Usually, it’s the father who doesn’t stick around and leaves the mom to rear the kids by herself—which is a distinct disadvantage for the children. (See “What Happened to Dad?” on page 6.)

How important is the role of the father in child rearing? New studies have shown that dads, who normally are not given as much credit as moms in child rearing, actually play a vital role in the upbringing of children and their future success. Amazingly, this research reinforces the same principles written in the Bible thousands of years ago! Let’s look at some of the evidence.

**“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).**

The Bible describes the ideal father as

actively and tenderly engaged in his children’s rearing and education.

Yes, his masculine child-rearing tactics often include horseplay with the kids that can annoy and cause anxiety in Mom, the maintainer of domestic peace and order. Yet his rowdiness actually fulfills a vital role in the children’s social, physical and intellectual skills in school and beyond.

“Children’s social, physical, and intellectual development benefit greatly from the involvement of fathers,” observes Yale child psychiatrist Kyle Pruett (quoted by Judsen Culbreth, “What Dads Are Made Of,” *Reader’s Digest*, June 2005, p. 72A). The intellectual gains are noticeable from the first year of life and continue on past high school.

“By eight weeks,” Dr. Pruett explains, “infants can anticipate differences in maternal and paternal handling styles . . . When infants were approached by their mother, they slowed and regulated their heart and respiratory rates, relaxed their shoulders, and lowered their eyelids (Ahh . . . Mom). When the father approached, the infant’s heart and respiratory rates quickened, shoulders hunched up, and eyes widened and brightened (Dad’s here . . . party time!)” (*Fatherhood: Why Father Care Is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child*, 2000, p. 25).

A father's playfulness helps his children develop motor skills, hand-eye coordination, balance and confidence. I remember teaching my four daughters at an early age to ride a bike, snow ski, roller-skate, snorkel and enjoy many other types of sports. Their favorite time as children was when we invented games like the helicopter ride, with me whirling them with my feet like the blades of a helicopter, and the volcano, where they would fall from my knees into the bed.

Such activities created a lasting bond between us and helped them lose their fears about taking on new challenges.

Child studies show that this kind of rough-and-tumble play helps children develop social and emotional experiences that prepare them for school. For instance, they learn to be confident, to take turns and to become leaders. "Kids who learn these early social skills from their fathers do better with peers," says Dr. Ross Parke, professor of psychology and

to spend time in jail, and half as likely to experience multiple depression symptoms" (Pruett, p. 38).

Researchers further found that "both sons and daughters of the dad-involved group [in the study] had higher levels of verbal skills," with the boys' IQ being "positively associated with their father's nurturing, (appropriate emotional and behavioral response to child's needs) and, interestingly, *negatively* associated with their father's disciplinary restrictiveness.

"Boys with nurturing fathers scored higher than the boys whose fathers were less involved unless the father was a strict, authoritarian disciplinarian" (pp. 43-44). So, although discipline has its place, when it becomes harsh and overbearing, as the Bible warns against, it yields negative results.

**"My son, pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding" (Proverbs 5:1).**

*A father's playfulness helps his children develop motor skills, hand-eye coordination, balance and confidence.*



author of *Fatherhood* (quoted by Culbreth, p. 72B).

Conversely, the lack of a father figure tends to leave kids more passive and fearful. Child research indicates that it is the *closeness* felt by the child to the *father* that is most predictably associated with a positive life outcome 25 years later.

"Children who feel a closeness to their fathers are twice as likely as those who do not to enter college or find stable employment after high school, 75 percent less likely to have a teen birth, 80 percent less likely

Mothers normally give care and comfort while fathers focus more on teaching children about the world around them. Notice, for example, that when mothers pick up a baby, they usually have the infant face her—whereas fathers often pick up children so they can look outward, and explore what is in front of them. Dads are "wired" to play a very important role to separate children so they don't become too absorbed in their mother's world.

"It is in the toddler years, from 1½ to about 3½," says Dr. Pruett, "that fathers play one

## What Happens When Fathers Are Not Around?

In Western societies more children than ever are growing up without a father. In fact, recent U.S. census figures indicate approximately *one out of every four* children grow up without a father and *half* will be raised in a one-parent family at some point. But does this mean mothers who rear their children without a father are doomed to failure?

Not at all, answers Dr. Kyle Pruett. It "does not doom fatherless or under-fathered kids. It does mean that we must support single mothers in their struggle to provide caring male relationships for their kids. And it means we can alert these mothers to the hunger in their kids for such relationships if their own hunger has been somehow damaged or wounded, tempting them to close the gate after their kids" (*Fatherned*, p. 14).

Single mothers, divorced mothers and widows with children face a tremendous challenge. Many certainly do rear wonderful children, but they face significant odds to overcome. "Fatherless kids are more prone to depression than kids with a father, are twice as likely to be school dropouts, do less well and are more violent when in school, abuse more drugs, are more criminally active, try (and succeed at) suicide more often, and are at high risk for becoming teenage parents themselves" (p. 158).

What are some of the ways single moms can beat the odds? Here are a few:

- Don't try to be everything to the child, just be the best of what you can be.
- Identify male role models, such as brothers, fathers, male friends, church leaders and neighbors who are competent and willing to take the children along on errands and outings.
- Involve children in activities led by good men—coaches, religious leaders, Big Brothers, etc.—so they get a good dose of masculine attitude and conduct.
- Don't demean the role of men in general just because of bad experiences with men.
- Actively support the child's proper interest in men.
- Strive to have a positive relationship with men so the children will see the benefits of correct masculinity.
- Surround yourself with all the support you can—emotional, physical, social and spiritual.
- Be positive—don't let loneliness, bitterness and isolation take root.

(For more information, see "What Does It Take to Be a Successful Single Parent," beginning on page 12.)

All of us also have a responsibility to help out the widows (single mothers included) and orphans (who, according to the Bible, include the fatherless) with their physical and emotional needs. As Scripture beautifully puts it, "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

## What Happened to Dad?

Today it's common to see the father's role disparaged in media, many times making him out to be a bumbling, inept fool while the children are saved by an almost superhuman mother.

This is a subtle but withering attack on the proper role of the father. "The effect of filling our children's heads with negative images of fathers, of ignoring men who share equally in raising their children," says Dr. Ross Parke, "and of showing nothing but part-time or no-time father is, quite simply, devastating" (*Throwaway Dads*, 1999, p. 81).

Modern literature thrives on this caricature of the father figure. Books such as *Raising Boys Without Men* exemplify this radical vision of children not needing fathers.

Yet when we see the statistics on how hedonistic and dysfunctional society is becoming by following such ideas, we ask, *Where have all the fathers gone?* Where is their leadership?

The answer? Many have selfishly deserted their responsibilities. But others have been cowed by today's liberal, morally relativistic culture and have slowly relinquished their God-given roles as providers, protectors, teachers and nurturers.

A particularly unsettling passage from the book of Isaiah describes society not only as it was in Isaiah's day, but prophetically as it would be at the time before Christ's return. It is eerily similar to what we see today: "I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. The people will be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbor; the child will be insolent toward the elder and the base toward the honorable . . . The look on their countenance witnesses against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves . . . As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them" (Isaiah 3:4-5, 9, 12).

Yes, it was prophesied that the father's role would one day be mostly forfeited in the face of an increasingly blind and lawless society. "Much of our national discussion of youth crime," writes sociologist David Blankenhorn, "simply ignores the elephant in the room called fatherlessness. Moreover, many analysts come quite close to viewing all traditional norms of fatherhood not as a remedy for the problem of youth violence but rather as a leading cause of it" (*Fatherless America*, 1995, p. 29).

So we have a duty to resist following society's evil ways. One crucial way is by strengthening the family unit as best we can.

We must realize the importance both the father and the mother have in properly rearing children and not give in to the false notions commonly presented that alternative-lifestyle parenting is just as good.

of the most critical roles they ever play in the life of their child: helping the child safely and securely separate from the intense maternal dependency of infancy.

"Healthy though dependency on their mother is for children at the beginning of their life, they will not experience, let alone practice, their own competence and mastery skills if they do not strike off in search of their own physical and emotional autonomy. And in this world, you, the father, are the expert guide" (pp. 83-84).

Actively involved dads, who let their children explore the outside world and teach them about the marvels of nature, will help them develop curiosity and self-esteem. "Infants who have been well fathered during the first eighteen to twenty-four months of life are more secure than those who were not in exploring the world around them, and they do so with vigor and interest. They tend to be more curious and less hesitant or fearful, especially in the face of novel or unusual stimuli" (Pruett, p. 41).

Eventually these exploratory skills will become crucial in school and the workplace. People who are inquisitive, socially developed and not afraid to try different methods will have an easier time excelling as challenges arise. After all, Dad already taught

them how to deal in the real world, how to overcome frustrations and figure things out for themselves.

"Fathers can affect how well their children progress in school, which subjects they prefer and even the kinds of occupations they choose," says Dr. Parke. "Whether a child prefers reading and hates math or aspires to be a physicist or an engineer rather than a book critic or a historian is affected by the father's attitudes, encouragement and other behavior" (*Fatherhood*, 1996, p. 156).

Studies done in the 1960s about the effect fathers had on their children surprised even the researchers. For example, they found the amount of time fathers spend reading with their children is a strong predictor for many intellectual abilities—in particular, of the daughters' verbal skills. Remarkably, the same study did not find mothers reading to children to have similar effects, indicating there was something unique in the father's role of reading to them.

For example, women who were high achievers, such as Margaret Thatcher and Indira Gandhi, former prime ministers of Britain and India, respectively, mention they were highly influenced and encouraged by their fathers in their academic and political careers.

Another important role in which the

father excels is teaching children about spiritual and moral values. When the father is a good role model of morality, children respect both of their parents more. If the father establishes rules that are fair and a level playing field in which the children can flourish, they tend to be more obedient. But when the mother sets the rules, children tend to defy them more.

"Sons of fathers who took more responsibility for limit setting, discipline, and helping their child with personal problems and schoolwork," adds Dr. Pruett, "had significantly higher empathy [having feelings of sympathy and compassion for others] scores . . . Father deprivation is directly linked to difficulties in a child's self-control" (Pruett, pp. 48, 51).

**"But did He not make [husbands and wives] one . . . ? And why one? He seeks godly offspring" (Malachi 2:15).**

When God united Adam and Eve, the first two human beings, in marriage, He told them to multiply and fill the earth. God had carefully designed the family unit so children would be reared between two parents who would act as opposite (masculine and feminine) poles.

The child would then be in the middle of this union, receiving equal influence from both parents. An analogy would be of a metal ball suspended between two magnetic poles. Similarly, each parent exerts his or her unique influence so the child is reared to have a balanced and full personality.

Researchers have confirmed that actively involved male and female parents are ideal for bringing up balanced and mature children. Here are some of their findings:

- Children yearn deeply for dads and are born with a drive to find and connect with their fathers and not only with their mothers.
- Fathers have the internal capacity or instinct to respond to their child's desire to connect.
- Men and women do not differ in the depth of love toward their children.
- Each child is loved in a *unique* way by the father and the mother.
- The desire to feel emotionally connected to their children throughout life is the same for men and women, though it may find differing forms of expression.
- Fathers and mothers are equally able to interpret their child's behavioral cues.
- Fathers and mothers are equally anxious about leaving the child to the care of someone else.
- With the exception of lactation, there is no evidence women are biologically

predisposed to be better parents than men.

- Men who become active fathers gain in their ability to understand themselves and others.
- A father who is deeply involved with his children experiences beneficial health results.
- A father present at childbirth is the single most important factor that protected against birth complications and further illness or trauma in the newborn.
- Parental love that overindulges a child usually results in selfishness.

One encouraging trend in Western society is the number of parents who now want to coparent, or share in the physical and emotional care of their children as well as in the responsibilities and decision making. Instead of leaving it to Mom to basically rear the children, now more fathers want to become actively involved.

In a long-term survey of newly married couples who were asked to rank certain values in their marriage, coparenting has moved from the 11th priority out of 15 in 1981 to the second priority in 1997, a surprising shift in

**fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:6).**

We see here that God is very concerned with preserving families. It’s interesting that in the scripture above, it is the hearts of the fathers that must *first* turn to the children, before the children’s hearts are then turned toward their fathers.

How can the hearts of fathers be turned to their children? An important way is taking an active role in their children’s lives!

Simply *reading to them* has been shown to make a big difference in improving children’s verbal skills. Playing with them, so that they feel the warmth, tenderness and masculine good humor of a father, goes a long way to establishing those bonds of closeness that have been shown to determine such positive outcomes in the future.

Taking children out for a walk and pointing out all the wondrous living things around them will arouse their curiosity and kindle their thirst for knowledge. Showing them

become a role model for them.

Fathers are also ideally suited to develop logic skills in their children so they can understand not only *what* they should do in a given situation, but *why* they should do it. The Bible is a marvelous source in this regard, for not only does it reveal true moral and spiritual principles, but it also explains from God’s point of view *why* they should be followed and what happens when they are and when they aren’t.

On the other side, how can children’s hearts be turned toward their fathers? Again, the best source to begin searching for the answer is the Bible, which says this turning of the heart begins with parents following God’s example in His love for His children and by children honoring, obeying and loving their parents.

After all, the Fifth Commandment instructs a child to “honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land” (Exodus 20:12). According to God, *both* parents should be involved in child rearing, and the children should show equal respect for both of them.

As research has confirmed, there’s nothing better than God’s original design of a loving father and mother, along with an extended family, rearing their children in His ways. Dr. Parke states it succinctly when he says that mothers and fathers are indeed different, “but their distinctive styles of caretaking complement each other perfectly to the advantage of children” (quoted by Culbreth, p. 72D).

It is a tragedy that society has come to the point of asking where all the fathers have gone—with so many leaving or abandoning their proper roles. If you are a father or will be at some point, you don’t have to follow the trend. Instead, by following God’s laws and true values, you can be the kind of father He wants you to be! And your children will be blessed. **GN**

## The Bible describes the ideal father as actively and tenderly engaged in his children’s rearing and education.



values in less than one generation.

“Men from Wall Street to homeless shelters,” says Dr. Pruett, “speak with conviction about wanting to father their children more actively than they themselves were fathered. As a senior manager at the investment house Goldman Sachs puts it, ‘I don’t want my son to feel the same void in his heart where his father belongs that I do in mine’” (p. 1).

how to overcome their fears by tackling physical challenges, such as how to ride a bike or take up a sport, helps create confidence, sociability, physical coordination and perseverance that are so valuable in school and the workplace.

Teaching them strong moral values is also another way fathers turn their hearts to the children. It’s wonderful for sons or daughters to be able to turn to Dad for moral guidelines and see their father love their mother and

**“And he will turn the hearts of the**

### Recommended Reading

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



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## A Good News Interview With Dr. Ross Parke

# Why Are Fathers Important?

Interview by Mario Seiglie

## About Dr. Parke



Dr. Ross Parke is a distinguished professor of psychology at the University of California at Riverside. He has more than 30 years of experience researching and writing about fatherhood and is the father of seven children. He is the author of *Fatherhood* (1966) and co-author of *Throwaway Dads* (1999).

**The Good News:** You have spent decades studying father-child relationships. What has most impressed you about those relationships?

**Dr. Ross Parke:** The most impressive thing is fathers are finally waking up to the fact that they *do* matter, and society is also recognizing it. Fathers as well as their wives are realizing fathers do play a unique and distinctive role not only in child rearing but in sharing the burden of daily child care as well, and that wasn't the case 30 or 40 years ago.

**GN:** What is the most encouraging trend about the father-child relationship?

**RP:** It is the recognition that fathers are not only important to kids, but that fathering is good for men as well as good for their partners. I think it is a major shift.

As men have become more concerned about balancing work and family, they have recognized the enormous benefits, rewards and satisfactions from being a good parent. They see that the emotional investment they make in their children comes back to them in terms of making them more open and more satisfied as an adult human being.

**GN:** What about the most *discouraging* trend you see about the parent-child relationship?

**RP:** While there has been some progress toward greater father involvement, it is by no means the revolution we envisioned 25 years ago. That is the point of the *Throwaway Dads* book, to spell out the kind of barriers that still exist in society, such as corporations and the workplace.

The workplace is one area that doesn't normally give the father the flexibility to attend school plays, stay home with a sick child or attend a parent-teacher conference at 3:30 p.m., whereas women are generally given more flexibility in this regard.

