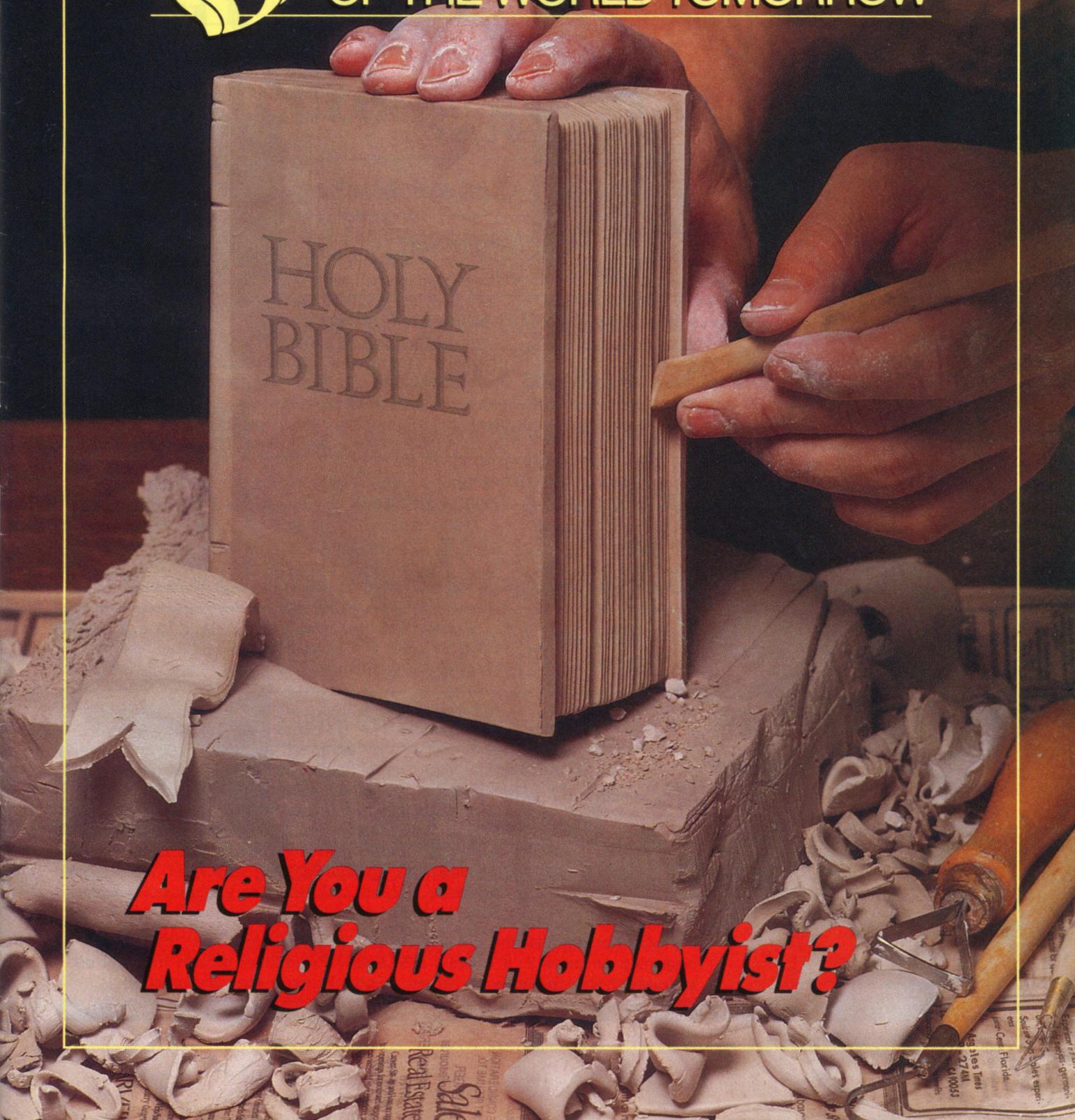


NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1988

The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW



***Are You a
Religious Hobbyist?***

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OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

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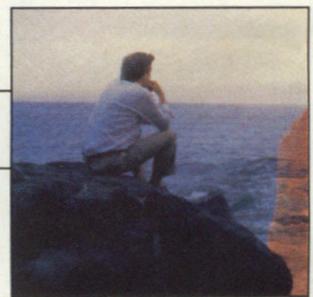
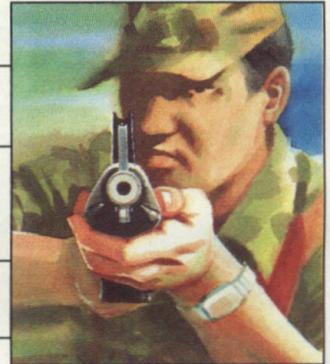
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COVER

If you're not serious about the Bible and religion, *don't* read the article beginning on page 7. It reveals a vital key to spiritual growth that will be of interest only to those for whom religion is more than just a hobby!
Photo by Hal Finch.

GOOD NEWS PERSONAL



You Can Be Protected!

Few people today seem to realize what *serious* times we are living in.

The apostle Paul spoke of these closing days of this age in II Timothy 3:1-5.

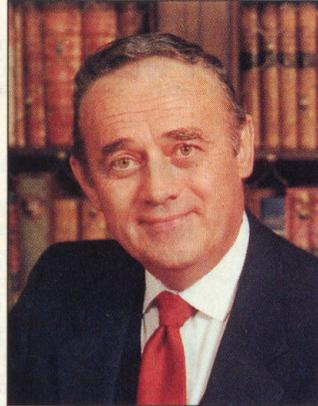
He said: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!"

That way of life is today clearly seen wherever one may look. It is trumpeted in entertainment, in advertising, in education and in politics. It is like a rushing torrent that sweeps along with it all who are not firmly committed to standing against it. If one wishes to "fit in," he or she must go along with the crowd—a crowd being swept toward certain destruction if it does not *wake up and change!*

God warns all who will listen to "come out from them and be separate" (II Corinthians 6:17, New International Version).

"For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?" He asks in verse 14. "Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"

Yet in today's "progressive" societies many reason that it doesn't really make a lot of difference how you live. Morals are considered old-fashioned. Perceptions of what is right and what is wrong have become blurred. Faithful commitment to moral integrity is both rare and ridiculed. The war on drugs has no victory in sight. Sex outside marriage has become the norm. Honesty in dealing with fellow humans is viewed as naive, or even plain stupid. Western society has become saturated with



greed (better called covetousness).

But what about you? If you are reading this magazine you are at least interested in what God has to say about life. Do *you* compromise with illegal drugs? Do *you* misuse alcohol? Have *you* concluded that God should stay out of your sex life? Is *your* word good? Do *you* steal

from your workplace? Does Jesus Christ live His life in you, or do you decide for yourself what is right and what is wrong?

You don't have to go along with the crowd. You don't have to share in the destruction that is coming on a world that has rejected God as Ruler and Authority. Revelation 18:4 pleads, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues."

If you will *listen* to your Maker, and *change* your life, and begin to obey *Him* instead of the siren song of the society around you, then Jesus says *you can be protected* from the greatest time of trouble in all of human history.

If you want to know more, why not write for your own free copy of our booklet *What Is a Real Christian?* The answer to that question may surprise you!

Joseph W. Tkach

Pastor General
Worldwide Church of God

LETTERS

God's Work

I am sending this letter in response to the article entitled "How Much Does God's Work Mean to You?" (July-August). The seven points mentioned by David J. Albert really hit home for me.

I think we all have a tendency to become complacent. I know I have. The most important thing in my life is God and the Work of God. This article helped wake me up to my own shortcomings and also motivated me to work out my own salvation.

Charlotte Ramos
Modesto, Calif.

Pure religion

I'd like to thank you, Mr. Shoaf, for your article "How Pure Is Your Religion?" (July-August).

I just cried throughout your article, especially when I read of the young man who, against his father's threats, attended the Feast of Tabernacles. You see, I'm one of those young men who have come into the Church by themselves. I first started attending services in March, 1986, at the age of 17, and was baptized a few days before Passover this year. Thankfully, God has given me the great blessing of having a family that has (reluctantly) accepted my beliefs, weird ways (Sabbath, etc.) and being a member in the Church. I'm able to live with them and there is never any friction now about the entire matter.

But I am still alone in my own house, with my own family. I just can't talk in-depth with them because there is no meeting of minds.

You're so right when you say one of the major needs is companionship. I've often felt very lonely and just wanted to be near my spiritual family. I never get the chance to even hug them, which I often want to do, sometimes in mere



Good News

appreciation for the fact that they are my family.

Mr. Shoaf, your article has moved me with compassion. It's helped me to see that I need to use my experiences and situation to be warm, friendly, compassionate to others. To love and give to them.

I need to make myself and others more a part of this Family.

Peter J. McLean
Perth, Australia

Patience

Mr. Morrison, I thought that I would just drop you a short note to tell you how much I appreciate the time and effort you went to to write the article in the July-August issue of *The Good News*.

This article caught me at a particularly sobering time of my life, when the trials have been many and very hard. . . . It was just great to have someone tell you to keep on keeping on and wait for God to make it all right.

Jerry S. Girard
San Antonio, Tex.

Sex information in articles

I just read the July-August magazine and someone cancelled his subscription because of the sex articles. If sex is such a bad subject, then why does the Bible devote so much time to it? I suppose this person believes that the Bible shouldn't talk at all about sex. After all, did not God create sex?

Joan Barton
Helmville, Mont.

Regarding the parents who wished to cancel their child's subscription to *Youth 88* because they felt the articles about sex were not appropriate for a child of 11: These parents are not only naive, they're stupid.

I remember when I was 11 (I'm 18 now). This was when my interest in sex began. My friends and I began looking at our parents' pornographic magazines, pretended our Barbie dolls were having sex and that our dolls were our illegitimate children. This was when we began masturbating. The saddest thing is that our parents had no idea, nor did they two years later when we began having sex.

A child of 11 does need to know about the right kind of sex. Those parents should have been glad that their child was finding out about it from a magazine that encourages high sexual morals. It's too bad for that child that his parents will never get to read this. Their child is

headed toward becoming a parent at 13 or 14.

Reader
Pennsylvania

Remarriage

To the Michigan reader whose letter was printed in the May-June, 1988, *Good News*, I say this: I, too, married a divorced man with children almost 10 years ago. I have felt everything you describe including "the deep, inner sadness." However, I've discovered that there are people whose marriages have nowhere near the kind of trouble you and I have experienced who also have deep, inner sadness over their marital situations. The only answer that I can see is that this is an immaturity in us.

Maturity is "the ability to meet life's situations, good and bad, with emotional stasis." I know I have not done this. I am in the process of looking to God for my "inner happiness" rather than waiting for a human prince to bring it to me. My husband is not responsible for my happiness—I am.

My heart ached as I identified with your letter and I wanted to share something that is currently helping me.

Reader
South Carolina

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'I Know You Can Do It— I've Seen You Do It!'

By Peter Moore

It was a pleasant, sunny, spring day in 1962, in England. In the army training camp in Catterick, Yorkshire, to be precise.

Just the kind of day to be wearing a heavy, itchy, sack-like (in color and shape) army uniform while pounding around in several pounds of boots!

(Summer doesn't officially arrive in the army in England until June, hence wearing lighter-weight kit wasn't allowed.)