**GN:** What is the most important thing a father can do to benefit the long-term outcome of a child?

**RP:** Probably it is the same thing a mother usually does, which is to let the children know they are cared about. In fact, we are doing a study now on a concept called "mattering."

We are trying to measure the way children view their parents and feel that they matter to their parents—that they are something

**RP:** It is probably different, but I'm sure it was just as difficult then too. I think there's a myth that 50 years ago it was easier and now it's harder. But when you look back 50 years ago to when radio, television and comics were introduced, people said, "With all these new technologies, child rearing is becoming more difficult."

Now we have the Internet, video games and Game Boy. So each era has its challenges,

*Fathers do play a unique and distinctive role not only in child rearing but in sharing the burden of daily child care as well.*



important in their lives. You can do a lot for a child, but it is the emotional bond that the child feels—that this adult is really there for the child and that his or her welfare and progress socially, intellectually and emotionally really matter to the parent.

**GN:** What about the mother?

**RP:** It is similar. Mothers and fathers communicate caring in different ways. Moms are probably more likely to listen to the children's problems and be emotionally available, while dads do it through play, shared recreational activities and humor. Both are important ways of communicating that parents care about their children.

**GN:** Is it more difficult to rear a child today than 50 years ago?

but I'm not sure it is any harder now. Even if you think of people in frontier times, it was difficult too, in terms of keeping your kids safe and providing an education. Yes, there are problems with drugs and gangs today, but on the other hand, there were outlaws and challenges in frontier towns that were just as difficult.

**GN:** What is your opinion of books that claim maverick, white-collar moms can rear their children just as well without dads?

**RP:** The evidence is pretty clear that kids do better in two-parent families—partly because of economics and partly because of the distribution of responsibilities between two parents that leads to lower stress.

It's also pretty clear that there are success-



ful single moms, but it's tough to do it on your own. Just consider the sheer economics and the juggling of time to do everything when you're a single parent. Yes, there are feminists who are trying to do the men in, but I think the more sensible ones recognize that fathers play a unique and helpful role.

**GN:** Are you encouraged by the way child rearing is generally going today?

**RP:** Yes, there are positive aspects, such as an awareness of excessive physical punishment as being detrimental to kids and an increased awareness of child abuse. A lot of the practices we accepted in the past, such as the harsh and severe treatment of children, have come under increasing scrutiny.

People are much more aware that there are strategies for dealing with kids like reasoning with them and using nonpunitive tactics that



can be effective. I don't mean you should not set standards, or avoid monitoring them, or not provide discipline, but there is a sense that there are alternative strategies that can avoid what may escalate to more abusive tactics.

**GN:** What do you think is the biggest myth about fatherhood today?

**RP:** There are two myths—one is that fathers are incompetent, and the other is that they don't care. The myth about incompetent fathers is just a cop-out that people have used for not wanting fathers to be very involved.

As for the other—the myth that fathers don't care—even in the case of young or unwed fathers, a lot of those men, when they are encouraged, can take a role in the rearing of the children and can provide economic

support. So there are a lot of attitudes toward men that are often ill-founded.

**GN:** What do you mean in your book by the term “throwaway dads”?

**RP:** We mean society has put up barriers and basically has thrown away dads. Society has not given them the kind of respect and the opportunities to realize the kind of contributions they can make. It has not given them the respect it has shown mothers. Dads have been discarded and not given the central role in the cultural message that they are an important partner in parenting.

**GN:** Do you agree with David Blankenhorn's quote, “Fatherlessness is the most harmful demographic trend of this generation”?

**RP:** Yes, I agree in general with his assessment, but not with his solution, which would take us back to copying a family of the 1950s. I believe women now have many more opportunities to do other things besides being a homemaker, and fathers are now in general more involved in child rearing, and I think that is positive.

**GN:** Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the trends in fathering?

**RP:** I am optimistic about them. All the signs are that even though the changes have been slower than any of us would have liked in terms of how involved fathers are and how much time they spend with their kids, there are measurable increases in father involvement, which is very encouraging.

Secondly, men are recognizing the importance of such participation. I think of my generation vs. my father's. He was involved with me, but it was a more distant relationship than what I have with my own children. So there are signs things are improving, for both men and women.

**GN:** Do you see that trend internationally?

**RP:** Absolutely. You see the same trends in Western Europe, Australia and Scandinavia in terms of social policies giving more opportunities for both men and women to rear their children together. The developing countries do still lag in this regard, mainly in their treatment of women and of recognizing that the father's role could be more nurturing and emotional.

**GN:** You have seven children. What have they taught you most about child rearing?

**RP:** They have taught me the need to listen to them, to be patient and to recognize their developmental changes with respect. I have a 15-year-old boy who says to me, “Dad, I'm not 7 any more!” So, part of the trick for all parents is to recognize that as children develop they need some autonomy—but at the same time, keep some tabs on what they are doing. **GN**

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# Does Father Know Best?

Research shows that children without a father tend to be less settled and more insecure. Now is the time to break that cycle of distant and damaged family relationships wherever they exist.

by Jerold Aust

It's not easy being a father these days. Many pressures compete for our time and try to pull us away from that crucial responsibility. Ken Canfield, president of the National Center for Fathering, cites a telling story in his book *The Heart of a Father*:

"When Don called home from the road one evening, he spoke briefly to his nine-year-old daughter: 'Honey, could you get your mommy on the phone?' He then heard Tasha blurt out, as she set the receiver down on the counter: 'Hey mom, the invisible man is on the phone!' 'In that moment, even before his wife got

hear voices raised in anger, or sarcastic insults between their parents, they inherit the blessings of calmness and security and will likely pass these values to their children.

Parents are role models for their children. Children do what they see their parents do. Thoughtful parents take care to not cripple their children's futures by being immature, selfish role models.

Being an ideal parental role model doesn't come about naturally. Becoming a good father or mother takes attentive work, sensitivity, selflessness and hands-on involvement with

embarrass himself or his family. The show's mother helped reconcile problems, a credit to the media of that day.

What a contrast to today. "Ward and June Cleaver [of the similar TV series *Leave It to Beaver*] and their ideal neighborhood of the fifties seem to be a nostalgic relic. Dramatic changes in lifestyle and culture have revolutionized the structure of the traditional American family. According to one expert, more than 40 percent of American adults have no weekly contact with children" (ibid., p. 18).

The American family was changed enormously by the demands of World War II. Families were subjected to life-changing forces beyond their control: shortage of housing, a lack of good schools and child-care facilities, and, perhaps most importantly, a wearing and prolonged separation from loved ones.

Many "war widows" ran their homes and reared their children alone. Older married women went to work in a variety of war industries; the country needed them.



Parents are role models for their children. Children do what they see their parents do. Thoughtful parents take care to not cripple their children's futures by being immature, selfish role models.

on the phone, Don went through a transformation. He couldn't laugh it off. He had to face the fact: There's something more important than achieving success at work. It's being a dad" (1996, inside front cover).

Increasingly, more families are struggling to make a go of it without a father present. Being fatherless doesn't necessarily mean losing a father through death or divorce. "In a 1994 survey of more than 1,600 adult men, more than 50 percent said their fathers were emotionally absent for them growing up. That may help explain why in another survey only 34 percent of adult males could say that they considered their fathers to be a role model" (p. 18).

Children want to feel safe and secure in their family. Ideally, children with both parents feel safe as they watch positive interactions between their parents. If children don't

children. There are no elevators to parental success; all parents must take the stairs.

## The *Father Knows Best* era on TV

The popular 1950s-60s family TV show *Father Knows Best* showed the ideal American family in those heady days after World War II. American families had separated during the war, and not by personal choice. For many families, Dad went to war and Mom went to work in a factory.

The family would never be the same again. Although the role models of the *Father Knows Best* TV series were a good thing, the show depicted perfect people. This, some believe, set the bar too high and seemed unrealistic for the average family. The show's father and mother offered sage advice to their children. Father never raised his voice, lost patience or did stupid things to

The divorce rate suddenly surged upward. Juvenile delinquency, unwed pregnancy and truancy all rose and many children became the first generation of "latchkey kids."

There's no doubt that the unnatural forces of World War II deeply affected the family unit. Those forces helped set the stage for more debilitating changes to come.

## Times have changed the family

In the 1970s and 80s some liberal thinkers argued that the traditional family, meaning a married biological father and mother and their children, was archaic. Feminists and social liberals led a campaign to experiment with other family structures.

They disguised those freewheeling experiments as freedom of choice, self-fulfillment and showing equal respect for all family types. They went as far as claiming that women and

children don't need men and might be better off without them.

The new language said that the family structure wasn't breaking down, it was simply changing. According to this new thinking, the most important thing for children was their parents' happiness and self-fulfillment. After all, the children were resilient and would likely not suffer the effects of divorce. They derided the idea of parents staying together for the children's sake.

As this notion took hold, more breakups occurred, placing an unbearable load on social and legal supports. The bottom line was that some mothers and children were simply abandoned and fathers forgotten.

Can history help change a family's future for good, or will history repeat itself?

### Future of the family

Modern media entices the weaker side of human nature, and in so doing erodes the family unit with such TV shows as *Desperate Housewives*, *Two and a Half Men* and *Wife Swap* (all airing during prime family viewing time in much of the United States). Media executives and producers say they are simply showing society in a more realistic manner. But this compels the question: Is it better to join human depravity to prove reality, or is it better to lift others up to follow higher standards and good values?

In taking advantage of the basest human desires to milk consumers for money, media actually corrupts reality and is on the wrong side of family values.

Famous TV psychologist Dr. Phil McGraw believes there's hope for families if we stand up to the pressures allied against them:

"It's time that as parents we say, 'Hey, I don't surrender, I do not give up. I will not be intimidated by all the forces tugging on my children and family. I do not accept the epidemics of oral sex, drugs and alcohol in the middle and upper schools. I do not accept a child that appears deaf when I say 'Pick up your toys and don't hit your sister in the head anymore.'

"I will not continue to parent out of fear that my kids won't like me if I require more from them behaviorally, academically and spiritually as I teach them that relationship-building is important in life. I will not feel guilty and go into debt trying to keep them in designer clothes and toys from preschool on up!

"I am not charged with being their friend, I am charged with being their leader. I will not let the television or Internet baby sit them as I communicate only through e-mails, pagers and cell phones. I will instead plug in the old-fashioned way and prepare them to deal with the distractions that assault them and blur their vision of

self. I will create the pride, unity and loyalty and team spirit that is so critical to a phenomenal family" (*Family First*, 2004, p. xv).

### God and family

What's in store for the family unit in the future? Where can parents turn to get the help they want and need?

The Creator God *made* us male and female so we could have children and families (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24). God *designed* the human family to reflect and prepare us for an eventual role in His divine, immortal family (compare Hebrews 2:10-13; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Revelation 19:7). And He has provided an *instruction manual* for humankind, which shows parents how to have a happy and secure family. That manual is the Holy Bible.

The key to a happy family begins with a good foundation. That foundation is God and His Word.

God instructs a father and mother to look to Him for guidance in rearing their family: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:5-7). Most truly happy families have learned to honor God.

The apostle Paul gave fundamental advice to all family members on how to have happy, healthy relationships with one another: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (Colossians 3:18-21).

These fundamental instructions run pretty much opposite to modern media's portrayals of reality. Which do you think is better in the long run?

### Applying basic values

You can have a happier, more secure family by applying some basic values.

Let's consider some good values we as parents can apply. Dr. Canfield gives a three-part blueprint for being a good father in his 1996 book *The Heart of a Father*:

- First, if need be, a father should resolve his relationship with his own father.
- Next, Dad should make his house a home through involvement, awareness, consistency and nurture.
- Finally, a good dad will plan his future. One day he will be a grandfather, so he should anticipate and prepare for changing

situations throughout life.

These are helpful points that deserve our attention. And there are others you can use almost immediately—and when you do, you'll begin to see a healthy change in your family. Here are a few that apply equally well to both fathers and mothers:

- Parents should tell their children they love them. One father and mother established a loving environment in their home by randomly calling out to their children and each other, "I love you with all of my heart!" To this day, family members always greet each other with "I love you and want you to know that I do."

- Parents should apologize to their children if they hurt them. If they don't apologize, they can create a cold-hearted child. Apologizing teaches a child that a mature person should recognize his mistakes and promotes the values of mercy and forgiveness.

- Parents should not show favoritism to one child. If they do, the other children can become resentful and lash out at their sibling.

- Parents should avoid living their lives vicariously through their children. Allow your children to develop their own strengths and they will become more confident.

- Parents should listen attentively to their children. This promotes a healthy relationship, and children come to better respect their parents.

- Parents are the primary models for their children for all types of behavior. If parents are replicating *their* parents' bad habits, they should try to break the cycle by doing what is right.

Parents should teach and love their children while training them to be good future parents. In a larger sense, the investments we make in our families today help determine the welfare of our society tomorrow.

God is developing happy, secure families today. Perhaps your family is that way already. If it isn't, take heart; your family can become one of the happiest and most secure possible. Why not start today? **GN**

## Recommended Reading

What are the keys to building a strong and successful family? What will it take to restore families to their proper place as the foundational building blocks of society? How can you be sure your family will weather the storms of life? To discover the biblical keys to strong, lasting and loving families, request or download your free copy of *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* today!



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# What Does It Take to Be a Successful Single Parent?

*Today's epidemic of divorce and single parenthood affects many people, Christians included. How can you be successful as a Christian single parent?*

by Cecil Maranville

**M**any of you reading these words are single parents. But even if you're not, chances are you know family members or friends who are single parents. It's now so common that it's hard to *not* know any single parents.

A third of American babies are born out of wedlock. Statistically, half of all American children under age 18 will live in a single-parent home at some point in their lives.

Currently about a fifth of all Canadian and South African children live with just one parent. Britain, France, Germany and Australia aren't far behind. In Jamaica, St. Lucia and Haiti, more than four in 10 households are headed by a single parent. In Denmark and Norway, it's close to half.

It's doubtful that many of our readers chose to be single parents. It's not the point of this article to judge single parents for what brought them to their current circumstances. Some were widowed, others had children out of wedlock, some divorced or were divorced, others are separated. What we want to focus on is *where to go from here*.

Let's begin by defining what we mean by "single parent": If you carry the day-to-day responsibility of parenting one or more children without the consistent, hands-on support from a partner, you're a single parent.

Even a married person may be a part-time single parent, if his or her spouse is physically disabled or behaviorally dysfunctional (from drug addiction or substance abuse, for example). The same is true when a spouse's work takes him or her away for extended periods.

The prevalence of divorce adds greatly to embedding single parenting into our culture. One shocking study concluded that most children born in recent years will have more *spouses* in their lifetimes than children of their own.

Think for a few moments about what that means to our children and our grandchildren.

It means a lot of pain for them (and for us). Since they are likely to have at least one or more children along the way, it also means that they will be or will raise single parents.

## Most are mothers

Most single-parent households are headed by mothers, perhaps for many reasons.



***If you are in a single-parent situation, can you be okay? Can your children do well, or are they doomed to an unhappy existence?***

But probably chief among them is the perception that the mother is the nurturer.

In testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives' Subcommittee on Human Resources in 1992, Ronald Henry, a Washington, D.C.-based attorney, testified about the shifting sands of American culture. He noted that throughout most of the nation's history, family law awarded custody of children to the father, who was viewed as central to educating children, providing for them and preparing them for adult life.

After World War I, however, family law adopted the view that the mother was the primary nurturer of children in their early years, meaning that she was typically awarded custody of young children.

Since the 1970s, courts have been making a slow swing back toward the center, theoretically willing to award custody to fathers as much as to mothers.

But in reality few fathers have sole custody, though the numbers are growing. In any case, the win-or-lose adversarial approach of divorce court does not meet the needs of children, who truly require *both* parents.

Thus we see the increasing tendency toward joint custody, which divides the children's time between their parents. It's an attempt to try to "make it all okay."

In contrast to the nurturing mother, the father's contribution (after the initial spark of life) is perceived to be the financial support the child needs. Increasingly, then, the role of the father is thought to be just as easily fulfilled from a distance

as in the same home with his children.

## America the fatherless

"The United States is becoming a fatherless society," writes David Blankenhorn, founder and president of the Institute for American Values, in the introduction to his book *Fatherless America* (1995). "A generation ago, an American child could reasonably expect to grow up with his or her father. Today, an American child can reasonably expect not to."

U.S. Census Bureau statistics from 2003 show that almost one out of four American children under 18 live with only their mother.

"Yesterday, when a father died, our

society affirmed the importance of fatherhood by comforting and aiding his family. Today, when a father leaves, our society disconfirms the importance of fatherhood by accepting his departure with reasoned impartiality.

“Historically, we viewed the death of a father as one of the greatest tragedies possible in the life of a child. Today, we increasingly view the departure of a father as one of those things that we must simply get used to” (p. 24).

The implication is that a single-parent home is the same as a two-parent home. But your children, your emotions and your finances tell you there is a big difference! (Single-parent homes headed by mothers are statistically low-income ones.)

### Anger issues

Many single parents feel a heavy burden

to please Him above all and thus feel that a failed marriage has failed Him.

Single parents might well also have to deal with bitterness, which is the outgrowth of unresolved anger. A single parent may be angry over the behavior of his or her former spouse that led to the present reality of single parenthood. There may be anger over being rejected as a wife or husband. It's not easy to apply the premier godly counsel on anger management: “Be angry, and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down upon your wrath” (Ephesians 4:26, Modern King James Version).

Yet we must deal with anger so that it does not become a “root of bitterness” (Hebrews 12:15) with the power to destroy us spiritually, as well as to do serious harm to our children.

A parent who harbors resentment toward the other will transfer that to the child,

anger. The spouse who pulled the plug on the marriage is often viewed by the other as having betrayed his or her trust.

The marriage covenant is implicitly a lifelong one. When a person proposes marriage or accepts a marriage proposal, it is a profound compliment. It essentially says, “I know you well, and I love what I know. I trust you with my feelings, hopes, dreams and future. I trust you to become the father [or mother] of my children. I trust your judgment. I am comfortable around you at all times.”

The announcement “I want a divorce” is a cancellation notice, a revocation of all of the above. No one in his or her right mind enters into marriage with the thought of simply trying it out for a year as one might lease an automobile instead of buying it. Marriage by nature is a purchase of the heart. So when two who became one become two again, it is inevitable that it breaks the heart of one if not both of them.

## Resources for Single Parents

- [www.montana.edu/wwwpb/pubs/mt200110.html](http://www.montana.edu/wwwpb/pubs/mt200110.html)—Sandra Bailey, Montana State University Extension family and human development specialist, in a 2001 short article titled “Building Strong Single-Parent Families,” gives several examples of the makeup of modern families, a profile of what successful single families look like and a detailed list of the “secrets of strong families” from a 1985 book by that title by college educators and counselors John Defrain and Nick Stinnett. It also offers a 15-point self-analysis by which you can plot your family's situation and on which you can make notes about ideas to implement to change factors that are unsatisfactory.

- [www.edu.pe.ca/southernkings/familychart.htm](http://www.edu.pe.ca/southernkings/familychart.htm) offers a different chart for assessing your family strength and growth areas.

- [kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org)—The “Kids” section has an article for preteens titled “Living With a Single Parent” that offers sound advice; the “Teens” section has one titled “Dealing With Divorce,” which likewise offers good counsel. The Web site is sponsored by the Nemours Foundation, which is dedicated to improving the health of children.

- Judith Wallerstein, celebrated author on issues involving children of divorce, teamed up with professional writer Sandra Blakeslee to write *What About the Kids?*, a 2003 book focusing on the specific needs of children of divorce before, during and after the event. The book helpfully catalogs the different emotional and psychological needs of children at various stages of maturation, offering practical advice on how to meet those needs. As with any resource, you may find points that don't apply to you or with which you don't agree. The book is available through any bookseller (ISBN: 0786868651), as well as in many public libraries.

We do not necessarily endorse the entire content of these resources, but when read with a mind-set based on the Bible, you should find them helpful.

We also publish some related material that you would find useful in meeting your family's physical and spiritual needs: *Making Life Work*, *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*, *Managing Your Finances* and *Successful Parenting*.

of guilt for being in their situation. Perhaps those striving to follow Christ feel it even more strongly.

Even when it may be evident that they did little or nothing to break up their family, their strong sense of responsibility causes feelings of guilt. They place a high value on marriage “‘til death do us part,” not just out of loyalty to their spouse, but also out of an even stronger sense of loyalty to God. These dedicated people want

*even without consciously trying to do so.* It comes across in the tone of voice, the look in the eyes—even in the awkward silences. It is so much healthier to let go of the anger, with God's help.

Understanding the reason for your anger can help. Divorce is often called “the death that never ends.” It brings grieving over your loss, and anger is part of that process. It's often accompanied by a sense of betrayal, which sparks and then fuels

### Issues of faith

The shock of sudden single parenthood can also shake the spiritual faith of the believer who might wonder *Why did God allow this to happen to my child and to me?* But God didn't do it! While it takes two people to enter into the marriage union, it takes only one to break it apart.

God truly blesses the people who commit to marriage the way He fashioned it, as laid out in Genesis 2:24: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

God's blueprint for rearing children is the committed marriage of their biological parents. Two committed parents support each other, reinforce each other, balance each other—and occasionally, they give each other a break. But God doesn't force people to make a commitment that they choose not to make, or that they choose to break.

The believer has an inner trust in the biblical statement in Genesis 2:18 that “it is not good that the man should be alone.” This is not just something that “works for some people,” it is the way God designed us at the emotional, mental and spiritual level.

But if you are in a single-parent situation, can you be okay? Can your children do well, or are they doomed to an unhappy existence?

Children are amazingly resilient. So you can rest assured that indeed you and your children can be okay and that they can have

*Continued on page 28*

## Will America coexist with a nuclear Iran?

Diligent diplomatic efforts are being made to avoid any kind of Western military conflict with Iran. When questioned during her recent visit to Britain, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice emphasized the importance of reliance on diplomacy to achieve the goal of persuading the Iranian leadership to abandon any activities that would lead to creating a nuclear arsenal.

**“An American-led attack on Iran’s nuclear installations is ‘all but inevitable’ if the country fails to comply with the United Nations over its nuclear programme.”**

The recently revised National Security Strategy statement says, “This diplomatic effort must succeed if confrontation is to be avoided” (*The New York Times*, emphasis added throughout).

The Bush administration recently reaffirmed its policy to possibly employ preemptive military strikes against potential threats to American national security. As recently as April 1, the United States warned that “an American-led attack on Iran’s nuclear

installations is ‘all but inevitable’ if the country fails to comply with the United Nations over its nuclear programme” (*The Sunday Express*).

How the Islamic world might react is a major wild card—as, for that matter, is the possible reaction from supposed continental European allies like France and Germany.

According to the *Financial Times*, “Germany’s foreign minister has urged the Bush administration to hold direct talks with Iran over its nuclear programme.” This suggestion has been rejected in favor of collective diplomacy with European nations in the forefront. That this was even suggested is taken as a sign that the European powers privately have little confidence in the ability and capacity of the UN to restrain Iran. Hard choices are ahead for Western leadership, especially the United States.

Some observers warn of unpleasant surprises perhaps much like those that have emerged in Iraq. This much we do know: Serious conflicts in the Middle East will eventually be the spark that ignites a time of unprecedented world troubles leading to the second coming of Jesus Christ. This scenario is laid out in our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The Sunday Times*, *Financial Times* [all London], *The New York Times*.)

## Germany: In need of nuclear weaponry?

Rupert Scholz, a defense minister in the former Helmut Kohl administration, recently stated, “We need to ask ourselves how we could react in an appropriate manner to a nuclear threat from a terror state, and if need be, *even by using our own nuclear weapons*” (emphasis added throughout).

Mr. Scholz openly doubted the present effectiveness of previous guarantees by Western nations during the Cold War era to keep Germany safe and secure. He further stated, “Without the appropriate guarantees of protection by our partners, the question of our own nuclear deterrent needs to be discussed openly.”



After World War II Germany consented to not developing a nuclear arsenal, relying instead on America and NATO for its primary defense needs. Now, however, with the growing threat of nuclear terrorism, Germany appears to be rethinking its position. From the standpoint of biblical prophecy, the likelihood that Germany will eventually have its own nuclear weapons is very great indeed. (Source: *The Times* [London].)

## U.K.-U.S. defense cooperation waning

*The Sunday Telegraph* reported that Britain “seems ready to pull out of the British-US joint strike fighter project and to buy instead French Rafales, which will be used on a third super-carrier to be built for the French navy.” Later an official government source stated that no final decision had yet been reached on this matter.



According to commentator Dr. Richard North, there has been a radical shift in British defense policy “whereby the Ministry of Defence is stealthily steering our armed forces away from co-operation with the US and *towards full integration with the planned European Rapid Reaction Force*” (emphasis added).

The problem revolves around British defense treaties with France and other EU nations in Western Europe. *The Sunday Telegraph* feature article continued, “The Americans have been increasingly reluctant to pass on technological secrets to Britain knowing that we are now treaty bound to pass them onto France.”

Even China is potentially in the loop because of a treaty the European Union signed in Beijing last September. These are the fruits of Britain being caught between conflicting loyalties.

The most disturbing aspect of this whole scenario

## South Africa’s killing fields

According to a cover article in *The Sunday Times Magazine*, more than 1,700 white farmers in South Africa have been raped, tortured, mutilated and killed in the last 10 years. Journalist Brian Moynahan reported that the motive was “not theft, nor land grab as in Zimbabwe—but revenge fuelled by racism and envy.”

The perpetrators of these attacks operate in small gangs that employ extreme violence, torture, rape and mutilation. Sometimes nothing is stolen. One survivor, a woman beaten severely with a steel pole, needed nine steel plates and lost her right eye.

The ethnic cleansing of neighboring rural Zimbabwe is all but completed. We should also be aware that South Africa is not the stable, forgiving country that some observers have pictured for us in the media—although there are positive elements of both qualities in certain places.

Residual racism against white farmers is far from the only problem. Mr. Moynahan also reported that “South Africa suffers from a general epidemic of violence, and farmers cannot expect to be immune in a country where 18,793 people were murdered [from March 2004] to March 2005, *the great majority of them urban blacks*” (emphasis added).

We live in an increasingly violent world, not so unlike it was shortly before Noah’s Flood. Jesus Christ said that at the time of the end, just before His second coming, world conditions would mirror those of Noah’s day (Luke 17:26-27). For further understanding, request or download our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* (Source: *The Sunday Times Magazine* [London].)

is that the British government “has been able to drive it forward without ever admitting what it is up to—and with virtually no one noticing.”

Britain and America have had strong historic ties of mutual defense cooperation going back more than a century. These two nations successfully fought side by side in two world wars in the first half of the 20th century and are now together again in Iraq. Englishmen founded the United States notwithstanding the fact that their parents and/or grandparents may have been born across the Atlantic in Great Britain.

A major disruption in their cooperative defense efforts would eventually produce dangerous consequences for a world at least partially dependent on Anglo-American solidarity for its overall safety and security. To understand more, request our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *The Sunday Telegraph* [London], EU Referendum Web site.)

## Canterbury on the road to Rome?

Many readers may not be aware of the fact that for nearly 50 years there has been an ongoing dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches. It formally began in 1960 when the 100th archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, visited Pope John XXIII in Rome. These two church leaders committed to a serious dialogue in the hope that it would eventually lead to real church unity.

Published last summer, the last formal document (titled *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*) actually stated that “the Roman Catholic Church teaching on the immaculate conception and the assumption of Mary were consonant with Anglican reading of the Bible.” Also, according to *The Times*, there are “increasing numbers of Anglican and Catholic parishes that share church buildings and non-

eucharistic services,” particularly in England.

The original split with the Roman Catholic Church occurred during the days of King Henry VIII in the 16th century, principally over the validity of divorcing his first wife Catherine of Aragon and then marrying Anne Boleyn. Only in the last half of the 20th century has there been a serious ecumenical movement between the two church bodies. Rome has warned Canterbury that a major impediment to full unity would be the Anglican ordination of women to the office of bishop.

Notwithstanding, arrangements are being made for Dr. Rowan Williams, current archbishop of Canterbury, to visit the new pope this year in yet another attempt to make major progress in healing centuries-old rifts. Biblical prophecy shows that religion will play an essential role in end-time events in Europe directly preceding the second coming of Christ. To understand more, request or download our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. (Source: *The Times* [London].)

## Will Osama bin Laden strike again?

A former personal bodyguard of Osama bin Laden says he is certain the al-Qaeda leader is planning another attack on the United States.

As long as this archterrorist is alive, he apparently will continue to make threats—after all, it serves him well. Consider the reasons for such boasts. He might want to discourage the United States’ pursuit of him. He may also want to rally fellow terrorists, hoping to regain some control over them.

Threatening the U.S.-led coalition forces offers an acceptable bravado to potential followers that need strong, rallying language. His threats could also serve as personal ego boosts.

Can Bin Laden facilitate a strike against the United States? Anything is possible, and the mere

bravado might stir a terrorist cell to action. America and Europe must remain extremely vigilant to avoid such a strike, given their porous borders and personal freedoms. Though dangerous times are foretold for the future (2 Timothy 3:1), the Bible also shows that unprecedented peace will eventually come (Isaiah 11).

To better understand Bin Laden’s motives and thinking and where such attitudes will eventually lead, request or download our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.



## Survey: Many teens have sex by age 14

Many American teens are losing their virginity before they are old enough to legally drive, according to a survey produced by The New York Academy of Medicine.

The survey of more than 2,300 Baltimore youths found that four in 10 teens had experienced sexual intercourse by age 14. One in eight said they had sex before age 13. Many had also participated in other forms of sexual activity.

Dr. Danielle Ompad, author of the survey, said the findings are cause for concern for even greater increases in the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases among teens. While the survey was limited to only the city of Baltimore, Dr. Ompad said, “I don’t think other cities would be too different.”

Judy Kuriansky, author of *Generation Sex*, described the results as disturbing though not surprising. She stated that age 14 is far too young to have sex. “They’re not emotionally capable of dealing with this,” she said. She blamed the prevalence of youth sexual activity on mass media’s obsession with sex and the growing number of sexually explicit Internet chat rooms popular with teens.

These shocking findings illustrate the enormous pressures exerted on teens by media, peers and society in general. Parents, if you don’t know what your teens are up to, you had better educate yourself. Otherwise you and they are being set up for major heartbreak or worse. (Source: *New York Daily News*.)

## Alcoholism and drug abuse ruining youth

Binge drinking and drug abuse are taking a terrible toll among British youth. Both addictions breed violence, and drug abuse is notorious for causing violent robberies. According to the *Daily Mail*, “Binge drinking was being blamed after it emerged that British girls are among the most violent in the Western world. English girls aged 11 to 15 came fifth in a league table of violence covering 35 countries.”

Yet another feature article in *The Times* revealed that “cocaine use among children has doubled in a

year . . . Hundreds of thousands of 11-to-15-year-olds are being offered the class A drug which is flooding into the country.”

Both drug and alcohol addiction break down the normal restraints of human conscience. Only a restored family life renewed by the teaching and practice of biblical morality can reverse these damaging, life-destroying trends. To learn more, request our free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. (Sources: *Daily Mail*, *The Times* [both London].)

## Get married, stay married, live longer

Marrying and staying married has a significant impact on longevity for both men and women, according to a study by the National Center for Health Statistics that analyzed 2.2 million U.S. death certificates from 2003.

The study found that married men lived an average of 77.6 years compared to 69.2 years for never-married men and 67.1 years for divorced men. Married women had an average life span of 81 years compared to 77.4 years for the never-wed and 72 for women who had divorced. (Source: Scripps Howard News Service.)

### 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](http://www.wnponline.org) today!





# Will America Run Away From Iraq?

*Does America have the will to endure a protracted conflict in the Middle East? Or will it follow its pattern of withdrawing in the face of determined resistance from both inside and outside the country?*

**T**he U.S. does not have the stomach for a long conflict and will soon revert to its traditional policy of ‘running away,’ leaving Afghanistan and Iraq, indeed the whole of the Middle East, to be reshaped by Iran and its regional allies.”

According to Iranian-born journalist Amir Taheri, writing in *The Wall Street Journal* (March 29), this is the constant theme of Hassan Abbasi, “the principal foreign policy voice in President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s new radical administration” in Iran.

Summing up the view from Tehran, Mr. Taheri states: “Mr. Ahmadinejad believes that the world is heading for a clash of civilizations with the Middle East as the main battlefield. In that clash Iran will lead the Muslim world against the ‘Crusader-Zionist camp’ led by America.”