Those who were there in one of those National Service conscript or draft groups of the Royal Armoured Corps would remember it well. A few weeks after Her Majesty the Queen requested our presence at the RAC training camp, we left our family nests and there we were.

What happy times: The excitement (fear)! The country walks (slave marches)! The gourmet breakfasts ("Egg or sausage!

Egg or sausage! You know the rules, George!" Everybody was George.)! The sharing ("Who's taken my boots?")!

And the drill sergeant. Sergeant Ferraday.

A nice man, in his own way. He liked people, especially those from my part of the country, he said—he had one every morning for breakfast.

So there was our contingent of the flower of British manhood that bright morning, on Sergeant Ferraday's "own little bit of

heaven," as he called the drill square, eager for another fun-filled day in the country.

Learning a difficult maneuver

"Today," Sergeant Ferraday advised us, "you lot are going to learn a new drill instruction—the 'about turn!'" He duly demonstrated the maneuver for us, then had our groups march around the square, practicing.

I have never been too adept at marching on hot days in a tightly packed crowd and having to be able to see sideways while staring straight ahead, shouting certain numbers at an exact moment as I

whipped my body round in "short, sharp, jerky-like movements" (another Ferradayism).

Although others were similarly limited, that didn't make me feel any better. After some long minutes of our prancing around with diminishing success, our apprehension rising with his voice, Sergeant Ferraday made toward our squad.

I was in the front line of the group on the end of the line and easily spottable. The sergeant marched directly up to me.

Neither of us was happy.

Expecting much scathing disapproval from him to add to my own low self-esteem, what, in fact, he did say was of the greatest encouragement! Eyeball to eyeball (*that wasn't too encouraging*), he shouted, "I know you can do it—I've seen you do it!"

I was amazed. By now I had told myself (it seemed there was

enough evidence) I couldn't. But there was Sergeant Ferraday, of all people, telling me, "You can do it!"

He had seen me do the maneuver right a few times (well, at least once!). Not necessarily up to the required standard yet, but certainly *do it*. And because he knew I had, or could—and because I was becoming despondent about the failures—he told me that he knew I could do it.

My whole attitude changed right then. It was still a hot, arduous day in the army. But because of someone whose approach was one of encouragement, I was motivated to do better at what I was attempting. He didn't "correct" me by saying that I *didn't* do the drill right, but by saying that I *could* do it right.

You can do it!

What have you done better than you are doing now, and would like to do well again? Have your spiritual drill standards slackened off?

Look back at when you "had it together." Think about those times in detail. Relive those times when you're down. Don't dwell on the mistakes or failures. Don't belabor yourself with what you didn't do or can't do. Change negative habits. Concentrate on what you *can* do. (And if you haven't done it before, tell yourself what God through Paul tells us: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"—Philippians 4:13).

The principle also applies when communicating with God. You've experienced many of His blessings in your life. So when calling on God, especially in times of need, remind Him of the help He has given in times of similar need. Tell Him, "I know You can do it—I've seen You do it!"

To help get back to the better condition you were in before, or to reach an even higher plateau, keep in mind what that drill sergeant told me more than 26 years ago, and what God also tells us throughout His Word: "I know you can do it—I've seen you do it!" □



Ken Tunell

Why Does God Govern the Way He Does?

Are you sure you understand the purpose of God's government? Even longtime readers of The Good News may be surprised!

By Earl H. Williams

What makes the Worldwide Church of God different from all other churches?

The answer, in a word, is *government*.

Many churches are governed by man's democratic system. The members vote to determine policy and doctrine and even who the ministers will be. In other churches, committees and councils govern.

In God's true Church, Almighty God directly governs and rules.

Throughout human history few have understood *why* God governs the way He does. But you can!

First, let's understand God's government is designed to produce harmony, peace and unity. It is a government of love and understanding. It is based on the way of mercy and compassion.

But it is government. There is authority. And there is a fantastic, almost unbelievable purpose for those who do understand and live under that government.

That's what many have never grasped.

Unfortunately, some even in the Church of God have not fully understood the glorious purpose of God's government. Because of this lack of vision, a few have stumbled over this point of government, and others have not grown as they should under God's government.

Read on and discover how God

is using His government on earth to make *you* one of His spirit-born children!

Your destiny

You are destined to become God!

Shocking? Unbelievable?

If you understand the purpose of God's government, you will not be surprised.

Most in this world do not understand. The people of Jesus' day did not understand either. They were so shocked by Jesus' revelation of man's destiny that they wanted to kill Him.

When Christ asked them why, they growled, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God" (John 10:33).

The Jews of Jesus' day should not have been surprised that man could become God—it was revealed hundreds of years before in their own sacred Scriptures!

God's purpose revealed in government

Listen to the words Christ quoted from Psalm 82:6: "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "you are gods?"' If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God?'" (John 10:34-36).

How beautiful is the light of

that truth when you begin to understand it. The purpose of God's government is clearly revealed in the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. He came preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23). *Gospel* means "good news."

The good news is that man can join the Family of God through the government of God.

Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God because we are destined to become members of the Kingdom of God—the di-



vine, ruling Family of God. At present, there are two beings in the Family of God—God the Father and Jesus Christ. When they created humans, God said to the Word, who later was to become Christ, "Let Us [plural] make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26).

You were created in the image of God by the authority of the government of God. Why? Because the government of God is designed to create the children of

God. God is in the process of reproducing Himself in you! You look like Him, and ultimately He wants you to be like Him in every way: body, mind and spirit.

The apostle Paul said the same thing when he wrote, "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Corinthians 15:49, King James Version).

God is the spiritual Father, and He wants those He now calls (John 6:44) to be His spirit-begotten children.

You are the physical child of your physical father. You are what your father is—a human being. Why should it seem strange that you will someday be the spirit-composed child of your heavenly Father? You will be what He is—God!

As we learned earlier, Jesus Christ preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. The word *kingdom* not only refers to the Family of God, it also indicates government. A king rules over a kingdom, and God rules over us to help us prepare to be born into His Family.

But what is Christ's role in

manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (I John 3:1).

In His image

Now, how does the government of God prepare us to become the children of God?

At creation the governing Family of God formed man out of the dust of the ground in their shape and image. During this physical life, God is using His government to form in you His character.

Since character resides in the mind, God must first change your mind toward His government and way of life.

If you are like most people, you have a negative attitude toward government and laws. The human mind even rejects the thought of God telling it what to do.

But why?

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

God, by His supreme authority, must intervene in your life

tism, your heavenly Father gives you His holy spirit (Acts 2:38).

God's spirit is like the embryonic seed of His character and mind. His spirit, like genes, contains all the characteristics of God. These hereditary traits are "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Next, the government of God provides the right environment you need to grow into the image of God.

Speaking of image, there is a relationship between the image of a ruler and his government. For millennia, a ruler's government has often mirrored his character image. Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, the Caesars of Rome all stamped their images in the nations they ruled. In

God's government is utterly unlike any other form of church or secular government in this world. From left, the Soviet Union's Kremlin (photo by Victor Kubik), U.S. Capitol (John Halford), China's Great Hall of the People (John Halford) and Britain's Houses of Parliament (Good News photo).



God's government? He is our elder brother, "the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). The Father has given Christ authority over us "in bringing many sons to glory" (Hebrews 2:10). Again we see God's government in action to produce His children.

What a wonderful relationship we have with the Family government of God—God as our Father and Jesus Christ as our elder brother. No wonder the apostle John exclaimed, "Behold what

and change your mind to submit to His government. As Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44). When God calls you, He gives you a pliable, willing mind that can be shaped into His character.

Yes, even your calling is an act of God's government. It is the exercise of His governmental authority that determines your calling.

After true repentance and bap-

prophecy, God compares the governmental character of the coming resurrected Roman Empire to that of a beast. Since a government is synonymous with the image or character of its leader, God calls this governmental system the "image of the beast" (Revelation 13:15).

But who is the real beast? It's none other than the dragon, "that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan" (Revelation 12:9). Satan is the true god and ruler of

this evil world (II Corinthians 4:4).

During the coming Great Tribulation, those who follow this satanic government will be shaped into the image of this leader.

Those who follow this government receive the mark of the beast in their foreheads (Revelation 14:9). In your forehead is your brain, your mind and your character.

This government leaves the image or mark of its leader (Satan) in the character of its followers!

God has called you out from Satan's government and into His. God's government is the image of His character and nature. It administers God's way of life that, if followed, will leave God's character in your mind.

From God down

How is God's government administered? The fact that we call God "Father" gives us the answer. In a physical family the father is the head. Likewise, God the Father is the head of His spiritual Family.

A father passes down his values and way of life so that his children will become like him. The same is true with God. Paul showed the supreme order of God's government when he wrote, "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (I Corinthians 11:3).

You might wonder: "But why does God have to be in charge? Can't man govern himself?"

Jeremiah looked at man's attempts at governing himself and said, "Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

We need God's government. Just look at the confusion and trouble in the world today for proof of that.

The Father has placed His Son, our elder brother Jesus Christ, over the Church. He has "put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church" (Ephesians

1:22). Christ is now in heaven. Who serves under Him to administer the will of God on earth today?

Paul answers, "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11).

In other words, God's government in His Church is administered by the chosen and faithful ministers of Jesus Christ.

What is the nature of God's government? Is it dictatorial and self-serving?

No! On the contrary, the nature of God's government is just like that of a loving father.

Jesus told His disciples, the future administrators of God's government on earth: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28).

Those who administer the government of the Father are there to give, not get—to serve, not be served.

Building members of God's Family

What is the chief purpose of the ministers of Jesus Christ?

The ministry exist "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-13, KJV).

The minister's job is to help you build the character and mind of God. Matthew 4:4 says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." So the key to becoming a child of God is living by the words of God. God's gov-

ernment assists and directs God's people in living by every word of God. It provides an environment where individuals who have been called and begotten with God's holy spirit can mature in His way.

Repenting of your ways and then living by God's laws changes your carnal human mind into a godly mind. King David wrote, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psalm 19:7).

As you submit to God's government and live by His laws, He injects His character into your mind. God says, "I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Hebrews 8:10).

Perhaps you have never realized the purpose of living under God's government and laws. The more we live like Him, the more we follow His government, the more we become like Him.

Very soon Jesus Christ will return to this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). Those who have grown under the government of God and developed the character of God will be changed into children of God (I Corinthians 15:50-53).

When you become a member of the ruling Family of God, the Father will give you rulership with Christ in His Kingdom.

So what is the glorious purpose of God's government? Why do you need to be subject to your heavenly Father and His government on earth?

Notice I Corinthians 15:28: "Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him." Why? "That God may be all in all."

Will God's government and purpose ever end? No! You will help millions of others become children of God just as you did—under God's government.

The prophet Isaiah declared, "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:7). □

RELIGION Just a Hobby?

To some, religion is something merely to be pondered, perhaps argued, but not lived. They wouldn't be interested in this article at all. But if you're different—read on!

By Karl Karlov

Remember when the Bible was just a hobby to you?

You enjoyed picking it up to learn doctrines—abstract ideas about all kinds of subjects that didn't affect you too personally. Ideas like whether God is a trinity, whether the soul is immortal, whether there is a heaven or hell, what happened to Israel, will there be a Millennium and so on.

Back then, the Bible was simply a store of ideas to you, or perhaps a good source of ammunition for arguments with others.