America is the greatest military power of our age. To many, America seems invincible and has been since World War II. But an increasing number of countries perceive America in quite a different light. Attitudes toward the United States have changed, particularly in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The success of the terrorists that day has emboldened Islamic terrorists around the world who now see the United States as vulnerable.

They are encouraged by the defeat of the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan during the 1980s when the fundamentalist Taliban drove out a world superpower. The Soviet Union collapsed soon afterwards. Now Islamic terrorists see their opportunity to also bring down the world’s remaining superpower, the United States. In the minds of many, only U.S. President George Bush stands in their way.

## “The Last Helicopter”

“The Last Helicopter” was the title of Mr. Taheri’s *Wall Street Journal* article, a reminder of America’s defeat in Vietnam. In April 1975 the last Americans were flown out of Saigon by helicopter as communist troops took the city and moved into the U.S. embassy compound. Tens of millions of people witnessed the last helicopter leaving in a

truly historic moment—the first-ever defeat of the United States in a military conflict, shown on television around the world!

Mr. Taheri continues in the same article: “To hear Mr. Abbasi tell it the entire recent history of the U.S. could be narrated with the help of the image of ‘the last helicopter.’ It was that image in Saigon that concluded the Vietnam War under Gerald Ford. Jimmy Carter had five helicopters fleeing from the Iranian desert, leaving behind the charred corpses of eight American soldiers.

“Under Ronald Reagan the helicopters carried the bodies of 241 Marines murdered in their sleep in a Hezbollah suicide attack. Under the first President Bush, the helicopter flew from Safwan, in southern Iraq, with Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf aboard, leaving behind Saddam Hussein’s generals, who could not believe why they had been allowed

Congress to withdraw its support of an American military presence in the Middle East.

The leaders in Tehran see the world very differently from those in Washington. From their perspective, everything seems to be going their way. “Mr Ahmadinejad also notes that Iran has just ‘reached the Mediterranean’ thanks to its strong presence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories.”

Thanks to Iranian support, President Bashar al-Assad of Syria is able to continue his anti-American policies, supporting terrorist movements in both Iraq and Lebanon. To the east, even America’s ally in Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, is strengthening relations with Iran, fearful of an eventual U.S. pullout from his country.

The Iranian government is also meddling in Iraq, fomenting conflict between the majority Shia and the minority Sunni

*Americans tend to forget quickly. Few would put together the many past incidents and see them as an indication of further military defeat and decline in the future.*

to live to fight their domestic foes, and America, another day.

“Bill Clinton’s helicopter was a Black Hawk, downed in Mogadishu and delivering 16 American soldiers into the hands of a murderous crowd.”

## Everything going Iran’s way?

Americans tend to forget quickly. Few would put together all the above incidents and see them as an indication of further military defeat and decline in the future. Yet such a view is gaining ground in the Muslim world.

According to Taheri, this view of history sees President Bush as an “‘aberration,’ a leader out of sync with his nation’s character.” Radical Islamists believe that the United States is a “sunset” power, on the decline, while Iran is a “sunrise” power, on the rise.

They are convinced that soon the United States will withdraw its military forces from the Middle East, either when a new presidential administration takes office in Washington after the 2008 elections, or as a result of increasing antiwar sentiment at home forcing

Muslims, seeing a future American withdrawal as an opportunity to further Iranian influence in the country. Iran and Iraq fought a bitter eight-year war in the 1980s that left more than a million dead.

Thanks to oil, Iran has money it can use to gain influence. By all appearances, it is also working hard to develop nuclear weapons, which it is already threatening to use against American and British interests in the region. Iranian President Ahmadinejad has also repeatedly threatened to permanently rid the Middle East of the Jewish nation of Israel.

## Events building for withdrawal?

Already we are seeing one consequence of a possible U.S. withdrawal—the inability of the various Iraqi political factions to come together to form a functional government. At the time of this writing, it has been three months since the January election and there is still no government, with major disagreement between Iraq’s Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds on who should head the government as prime minister.



Many politicians are unwilling to commit because they don't know how long the U.S. military and its allies will remain. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw made a surprise visit to Iraq in early April to stress the urgency of the need to form a government. The delay is further aggravating Iraq's security situation.

Added to the lack of a government is the fear among Iraqis of joining the security forces and the police. Already, many recruits have been prime targets of the insurgency. A withdrawal of coalition forces would likely lead only to more blood being shed, with

more than three decades ago.

Then, it seemed to many that the continued spread of communism was inevitable. But the communist system itself is unworkable and began falling apart at the end of the next decade. Today, however, the reality is that the supporters of radical Islam are growing in numbers. It is an ideology with a fervent following, whose adherents are willing to sacrifice their own lives to further their aim, which is to spread Islam and sharia law throughout the world.

Many are convinced they can bring down America and its allies the way they believe they brought down the Soviet Union. A U.S.

the United Nations is in such a role.

### A warning for our time

Long ago God warned a nation, "I will break the pride of your power" (Leviticus 26:19). He was warning ancient Israel and future generations of the consequences of national sin, of turning away from God. He also said, "The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies" (Deuteronomy 28:25).

These negative consequences were not a warning to the gentile nations of the ancient world, but to Israel and its descendants. The United States, Great Britain and Australia, the three most significant contributors to the coalition forces fighting in Iraq, are modern descendants of Israel to whom these warnings apply.

As Mr. Taheri pointed out in his article, the enemies of the United States have been emboldened by the flight of American helicopters from Vietnam, Iran, Lebanon and Somalia. The stakes are high. "The enemies that America is now facing in the jihadist archipelago," he explains, "... are dedicated to the destruction of the U.S. as the world knows it today."

For the safety and security of Western civilization, the rest of the world should hope it's a long time before it sees the last U.S. helicopter leave Iraq and Afghanistan.

But realists around the world know this safety and security is tenuous at best. The Bible shows that cataclysmic events will shake this world as Western civilization, Middle Eastern powers and all other human governments finally reach the end of their rope.

Thankfully the Bible also shows that God will step in before humanity unleashes total destruction upon itself. That is truly Iraq's, America's and this world's only hope. **GN**



**War protestors circle the White House during a peace rally in Washington, D.C., some carrying mock coffins representing those who have died in the Iraq war. Enormous pressure is building for American forces to withdraw from Iraq.**

terrorists targeting anybody in the security services or those who have worked with coalition forces.

The problem for the Western democracies with a military presence in Iraq is that no government can commit troops indefinitely. A change of administration in Washington, London or Canberra could mean a change of policy towards Iraq. It is even possible that a change in the makeup of the U.S. Congress following November elections could precipitate American withdrawal.

The insurgents in Iraq know this and are simply waiting, keeping the body count and bad news in the headlines, believing that their time will come.

### Withdrawal—an ugly scenario

It's important for people to realize that a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq would not be similar to the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam

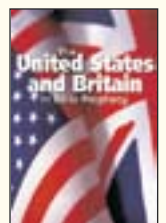
withdrawal from Iraq would only strengthen this conviction. The militants would then be free to go for the jugular, attacking U.S. interests around the world, undermining the American economy and the economies of other Western nations.

Simply attacking oil interests close to home in the Middle East would drive up the price of oil considerably and thereby threaten the economy of the United States and the entire world.

A U.S. withdrawal would be seen as a U.S. defeat, not only in the Middle East but around the globe. Many nations would likely take advantage of such a situation and seize the opportunity to settle scores with other less-powerful nations. The absence of a global superpower—a world policeman or fireman to respond to emergencies—could lead to international chaos. The entire world has long witnessed how toothless

### Recommended Reading

How did the United States rise to dominate the world since the middle of the 20th century? And Britain for the century and a half before that? What lies ahead for these two long-time allies? Believe it or not, the Bible holds the answers to these questions. You need to read *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. Request or download your free copy today!



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[www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets)

# The Da Vinci Code, Christianity and the Bible

The *Da Vinci Code* has sold more than 40 million copies and has been made into a major movie. But how much of the story is fact and how much is fabrication? And how important is it for you to know?

by Don Hooser

**T**he *Da Vinci Code* is a fictional thriller that is supposed to be set against a backdrop of real history. But how much of its “history” is actually true?

The timeless and perfect standard of historicity and truth is the Bible. It contains true history—God’s flawless account of the past, present and future.

*The Da Vinci Code* attempts to reconstruct Jesus Christ, reinvent Christianity and radically revise the Bible. One of the book’s major characters presents its major premise on page 235: “. . . Almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false.”

Which should we believe, *The Da Vinci*

whole cottage industry of publishing—books and Web sites that praise and parrot it, and Christian books and Web sites that refute its claims.

Why is it so popular? Author Dan Brown is a talented storyteller who knows how to appeal to a variety of people—murder-mystery fans, lovers of romance novels, history buffs, religious skeptics, conspiracy theorists, radical feminists, intelligentsia attracted to “alternative” Christianities and even art enthusiasts who may be wondering if Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci really did put secret clues in his paintings.

*The Da Vinci Code* is riding current waves in our culture: revelations of scandals in the

“sacred feminine,” sex rituals and the worship of goddesses.

## The plot

The current-day portion of the plot takes place over 24 hours, mostly in Paris, London and Scotland. It has plenty of surprising clues to pursue, cryptic messages to interpret and people to identify.

In the movie, Harvard professor Robert Langdon, an expert in religious symbols (played by American actor Tom Hanks), is paired up with Sophie Neveu, a detective specializing in analyzing codes and other cryptic messages (played by French star Audrey Tautou), to help solve the mystery

## Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene

**T**here is not one shred of evidence in the Bible—or even in the gnostic “gospels” for that matter—that Jesus Christ ever married a woman. The more one is familiar with the Bible, the more illogical that idea is. Consider these points:

- If Jesus was married to a woman, surely it would be recorded in at least one of the four Gospels or mentioned somewhere in the many New Testament verses on marriage. Yet there is not so much as a hint of it.
- Jesus had to focus entirely on His mission. Knowing He would have to give His life as a sacrifice for all humanity, it would have been incomprehensible that He would marry someone whom He would shortly leave a widow.
- Marriage to a woman would have created great confusion about the present and future role of His wife. Should she be adored and worshipped?

It’s a ludicrous mistake to form opinions about Jesus and His followers based on the paintings of artists who never saw them. For example, the Bible shows that Jesus did not have long hair (1 Corinthians 11:14). And just because Leonardo da Vinci in his painting *The Last Supper* portrayed one disciple as

looking somewhat feminine is no evidence of anything—certainly not that one of the 12 disciples was Mary Magdalene or any woman.

The only record we have of Mary Magdalene is the 12 times she is mentioned in the four Gospel accounts. Jesus cast seven demons out of her and then called her to be one of His followers. She was extremely grateful and dedicated and became a sterling spiritual example.

It is fascinating that after Jesus’ resurrection, His first appearance was to a woman—Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9). Knowing the patriarchal prejudices in that society that still affected Jesus’ disciples, it was further proof of His acceptance of the full worth of women.

But worship her? On the last page of *The Da Vinci Code*, the fictional professor thinks he has found the tomb of Mary Magdalene. “With a sudden upwelling of reverence, Robert Langdon fell to his knees.” And his thoughts were, “The quest for the Holy Grail is the quest to kneel before the bones of Mary Magdalene. A journey to pray at the feet of the outcast one.”

The first of the Ten Commandments forbids the worship of anyone but the one true God (Exodus 20:3).

*Code* or the Bible? Popular Christianity isn’t much help. Ironically, the Bible discredits much of today’s Christianity as well, as we shall see.

## Why *The Da Vinci Code*’s astounding popularity?

*The Da Vinci Code* appears to be the best-selling novel of all time. Buyers have snapped up more than 40 million copies, and it has been translated into more than 40 languages and counting!

*The Da Vinci Code* has become a popular phenomenon. In fact, it has spawned a

Catholic Church and other churches; the growing interest in apocryphal and gnostic writings claiming to be the genuine accounts of the life of Jesus; the “spirituality is good but religion is bad” mind-set; the feminization of Western society; the rage for New Age; biblical illiteracy; and while criticizing most religions is politically incorrect, it’s open season on Christianity.

And, of course, sex sells—so we should anticipate a sexual angle in a blockbuster novel. In *The Da Vinci Code* it’s the portrayal of Jesus as having engaged in a physical relationship and the call for restoration of the

of the bizarre murder of Jacques Saunière, the curator of the Louvre Museum in Paris. All together there are five murders in the story.

They discover that Saunière was murdered because he was a grand master of the Priory of Sion, supposedly a secret society formed to protect the “truth” that Jesus Christ married Mary Magdalene, planning for her to lead His Church after His death.

According to this secret knowledge, Mary was pregnant with Jesus’ child when He was crucified, and in France a whole royal line of their descendants survived to modern times.

Instead of a literal cup or chalice, the legendary “Holy Grail” was Mary Magdalene herself, the “vessel” who held the blood of Jesus in her womb by carrying His child.

Supposedly the Priory of Sion has hidden the bones of Mary Magdalene together with numerous documents “proving” this truth until the right time to reveal it to the world.

In the story, members of Opus Dei (Latin for “Work of God”), a Catholic priestly order, are part of a conspiracy that will stop at nothing, including assassination, to prevent this “truth” from being revealed—because it would not only disastrously undermine the patriarchal Catholic Church, which has suppressed women, but would also refute the very foundation of Christianity.

How? By demonstrating that Jesus Christ, though a great teacher, was a mere mortal and fallible man—and that there was no miraculous virgin birth, no perfect life and no resurrection from the dead.

### Can we separate fact from fiction?

Much space in *The Da Vinci Code* is devoted to “history” being explained by its

sometimes introduce minor errors in understanding, the original Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament are absolutely true and trustworthy. In Jesus’ prayer to God, He said, “Your word is truth” (John 17:17).

This is not something we need to accept only on blind faith. If you sincerely want to know truth, you can learn many proofs that God exists and that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). Simply request or download our free booklets *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*, *Life’s Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and *Is the Bible True?* and prove these matters for yourself.

Both biblical and secular history expose many flagrant fallacies in *The Da Vinci Code*. You can learn about many specific errors in such books as *Cracking Da Vinci’s Code* by James Garlow and Peter Jones, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code* by Darrell Bock and *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers* by Josh McDowell. You can also find many helpful resources on the Internet.

But the title of this article is significant in that there are not just two perspectives to consider—the Bible vs. *The Da Vinci Code*.

People are seldom deceived when teachings are totally false. Most deception occurs when error is mixed with enough truth to make it believable, so the counterfeit seems genuine. Such deception began when Satan befriended Eve and deceived her with half-truths. “The tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:17) partly represented the confusion that results from mixing truth and error.

Deception also depends on the deceiver appearing to be harmless. The apostle Paul warned of “false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:13, Revised Standard Version).

Believe it or not, the beliefs of most churches are mixtures of biblical teachings and pagan traditions (see “Truthful Quotes From *The Da Vinci Code*”). No wonder the great mother Church is called “Babylon,” since the Hebrew word for Babel or Babylon means “confusion” (Revelation 17:1-6; Genesis 11:9). And during the Reformation, when “daughter” churches were expunging many wrong practices and traditions, they did not reject nearly enough!

Certainly *The Da Vinci Code* mixes a paucity of truth with a plethora of error. Its introductory page makes this audacious claim: “All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate.” In fact, a large portion is anything *but* accurate. Since the author’s history and physical facts include innumerable errors, how much less can he be trusted in describing complex theological issues!

However, some of its statements about numerous “Christian” teachings having originated in paganism are true. Note—none of the *Bible* originated in paganism, and the teachings of the *earliest Christians* did not originate in paganism, but pagan ideas and practices began to infiltrate the Church very early in its history.

Most erroneous theories circulating today are nothing new. *The Da Vinci Code* revives and popularizes long-debunked heresies. Religious history has myriad myths based on previous myths based on still previous myths.

## Truthful Quotes From *The Da Vinci Code*

While *The Da Vinci Code* contains many outright fabrications about the history of Christianity, it does contain a few shocking statements that are true. The following quotes from pages 232 and 233 summarize how mainstream Christianity

became contaminated with pagan traditions, and help explain how confused people are when they assume all “Christian” practices originated in the Bible.

“In 325 A.D., he [the Roman Emperor Constantine] decided to unify Rome under a single religion . . . Historians still marvel at the brilliance with which

Constantine converted the sun-worshipping pagans to Christianity. By fusing pagan symbols, dates, and rituals into the growing Christian tradition, he created a kind of hybrid religion that was acceptable to both parties.

“The vestiges of pagan religion in Christian symbolism are undeniable. Egyptian sun disks became the halos [in religious art] . . . The pre-Christian God Mithras . . . [had his birthday celebrated] on December 25 . . . Even Christianity’s weekly holy day was stolen from the pagans . . . Originally . . . Christianity honored the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday, but Constantine shifted it to coincide with the pagans’ veneration [of the] day of the sun . . . To this day, most churchgoers attend services on Sunday morning with no idea that they are there on account of the pagan sun god’s weekly tribute—*Sunday*.”

Shocking, but all true! To learn more, request or download our free booklet *The Church Jesus Built*.



three leading characters—Robert, Sophie and Holy Grail fanatic Leigh Teabing.

But it’s a “history” that exists largely in the imagination of the biased author Dan Brown and the coauthors of one of his major sources, the 1982 book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*—Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln (the first two of whom unsuccessfully sued Brown for incorporating their ideas into his book).

A Christian who has proved the veracity of the Bible will judge books by the Bible, not the Bible by books. Although translations

The perspective of most Christian churches is far different from that of the Bible and the way of life of the original Christians.

### Any mixture of truth and error is error

A major tragedy is that, rather than diligently reading the Bible for themselves, most people assume that the teachings and practices usually presented as “Christian” accurately reflect biblical teaching. As a result, they often get false impressions of what the Bible says. Some become skeptical, assume the Bible has no real authority and decide it is not worth reading. Please, to know the real truth, *read the Book!*

### Major errors in *The Da Vinci Code*

During Jesus Christ’s earthly ministry, His example and teachings did more to elevate women to spiritual equality and respect than perhaps anyone else in history. The Gospels note repeatedly that women were among His most devoted followers.

It is true that oppression and suppression of women have been all too common from the beginning of time. But this novel proposes the opposite extreme—that women are spiritually *superior* because new life comes from their wombs and is nourished from their breasts. It suggests a return to matriarchal paganism with

its ritualistic sex. It even supports the worship of goddesses—especially Mary Magdalene (see “Jesus and Mary Magdalene,” page 18).

*The Da Vinci Code* makes many false and outrageous claims. Among them are:

- The world has made a huge mistake in rejecting Mother Earth in favor of Father God.

- The early Christians did not believe Jesus Christ was divine—only that He was merely a great preacher and prophet.

- After the supposed conversion of Roman Emperor Constantine to Christianity, he invented the idea of the deity of Christ to achieve male dominance and the suppression of women.

- It was the Council of Nicaea, which Constantine convened in A.D. 325, that determined which books were to be included in the New Testament.

- This council rejected as many as 80 gnostic gospel accounts of Jesus to suppress the knowledge that Jesus was a feminist, merely mortal and had a sexual partner.

Please be aware that the Bible teaches that there are only two members of the divine God family—God the Father and Jesus Christ—and they are always referred to with the masculine gender. There are no goddesses. One must not make assumptions based on paganism, such as if there is a Father God there must also be a Mother Goddess.

As the apostle Paul explains, “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Neither Mary the mother of Jesus nor Mary

Magdalene is a god or a mediator between God and men. Nor is any supposed “saint.”

### Conspiracies, conspiracies!

If you decide to read *The Da Vinci Code* or see the movie, it would be much better if you were well-grounded in the Bible rather than have your opinions *about* the Bible and Jesus Christ formed from this novel or film!

People are so intrigued by secret conspiracies that they imagine them, invest in them and exaggerate them. But this blinds them to the world’s *greatest* conspiracy and cover-up—the one pulled off by “Satan, who deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). Jesus Christ called him “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Paul said it is “the god of this age [who] has blinded” everyone (2 Corinthians 4:4). John wrote that “the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19).

Satan doesn’t care what you believe as long as it is not the truth. He would have you piece together your own god in whatever image you choose.

Satan has always wanted to destroy Jesus Christ and the truth that He taught. He influenced King Herod to try to kill Jesus when He was a child (Matthew 2:1-18). He tried to tempt Him to sin (Matthew 4:1-11). He tried many times to get Jesus killed and finally succeeded—with a Roman crucifixion no less. But Christ arose from the dead after three days and three nights, and later ascended to heaven where He rules at the

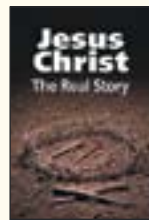
right hand of God (1 Peter 3:21-22).

But Satan has never stopped trying to “suppress the truth” (Romans 1:18). He continually circulates countless counterfeits of biblical Christianity as well as innumerable other religions. But there is only *one* way to eternal life—through Jesus Christ and His revealed Word, the Bible (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

The staff of *The Good News* hopes that the controversy surrounding *The Da Vinci Code* will “work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). We hope it will motivate our readers to study the Bible and be prepared to help other people who are confused and disturbed by fictional pop-culture books and movies like *The Da Vinci Code* (1 Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:15, 22-26). **GN**

### Recommended Reading

Perhaps no figure in history has been as misunderstood and misrepresented as Jesus of Nazareth. Hundreds of books, thousands of articles and billions of words have been written about Him. But who is He really? How much do you know about the Jesus Christ of the Bible? You need to read *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*. You should also request and read *Is the Bible True?* Both are yours free for the asking.



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

## Constantine’s Impact on Christianity

Constantine’s reign as Roman emperor (A.D. 306-337) dramatically changed the direction of Christianity, though in ways far different from those portrayed in *The Da Vinci Code*. This grew out of his strategy for unifying his empire by creating a “catholic”—meaning *universal*—church that would blend elements from many religions into one.



While Constantine supposedly converted to Christianity in 312, he wasn’t baptized until on his deathbed 25 years later. In the intervening years he had his wife and eldest son murdered, and from all appearances he continued as a worshipper of the sun god. Long after his supposed conversion he had coins minted with a portrait of himself on one side and a depiction of his “companion, the unconquered Sol [sun]” on the other.

The “Christianity” Constantine endorsed was already considerably different from that practiced by Jesus Christ and the apostles. The emperor accelerated the change by his own hatred of Jews and religious practices he considered Jewish.

For example, at the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325), church authorities essentially replaced the biblical Passover with Easter, a popular holiday rooted in ancient springtime fertility celebrations. Endorsing this change, Constantine announced: “It appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast [Easter] we should follow the practice of the Jews, *who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin*, and are, therefore, *deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul* . . . Let us then *have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish*

*crowd*” (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3, 18-19, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1979, second series, Vol. 1, pp. 524-525).

Constantine’s affection for sun worship had earlier led him to endorse Sunday, the first day of the week and a day dedicated to honoring the sun, as a weekly day of rest in the Roman empire. This created considerable hardship on those Jews and true Christians who continued to keep the biblical Sabbath on the seventh day of the week. (A century later the Council of Laodicea would essentially outlaw Sabbath-keeping and Christian observance of the biblical Holy Days.)

British historian Paul Johnson summarizes how Constantine’s approach of merging religious practices produced a corrupted Christianity that meshed paganism with biblical elements: “Thus the followers of Isis adored a madonna nursing her holy child; the cult of Attis and Cybele celebrated a day of blood and fasting, followed by the Hilaria resurrection-feast . . . the elitist Mithraics, many of whom were senior army officers, ate a sacred meal . . .

“Many Christians did not make a clear distinction between this sun-cult [Mithraism] and their own. They . . . held their services on Sunday, knelt towards the East and had their nativity-feast on 25 December, the birthday of the sun at the winter solstice . . .

“How could the Christian Church, apparently quite willingly, accommodate this weird megalomaniac [Constantine] in its theocratic system? Was there a conscious bargain? Which side benefited most from this unseemly marriage between Church and State? . . . Did the empire surrender to Christianity, or did Christianity prostitute itself to the empire?” (*A History of Christianity*, 1976, pp. 67-69).

When we consider the vast differences between the mainstream Christianity of today and the original Christianity of Jesus Christ and the apostles, we can trace much of that change to Constantine and the religious system he put in power.

—Scott Ashley

# Meditation: What's on Your Mind?

The Bible teaches us about tools we can use to grow spiritually and build our relationship with God. In this third article in a series, we examine the importance of godly thoughts and meditation.

by Don Hooser

**W**hat were you *thinking*? What *are* you thinking? What *am I* thinking? God knows very well, and He is concerned.

We had better be concerned!

Our minds are what matter most. We are what we are inwardly.

The Bible has much to say about the human “heart,” a word that can be synonymous with “mind,” but which emphasizes the functions of thought, attitudes, emotions, personality and character. In the King James Version of the Bible, the word “heart” appears 833 times!

God judges us largely by what is taking place in our hearts. “For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 through 7, Jesus Christ made it clear that obeying God with our thoughts is as important as obeying with our words and actions. Thus the *spirit* of the law is as important as the letter of the law. No wonder God hates hypocrisy. Speaking to hypocritical religious leaders, Jesus said, “Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matthew 23:28).

Thoughts are seldom hidden forever—they usually lead to words and actions. “For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45).

In the last two issues of *The Good News* we covered the vital spiritual tools of prayer and Bible reading and study. But the quality and effectiveness of our prayers and Bible study are greatly enhanced when we *think carefully or meditate* about what God is saying to us and what we are saying to God. Taking time to really think makes our prayer and Bible study meaningful instead of mechanical, inspiring rather than superficial.

## Many kinds of “meditation”

Contemplating and reflecting on a subject is commonly called *meditation*. Of itself, it is not a religious word. The Bible does not

make a major distinction between *thinking* and *meditating*. The Bible was originally written almost entirely in Hebrew and Greek. A particular word may be translated *think* in one English translation and *meditate* in another translation, or with similar words such as *ponder, consider, imagine* or *muse*.

Here is the point: In the Bible, meditation is never portrayed as a religious, mental or

about “the power of positive thinking” is more humanism, faulty psychology and a rage for New Age “mind over matter” rather than anything biblical. Some of this is worshipping the mind rather than the Creator of minds!

For many Christians and non-Christians, meditation is viewed as a mental or religious ritual. This discourages many believers because it makes meditation to be

something awkward and difficult. This may come as a shock to some, but the Bible never mandates that we meditate—just as it never tells us to think—the presumption being that we already do. It does, however, tell us what we are to meditate *about*.

What do you think is the most common type of meditation? Probably it is *worry*. How



## We can learn much about our loving Designer and Creator by contemplating His incredible creation.

emotional ritual. It simply is directed thinking, reflection, contemplation or concentration. Certainly the *quality* of our thinking can continue to improve, especially when we regularly pray for God’s guidance.

Prayer, Bible study and meditation take *time*. Most people are tempted to neglect these because they feel they are too busy, which is like the life of a young seedling being choked out by too many weeds (Luke 8:14). Find a quiet, comfortable place and take time—*make time*—for God! Our relationship with God needs nurturing, which requires time and communication.

Today we see a virtual mania for all kinds of unbiblical meditation. Meditation that is truly Christian is worlds apart from the meditation of Eastern religions (see “Misguided and Mystical Meditation,” page 22).

Even much of what has been written

sad! Instead of worrying about problems (or *possible* problems), we should *pray*! In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus Christ tells us *not to worry*—but to put God first and trust Him for our needs.

There are many constructive types of meditation, such as analysis, planning ahead and problem solving. Meditation should be *practical*! But much thinking, while not evil, is spent on trivial subjects. Beware of wasting your time and life that way.

Sadly, many thoughts are carnal and destructive—dwelling on fears, resentments, jealousy, lusts, pride and the like. God, however, wants all of our thoughts to be clean, wholesome and godly. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). We expel wrong thoughts from our minds by filling them with *right* thoughts. And purity of heart

## Misguided and Mystical Meditation

Oriental meditation in general is an attempt to empty the mind, while Christian meditation fills the mind. The first looks *within* (to gain access to the “higher self”) or seeks “mindfulness” of the around (“mother earth” or the “cosmos”) while God’s way is to look *up* in worship and submission (to know and obey God). Eastern contemplation is trance-like detachment, while Christian contemplation is attachment—to God.

The blanking of the mind to achieve “enlightenment” includes “transcendental meditation” (TM), the fad started in 1956 by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Many followers believe in the power of “collective thought”—often called the “Maharishi effect”—whereby many people merely thinking the same thing make something happen! It’s essentially saying, “Who needs God or prayer when we can rely on our minds?”

Satan continues to deceive the world with promises “to make one wise”—“your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5-6). He claims to be “an angel of light,” but in reality only blinds people so they are in spiritual darkness (2 Corinthians 11:14; 4:4).

Secular meditation is commonly recommended for therapeutic relaxation for the mind and body. This can be helpful and harmless, but usually the practitioners are naively tempted to “advance” into the more spiritual philosophies and practices. Before long they may be chanting a mantra and studying Zen mysticism. There are plenty of good ways to relax that have no connection with such Eastern religions as Buddhism, Hinduism or Taoism.

Oriental-type meditation is dangerous. First, it is involvement with false religion, which alienates us from God (see Deuteronomy 12:29-32; 18:9-14). Secondly, any attempt to empty the mind in hopes of some telepathic enlightenment is unwittingly inviting demonic influence (compare Luke 11:24-26).

The current widespread fascination with oriental religion is “nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Speaking through Isaiah to His people who should have known better, God said, “They are full of superstitions from the East; they practice divination like the Philistines and clasp hands with pagans” (Isaiah 2:6, NIV).

can only come about through true spiritual conversion. We need God to heal our “heart” trouble!

### Matters to meditate about

Let’s take a closer look at what God tells us to think about. For a more thorough study, you can use a Bible concordance to find and read all the verses that mention such words as *meditate, think, commune, ponder, imagine, remember, examine, watch, etc.*

We find two classic verses on this subject in Philippians 4—“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (verse 4) and “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (verse 8).

The supreme focus of our attention and adoration should be our awesome Creator God! We tend to be *self*-conscious when we need to be *God*-conscious. “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1-2).

Meditate on your Maker and Master. Contemplate His omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. Be filled with gratitude for His goodness, grace and glory. Ponder His perfection, personality and providence. *Be in awe* of God.

### Meditate on God’s words and works

Read and meditate on God’s revelation to mankind, the Holy Scriptures. This is truly *listening* to God.

How appropriate that the longest chapter in the Bible, Psalm 119 with its 176 verses, is totally devoted to praising God for His Word and His laws. “I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways” (verse 15). “Oh, how I love

Your law! It is my meditation all the day” (verse 97). “My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word” (verse 148).

We can learn much about our loving Designer and Creator by contemplating His incredible creation (Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1-4; 139:13-18; Job 38-39). One great way to meditate is to spend time outdoors marveling at God’s flora and fauna!

We should also ponder our relationship with God and His plan and purpose for our lives. David beautifully expressed this in Psalm 8: “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” (verses 3-4, New International Version).

### When to have spiritual meditation

Ideally, we should meditate every day and night about God and the things of God! Psalm 1:2 speaks of a righteous man whose “delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.” Make time to pause and meditate about what you are reading in the Bible to gain spiritual understanding and inspiration.

Think of the parallel between eating and spiritual nourishment. Food is better digested when we eat slowly and chew it well. To digest and absorb God’s Word, we need to “chew” it well and relish each morsel. It’s interesting that the word *ruminant* can refer either to a ruminant mammal chewing its cud or to turning a matter over and over in one’s mind.

As we reflect on God’s truth, we absorb, internalize and personalize God’s words and ways. Rather than words engraved in stone or written on paper, God’s laws become written on our hearts! (Hebrews 8:10).

The foremost reason for meditating on God’s Word should be to analyze how we can *apply and practice* what we are learning. “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is

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## What Should We Meditate About?

What are some of the things we might meditate on to get our minds more attuned to God's way of thinking? Here's a short list to get you started:



- God's astounding creative power as revealed through His creation.
- How God is a Father to us.
- God's awesome plan as revealed by His Holy Days.
- Jesus Christ's sacrifice.
- What the Kingdom of God will be like, both in the Millennium and beyond.
- Jesus Christ's perfect example of what God wants us to be.
- Jesus Christ's teachings—how can we best live by them?
- The blessings that come from obeying God's laws.
- The curses that come from disobeying those laws.
- How to overcome various sins.
- The many promises in the Bible.
- The experiences of biblical figures—what can we learn from them?
- Read any section of the Bible and ask, What does God want me to learn from this?