That still seems to be the main use many people make of the Bible. They're probably not reading this article!

But if God really was calling you, you eventually began to notice an interesting word in the Bible: *overcome*.

That biblical word, and the idea for which it stood, were something you found increasingly hard to miss. You found it at the beginning of the Bible (Genesis 4:7), in the middle (Psalm 119) and at the end (Revelation 21:7). It permeated Christ's teachings (Matthew, chapters 5-7) and Paul's writings (Romans, chapters 7-8). It was a requirement made of each of the seven eras of

God's New Testament Church (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 3:5, 12, 21).

You realized that the command to overcome meant *you*, too.

Called to overcome

The shocking truth began to sink in. You realized that your Creator actually expects you, of all people, to change. And not just on academic points or side issues, but in fundamental, important, big areas of your life—areas that include your conduct at home and at work, your financial affairs, your observances and customs and personal values and priorities.

Even your very thoughts and attitudes needed changing (II Corinthians 10:5), let alone your actions.

In short, you discovered that your nature itself is seriously, urgently, profoundly flawed (Romans 7:18, 8:7, Jeremiah 17:9). To you, this was no longer a philosophy, but a reality, and your earlier enthusiasm for perhaps argue religion melted

before the awesome realization of the magnitude of changes the living God expects to see in you.

You had at last graduated from the crowded ranks of mere religious hobbyists!

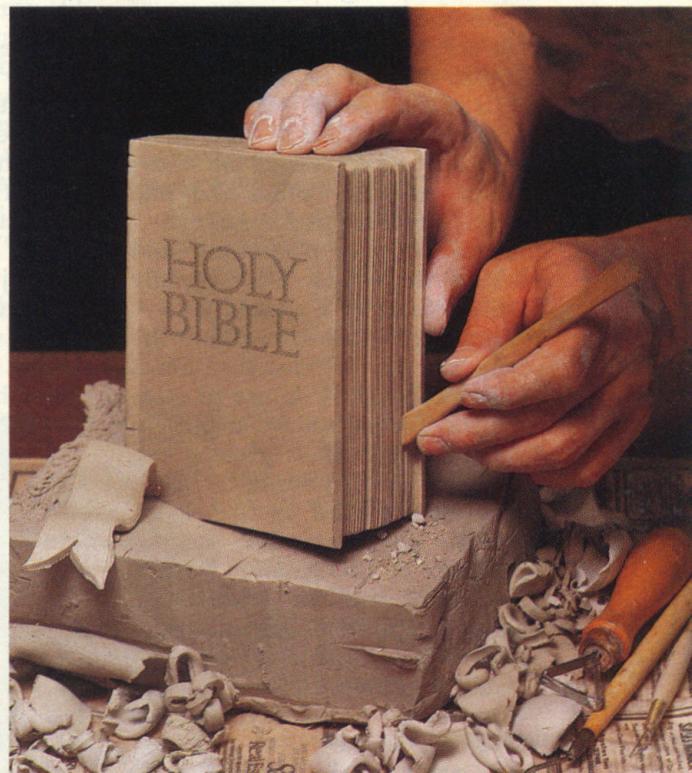
At about the same time as this sobering truth settled into focus, other exceptionally encouraging scriptures also came to your attention. These were the many promises you discovered where God offers His help in overcoming. Remember, for example, Romans 8:31-39, Hebrews 2:18 and Hebrews 4:14-16.

Among these promises were Christ's words in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you . . . and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Rest? Easy? Light? Exactly how does this tie in with overcoming? You weren't sure, but you assumed that I Corinthians 10:13 had something to do with it:

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted

Photos by Hal Finch



beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

A way of escape or, as the original Greek *ekbasis* may be translated, “a way out.” That’s more like it! You have to overcome, but somehow there’s a way out after all.

But what is that way out? What does it mean? How does it work?

The way out of difficulties

There indeed is a way out of the seemingly impossible difficulties of personal overcoming. Truly understanding this way out is the key that unlocks God’s power and makes that power available to you for your personal use. So vital is this key that information about it is scattered throughout almost every part of the Bible. But in few places is it seen in such startling clarity as in Deuteronomy 9.

Israel was near the end of its arduous 40-year Exodus. The Israelites had weathered many problems and trials since departing from Egypt. But all these seemed to pale before the one colossal problem that remained—that of actually occupying and making their own the strongly fortified land of Canaan.

God didn’t hide from them the scope of the difficulties ahead: “Hear, O Israel: You are to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven, a people great and tall, the descendants of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you heard it said, ‘Who can stand before the descendants of Anak?’” (Deuteronomy 9:1-2).

God is no “pop” psychologist. He didn’t advise Israel to somehow imagine their troubles away,

nor did He say the problem wasn’t as big as they thought. He advised them it was even worse than they thought!

God is realistic. And He is every bit as realistic about your difficulties as He was about Israel’s. God won’t waste His time—or yours—by pretending your hard problems are really easy, or by claiming that, through mental gymnastics, you can somehow overcome your difficulties without really trying.

But what He does say is even more amazing. Read it in verse 3:

“Therefore understand today that the Lord your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you.”

God promised to go into battle ahead of Israel. But only just ahead. If they lacked courage to face the enemy and weren’t prepared to march directly into battle—if they instead chose to sit on their hands and look at the enemy from afar—so would God. In that case, nothing at all would be accomplished. But if Israel took the initiative to actually confront the difficulty, and willingly marched into action, then God would proceed ahead of them. Only just ahead.

Israel had to demonstrate that they were absolutely serious about overcoming their obstacle. They had to go to war against it. Then, like a withering, consuming fire before them, God would intervene and give them victory.

Undoubtedly Israel would have found it much more comfortable had God chosen to step in while the enemy was still way off in the distance. But that would have required little faith or commitment on Israel’s part.

So God didn’t do it like that—and still doesn’t.

Overcoming is really a joint

venture: God supplies the power, but only after you first supply the initiative. The resulting success is a joint achievement.

That’s why Deuteronomy 9:3 concludes: “*He . . . goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the Lord has said to you.*”

Overcoming does not depend on your strength. But it does depend on your initiative. Without it, God won’t make His strength available to you.

How to draw on God’s strength

This explains why all of us sometimes fail to overcome. The failure is not the result of the problem being too strong, or of us being too weak. Often, it is the result of us lacking the faith in God to even get started. We aren’t sure God will wipe out the enemy from in front of our faces, so we do not take ourselves anywhere near the action!

Or perhaps we aren’t convinced that the problem to be overcome is an enemy in the first place. In our heart we don’t really want to overcome, so we aren’t serious in going out to battle. So God doesn’t involve Himself on our behalf.

Now it should be clear what the Bible means when it advises in I Corinthians 10:13 that there is a way out of our difficulties. That way is directly ahead, straight through the problem!

Yes, the obstacle may well be too hard for you. But not for God. He’ll provide the strength if you’re serious enough to provide the initiative.

Religious hobbyists will continue to ponder the Bible. They’ll talk a lot about it, and assertive ones may even argue it. But only the people who take God’s Word seriously will actually use for themselves the biblical key we’ve outlined. Only they will have the thrilling experience of seeing God’s vast power unleashed on their behalf in their own lives. Only they overcome! □



While praying, have you ever found your mind flitting from one thing to another?

After fasting, have you ever said, "All I've done is go hungry for 24 hours"?

Upon closing the Bible, have you ever found yourself unable to remember what you just read?

Each of these problems indicates that you have failed to use one of the most powerful spiritual tools available to Christians!

The lost art of meditation

Meditation is surely the most neglected of the four basic spiritual tools. And yet, without meditation, the other three—prayer, fasting and Bible study—are rendered ineffective.

Without meditation, prayer becomes no more than an exercise of logging in hours of vain talk.

It seems that when we get down on our knees, Satan inspires us to see trivial things as significant: Did I turn the coffee pot off? Did I lock the car door? Did I pay the gas bill?

These concerns are all legitimate at the proper time, but not in the middle of prayer. If you have been exercising your mind through meditation, you are much less likely to be overwhelmed by such distractions.

Along with aiding prayer, meditation makes fasting meaningful. Unless you come to a conclusion or solution about the problem that led you to fast, you merely have gone on a futile hunger strike.

And studying the Bible without meditating is like thinking with a Teflon memory. Nothing sticks to your mind! You read Bible passages like you would an adventure novel—but take nothing with you after you finish.

The four spiritual tools—prayer, fasting, Bible study and meditation—are like the spark plugs in a four-cylinder car. If one of the plugs is fouled, the motor

The Most Neglected Spiritual Tool

By David Maas

coughs and sputters. The fouled plug in your spiritual engine may be lack of meditation.

Meditation is a lost art in today's culture. The attention span of this media-blitzed society is growing shorter and shorter.

One of the biggest curses on society today is mental laziness. The antidote to mental laziness is meditation.

How to meditate properly

Ironically, people often use their minds in ways that masquerade as meditation—but that over a period of time destroy the mind's ability to concentrate!

Daydreaming is one such activity. Certainly, daydreaming floods the mind with images, but God expects you to use the picture-making part of your mind to envision the reality of His Kingdom or to see yourself overcoming some problem—not to flit from one useless picture or subject to another.

Paul says we must bring "every

thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:5). Daydreaming is not controlled, but a kaleidoscopic hodgepodge of purposeless images.

Fear and worry also masquerade as meditation. Some people constantly let their minds fill with vivid scenarios of how something could go wrong. But fear and worry are only perverted counterfeits of meditation.

Proper meditation is private devotion to deep, continuous, purposeful reflection of the mind on a single, meaningful theme.

David knew God's law was a proper subject for meditation (Psalm 119:97). That doesn't mean he merely recited God's law to himself over and over.

No, David thought about how God's law applied to his own life. He learned to see spiritual cause and effect. He concentrated on those areas in his life where he needed to improve.

You can meditate more effectively if you follow these points:

1) *Isolate the subject you're going to meditate on.* It could be a thorny problem, a habit you've tried to break, a difficult passage of Scripture or a spiritual goal.

2) *Think deeply on the subject.* Picture yourself handling situations effectively. Concentrate on the benefits you will enjoy by overcoming.

3) *Stick to the subject.* Fight distractions and force yourself to come to a conclusion.

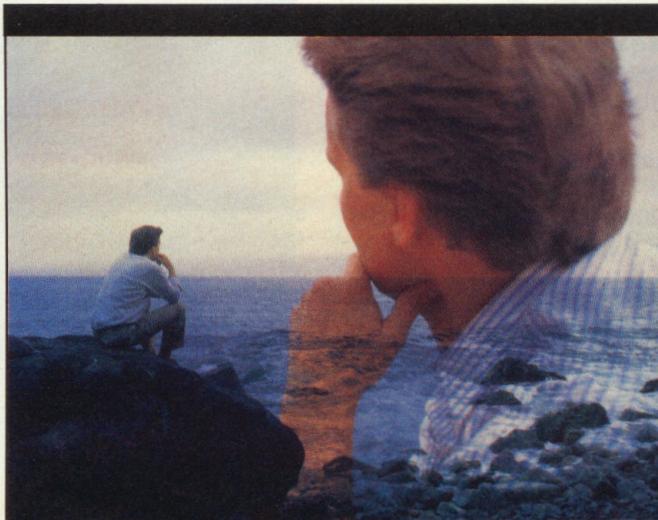
4) *Use the Bible as your spiritual searchlight.* Keep your focus positive (Philippians 4:8). Look at your behavior and determine how you can become more like Jesus Christ.

5) *Record your progress in a notebook.* Writing is an excellent extension of meditation.

If you do these things, your spiritual engine will again fire on all four cylinders. You will grow spiritually.

It is time that many of us rediscover the lost art of meditation—the most neglected spiritual tool! □

G.A. Belluche Jr.



The Day We Nearly Got Shot

*Are you ready for action as
a soldier in God's spiritual army?*

By John Halford

I remember the day some colleagues and I nearly got ourselves shot! I was with a camera crew in Thailand, making a film for the Ambassador Foundation about the Thai royal family's projects to help the poor.

We had spent a long day filming silk production in a hot, dusty village, and were looking forward to relaxing. But when we arrived back at our hotel, a message was waiting: "Come to the palace immediately!" So, tired as we were, after a quick shower and a change of clothing we got on the road again.

Her Majesty Queen Sirikit was spending the evening inspecting some of the silk fabric woven by local peasant women. Our friends at the palace thought, quite rightly, that we would want to include this in the film.

The queen was meeting the people at a pavilion in the palace garden. Thailand's royal family, deeply respected by their people, nevertheless have a way of putting everyone at ease. The peasant women chatted openly with the queen. The palace officials were courteous and kind. Even the bodyguard, in spite of the lethal-looking machine gun at his side, seemed friendly and relaxed. But he only *seemed* to be, as we soon found out!

Quickly, we set up the lights and cameras and got to work. The sound technician, with his tape recorder, took up a position close to where the queen was sitting so he could record the conversa-

tion. The rest of us stayed a respectful distance away.

It was a pleasantly cool evening with a gentle breeze. The peasant women sat quietly until it was their chance to meet the queen. She gently praised and encouraged each one. (Through the SUPPORT Foundation, she buys the silk and provides a market for it, thus supplementing the income of the poor villagers.)

Battle stations

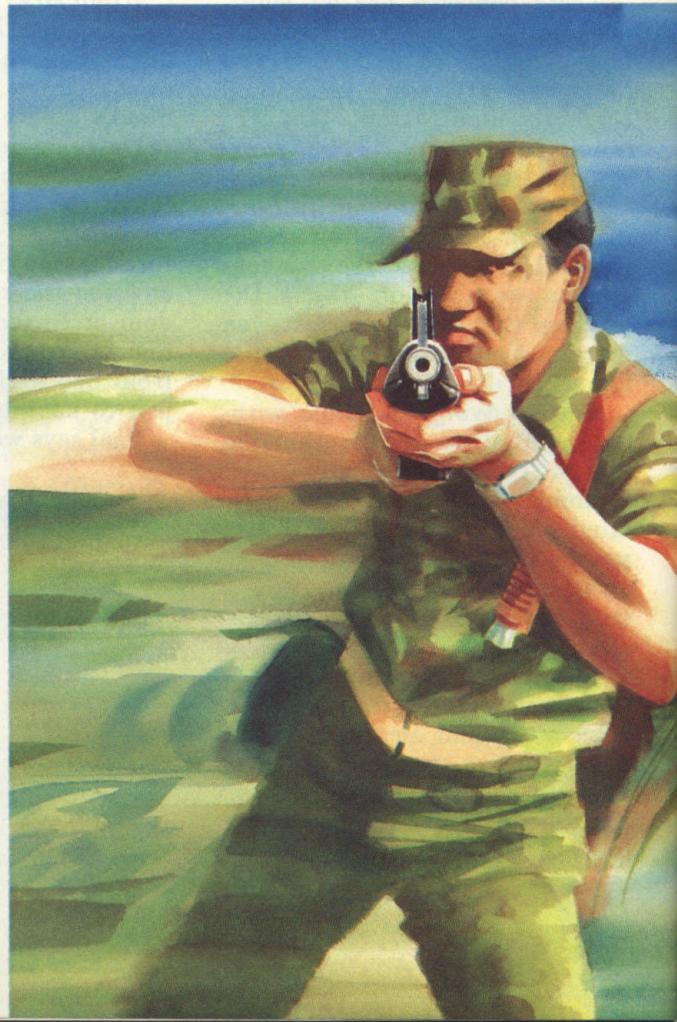
After half an hour or so of taping, the sound technician changed reels on the tape recorder. After he had put on the new tape, he needed to mark the reel he had taken off. We always do this immediately—it saves getting them mixed up later. But he didn't have anything to write with. He looked over his shoulder and indicated he needed a pen. One of our engineers tossed a pen toward him—without stopping to think that the pen was also headed in the direction of the queen.

Immediately the bodyguard, who had seemed so relaxed, sprang into action. Never before or since have I seen a man move so fast. One moment he was casually leaning against a post. A split second later he was in full battle position, every muscle in his body taut, his machine gun aimed dead at us, his finger poised on the trigger.

Quickly, I assured him that it was only a pen. Once satisfied, he became his relaxed self again.

An overreaction? No. It was only a pen, but it

Ken Tunell



could have been a knife or a hand grenade or a bomb. This man's job was to protect his queen. So, even though it looked like all was well, he had never stopped watching.

What an example for all of us who are called to be Christian soldiers!

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul exhorted the young minister to "Be ready in season and out of season" (II Timothy 4:2).

He meant more than just to be prepared in general. He meant to be able to spring into action at a moment's notice to fulfill a responsibility—like that Thai soldier was.

Earlier in this epistle, Paul told Timothy to be a "good soldier of Jesus Christ" (II Timothy 2:3). Although Timothy was called to be a man of peace, in this regard the military analogy was valid.

Always on duty

As a popular old hymn tells us, Christians are like soldiers "marching as to war." The trouble is, the phrase is so well-known that it has become a cliché, and like all clichés, it has lost much of its power.

But think about it for a moment. A soldier is enlisted to do a job. If there is a war, he must be willing to go and fight. If he is on guard, he must be alert and ready to perform his duty.

But even when he is "off duty," a soldier must never forget that he is a soldier. He always is responsible to be ready for action. Whatever he does, wherever he is, he cannot allow himself to become so involved with anything else that he is not able to function as a soldier when he is needed.

As Paul told Timothy, "No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life" (verse 4).

Notice that Paul said "entangled" rather than "involved." Even a soldier has to be involved to some extent in the affairs of this life. But "involvement" and "entanglement" are two different things.

The soldier in the palace in Thailand was enjoying the occasion like everybody else. But he wasn't so involved in it that he forgot his duty. In spite of his apparently relaxed attitude, he was ready in a split second. This would not have been the case if he had been chatting with his friends or asleep under a tree, or if he had forgotten where he put his rifle. He was involved, but not entangled.

If you are entangled, it takes time to get out—and maybe you can't. Remember when Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac? God showed him a ram tangled by its horns in a bush (Genesis 22:13). From the ram's point of view, that was a very unsatisfactory situation. It couldn't get away.

If a soldier is not actually on active duty at the battlefield, he can easily let down his guard and become so involved that, without realizing it, he becomes entangled. For Christian soldiers, it may not always seem that they are at the battlefield.

We are told to pray for our rulers and leaders so

A soldier must never forget that he is a soldier. He always is responsible to be ready for action. He cannot allow himself to be so involved with anything else that he is not able to function.

that political situations will remain stable and the Work of God can continue in a free and unthreatened way. We can be thankful that in most areas where God's Church functions today, this is the case. Most of us live in peace and comparative prosperity. But there is a danger in this. If an army is constantly surrounded with conditions of peace, it can go to sleep on the job.

So Paul told Timothy—and us—to be ready "in season and out of season"—not only when it looks like readiness is needed, but also when it does not.

When we first hear the truth of God, our spiritual life seems so urgent. We tend to drop everything and throw ourselves into intense Bible study and prayer. Old friends are ignored. Jobs, hobbies and even families take second place. We are willing to forsake everything and "die for the faith"—even if nobody is really asking us to.

After a while, a newly converted person begins to lose that initial momentum. A balance returns. That is good—as long as the zeal that accompanied the first love is not lost. But often zeal *is* lost—as you begin to realize how much you can get away with.

God usually does not expect us to forsake everything. Life can go on—in fact, it can continue a lot more normally than you might have thought at first. Friends and relationships can be maintained. There is even a place for sports, hobbies and pastimes. There's nothing wrong with these, providing they stay in focus.

The danger lies in letting the cares and affairs of life grow up and entangle you until you become more like the ram entangled in the thicket than the soldier who is ready for action.

Staying alert

In the parable of the sower, Jesus showed how some of the seed "fell among thorns, and the thorns

sprang up and choked them" (Matthew 13:7). When the disciples asked for a full explanation of this parable, Jesus explained, "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful" (verse 22).

Years ago, in a time when the Western world was enjoying unprecedented prosperity, the late Her-

Are you in peak spiritual condition? How long would it take you to get ready for action? What shape is your equipment in? Is some maintenance required?

bert W. Armstrong issued a firm warning to the Church. This has been reinforced by Pastor General Joseph W. Tkach. The admonition is: *Simplify your life.*

This is sound advice for those who do not wish to become entangled in a thornbush of their own making. The Bible warns Christian soldiers that "if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning" (II Peter 2:20).

Are you in peak spiritual condition? Are you totally awake and alert? How long would it take you to get ready for action? What shape is your equipment in? Check Ephesians 6:13-17. Is some maintenance required?

The ten virgins

In Matthew 25, Jesus likened the Church to 10 young women waiting to serve at a wedding. The bridegroom took longer to come than had been expected, and in the interval, the women all laid down and slept (verse 5).

The bridegroom arrived eventually, at the most unexpected and inconvenient time—midnight (verse 6).

Everyone got up and, since it was dark, prepared to light their oil lamps. However, five of the young women were not prepared. They did not have enough oil in their lamps. They begged the five who were prepared—who *did* have enough oil—to give them some of their supply.

But the five who were ready could not share,

since there would then not have been enough for themselves, and everyone would have been in the dark.

By the time the foolish, unprepared young women had gone out and bought enough oil for their lamps, the wedding had begun, and they were shut out (verse 10).

The lesson of this parable is obvious: Those who wait for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ had better be ready when He comes. It may take longer than some expect, but the Bible shows that when it happens, it is going to happen very quickly. Those who are unprepared will not have enough time to get ready.

So Jesus said, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" (verse 13).

That Thai bodyguard was watching. Behind the easygoing, cheerful, friendly exterior was a superbly trained soldier. He is an example to us as we wait for Jesus Christ. In this time of comparative peace and prosperity, we must stay alert.

That alertness is a product of constant training, continual discipline and making sure each day that we do the important things.

Coming—ready or not

In Matthew 24:36, Jesus explained that no one except the Father Himself knows the day or the hour when Jesus Christ will return. It will be like the days of Noah, when they were "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away" (verses 38-39).

The Flood caught most people by surprise. Most people now will also be caught off guard by the return of Jesus Christ. That should not happen to those who have been called by God specifically to prepare for that occasion. But the Bible indicates that some will be unprepared.

Will it be you?

A Christian soldier must be ready not only for the big battle, but also for the ambushes, the skirmishes and the sudden emergencies that can occur at any time and any place.

Are you ready for action if you are needed *now*?