God's Word is filled with subjects on which we can meditate. The important thing is that we set aside time to do so, and in so doing learn to see things as God does. As He tells us in Isaiah 55:9, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." What a privilege and blessing it is to have many of those thoughts written down for us in the Bible!

—Scott Ashley

*written in it.* For then you will make your way prosperous, and then *you will have good success*" (Joshua 1:8, emphasis added throughout).

And intersperse your prayer with meditation. Then your worship is a two-way

necessary for deep spiritual understanding. (How to receive God's Spirit will also be covered in a future article in this series.)

Once we recognize sins we must confess them to God and seek His forgiveness. We find an inspiring example of repentance,

**People tend to believe it doesn't matter if thoughts are sinful, as long as they don't act on them—because no one knows their thoughts. But Someone does. God knows every thought of every person.**

conversation with God. Pray and meditate about God's solutions when you have problems. And meditate with thanksgiving as you count your blessings.

### Meditation should include self-examination

Spiritual growth requires introspection to discover the sins and faults that we need to remove (compare 1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5). Pray for God to help you see yourself the way God sees you. Fasting for humility can help like a spiritual mirror (the value of fasting will be covered in the next article in this series).

As we evaluate ourselves and do this "soul-searching" based on the standards of God's Word, the gift of the Holy Spirit is

confession and prayer in Psalm 51, written by King David: "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (verses 2, 10).

When meditating on God's Word, we should use it as a mirror to help us see what we need to change.

### Danger of mind-manipulation

Now for a strong word of warning. Consider the powerful influence of modern media in manipulating our thoughts. For example, no matter how long a movie lasts, it usually keeps our full attention. And with all of today's technological realism, we viewers vicariously experience

and respond to everything in the drama.

Television and movie producers often have an agenda for shaping the values of the audiences. If they want us to sympathize with an atheist with an immoral lifestyle and be disgusted with a sincere Christian family man, they can easily manipulate our feelings in that direction (compare Isaiah 5:20). And ultimately behind all evil influences and deception is a real Satan the devil (1 John 5:19; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 14).

Rather than be naive about the dangers, we must protect our minds from being infected with spiritual pollution—garbage in, garbage out, as they say. When we are repeatedly exposed to evil such as immoral sex, pornography, violence and foul language, our consciences become insensitive and our personal standards are pulled down. Actions become habits and habits become addictions.

We can all regularly pray the request in Psalm 119:37—"Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way." We can ask ourselves, what movies and TV shows would Jesus Christ watch? What music would He listen to? What books and magazines would He read or look at? And what would He be thinking about?

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Proverbs 4:23, NIV). Rule your heart! Better yet, let *God* rule your heart!

### God reads minds

People tend to believe it doesn't matter if thoughts are sinful, as long as they don't act on them—because no one knows their thoughts. But *Someone does*. God knows every thought of every person (see Psalm 139). And He holds us accountable for our thoughts as well as our words and ways (see Matthew 5).

In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 the apostle Paul speaks of the spiritual warfare we should be waging. He says we must be "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, *bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*" (verse 5). That is impossible humanly speaking, but not when we allow God to work through us. Along with Paul, we can say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

May the conclusion of the beautiful Psalm 19 in verse 14 be our prayer: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer." **GN**

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<b>Arizona</b>	
Phoenix	ch. 24, 98, Sundays 4 p.m.; Mondays 5:30 p.m.
Prescott	ch. 13, Sundays 6:30 a.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m.
Prescott Valley	ch. 13, Sundays 6:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.; Mondays 9 a.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Tucson	ch. 73, 98, Sundays 8 a.m. ch. 72, 97, Saturdays 10 a.m.
<b>Arkansas</b>	
Fayetteville	ch. 18, Sundays 10 a.m.; Wednesdays 6 p.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m. ch. 19, Sundays 8:30 a.m. ch. 7, Sundays 9 a.m.
Mena	
Mountain Home	
<b>California</b>	
Alamo	ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Berkeley	ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
Chatsworth	ch. 34, Sundays 2:30 p.m.
Clayton	ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Concord	ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Danville	ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Dublin	ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
El Cerrito	ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
El Sobrante	ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
Eureka	ch. 10, Fridays 7 p.m.
Hayward	ch. 28, Tuesdays 10 p.m. ch. 3, Fridays 3 p.m.
Hemet	ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
Hercules	ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Lafayette	ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
Livermore	ch. 26, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Marin County	ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Martinez	ch. 26, Thursdays 8:30 p.m.; Fridays 6 p.m.
Modesto	ch. 16, 98, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays 4:30 p.m.
Monrovia	ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Moraga	ch. 71, Tuesdays 7:30 p.m.
Novato	ch. 26, Sundays 8 a.m.
Oakland	ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Orinda	ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Palo Cedro	DCA cable link, Thursdays 10 a.m.
Pasadena	ch. 56, Sundays 6 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Petaluma	ch. 26, Sundays 8 p.m.; Fridays 4 p.m.
Piedmont	ch. 26, Sundays 8 a.m.
Pittsburg	ch. 26, Thursdays 12 midnight
Pleasant Hill	ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Pleasanton	ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
Redding	ch. 11, Sundays 11:30 a.m.
Richmond	ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.
Rossmore	ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Sacramento	ch. 18, Thursdays 11:30 p.m.
San Diego	ch. 23, Thursdays 10 p.m.
San Diego (North)	ch. 19, Sundays 11:30 a.m.
San Francisco	ch. 29, Sundays 9 a.m.
San Jose	ch. 15A, Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.
San Rafael	ch. 26, Tuesdays 7 p.m.
Santa Clara	ch. 15A, Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.
Santa Rosa	ch. 72, Sundays 7:30 p.m.; Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
S. Pasadena	ch. 6, Thursdays 4 p.m.
Van Nuys	ch. 25, Sundays 2 p.m.
Verdugo Hills	ch. 20, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.
Walnut Creek	ch. 6, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
<b>Colorado</b>	
Boulder	ch. 43, Fridays 1 p.m.
<b>Florida</b>	
Tampa	ch. 19, 20, Sundays 10 a.m.; Fridays 12:30 p.m.
<b>Hawaii</b>	
Lanai	ch. 13, Fridays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 7 a.m.
Maui	ch. 52, Fridays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 7 a.m.
Molokai	ch. 13, Fridays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 7 a.m.
<b>Idaho</b>	
Boise	ch. 11, Tuesdays 7:30 p.m.
Coeur d'Alene	ch. 19, Fridays 8 a.m.
<b>Illinois</b>	
Arlington Heights	ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Bartlett	ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Buffalo Grove	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Chicago	ch. 36, times vary
Des Plaines	ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
East St. Louis	ch. 18, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.
Elk Grove Village	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Glenview	ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Golf	ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Hanover Park	ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Hoffman Estates	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Lincolnwood	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Morton Grove	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Mt. Prospect	ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Naperville	ch. 17, Sundays 10 a.m.
Niles	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Northbrook	ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Palatine	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Park Ridge	ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Prospect Heights	ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Rolling Meadows	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Romeoville	ch. 6, Sundays 9 a.m.
Schaumburg	ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Skokie	ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.

Springfield	ch. 4, Fridays 3 a.m., 11 a.m. & 8 p.m.
Streamwood	ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Wheeling	ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Wilmette	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
<b>Indiana</b>	
Bloomington	ch. 3, Sundays 9:30 p.m.
Elkhart	ch. 99, Mondays 4:30 p.m.
Evansville	ch. 7, Mondays 5:30 p.m.
Ft. Wayne	ch. 57, Thursdays 2 p.m.
Valparaiso	ch. 99, Tuesdays 8:30 p.m.
<b>Iowa</b>	
Des Moines	ch. 15, Sundays 11:30 a.m.
Low City	ch. 18, Tuesdays 12:30 p.m.; Fridays 5:30 p.m.
<b>Kentucky</b>	
Hopkinsville	ch. 23, Wednesdays and Fridays 11 a.m.
Murray	ch. 19, Sundays 8 p.m.
Owensboro	ch. 52, Sundays 8 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Paducah	ch. 2, Thursdays 3:30 p.m.
<b>Massachusetts</b>	
Amherst	ch. 12, Tuesdays 9 p.m.
Cambridge	ch. 22, Sundays 7 a.m.; Wednesdays 10 a.m.
Greenfield	ch. 17, Fridays and Saturdays 5 p.m.
Palmer	ch. 15, Sundays 12, 2:30 & 8 p.m.
Shrewsbury	ch. 33, Wednesdays 10 p.m.; Thursdays 7 a.m.
Worcester	ch. 13, Thursdays 10 a.m.
<b>Michigan</b>	
Ann Arbor	ch. 17, Thursdays 4:30 p.m.
Grand Haven	ch. 22, Mondays 4 p.m.
Grand Rapids	ch. 25, Tuesdays or Wednesdays 11 a.m.
Kalamazoo	ch. 19, Sundays 8:30 a.m.
Midland	ch. 3, Thursdays 12:30 p.m.
Mt. Pleasant	ch. 3, times vary
Traverse City	ch. 2, Sundays 11:30 a.m.
<b>Minnesota</b>	
Austin	ch. 6, Sundays 7 p.m.
Blaine	ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Burnsville	ch. 14, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 4:30 p.m.; Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays 4:30 a.m.
Centerville	ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Circle Pines	ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Eagan	ch. 15, Sundays 6:30 a.m.; Mondays 12:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 9:30 p.m.; Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.; Thursdays 3:30 p.m.; Fridays 12:30 p.m.; Saturdays 9:30 a.m.
Ham Lake	ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Inver Grove Hts.	ch. 15, Sundays 6:30 a.m.; Mondays 12:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 9:30 p.m.; Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.; Thursdays 3:30 p.m.; Fridays 12:30 p.m.; Saturdays 9:30 a.m.
Lexington	ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Lino Lakes	ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Litchfield	ch. 10, Sundays 2 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 1 p.m., 7 p.m.; Wednesdays 1 a.m., 3 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 6:30 p.m.
Minneapolis	ch. 75, Mondays 6:30 p.m.
Rochester	ch. 10, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays 7:30 p.m.; Sundays 10:30 a.m.
Spring Lake Park	ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
Willmar	ch. 8, Thursdays 8 a.m. & 5 p.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m.
<b>Missouri</b>	
Jefferson City	ch. 3, Mondays 5 p.m.
Springfield	ch. 26, Sundays 8:30 a.m.; Wednesdays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 8:30 a.m.
St. Charles County	ch. 18, Sundays 8 a.m., Saturdays 10 p.m.
St. Louis	ch. 18, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.
<b>Montana</b>	
Billings	ch. 7, Sundays 6 p.m.; Saturdays 11 a.m.
Helena	ch. 11, Sundays 3 p.m.
Missoula	ch. 7, Sundays 11 a.m.
<b>New Hampshire</b>	
LaConia	ch. 25, 26, Sundays 7:30 a.m. & 4:30 p.m.
<b>New Mexico</b>	
Albuquerque	ch. 27, Saturdays 7 p.m.
<b>New York</b>	
Binghamton	ch. 4, Thursdays 5:30 p.m.
Brooklyn	ch. 56, 69, Sundays 10 a.m.
Canandaigua	ch. 12, Sundays 2 p.m.
Long Island	ch. 20, Thursdays 9:30 a.m.
Manhattan	ch. 57, Sundays 7 a.m.
Olean	ch. 6, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.
Oneonta	ch. 23, Mondays 6 p.m.; Wednesdays 9 p.m.
Queens	ch. 35, Mondays 10:30 a.m.
Rochester	ch. 56, Sundays 10 p.m.; Thursdays 4:30 p.m.
Woodbury	ch. 15, Tuesdays 8:30 a.m.; Thursdays 8 a.m.
Ch. 20, Fridays 8 a.m.	
<b>North Carolina</b>	
Charlotte	ch. 21, Saturdays 2 p.m.
Greensboro	ch. 8, Mondays 3 p.m.; Saturdays 6 a.m.
Hickory	ch. 3, Sundays 7 p.m.
<b>North Dakota</b>	
Bismarck	ch. 12, Sundays 2:30 p.m.
Fargo	ch. 12, Wednesdays 5 p.m.
<b>Ohio</b>	
Athens	ch. 23, Sundays 7 p.m.; Wednesdays 7 p.m.
Bryan	ch. 12, Wednesdays 10 a.m. & 3 p.m.

Cincinnati	ch. 18, Sundays 10:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 10 p.m.; Thursdays 11 p.m.; Saturdays 6:30 a.m.
Cleveland West suburbs	ch. 21, Sundays 11:30 a.m.; Thursdays 7 p.m.
Dayton	ch. 12, 23, Tuesdays 4 p.m.; Fridays 2:30 & 7 p.m.
Defiance	ch. 5, Sundays 12 noon
Fairborn	ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Greenville	ch. 3, Thursdays 8 p.m.
Oberlin/Wellington	ch. 12, Sundays & Saturdays 9 a.m.
Trotwood	ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Urbana	ch. 1, daily 8 a.m., 2 p.m. & 11 p.m.
Vandalia	ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Xenia	ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
<b>Oregon</b>	
Ashland	ch. 15, 31, 95, Sundays 2 p.m.
Eugene	ch. 29, Mondays 12:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.
McMinnville	ch. 11, Tuesdays 8 p.m.; Wednesdays 12 noon
Oregon City	ch. 21, Mondays 8 p.m.
Portland	ch. 22, Sundays 7:30 p.m.
Salem	ch. 23, Sundays 12:30 p.m.; Fridays 2 p.m.; Saturdays 11:30 a.m.
Woodburn	ch. 11, Sundays 9 a.m.
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	
Pittsburgh	ch. 21, times vary
York	ch. 16, Sundays 8:30 p.m.; Mondays 12:30 & 4:30 p.m.
<b>Rhode Island</b>	
Entire state	ch. 14, Fridays 10:30 a.m.
<b>Texas</b>	
Arlington	ch. 16, Mondays 1:30 p.m.
Austin	ch. 11, Mondays 6 p.m.
Dallas	ch. 14B, 74, Sundays 12:30 p.m.; Thursdays 9:30 p.m.
Del Rio	ch. 19, Sundays 9 a.m.; Wednesdays 5 p.m.
El Paso	ch. 15, Mondays 1 p.m.; Saturdays 1 p.m.
Fort Worth	ch. 28, Tuesdays 5:30 p.m.; Thursdays 1 p.m.
Longview	ch. 10, Wednesdays 10 p.m.; Fridays 12 noon
<b>Virginia</b>	
Hampton Roads	ch. 71, 74, Sundays 10 a.m.
<b>Washington</b>	
Olympia	ch. 22, 29, Sundays 9 a.m.; Thursdays 10:30 p.m.
Spokane	ch. 25, Sundays 7 p.m. ch. 14, Saturdays 5:30 p.m. ch. 11, Sundays 1 p.m.; Tuesdays 3:30 p.m.; Thursdays 12 noon; Fridays 8 p.m.
Vancouver	
<b>West Virginia</b>	
Morgantown	ch. 3, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 3 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.
<b>Wisconsin</b>	
Beloit	ch. 12, Thursdays 6:30 p.m.
Eau Claire	ch. 11, Sundays 2 p.m.
Kenosha	ch. 14, Sundays & Mondays 7:30 p.m.
Madison	ch. 4, Sundays 4:30 p.m.
Milwaukee	ch. 96, times vary
Stevens Point	ch. 3, Mondays 10:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 10 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.
West Allis	ch. 14, times vary

# Radio Log

For additional information and the most current airing times, or to download or listen to programs online, visit [www.beyondtoday.tv/radio/](http://www.beyondtoday.tv/radio/).

<b>Nationwide</b>	
XM Satellite Radio	170, Sundays 8:30 a.m. (EST)
Internet Radio	live365.com, Sundays 9 a.m. (PST)
<b>Alabama</b>	
Birmingham	1070 AM, Sundays 7:30 a.m.
<b>Arizona</b>	
Douglas	930 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
Globe	1240 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
Sierra Vista	1470 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
Tucson	940 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
<b>California</b>	
San Diego	760 AM, Sundays 6 a.m.
<b>Florida</b>	
Orlando	540 AM, Sundays 6:30 a.m.
<b>Indiana</b>	
Indianapolis	1070 AM, Sundays 7 a.m.
<b>Louisiana</b>	
New Orleans	870 AM, Saturdays 9:30 p.m.
<b>Michigan</b>	
Lansing	88.1 FM, Sundays 7 a.m.
<b>Montana</b>	
Helena	101.9 FM, Mondays 8 p.m.; Fridays 8:30 p.m.; Saturdays 8 a.m.
<b>New York</b>	
Buffalo	930 AM, Sundays 6:30 a.m.
<b>Oklahoma</b>	
Tulsa	740 AM, Sundays 8 a.m.
<b>West Virginia</b>	
Wheeling	1170 AM, Fridays 8:15 p.m.