We kid ourselves if we think we can relax now and somehow still be in fighting trim for the final conflict.

Jesus knew that those who thought that way would not be ready for Him. "Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching," He said (Luke 12:37). "Therefore you also be ready," Jesus added (verse 40), "for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." □

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

In a Good News article earlier this year, one of your writers stated that Pharaoh did not drown with the Egyptian army when they tried to pursue the Israelites through the Red Sea. I always thought he did. Can you clarify this point?

Whether the Pharaoh of the Exodus perished in the Red Sea when the Israelites escaped from Egypt has been a point of long-standing debate.

James Hastings, for example, in his respected *Dictionary of the Bible* (1900), notes that "the biblical narrative does not distinctly state that Pharaoh himself was drowned in the Red Sea."

Indeed, some rabbis through the centuries have held that Pharaoh was *not* drowned in the Red Sea. If the original Hebrew language was explicit in indicating that Pharaoh drowned, surely these rabbis could never have held such an opinion.

The oft-cited scripture in this regard, Exodus 15:19, states in the original Hebrew: "the *horses* [plural] of Pharaoh went in"—not "horse" (singular) as the word is translated in the King James Version.

Further, Psalm 136:15 states only that God "overthrew" Pharaoh. The power of Pharaoh was indeed overthrown by the disastrous miracle at the Red Sea, when the mighty Egyptian army was vanquished by the mightier hand of God.

What does the Bible say about wearing wedding rings?

The Bible nowhere criticizes the wearing of a ring in general or of a wedding ring in particular.

Exodus 35 records that rings were included in the offering the Israelites gave for the building of the Tabernacle. There is no indication that God was displeased with their wearing rings.

God was with Joseph when Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt. Joseph served God, and

God caused him to find favor in the eyes of the Pharaoh. In Genesis 41:41-42, we find that Joseph accepted a ring from Pharaoh as a symbol of the high office that had been bestowed upon him. God was not displeased with this, and the next few chapters show that God continued to bless and guide Joseph.

Just as the ring given to Joseph served a symbolic purpose, a wedding ring is merely a symbol of the marriage vows that have been made.

One further example is the parable of the prodigal son. Jesus used this parable to illustrate God the Father's love toward a repentant sinner. The father, who pictured God, ordered a ring to be put on the son's hand (Luke 15:22).

My friend and I disagree on what kind of music is proper. What does the Bible teach on the subject of music?

God is a God of variety. When you look around at His creation, you see a myriad of different wonders, each with its own value and place. Flowers come in thousands of colors and shapes. Trees and animals come in all different kinds and sizes, and so on.

As far as humans are concerned, God is not trying to make all of us exactly the same. There is variety of taste and preference in many areas, including music.

However, there are some basic criteria by which we should judge the music we listen to. Certainly, we would not want to listen to songs that glorify or promote lust, coveting, sexual promiscuity, violent behavior or other actions forbidden by God's laws.

I Corinthians 10:31 gives us a principle that applies as much to music as it does to every other aspect of our lives: "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

I cry a lot at weddings, at movies, at a lot of things. My husband says I'm a crybaby,

but I think I'm just an emotional, sensitive person. What do you think?

Crying is a natural outlet that helps us relieve the tensions of overwhelming emotions. People cry to express grief, sadness and sometimes even joy. Unfortunately, in some societies people, especially men, are culturally conditioned to suppress and hide their emotions. God never intended this.

Jesus wept for the lack of faith displayed by some of His followers (John 11:35). God says that those who cry for the abominations done on the earth will be specially protected in the end time (Ezekiel 9:4).

There is nothing wrong with crying at a wedding or when deeply touched by a particularly moving situation. On the other hand, crying "at the drop of a hat" so to speak—crying frequently, for no good reason—indicates that one should exert more self-control.

Is there anything wrong with using slang terms such as gosh and gee?

The words you asked about are known as *euphemisms*. According to the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, a euphemism is "the substitution of a mild, indirect or vague expression for one thought to be offensively harsh or blunt."

Expressions such as *gosh* or *gee* are used as substitutes for the names of God the Father and Jesus Christ. They are thinly disguised expressions of strong profanity and blasphemy. As such, you should avoid using such words yourself, and you should teach your children not to use them.

A person with an adequate vocabulary does not need to use such "filler" words, but is able to express himself or herself in intelligent, reverent speech. Euphemisms do not add anything sensible to statements. □

When Christians Clash...

A real Christian knows a lot about conflict. There are job problems relating to the Sabbath, three tithes to explain to nonmember mates, steering your child through the pagan holidays at school, refusing to “swear” that statements you make are true and on and on.

But sad to say, the most traumatic conflicts in a Christian’s life quite often involve other members in the Church! Acts 15:36-41 and Galatians 2:11 show that not even the ministry is immune to problems.

This is serious business. No wonder Jesus Christ took time to give clear instructions on how to settle disputes among Christians.

Christ’s instruction

Let’s face it: The Christian life is for the tough-minded, not the squeamish or the easily intimidated. Christ’s instruction about handling legitimate points of conflict within the Church is bold and clear-cut:

“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

“But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to

What should you do—and not do—if you find yourself in conflict with another one of God’s people?

By K. Neil Earle

you like a heathen and a tax collector” (Matthew 18:15-17).

You must be persistent, Jesus said, and you must be courageous. If a member has done something to offend you, or if you know something in his life is offensive to the Church and its teachings, then Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, says to proceed in the above manner. Thousands of true Christians have to do this every year.

And it really works. Peter *did* listen to Paul’s tough rebuke—and changed. How do we know? By the fruits (Matthew 7:20). Christ would never have left Peter in such a high position if he had continued knowingly in the sin of prejudice.

Years later Paul himself had to publicly apologize for the way he had spoken about a high official (Acts 23:1-5)—yes, even one outside the Church!

Peter and Paul were only hu-

man, after all. They did make mistakes, sometimes serious ones (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

And well-intentioned Christians can worsen grievous mistakes and stir up even more trouble in *the way they apply* Christ’s simple instructions in Matthew 18:15-17. God’s way *is* simple (II Corinthians 11:3). It just isn’t easy!

Going to your brother to iron out wrinkles in the Church is not something to approach lightly or haphazardly. Not at all.

And—a word of warning!

Accusing the brethren

If we are the kind of Christian who chronically complains about or evaluates other members, perhaps we need to check our own attitudes first (Matthew 7:5). After all, the “accuser of the brethren” is Satan himself (Revelation 12:10), and who would want to be linked with him?

Actually, the very word *devil* means “slanderer,” one who revels in the mistakes and problems of others. We all at times find it much easier to go to our own friends on a gossip mission than to go to our brother, don’t we?

How often we all fall short! That is why Jesus balanced His teaching on “going to your brother” with vital attitude conditioning about the proper tone and respect in the *way* we go to our brother. A certain care is required in dealing with a fellow member of the Body of Christ (Philippians 2:3).

Jesus’ crucial instructions continued after Peter asked: “‘Lord,

how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven' (Matthew 18:21-22).

Peter got the point. And in case he didn't, Christ clinched His instructions on these sensitive matters with the parable of the unmerciful servant. Read it in Matthew 18:23-35 and see how God hates an unforgiving spirit, one that all of us as Christians can sometimes fall into.

A biblical strategy

Going to your brother in the spirit of a true friend and peacemaker demands nothing less than Christ's own attitude: the willingness to forgive (Luke 23:34).

Any of God's ministers can confirm that resentment and bitterness over the real or imagined faults of others are major stum-

bling blocks to Christian growth, especially in cases where people harbor grudges for years and years (Hebrews 12:15).

Here are some key points that can help steer us through this important but sensitive area. It is spiritual maturity that distinguishes true peacemakers in the Body of Christ from the careless Christian who "sows discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:19). Here is a biblical strategy to apply in the process of going to your brother.

First, ask yourself: Am I judging properly? Do I have all the facts? Christ, the Prince of peace, does not jump to conclusions quickly or let misconceptions or personal opinions cloud His judgment. His attitude is described in Isaiah 11:3-4. It is a balanced outlook animated by God's spirit: "He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge."

Of course. Wise men sometimes say, "Don't believe all you hear—and only half of what you see!"

A semihumorous example of this principle is recorded in Joshua 22, where we are told the tribes east of the Jordan River decided, in innocence of heart, to build an altar of thanks to God (verse 10). By the time it hit the grapevine west of Jordan, this beautiful, godly proposal had blossomed into an act of idolatry!

Note that classic line: "Now the children of Israel *heard someone say . . .*" (verse 11)! It almost led to war!

And how often have misconceptions and rumors—mere hearsay—disturbed the peace of God's Church?

Before you go to your brother, get all the facts. Make sure it's not just hearsay.

Is there a serious doctrinal or procedural issue at stake—or is it a personal difference? Have opinions, through repetition, hardened into judgments? Is it a matter of style—or substance? Do we see how important it is to judge righteous judgment (John

7:24)? Even then, be prepared to give your brother the benefit of the doubt.

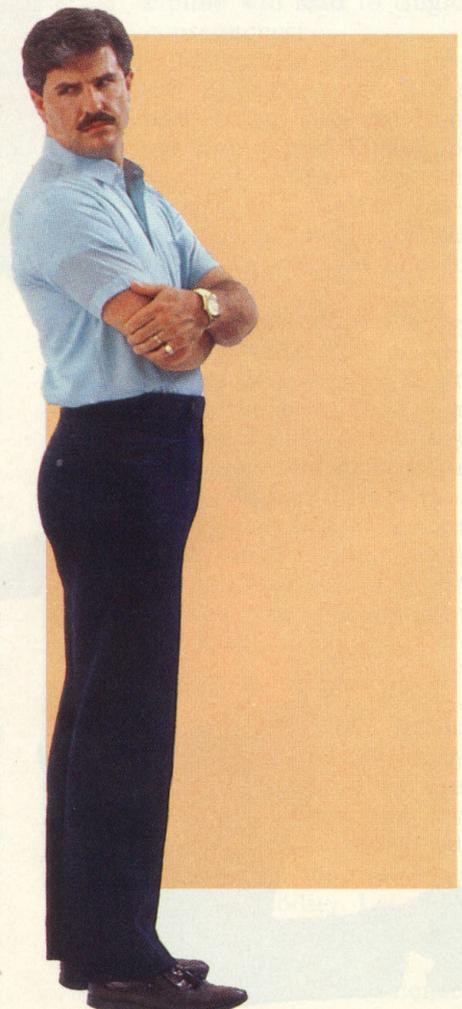
Second, gain the spirit of meekness. This totally negates the "trigger-happy" attitude we can sometimes get into, the puffed-up feeling another Christian's real or imagined mistakes can engender.

Paul explains: "Brethren, if a man [some translations read "even if"] is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:1-2).

Other brethren's sins or mistakes should burden us, weigh us down, make us feel sorry for them. That's the way a converted mind reacts.

Do we begin to see how careful we have to be to make sure we are going to our brother in the

Photos by Hal Finch



right way? The way we do it reveals as much about us as it does the other person's faults! *Agape*, the love of God that has no selfish motives at all, was what Samuel expressed when he cried all night over King Saul's downfall (I Samuel 15:11); *agape* triggered Paul's tears when he wrote corrective letters to the churches (II Corinthians 2:4).

Third, proceed with humility, courtesy and respect. These are basic requirements of all Christians, after all (I Peter 3:8). And please notice: All of this comes *before* you go to your brother. But if you do it this way, it will produce positive results. This is God's way, and His way works, even if the person you must talk to is in authority over you.

Some of you have had to do it. You've had to point out, carefully, courteously and respectfully, the shortcomings and errors of those over you—even in

Christ's ministry, on occasion. The prophet Nathan had to tactfully confront King David himself, and it triggered the most famous act of repentance in history (II Samuel 12:1-15). It will work for us if we follow tried biblical principles.

Fourth, prepare to endure suffering. This is what makes it so tough, of course. The brother you are trying to gently confront may turn on you. Humans often react emotionally when they are in the wrong. If we were all strictly logical we wouldn't get involved in half our entanglements. So in trying to point out someone's errors, count the cost; you could be bringing trouble upon yourself.

No wonder it's easier to take it to the grapevine. But a mature Christian knows there are times he must speak up, sometimes even in controlled anger (Ephesians 4:26). Once you've followed the first three steps, you can have faith that God will be with you.

Surely by now we see that these heart-wrenching experiences don't happen every day or even every year. If these experiences *are* recurring regularly in your life, be warned: *You* may have the problem.

Fifth, leave the final issue in God's hands. This is the faith step. After taking all of the preceding steps, you are absolved of your responsibility in this matter.

You've done your part. "I hate to have to say this, but . . ." may be the toughest words you'll ever

have to say, but if you're a real Christian you will carry it through. It takes character, but it will take even more character to get into the Kingdom of God!

Parting advice

If you find the atmosphere totally tensed and blocked with antagonism and hostility, excuse yourself and come back some other time. Or you can follow the sterling example of the late Her-

bert W. Armstrong and offer to pray with the person first.

A true Christian is actually working on kindness, tact and the right measure of boldness as part of his calling to be an effective ambassador for Christ (II Corinthians 5:20).

God's ministers have to use these principles constantly. They do work. They help keep peace in the Church of God, and prevent us from biting and devouring one another (Galatians 5:15).

Going to your brother in the spirit of making peace, of praying for a proper relationship, is so much different than the revenge-taking, nit-picking or fault-finding that disturbs the peace in the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 14:33).

Matthew 18:15-17 does work if we do it God's way, the way the Prince of peace commands. Let's do it His way, then, and reap the blessings! □



POSITIVE CHILD TRAINING

Discipline Your Children in Love

BY DEXTER H. FAULKNER

PART SIX

There is no surer way to spark a heated discussion than to bring up the subject of child discipline.

Just about everyone has his or her firmly held opinions on the proper way to correct and discipline children. Few subjects are as rife with controversy—and confusion.

Most people would agree that some sort of discipline is necessary. As every parent knows, children are bundles of energy seeking to be released! But how is a parent to guide those energies into constructive channels?

Make no mistake. Permissiveness does not work. “A child left to himself brings shame to his mother,” wise King Solomon rightly observed (Proverbs 29:15). Children must be given direction. Left to themselves, their energies will often be expended in ways harmful to themselves and to others.

But to many today, *discipline* is viewed as a harsh word, conveying the idea of punishment and retribution. It conjures up images of a stern adult with switch in hand, looming over a cowering youngster awaiting the



penalty for his wrongdoing. Though appropriate punishment is a necessary part of discipline, the true meaning of *discipline* goes much farther.

Establishing right behavior

Discipline comes from a Latin word meaning “teaching” or “instruction.” It properly denotes training that corrects, molds and perfects moral character. Certainly no one can be against that!

Some have the mistaken notion that discipline is incompatible with love. But it isn’t a choice between love *or* discipline. They are not opposites. Correct child rearing involves both love *and* discipline! God uses both in dealing with us (Hebrews 12:6-8). Discipline is actually an expression of love.

A parent has the awesome re-

sponsibility of establishing proper behavior patterns in children. Proper child rearing will set a child on the road to success in life. Failure to discipline will lead to tragic consequences.

Instruction should begin at a young age. Start early to put your child on the right track! “Train up a child in the way he should go,” states Proverbs 22:6, “and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

With so many conflicting philosophies of child rearing today, many parents simply don’t know how to proceed. Though a comprehensive discussion of this subject is beyond the scope of a single article, we can offer a few foundational principles. (Be sure to write for our free illustrated brochure *The Plain Truth About Child Rearing* for a more detailed discussion.)

Principles to build on

- *Give clear guidelines.* It has been said that some children never disobey because they are never told what to do. And it’s true! Children want and need guidelines. It gives them a sense of security and stability. Let your children know how you expect them to behave. Be specific!

- *Teach obedience.* Obedience

is one of the most important things a child can learn. Teach a child the meaning of *no*. A parent's orders must be obeyed without hesitation. Parents should not have to plead with their children or bribe them to get them to respond. In a dangerous situation, immediate obedience could spell the difference between life and death!

If simple curiosity takes your child into areas you deem off limits, then you have to intervene, but in a way that will not impede his further development.

One of the most effective ways is distraction. It's not hard to shift a baby's attention away from such things as electric sockets to safer objects or to a new activity. This allows you to help the child develop an accurate perception of reality without threatening the child's self-esteem.

A word of caution: Don't let the word *no* become commonplace, barking out "No!" for every little infraction. *No* can easily become one of those words children no longer hear.

- *Set a right example.* Your example is one of your most powerful teaching tools. *Show* your children how to live. All your lectures and spankings will be rendered ineffective by hypocrisy and double standards.

- *Correct for wrong attitudes as well as wrong actions.* Watch for attitudes of resistance, hostility, resentment of authority, stubbornness and selfishness in your children. Never overlook temper tantrums—they lead to emotional rages in adulthood.

Find out why your children feel as they do. Instruct them in proper responses to situations. Encourage right attitudes of love, giving, sharing and forgiveness.

- *Explain why punishment is being given.* A child must understand why he is being disciplined. Take time to teach (Deuteronomy 6:7).

Show him how his wrong actions or attitudes hurt other people and himself. Show him you

care, and encourage him. Your child will see your concern and love for him, and the punishment will be more effective.

- *Reward right behavior.* Rewarding right behavior is effective in establishing correct behavior. Praise works wonders. A child responds greatly to this type of encouragement.

- *Administer corporal punishment wisely.* When physical punishment is called for, it must be administered properly. A brief spanking on the buttocks is generally safe and effective. *Never* should a child be slapped or punched in the face, kicked, hit about the vital organs, shaken, pinched or struck with hard objects. Punishment should never produce bruises, welts, lumps or scratches.

Never punish in anger. Most incidents of child abuse occur when parents lose their tempers and punish in fits of rage. Don't let your emotions cloud your judgment.

Maintain control and clearly explain to the child why he or she is getting spanked. After the spanking, comfort the child and hold him or her until the crying



Illustrations by Dan Andreasen

stops. Assure him or her of your forgiveness and continued love.

- *Consider alternative punishments.* Every child is different. For some, withholding privileges

may be more effective than corporal punishment—no television, for example, or denying permission to play with a friend.

- *Be consistent.* This principle is often violated, which accounts for the lack of child-rearing success in many homes. If a child is to "get the point," the point has to be clearly and consistently emphasized. Don't compromise. Effective parents don't waver in enforcing established rules.

- *Don't over-correct.* Correction should fit the infraction. Don't over-discipline for a minor violation. "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged," advises Colossians 3:21. Over-corrected children often grow up feeling inferior and frustrated.

When a child spills milk at the dinner table, he doesn't need a thrashing or a scolding—he needs a cloth or paper towel to clean it up. Children should know that mistakes are made in life. Focus on finding solutions.

- *Extend mercy.* God is merciful and compassionate, patient and kind. He does not jump on us every time we fail to measure up. Likewise, parents must not be so stern and unbending that they do not extend mercy to their children. Dispensing mercy when the child admits the infraction and shows remorse will convey to him an appreciation for God's mercy, and will impress him with your fairness and compassion.

- *Persevere.* Be diligent in training your children. It requires time and patience. Ask God for help in dealing with your children with love and wisdom.

Training children is an awesome responsibility. Proper child rearing will bear the good fruit of happy, responsive and responsible children. Help your children avoid a life full of problems and heartaches. Start now to discipline—in love. □

The Plot Against Christ's Birth

Read how Satan tried to stop Christ's birth—
500 years before He was born.

By Philip Stevens

At this time of year, the world briefly turns its attention to Jesus Christ.

Or, to be more precise, to the supposed circumstances of His birth.

The image most people have of Christ at this time of year is that of a helpless babe born in a stable in midwinter. Yet, as open-minded students of the Bible can verify, this erroneous image only serves to obscure the truth about Christ!

The traditional Christmas story is propagated by Satan the devil to deceive the world about the true purpose of Christ's existence on this earth.

The real Jesus Christ is a powerful spirit being who is shortly to take over the rulership of this world from Satan!

By deluding society into keeping Christmas—and all the other so-called Christian festivals—Satan diverts attention from God's true Holy Days that dramatically reveal the destiny of man.

Ever since Satan disqualified himself from world rulership by rebelling against God's authority, he has tried to destroy Christ at every turn.

Not long after the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, Satan inspired King Herod to slay all the male children in the surrounding areas. But Mary and Joseph had been warned by God and escaped (Matthew 2:13-18).

Later, Satan attempted to get Jesus to submit to him and to reject the commandments of

God. Had Jesus succumbed, He, too, would have been rejected as future ruler of the earth. Again, however, the devil was unsuccessful (Matthew 4:1-11).

But Satan's attempts were not limited to attacks on Jesus as a human. In an incident some 500 years before Jesus' physical birth, Satan tried to eliminate a whole tribe of Israel to thwart God's purpose to send a Savior.

If he'd been successful, there would have been no birth of Christ, whether in December or at any other time of the year.

Promise of a Savior

To get the background of this incident, we need to go back to the book of Genesis, where God decreed that through Abraham's seed would come the salvation of the world (Genesis 12:1-3, 22:18).

Judah, grandson of Abraham, became the father of the people known as Jews. To this tribe, Judah, a special message was given: "The scepter [symbolic of rulership] shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes" (Genesis 49:10). Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the coming Ruler of the world, would descend from Abraham through the tribe of Judah (Galatians 3:8, 16).

Thus, many years before the birth of Christ it was known that the Messiah would be born of Jewish stock (see also John 4:22 and Romans 9:3-5).

Satan knew that, too. He real-

ized that if there were no Jewish people, then there would be no Messiah. No one to come and qualify to rule the earth. No Savior to open the way for humans to be reconciled to God.

With all that in mind, let's look at what happened five centuries before Christ's birth in Bethlehem. Let's see how God's working through one woman defeated Satan's plans to wipe out the Jewish people.

Jews in exile

Because of their disobedience to God, the Jews had been taken captive by Babylon. Later, Persia conquered Babylon. Part of the Persian prize was the sizable Jewish slave community.

King Ahasuerus was the Persian king at this time of Jewish exile. During a particularly heavy drinking session, he summoned his queen, Vashti, to appear before the assembled male guests: "On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded . . . to bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold" (Esther 1:10-11).

Tradition says the queen was ordered to appear wearing *nothing but* the crown. She refused, and was banished from the royal court.

During the following months, a number of women were groomed to replace the deposed queen. Among them was a young Jewishess called Esther (Esther 2:7). As

things worked out, Esther became the king's favorite and was made queen (verse 17).