# A Place Called Megiddo

*In northern Israel lies a legendary site, perhaps the world's most contested piece of territory. Bible prophecy tells us it will once again be a focal point for a battle almost beyond comprehension.*

by Darris McNeely

**R**ising out of the pastoral Jezreel Valley is a rocky mound containing the remains of a city whose foundations go back several millennia. On a modern map, it is called Tel Megiddo. A “tel” is a geographic feature, a hill often rising out of a flat plain, marking the site of a city dating from ancient times. Megiddo is a site that has seen more battles than perhaps any other location on earth. It will be the staging ground for the final battle at the time of Christ’s return.

In Revelation 16:16 we read of the armies of the kings of the east being “gathered . . . together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.” This is the only place in Scripture where the term *Armageddon* is mentioned. The word *Armageddon* comes from the Greek rendering of the Hebrew name *Har Megiddo* (the Hebrew prefix *Har* means “hill” or “mountain”).

Today the site of Megiddo is one of the crown jewels of Israeli archaeology. Remains of more than 25 cities, representing every period of ancient history in the land of Israel, have been uncovered. Understanding why the armies of the world will gather here requires that we understand the history of the site and its importance in the ancient world.

Megiddo controlled a narrow strategic stretch of road called the Via Maris, “the Way of the Sea,” a major international highway in the ancient world. This road stretched from Egypt in the south to Babylon in Mesopotamia, linking the major empires and trade routes of the day.

Megiddo’s position on this highway made it a prime mercantile city. Whoever controlled Megiddo controlled access to trade all along this road. Megiddo was a choke point, therefore, for the empires of the ancient world. Control of Megiddo was crucial to controlling any regional empire.

Many battles took place at Megiddo over the course of history. In 1479 B.C., Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III launched a campaign near Megiddo to assert dominion over territories in and north of Canaan.

Thutmose marched his armies north and paused just south of Megiddo and engaged his generals in a war council. The Egyptian generals proposed attacking along a circuitous route that provided easy access to Megiddo and the adjoining broad Jezreel (or Esdraelon) Valley—also known as the valley or plain

the inheritance of the tribe of Manasseh.

In 1 Kings 9:15 we see reference to the largest period of building at Megiddo during the reign of King Solomon of Israel. Solomon made Megiddo one of his district capitals as well as one of his three main fortress cities.

Archaeologists have uncovered evidence



**Beyond Today anchor Darris McNeely stands atop Tel Megiddo, the biblical site of Armageddon, overlooking the broad Jezreel Valley where Bible prophecy tells us armies will gather before fighting Jesus Christ at His return.**

of Megiddo (2 Chronicles 35:22; Zechariah 12:11). Thutmose preferred a more direct, yet dangerous route. His generals said, “How is it possible to march upon this road which becomes narrower?”

Thutmose’s plan prevailed and caught the Canaanite troops completely by surprise, routing them easily. Megiddo eventually fell and the Egyptians asserted control once again over this vital location.

## Megiddo: “Armageddon” of Revelation

In Joshua 12:21 we find the first reference to Megiddo in Scripture in a list of Canaanite kings defeated during the Israelite conquest. In Joshua 17:11 we see that Megiddo fell within

of several structures built by Solomon to garrison soldiers with their horses and chariots. The massive gates that stand today at the entrance to Megiddo date from this period and are evidence the city was a strategic regional site.

During the reign of Judah’s King Josiah, another Egyptian pharaoh, Necho, came to Megiddo to engage the king of Assyria. Josiah involved himself in this battle and was killed (2 Kings 23:29). Josiah’s death at Megiddo was a stunning blow to Judah. He was the last good king before the nation’s destruction at the hands of Babylon.

The city of Megiddo went into decline during the Babylonian and Persian periods.

However, in modern times the site continued to see battles. Both Napoleon (1799) and the British General Allenby (1918) defeated Turkish forces here. The area has never lost its significance as a battleground for control over this crucial crossroad of empires.

Megiddo today is a major archaeological site that tells a rich story of past civilizations. But it is the future story that captures our attention. Holy Scripture reveals to us that this is more than simply one more tourist site of dust and bones from past times.

The living words of God in the book of Revelation convey to those who will understand that the greatest gathering of armed forces in history is yet to occur here. At the end of the age, the Valley of Jezreel, in which Megiddo is located, will be the gathering place for an immense army that will fight the returning King of Kings, Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

The setting of this battle is found in Revelation 16, where we see “bowls of the wrath of God” poured out on the earth. The seven “bowls” of plagues mentioned here represent God’s final terrible judgment on an unrepentant humanity. The intensity of these judgments will be severe, indicating that time is very short till the coming of the Lord. The impact of these plagues alone would bring life on earth to a halt.

The first bowl brings painful sores on those marked with the sign of the ruling superpower the Bible calls “the Beast.” The second turns the sea to blood. The third fouls the fresh water of the earth by turning it to blood as well. A voice from the altar pronounces these as “true and righteous” judgments of God.

As if this is not enough, the fourth bowl impacts the heat of the sun as its energy is increased and scorches mankind with great heat. And still, there is no repentance from men to give glory to God. The fifth bowl brings darkness on the throne of the Beast, and the pain and anguish produces only blasphemy against God (verse 11).

### Nations gather for the ultimate battle

It is the sixth bowl that deals with the gathering of forces at Megiddo: “Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty . . . And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” (verses 12-14, 16).

Powerful demons influence the political and religious leaders of the world to send armies into this region of the modern state of Israel. Prior to this there will have been war, possibly involving nuclear exchanges, between nations leading to a movement of troops into this region (Revelation 9; Daniel 11:40-45).

This struggle for global dominion involves the armies of the Beast power and armies from beyond the Euphrates River, all moving toward a final confrontation. It is the final battle that Jesus Christ prophesied when He said all life could be destroyed if not for divine intervention (Matthew 24:22).

Popular telling of this final battle has led to it being called the Battle of Armageddon. Armageddon has become the term to describe the war to end all wars. But notice that Revelation 16:14 calls this “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”

Megiddo is merely the gathering place for the forces. Other scriptures tell us this is not the actual location of the battle. That takes place in Jerusalem, about 55 miles to the south. The broad flat plains of the Jezreel Valley are only the staging area for this climactic confrontation.

### Old Testament prophets speak

Zechariah 14 tells us more details of where this will be. “Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem . . . Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle” (verses 1-3).

Now go to the prophet Joel’s account of this time: “Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand” (Joel 2:1). Jerusalem is the location of Zion and God’s holy mountain.

Joel also indicates the specific location within Jerusalem. Notice: “I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land” (Joel 3:2).

So it is in Jerusalem that the battle of the great day of God Almighty is fought. The steep valley that is today called Kidron, between the Old City of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, will be the focal point.

Jesus Christ will descend with a spirit army and tread the winepress of His wrath (Revelation 19). It will indeed be a great battle, the final battle that will end in the peace of the Kingdom of God.

### Setting the stage for the great battle

Megiddo and the Jezreel Valley provide

an ideal staging point for this battle. We can imagine Western forces flowing in through the port of Haifa, a few miles to the northwest. Transport planes, helicopters, troop carriers and tanks will ferry men and materiel into the region. Eastern forces will also come from the north and east, having crossed the Euphrates River.

Jet fighters and missiles will no doubt be engaged in a battle between East and West that suddenly turns its attention to a force coming from an unexpected location—the heavens above Jerusalem. In their folly and deception, they will join together to fight Jesus Christ, not recognizing Him as the Messiah.

It’s difficult to imagine this today as we read these scriptures and ponder the modern geopolitical landscape. Not that we cannot easily see that the current Middle East conflicts could quickly lead to war, even nuclear war, between antagonists. But how could political leaders of nations in Europe and Asia be led by deceptive spiritual forces to move massive forces toward Jerusalem and fight Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

The answer may lie in one verse we skipped over in Revelation 16. Notice that verse 15 is a thought injected by Jesus Christ, the author of the book. “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” Here Jesus is saying to those with ears to hear that there is a way to avoid being part of this great end-time deception.

Remember, we saw that Megiddo was a crucial site on the Via Maris. Whoever controlled Megiddo controlled this vital link in world commerce. Megiddo represents man’s last effort to control his world apart from the guidance of his Creator. Is there something deeper at Megiddo to help us understand this grand deception?

Perhaps a key to the answer lies back at the site of ancient Megiddo. We’ll go there in the second part of this article in the next issue. **GN**

## Recommended Reading

Do you understand what is taking place in the world in the light of Bible prophecy? To help readers better grasp where current trends are heading, the publishers of *The Good News* have prepared an eye-opening booklet, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. It will take you through the major themes of the book of Revelation to help you discover the major trends and events that will shape the world in the days ahead. Request or download your free copy today!



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[www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets)

# God, Science and the Bible

News from the world of science about God and the Bible

by Mario Seiglie, Tom Robinson and Scott Ashley

## “The Gospel of Judas”—What’s the real story?

In early April news organizations breathlessly reported the “discovery” of a new Gospel—the Gospel of Judas,” as it is being called.

Actually the discovery wasn’t new, since the ancient papyrus codex—a small book written in the ancient Egyptian Coptic language—had been discovered sometime in the late 20th century and was offered for sale by an Egyptian antiquities dealer in 1983. What was new was that it had been translated and was now the subject of a TV program, magazine cover story and two books by the prestigious National Geographic Society.

Could this actually be a document authored by Judas, the disciple who infamously betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver as recorded in the Bible? If not, what exactly is it?

An April 7 *USA Today* cover article stated, “The Gospel of Judas takes a whole different vision of the life, death and purpose of Jesus.” And indeed it does. To a regular Bible reader, the text is so strange as to be virtually incomprehensible. Apart from a few names familiar to Bible readers, the manuscript is utterly foreign.

That’s because “the Gospel of Judas” is one of a number of gnostic writings discovered in Egypt during the last century. Gnosticism, which takes its name from *gnosis*, the Greek word for “knowledge,” was a movement that began in the first century and flourished for several centuries. This particular document has been dated to A.D. 220 to 340, when the gnostic movement appears to have been near its peak in Egypt.

Gnosticism emphasized special or secret knowledge (hence the name of the movement) involving mysticism, cosmology, the angelic realm and the soul. A basic (but heretical) premise of the “Christian” version of gnosticism was that Jesus was never a real flesh-and-blood human

being like us, but only *appeared* to be human.

These strange and antibiblical beliefs permeate “the Gospel of Judas.” The translation of the document provided by the National Geographic Society is filled with references to mystical gnostic teachings on cosmology, imaginary spirit realms, ranks of angelic creatures and spirit beings called “aeons.”

Since it is the product of a strange sect with no real connection to Jesus Christ or His disciples, it presents a vastly different view of God and Jesus Christ. For example, it has Jesus mocking the disciples for praying to “your god,” a being who, in gnostic theology, was inherently evil and corresponded to the God of the Old Testament.

It contradicts the record of the authentic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in many ways. It has the disciples seeing visions and Jesus interpreting those visions. It states that Jesus often appeared to the disciples not as Himself, but as a child. It has the disciples getting furious at Jesus to the point that they “began blaspheming against him in their hearts.”

It also bizarrely has Jesus describing Judas, who in reality was a thief and betrayer whom Jesus called “the son of perdition” (John 17:12), as the disciple who “will exceed all” the other disciples by playing a role in the killing of Jesus’ physical self so His supposed inner man could be set free.

Regular readers of the Bible are no doubt familiar with the fact that the New Testament books constantly quote and refer to the Old Testament, demonstrating the unity found throughout the Scriptures. It is striking that this manuscript contains no quotes or accurate references to anything else found in the Bible, other than the last few sentences briefly describing Judas betraying Jesus for money.

And, of course, it is difficult to imagine when Judas would have written his story down or told

it to someone else, since Matthew records that shortly after betraying Jesus, Judas was filled with remorse, returned the money to the priests and committed suicide by hanging himself (Matthew 27:1-5).

It’s not surprising that this document should vary so greatly from biblical teaching. The bizarre philosophies expressed in it simply didn’t exist when Jesus Christ actually lived. These ideas came along several decades later and weren’t fully developed for another century or two—which is when this “Gospel of Judas” was written.

*The Daily Telegraph* (London) summed up this incongruity well in quoting Aberdeen University New Testament scholar Simon Gathercole, who said: “It is certainly an ancient text, but not ancient enough to tell us anything new. It contains themes which are alien to the first-century world of Jesus and Judas, but which became popular later. An analogy would be finding a speech said to have been written by Queen Victoria, in which she talked about her CDs” (April 7).

This so-called “Gospel of Judas” serves no useful purpose for Christians other than to show how utterly clouded and confused human thinking becomes when we reject the truth of God and His Word (compare Romans 1:20-32). If you would like to learn the real truth of Jesus Christ’s life and why the biblical Gospels are an accurate historical record, request our free booklets *Jesus Christ: The Real Story* and *Is the Bible True?*



## Oldest Philistine inscription offers giant surprise

Archaeologists excavating Tell es-Safi, the biblical city “Gath of the Philistines,” recently uncovered a scrap of broken pottery bearing the oldest Philistine inscription yet discovered. Of itself, that wasn’t so surprising. What was surprising is that the potsherd bears two names etymologically remarkably similar to “Goliath,” the giant Philistine warrior slain by David as recorded in 1 Samuel 17.

According to the Bible, this

**Scratched into this broken potsherd, found at the site of biblical Gath, are two names quite similar to “Goliath,” the famed biblical giant who lived in the town.**



same Gath was the hometown of Goliath (verses 4, 23) and was one of the Philistines’ major cities. Archaeologists have also dated the sherd to 50 to 100 years after the biblical account of Goliath’s slaying at the hand of David.

No one can know for sure whether this inscription includes a reference to the biblical Goliath, since it is apparently a Hebrew transliteration of two Philistine names. This transliteration makes sense, since archaeological evidence indicates the Philistines gradually adopted the Semitic alphabet while retaining their Philistine names and some elements of their Philistine language.

Still, the similarities with the name of Goliath are striking. “It can be suggested that in 10th-9th century Philistine Gath, names quite similar, and possibly identical, to Goliath were in use,” says Bar Ilan University’s Aren Maeir, director of the excavation.

Bible critics who claim the Old Testament is a fabrication written only a few centuries B.C.—hundreds to a thousand years or more after the events it claims to document—face a challenge in trying to explain how such an invented name could show up on a potsherd dating to the time period the Bible describes and within the ruins of a town in which the Bible says an individual by this name lived.

# Single Parent

Continued from page 13

happy, enduring marriages and successful lives. We cannot minimize the task before you to accomplish this, but we can help you understand the factors that will help both you and them succeed.

Your children can do just as well in school as any other children, if not better. But that is predicated on you as a parent being an educated and able person, and to a lesser extent on having adequate income and ability to provide a quality environment for your children.

## What to do

What happens in the mind and heart of a child when his parents break up? He experiences the typical stages of grief—denial, anger, bargaining, depression and, eventually, acceptance. As noted earlier, in some ways the loss of the immediate presence of one parent is comparable to a death, and children react similarly.

Their grief may present itself as shock, sadness and feeling ashamed or abandoned. It may even manifest itself in physical pain that has no connection to disease or injury. Schoolwork may suffer and children may exhibit aggressiveness toward their playmates. That doesn't mean you simply excuse inappropriate behavior. You need to provide the loving boundaries that teach them self-control.

They will quite likely feel guilty, thinking that something they did—or did not do—caused their parents' breakup.

Children can be made to feel more secure by knowing where you are and how to reach you, by your being on time to meet them, and by your keeping your word. If you aren't going to be able to keep a promise, don't make it.

Give your child structure through routines and schedules. With all the time pressures facing you as a single parent, routines are essential to reduce the stress on you as well. In your own personal routine, plan free time for your child every day. Keeping the home clean and neat is important, but spending time with your child is more important. Strive to be consistent with your discipline and in your relationship with your child.

Emphasize reading. Read to them when they are young, and have them also read to you. That will boost them emotionally and academically.

Understand your child's need for a relationship with the other parent. Facilitate that where possible. Don't make it difficult by running down or showing your anger toward the other parent. That confuses the child

who loves that person you may not love in the way you once did.