Meanwhile, Esther's guardian, Mordecai, was having problems with a man named Haman, a leading official of the country. Haman expected those who came into his presence to bow before him, but Mordecai refused (Esther 3:2-5). As a result, Haman decided to make life as difficult as possible for the Jews in general and Mordecai in particular.

Haman's plot

Haman the Agagite managed to persuade King Ahasuerus to approve a decree that stated all Jews were to be annihilated on a certain day (verses 8-15). What Haman didn't know was that he was, in effect, moving against the queen—and, by implication, against the king himself.

When Mordecai heard the news he was, understandably, distraught. Queen Esther soon learned of the matter and sent a servant to Mordecai to find out more (Esther 4:4-6). Mordecai requested that the queen plead with the Persian king for the lives of the Jewish population.

Esther agreed to help, provided

the Jews joined her in a three-day fast. At the end of that period she would attempt to plead the cause. This was a delicate matter, as no one was allowed to approach the king without being summoned. To enter the court without permission could result in death (verse 11).

However, God was working out a plan that would ensure His Son would be born of Jewish stock. Esther was received by the king. She explained that she wished the king and Haman to attend a banquet later that day (Esther 5:4). Later the invitation was extended to another feast the following day (verse 8).

These invitations swelled Haman's vanity, but the sight of Mordecai refusing to pay homage marred his enjoyment of the situation. Acting on advice from his wife and friends, Haman had a gallows made on which he planned to hang the defiant Jew (verse 14).

Coincidentally, that night the king suffered from an attack of insomnia. To help pass the hours of darkness, Ahasuerus demanded that the country's history be read to him. Contained within those records was an account of an incident when Mordecai had disclosed a plot against the king. Ahasuerus was surprised to learn that Mordecai had not been honored for this service.

Haman, who had just come into the palace to make arrangements for Mordecai's execution, was summoned into the king's presence. "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?" the monarch asked (Esther 6:6).

Haman immediately jumped to the wrong conclusion. Whom would the king delight to honor more than me? he thought. Believing that the blessings would come his way, Haman listed a number of honors suitable for a favorite of the king (verses 8-9).

The king agreed with the assessment and, much to Haman's chagrin, told him to arrange the suggested honors for Mordecai (verses 10-11). Haman was devastated by this humiliating turn

of events, but took some comfort in the thought that all the Jewish people would soon be eliminated.

The saving of Judah

But worse was to come. At the banquet that night, Esther made her request to the king. She explained that a proclamation had been made to annihilate all her people (Esther 7:3-4). The king was incensed and demanded to know who was responsible for such an act. "And Esther said, 'The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!'" (verse 6).

As a result, Haman was hanged on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

But the problem of the proposed destruction of the Jewish people remained. According to Persian law, no proclamation that was made by the king could be reversed.

At Esther's request, the king issued a decree stating that the Jewish people should prepare themselves for the day set aside for the slaughter. The Jews were instructed to arm themselves, and were given permission to kill anyone who attempted to destroy them (Esther 8:5-11).

The Jews successfully defended themselves (Esther 9:5) and celebrated with much feasting (verse 17). Mordecai was later placed second in command of the country (Esther 10:3).

The Jewish nation had been saved. Jesus Christ could be born of a Jewish woman.

Although Haman was the human instrument planning the destruction of the Jewish people, Satan was the real force behind the plot. But Satan never seems to learn that God is very much in charge of the world's affairs.

As people of this society supposedly celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, they give little heed to the events that ensured the world would have a Savior.

God's people, however, can use this account of divine intervention at the time of Esther to remind ourselves that God is very much in charge of events—and that His purpose for us and for the world will stand. □



King Ahasuerus was incensed when he learned of Haman's plot to wipe out Queen Esther's people. Illustration by Ken Tunell.

Why You Must Worship God His Way!

*Could you be taking God's name in vain?
Here's an in-depth look at the neglected
Third Commandment.*

By Paul Kroll

Could anything be more important than properly worshipping God and receiving His blessings?

The apostle Paul tells us, "He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

God rewards those who worship Him in spirit and in truth. Certainly, we would all want to be rewarded by God and be pleasing in His sight. How, then, should we worship God?

The Third Commandment shows the way. It says: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

Understanding and following this commandment would totally transform the world!

The way to worship God

The first four of the Ten Commandments show us how to properly worship our Creator. (The last six show us how to love our fellowman.)

The First Commandment tells

us we are not to worship any other gods (verse 3). This would include anything that we might trust in and love more than God, such as wealth or family.

The Second Commandment instructs us not to use any kind of image in our worship (verses 4-6). The Fourth Commandment says we should keep the Sabbath holy so that we do not forget God is the Creator of all that exists (verses 8-11).

The Third Commandment directs us to avoid the false worship of God. But what does it mean to take God's name "in vain"? Here are several synonyms for *vain*: futile, useless, of no value, of no effect, to no purpose. We are not to take or use God's name in a way that is useless or doesn't bring the right or intended result.

Now, what does it mean to "take God's name" in a futile manner? Certainly it means, in part, that we are not to curse using God's name.

While the children of Israel were in the wilderness, a certain Israelite blasphemed God's name. The Eternal told Moses this person should be stoned: "When he blasphemes the name of the Lord, he shall be put to death" (Leviticus 24:10-16).

Using God's name phonetically

in cursing or oaths is a serious offense. But the Third Commandment goes far beyond being a command against phonetic infractions against God's name.

When a person takes, calls upon or invokes God's name, that person is claiming to follow, to rely on and to worship God. To use God's name in vain is to worship Him in a useless manner, in a way contrary to His instruction.

To use God's name in vain is to worship God according to our own ideas.

False worship is actually a thoughtless attempt to recreate God in our own image. This contradicts the very heart of God's purpose for us, which is to recreate us in *His* image—to recreate His thought process within our minds.

People today claim to worship the true God of the Bible. The problem is that these people worship as *they* think best. That's why there are so many varying sects and denominations in Christendom. But worshipping God the way *we* think we should, instead of the way He commands us to, is taking God's name in vain!

Only one nation knew God

The true God revealed Himself to only one nation, ancient Israel. He told Israel exactly how He was to be worshiped, in the first five books of the Bible.

In spite of the knowledge Israel had, they refused to worship God in the manner He prescribed for them. The people took or used His name, but worshiped Him according to the rules *they* set down. God roundly condemned their manner of false worship: "Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel... who swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth or in righteousness" (Isaiah 48:1).

God told the Israelites: "Do not learn the way of the Gentiles... For the customs of the peoples are futile [or vain]" (Jeremiah 10:2-3). But they wouldn't listen. They began to adopt pagan customs and worship

as the heathen did, in a completely vain and useless manner.

The problem of vain worship was not limited to ancient Israel. Embedded in the psyche of every human is a built-in antagonism to the true God: "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

Rise of false religion

We read that, during the days of Enoch, "Men began to call on the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26). This verse has been translated as "men began to call themselves by" God's name or "began to proclaim his name." While the exact meaning may be a bit uncertain, the point is clear.

Humans began using God's name by claiming to worship Him. On the surface, it might have seemed like the beginning of a noble religious revival. But this worship was useless because the actions did not coincide with the standards God demands.

At the time men were calling on or worshiping God, they were also sinning or transgressing His law (I John 3:4, Romans 3:23). We read the following about conditions in the pre-Flood world: "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). And again: "God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth" (verse 12).

Here were "God-fearing" people worshiping the Eternal—but in a vain manner. If they had truly worshiped God, the Flood would never have occurred!

Strange as it may seem, it's quite possible to fear and worship God and yet do it all in vain. The book of II Kings records two apparently contradictory points about the people brought into Palestine by the king of Assyria. "They do not fear the Lord" (II Kings 17:34) and "These nations feared the Lord" (verse 41). How can one fear and not fear God at the same time?

At first, these heathen wor-

shipped their own gods in the land of Israel. But wild lions ravaged them. The people thought this tragedy had befallen them because they didn't worship the God who supposedly was in the area. So they sent to the king of Assyria, saying, "The nations whom you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the rituals of the God of the land" (verse 26).

They asked that someone be sent to instruct them in the mode

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of worship of the people who had previously lived in the land. That would have been the people of Israel, who had always worshiped idols and false gods. Their worship had always been completely in vain (verses 7-18).

An Israelitish priest was sent to teach these peoples "the rituals of the God of the land." So they learned certain modes of worship in which they invoked the true God's name. Obviously, they would not have learned to worship God in a pleasing way from priests who had not obeyed Him in the first place.

The outcome was not surprising: "Every nation continued to make gods of its own... They feared the Lord, yet served their own gods—according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away. To this day they continue practicing

the former rituals; they do not fear the Lord, nor do they follow... the law and commandment which the Lord had commanded" (verses 29-34).

The bizarre conclusion was that "these nations feared the Lord, yet served their carved images" (verse 41). They feared the true God and began to take and use His name in worship. However, they didn't *really* fear or respect God because they worshiped Him according to their own ideas. In effect, their worship was vain or useless.

Now someone might reason, "These were heathen who worshiped wood and stone, people who didn't know the true God or have His Word, the Bible. Surely Christians couldn't worship God in vain, could they?" The answer is yes, they could!

False worship of the Pharisees

In Jesus' day, the Pharisees claimed to follow God's law. They were so zealous in their worship of God that they even added their own oral precepts and traditions to His written law. If anyone worshiped God correctly, it certainly would have seemed the Pharisees did.

In fact, however, the Pharisees widely missed the mark of the Third Commandment and became metaphors for misguided zeal. Jesus said the Pharisees were worshiping God in a futile manner. He quoted Isaiah 29:13 to them: "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

Then Jesus added, speaking directly to them: "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men... All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition" (Mark 7:6-9).

We mustn't assume the Pharisees rejected God's law. On the contrary, they were its most vociferous exponents. But *their interpretation* of the law was off base. The Pharisees' manner of

worship contradicted God's intent and distorted the law, which expresses God's mind.

When Jesus warned the Pharisees and scribes that they worshiped God in vain by substituting their own traditions for the intent of God's Word, He was telling them they were breaking the Third Commandment.

Not enough to call on God's name

Jesus also warned against worshipping the true God with false religious practices. He told His disciples: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Consider what this means. It is possible to worship Jesus, to work for Him, to proclaim His Gospel, and yet do it all in vain! A person may actually accept the truth of God and be zealous for it—and still do so in a useless manner.

But how?

In I Corinthians 13:1-3, Paul said one could have all faith, give all his goods to the poor, even give his or her body to be burned for some Christian cause. But if these actions were not done through the love of God working in that human mind, "It profits . . . nothing."

False worship in end time

Jesus warned in Matthew 24:5 that worshipping God in vain would be a special end-time problem. Many individuals would worship Jesus, stand up and proclaim His name, and many others would follow. Both proclaimers and followers would believe they were worshipping the true God. But both would be deceived.

In fact, these people would persecute Christ's true followers, thinking they were worshipping God (John 16:2-3). Zealousness

for God in and of itself does not necessarily mean a person is worshipping God in spirit and in truth. The apostle Paul, before his conversion, was a prime example of this paradox.

The life of Paul

As a Pharisee, Saul (later called Paul) was a paragon of human zeal for God (Philippians 3:4-6). We read in Acts 8:3: "He made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison."