Also, resist the natural, subconscious inclination to dislike your child due to reminders you see in him or her of the parent with whom you no longer have a partnership.

Make visitations pleasant. Your young child may want to take along a favorite toy, stuffed animal or book. Don't use these times when you come face-to-face with the other parent to confront him or her about disagreements. Accommodate the normal conflicts in scheduling that arise so as to make visitation possible. Never block visitation without a valid, legal reason to do so.

If it isn't possible for the child's father to be in his or her life, make sure that a stable, responsible and nurturing man is. He might be an uncle, a grandfather or a trusted friend. Please be extremely cautious about the latter. (For more tips, see "What Happens When Fathers Are Not Around?" on page 5. And to understand the importance of male father figures in children's lives, be sure to read the article it accompanies, "Where Have All the Fathers Gone?," beginning on page 4.)

Involve your children in making decisions about their world, but resist the tendency of some to treat them as equals or buddies. They need you to be a parent. Single parents often fall into the "buddy trap," probably due to their loneliness and desire for companionship.

Many of today's young parents grew up hearing a philosophy that diminished setting firm and clear boundaries, so they are not inclined to do so. But the results of this philosophy have not been good. Many social scientists, as well as the Bible, point out the dangers of parents not setting loving boundaries. Eventually, they will reap the chaotic results in frustrated, demanding and undisciplined children.

The single parent may not realize the harm done until a situation arises that requires asserting parental authority—perhaps for the child's safety—only to discover that he or she doesn't have any authority in the child's eyes. Of course, you should always deal with your child with love and respect, but as a parent rather than a peer.

## Care for yourself and look to God for help

While it's crucial to care for your children, it's also vital to take care of yourself. Keep up your physical, emotional and spiritual health. Maintain healthy friendships with other adults. Cohabitation, for example, is unhealthy on a number of levels—not least of which is that often it endangers your child.

Be with people whose companionship lifts you up. Exercise regularly and eat responsibly. Both will help you be at your best in caring for your child. Do not indulge yourself in self-destructive habits such as over- (or improper) eating, alcohol or other drug abuse.

Parenting is too multidimensional for you to think, *I will be both mother and father to my child*. You cannot do that. But you *can* be a good parent. You can provide nurturing, structure and discipline.

Hal Runkel, licensed marriage and family therapist, writes that parents who drift into the stereotypical pattern of one being the nurturer and the other the disciplinarian ("Wait till your father gets home!") are making a mistake. He advises all parents to do what single parents must do—some of both. Nurture at *all* times and discipline when necessary. (See "What We Can All Learn From Single Parents," <http://singleparents.about.com>).

Single parenting *can* be successful. It will present great challenges, but God can help you meet every one. Think on His promise, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Even when other people disappoint us, there is One who absolutely will never go back on His commitments to us.

We can depend on Him, but there is reciprocity—He has to be able to depend on us. That is, we receive His benefits in a lasting sense as *the outgrowth of a relationship* rather than as a handout.

Notice the wise counsel King David gave to his son Solomon: "Know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever" (1 Chronicles 28:9).

If we remain loyal to Him, we have His ironclad promise that He will always hear, always answer and always help. **GN**

## Recommended Reading

Parenting isn't easy, and even more so if you're a single parent dealing with all the pressures from a world that in many ways is set up to program our kids with wrong values and ideas. If you want to discover the Bible's basic guidelines for bringing up happy, successful children, be sure to request or download your free copy of *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. This booklet is yours free for the asking!



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

[www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets)

## “Jesus Wasn’t Crucified on Friday—or Resurrected on Sunday!”

What a great feature article you had in your March-April magazine. The author covered many points that I try to cover when helping others find the true word of Christ, in this case when Jesus was crucified. I find that you can use certain Bible verses to explain other parts of the Bible. I use John 11:9 where Jesus talks about day and night and asks, “Are there not twelve hours in a day?” [meaning the daylight part of a 24-hour day].

*L.S., Gainesboro, Tennessee*

## “Easter” a mistranslation?

You went to great lengths to show when Christ was crucified and resurrected. You should have done the same about Easter in the King James Bible. It’s not a mistranslation.

*Reader on Internet*

I very much enjoy your magazine and am happy to tell other people about it and pass along copies when I am done with them. I am hoping not to offend you in any way; rather I need to let you know of a glaring problem in your magazine you may not have intended.

The back cover of the March-April issue states that the King James Bible mistranslates the Greek word for Passover as Easter. Please consider carefully that if we say that any part of the Bible is not “God-breathed,” then we are finding ourselves in agreement with a worldview that selectively chooses which principles of the Bible are true or not.

*R.L., Ortonville, Michigan*

*We appreciate the diplomacy of our readers when they disagree and are happy to explain. Our English-language Bibles are translations from the original inspired Hebrew wording of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. In the New Testament, the Greek word pascha can only mean Passover, and it is so translated in virtually all Bible versions.*

*Of the 29 times the word pascha is used in the New Testament, the King James Version translates it correctly as “Passover” every time except for the one time it is changed to “Easter” in Acts 12:4. The general principles of translation are explained in our free booklet How to Understand the Bible.*

## “The Abortion Controversy”

Thank you for printing “The Abortion Controversy.” I experienced two abortions before becoming a Christian. I believe that there are so many beautiful, precious women who feel unworthy and guilt-ridden because of sin and poor decision making. Some may even feel that the love of God is out of their reach.

With every article such as this one, at least one person may see, hear and feel the love of Jesus Christ. Both women and men require counseling and healing after the loss of their child. The article mentioned that physicians, school counselors or ministers may be able to point people in the right direction. My new life, centered in Christ, wonderfully includes obedience, abstinence and love.

*C.A.B., Cleveland, Ohio*

## Marriage article helps

Your January-February issue came at the right time to correct mistakes in my marriage. For about two months there had been arguments between my wife and me, and page 9 of that issue opened my eyes to realize my mistakes. Putting the happy, stable couple rules into practice has brought joy into my home and my wife has been the happiest person for the past two weeks.

*T.A., Ghana*

## Letters from South America

Recently in a doctor’s waiting room I found a *Good News* magazine with an

article about my favorite topic, creation. It had a superb article about DNA and an interview with Michael Behe, the author of a booklet I happened to be reading at the time.

*H.J.G., Venezuela*

I received your January-February issue and enjoyed it very much. It is really biblically supported and enlightening; it helps me to know more about God and the Bible and has impacted my life. Thank you for revealing what is going on around the world. *The Good News* gives me understanding of this sin-saturated world and helps to allay the many fears that plague us.

*R.P.B., Guyana*

## Letters from India

I want to thank you for making *The Good News* available to me. I have nothing to say other than superlatives to describe the first issue. It’s all about life. As I go on reading the articles, I feel like someone is talking with me. As I am not a Christian by religion, I don’t have much of an idea about the Bible.

*H.P., India*

I received the first issues of *The Good News* and *Vertical Thought* a few days ago. I have gone through both magazines and liked them very much. Rather than only speaking about the Bible as some religious magazines do, your articles are focused on life. The human life with all of its problems is placed in the foreground, and I really like the way in which you offer solutions that are firmly founded on the Bible. I am a schoolteacher. What I read in these magazines is something I can always use in my classroom.

*W.T., India*

## Spreading the gospel of the Kingdom

I want to thank you for your magazine. I know I sound like a commercial, but I am absolutely sincere. The truth is seldom told these days, and it is very hard to find in this world controlled by Satan. You make it easy for people to acquire your magazine, making it free to anyone who wants it. Your articles go straight to the heart of issues Christians are and should be struggling with today.

We are so very close to the day when Jesus will return. That is obvious to those whom God has given the eyes to see His signs, the ears to hear His words and the skills to discern His message. It is important for every Christian to help spread God’s message of salvation. Unfortunately, there is very little information being made available just for the asking. Thank you for equipping us with the armor of knowledge.

*N.O., Internet*

I am living on a fixed income and for a couple of years you have been sending me your magazine. It has really answered a lot of questions about my own faith. You have never asked for a dime from me, so I am sending you this check to help. Keep up the great work.

*R.C.B., Waukegan, Illinois*

I have been truly blessed by *The Good News*. The information has immensely increased the strength of my relationship with God. I understand that it is not easy to distribute a publication for free because in this world everything has its price. But you have looked beyond monetary things and provide the word of God free of charge. That speaks volumes to those who feel that the distributors of the word are always out to get something. Instead, you provide the word and allow God to do the rest.

*E.C., Cortland, New York*

*Readers who would like to voluntarily contribute to spreading the gospel may do so through checks made out to the United Church of God. Our U.S. mailing address is P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, Ohio 45254-1027. Addresses of our offices in other countries are listed on page 2.*

# Hope and Help for Children of Divorce

Every year millions of children experience the trauma of their parents' divorce. Millions more have already gone through that pain and been affected in ways large and small. What can help children of divorce? One who has been there shares the keys that helped him through that experience.

**M**y life was going to be forever changed, that much I could understand. I knew Mom and Dad were not getting along very well, because sometimes at night, through my bedroom wall, I could hear the sounds of arguing, then crying. But as of tonight our family would never be the same again.

A man waited in a car across the street, and when Dad got home the man gave him some papers. In less time than it takes to watch a TV sitcom, it was over. Dad packed a few things, got in his car and left. Our family of four was no more.

Divorce was a word that sounded like a bomb exploding. This was the early 1970s, and while more and more families around us were being torn apart by divorce, it had always seemed like such a remote thing. I'd heard about it, and I knew families who had gone through it, but divorce was not something that I ever imagined would touch me or my family.

But on that blackest of all nights, it did. I couldn't fathom what the future would be like, but I knew without a doubt that the rest of my life would be very different from my first 11 years.

Over the years I've likened the destruction of my family to standing on a beach with a double-fisted handful of very fine, very dry, very special sand. It has substance, but it isn't solid—it isn't anything you can really hang onto.

No matter how hard you try to squeeze and hold on to it, with every beat of your heart more of it sifts through the small gaps between your fingers and falls to the ground. You can't catch what is falling without dropping more, and you could never ever gather every grain of your special handful of sand and hold it all together again. In no time, most of it is gone and all you have left in your hands is an empty space.

## Divorce's impact on children

I am far from alone in my experiences. Today the U.S. divorce rate for first



The destruction of my family was like standing on a beach with a double-fisted handful of very fine, very dry, very special sand. It has substance, but it isn't solid—it isn't anything you can really hang onto.

marriages is 43 percent, and for second marriages it's 60 percent. Upwards of one million American children live through the divorce of their parents every year.

Whether the divorce was a messy one or a "good divorce," every one of those children is impacted in powerful and generally negative ways. For one thing, these children do not seem to know as much about building a happy marriage. The divorce rate for first marriages of children of divorce is a staggering 60 percent.

The children of divorce also have, in general, a much more difficult time with religion and a relationship with God. Statistically they are much less religious than their counterparts from intact families. They often describe themselves as equally spiritual, but they are far less involved in any form of organized religion.

Children of divorce struggle with understanding God as a loving, tender and merciful Father. A great many feel that God is distant, aloof and generally uninterested in the day-to-day concerns of humanity.

Others reject the idea of a personal God altogether and prefer to commune with the spirituality of nature or participate in solitary meditation. A real, personal, close and loving relationship with the Creator of the universe seems unattainable and perhaps undesirable.

## Learning to be able to trust again

The trauma of watching parents divorce can generate mental and emotional obstacles to a strong faith, but they are not insurmountable. The keys are in *trust*, *belonging* and *hope*.

When parents part ways, their children often feel like a sacred trust has been broken. *If I can't trust my parents to always be there for me*, they say to themselves, *how can I think that anyone else will, even God?*

The matter is complicated for many when the Bible says God is our Father (Matthew 6:1) and their experience of a father is negative or even nonexistent. The word "father" often does not engender much trust!

But God is ever and always trustworthy. He is perfect, while our parents, no matter how wonderful they may have been, could never be. He promises that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5), and that is a very powerful promise!

A human being may let us down, but our Creator never will. He always knows what we need and when we need it. He may not always provide what we *want* at a given moment, but we can be assured that as we yield to Him, in His love and mercy He will always make sure we have what we *need*, which is what we would want in the long run.

Even the divorce of my parents, which hurt so deeply and changed the shape of who I would be, can be turned into something for my good (Romans 8:28). I may not be able to see how for a while, but that is a promise in which I can place my wholehearted trust.

### Regaining a sense of belonging

A sense of belonging is also a fundamental need in nearly every one of us. The desire to belong somewhere seems to be encoded into our emotional makeup. Some people find belonging in sports or academic pursuits. Some find it in art and music, some in service and helping. Some even try to find belonging in rebelling.

Our God offers us a chance to belong, to be a part of something so much larger than ourselves. God promised to build His Church, protect it and provide for it no matter what. In fact, He promises that nothing can prevail against His Church (Matthew 16:18). We can be a part of something that really will change the world!

God is in the process of calling many children to Him and offering them a place in His Kingdom (Hebrews 2:10; Revelation 5:10). God is building His family, and if we humble ourselves and yield to Him, then you and I can and do belong there!

### Looking forward with hope

Trust and belonging then lead to a wonderful hope. Divorce and all the accompanying pain and problems do little to foster hope for the future. But as we learn to trust our Father in heaven and realize we belong with His people and in His Kingdom, we can grasp and take to ourselves the hope God offers to all mankind!

He assures us that the world is not going to end with a total collapse of the earth's ecosystem or in a cloud of poisonous gas or in radioactive dust from a nuclear holo-

caust. Rather, God gives us hope through promising that He will intervene and send Jesus Christ to usher in a new and wonderful world of peace unlike anything mankind has ever seen before (Isaiah 9:7).

But more immediately, there is hope that our lives can be different. God has laws that govern relationships, especially marriage. If we will faithfully follow those laws, and revere the institution of marriage God created, we do not have to end up among the 60 percent who cannot seem to find success in marriage. We don't have to be among those without a daily relationship with the majestic God!

### God means what He promises

When my parents divorced, I watched as the only family I had ever known turned to sand and drained away through my fingers. It affected the way I viewed everything in my life. But I discovered through the pages of the Bible—and through personal experience with my Creator—a trust, a sense of belonging and a wonderful hope for both now and the future.

I have never been divorced, and my wife and I have shared more than two decades together quite happily with our children. My faith is strong and growing, and it's the underlying foundation to virtually everything I have ever accomplished. My life today is fuller and more complete than I could have ever dreamed of on that dark night several decades ago.

When God inspired the apostle Paul in Romans 8:28 to pen the words "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose," He meant it—even to children of divorce. **GN**

*The author's name has been withheld for family privacy.*

### Recommended Reading

Most people don't understand what it takes to create a happy, healthy fulfilling marriage. That's where the Bible comes in. After all, the God who gave us the Bible is also the creator of men, women and marriage, and He gave us lots of guidance on how to make it work. We've gathered much of that guidance into a free booklet, *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. In its pages you'll discover the keys to the missing dimension in most marriages. Request or download your free copy today!



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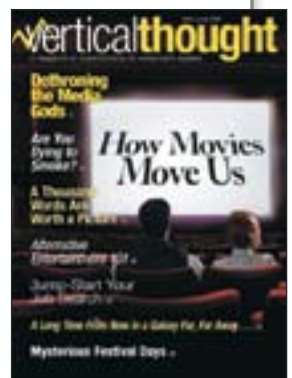
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# They're Not the Ten Suggestions.

**M**ay 7 is Ten Commandments Day in the United States. But in reality, God intends that every day should be Ten Commandments Day. After all, the Ten Commandments are His instructions for a safe, secure, free and fulfilling life and a blueprint for a peaceful and prosperous society.

How much do you know about the Ten Commandments? Sadly, most people know little about them at all. Few people can name more than three or four of them.

Don't you think it's about time you learned what the Ten Commandments are all about? Those who take the time to study them find they're not a list of "Thou shalt nots," but are in fact God's guide to the good life. That's why the Bible calls them "the royal law" and "the law of liberty."

There's much more to these commands than meets the eye. They're not just God's way of preventing us from having a good time. They're designed to protect us, our families and our communities. They're a guide to transforming the way we think, what we do and how we live.



We've prepared a free, eye-opening booklet that we'd love to share with you. Just contact us at our office in your country (or the office nearest you) listed on page 2, or request or download it from our Web site at [www.ucg.org/booklets](http://www.ucg.org/booklets).

Discover for yourself why they're the *Ten Commandments*, not the *Ten Suggestions*.

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