Saul thought he was worshipping God. But it was all in vain. He had to be struck down, humbled and changed in heart through the power of the mind of Jesus working in him. Then and only then did his spiritual works count.

Paul realized how vain his past worship had been: "Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man . . . I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (I Timothy 1:13).

Paul warned, through inspiration of God's spirit, that the end time would see a resurgence of worshipping God in vain. He told Timothy, "Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come" (II Timothy 3:1). People would exhibit "a form of godliness but denying its power" (verse 5).

On the surface, it would not always be apparent that this vain or useless worship was really disobedience to God.

Paul explained why when he described those who falsely worshiped God: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness" (II Corinthians 11:13-15).

Such people might even use the terminology of the Bible and uphold the cultural traditions associated with Christianity. They certainly invoke the name of Je-

sus and God. But their worship is false and in vain!

False spiritual veneer

The works of useless worship may not always appear to be vain. That's why the Bible constantly warns against deception from others, and about *self*-deception.

A person will not escape the allure of deception unless the very spirit of truth from God is operating within his or her mind.

Those few who truly live their lives by the power of God will discern true from false or vain worship. Jesus said of those days, "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:23-24).

But the elect will not be deceived. They will recognize true worship from false. But not by intellect nor through human understanding. Neither will circumstances always make the right choice evident. The holy spirit in their minds will lead them to worship God in truth, and will discern for them those others who are doing the same.

Jesus put it this way: "And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers" (John 10:4-5).

What you must do

In the coming years, it may become increasingly difficult to sort out true worship from false. Only one force will save humans—you included—from worshipping God in vain and being deceived by those who do.

It will be the spirit of God, given to those whom God has specially called (John 6:44, Acts 5:32)! They will have taken the steps to obey Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23), and will have asked for His holy spirit (Luke 11:13). □



avoid the pitfalls of thinking that are so easy to fall into!

The real-life dragons

The goal of the handsome knight in the fairy tale was to rescue the princess and marry her. He was willing to fight any obstacle to do so.

Your goal may be to marry, too. And you also have deadly obstacles to overcome. Rather than fighting dragons, staying out of quicksand or the death grip of a man-eating plant, you must fight yourself.

Let's take a look at five of the most common pitfalls that singles need to avoid.

• *The "I'll never get married" syndrome.* Despite what your discouraged mind may tell you, most singles eventually will marry. More than likely, marriage is down the line for you.

You must fight thinking that life has dealt you a bad hand. Why? Because you may fulfill your own prophecy. This negative frame of mind can cause you to pass by opportunities. Perhaps you've taken yourself out of the dating scene because you feel dating is to no avail.

It takes faith and courage to keep going, to keep positive. You can't move forward by standing still. So keep dating, keep mixing and mingling with members of the opposite sex and keep praying for peace of mind in this area.

• *The "I'm so lonely" syndrome.* Loneliness is a strong emotion. It's hard to come home to a roommate who may not have time to hear how your day went. Or maybe you live alone and only have four walls with which to share your hopes and dreams.

It is natural to want a flesh-and-blood, tangible person who will show you attention and love. People often quip, "It's not good for man to be alone." That's true. But until you marry, and even if you don't marry, don't wallow around in loneliness.

Some people can be virtually surrounded by friends and still feel alone. They can be involved in enough activities to run a recreation department and still

wicked king and taken to his castle.

A handsome knight volunteered to rescue her. On his way to the foreboding castle on the hill, he encountered all sorts of obstacles—quicksand, camouflaged pits, man-eating plants and wild boars.

Would he be able to save the beautiful princess?

Just as the princess was about to be fed to a fire-breathing dragon (because that was what wicked kings did to helpless maidens), the knight in shining armor on a white stallion galloped into the arena. He slew the dragon with his sword and swept the princess off her feet.

The handsome knight and the beautiful princess then rode off against the backdrop of the setting sun, beautiful music filled the air and they lived, married, happily ever after.

Twentieth-century singles in the real world sometimes wish romance could be like a fairy tale.

But avoiding the clutches of a man-eating plant and tackling a dragon are no easy tasks.

This article is for singles who want to marry but haven't yet for whatever reason. It's for singles who may be giving up hope for ever marrying. It's for singles who may be discouraged.

It's for singles who want to

Singles: Stay Out of the Pits!

Which of these pitfalls of thinking could have you ensnared?

By Lana Walker

Once upon a time there was a beautiful princess. And like most princesses in fairy tales, she was abducted by a

feel like the fulfilling, abundant life is passing them by. Why?

Because they don't understand that the joy of living comes from having a deep relationship with God first—not physical activities.

If you are seeking "substitutes" to keep you happy until you marry, you are selling life short. Without the right foundation, constantly going and doing will be a lesson in futility.

Also, mechanically throwing yourself into service as some sort of substitute for marriage doesn't work. Serving and loving others, regardless of your marital status, is what this life is all about. Be involved with other people so you can give to *them*.

• *In a rut*. You're not expected to put your life on hold until you find someone to hold!

It seems to be a quirk of human nature to wait to do things, to put off until tomorrow what can be done today. Some singles fall into the frame of thinking that *when they are married*, they'll do such and such.

"When I get married, I'll be able to serve so much more with a mate." A single can serve in ways that a person with a mate and children can't.

"When I get married, I'll get a nice apartment [car, furniture, clothes]." "When I get married, I'll fix nice meals and eat better." But we don't realize that we are judged by who we are *now*. It would be hard for a woman to be attracted to and want to spend the rest of her life with a man who seemingly has nothing to offer. And it would be hard for a man to be excited about a woman who demonstrates the same lack of quality and concern.

"When I get married, I'll develop my talents." But *why* wait? Be an interesting and dynamic person now. Learn to make life happen—yourself. Don't hold out, thinking that only another person in your life can make it all worthwhile.

Singles need to exercise ambition, to set and reach goals. You need to make yourself financially stable and enjoy life. Then you are in a position where God can

bless you. Never settle for the status quo.

• *Discouragement*. This is perhaps the hardest pitfall to stay out of. Your feelings of futility can cause you to tumble into a pit of depression.

The answer is, again, that marriage isn't the solution—God is. None of these points are new. You know what you need to do. But it does help to know that many others are right where you are, and can empathize.

Perhaps your discouragement deepens when everyone you come into contact with asks about your love life. Or makes you feel like there is something wrong with you because you aren't married. But you need to rise above what can seem like a constant attack on your worth as a person.

Yes, hope deferred makes the heart sick. But you can't allow yourself to stay in the pit of discouragement any more than anyone else who has been called to a life of growth and change can stay there—married or single.

• *Making an idol out of your desire to marry*. Just as a deceived person doesn't know he is deceived, people who have set up a mental or emotional idol often don't know what dangerous ground they walk on.

We know we can pray for our lawful desires. Even be importunate. But there is a fine line between being importunate and being obsessed.

Here is how making an idol out of being married can happen: You want with your whole heart to marry. So you set about praying, studying and fasting about the matter. You read everything the Church has published about marriage. So far so good.

But the problem starts when 95 percent of your prayers 95 percent of the time is about how badly you want to marry. It starts when no other topic of study has your full attention and diligence like marriage does.

It makes its insidious inroads when you fast once a week about getting married, scrutinizing every aspect of your spiritual life for the sole purpose of becoming

marriageable. The idol is well set up when, with other singles, you can't talk about anything else but your desire to marry.

Besides setting up an idol, which is bad enough, this kind of concentration can well be your entry into bad relationships or even a bad marriage.

How? By having your mind so preoccupied and wrapped up with being married that you will, unwittingly, make compromises. You can convince yourself that you've found a perfect mate when in reality you haven't. You can become so psyched up about being married that you can become blind and make the biggest mistake of your life.

Your desire to be married and have a family is natural and positive. You must do your part to prepare for the responsibility, but don't wrap your whole being around your desire.

You'll have what it takes

Some believe that if they don't marry they won't have what it takes to be in God's Family. Marriage is not a prerequisite. It's not the only way to prepare.

Don't allow marriage to be the reason for your existence. Serving God is the reason—and you can do that whether you are married or single.

You can avoid these pitfalls of thinking. And if you are already in one, you can get out. It takes work, effort and diligence, but these "dragons" can be overcome. Be positive!

Brandishing a sword like the knight, slay the dragons in your life—and stay out of the pits! □



Ever argue with someone about whether a book or a movie or a work of art was “good”?

If you have, you know how hard it is for humans to agree on what is good—and you also know how much each of us, by nature, nevertheless wants to decide for ourselves.

And right there lies the point that separates humans from God!

Only God can define it!

Speaking of morality, God reveals, “It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). When it comes to basic ways of living, God must tell us the difference between good and evil. He is the Creator and Lawgiver, and therefore the only one who can judge.

But humans refuse to accept God’s definition of good. Instead we desperately hold to our own philosophies and ways—even to our own destruction.

It all started in the Garden of Eden. When He finished the creation, God—the only one with the authority to define good and evil—“saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

But Satan got to Adam and Eve, the first humans, and convinced them to reject God’s definition and to decide for themselves what was good. That’s what humans have been doing ever since. (For more information, write for a free copy of our booklet *A World Held Captive*.)

So, depending on who has the most firepower, one side or another in a war can force its own definition of good on whoever it defines as the enemy.

The political party that can beg, borrow or steal the most votes gets to lead a country in a direction it feels is good.

High-school health centers can dispense birth-control devices to teenagers without the consent of their parents because someone thinks this is good.

But look at the world around you! What man, apart from God and influenced by Satan, *thinks* is

Fruits of the Spirit

Walk in the Way of Goodness

Humans want to decide for themselves what is good. But only God can define goodness—it is a fruit of His spirit!

By Norman L. Shoaf

good *isn't*. As Proverbs 14:12 says, “There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”

God must define good for us. Goodness is a fruit of His spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). What is God’s goodness, and how should we who want to obey God express it?

Goodness is an action

We should first take note of some Bible words translated into English as “goodness.”

In the New Testament, we will notice two words translated from the Greek. The first refers to an internal quality of wanting to provide for and serve others; the second refers to the outward expression of that inner intent. Goodness is God’s way of love in action!

The first word, in Greek, is *chrestotes*. It describes a basic internal quality of God.

Notice, for example, Romans 2:4: “Do you despise the riches of His goodness [*chrestotes*], forbearance, and longsuffering . . . ?”

And Romans 11:22 tells us to “consider the goodness [*chrestotes*] and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness [*chrestotes*], if you continue in His goodness [*chrestotes*]. Otherwise you also will be cut off.”

The second Greek word is *agathosune*, referring to goodness that is expressed outwardly in acts of helping others. *Agathosune* is the word found in Galatians 5:22-23, where the fruits of God’s spirit are listed.

II Thessalonians 1:11 commands, “Fulfill [meaning to put into action, to express] all the good pleasure of His goodness [*agathosune*] and the work of faith with power.”

Paul told the Romans, “Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness [*agathosune*], filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another” (Romans 15:14).

The brethren at Rome were expressing God’s love outwardly. In fact, in greeting certain brethren at Rome by name, Paul first mentioned Priscilla and Aquila, “who risked their own necks for my life” (Romans 16:3-4). Priscilla and Aquila had

risked their own lives to help Paul! This was love in action—goodness!

Two main Hebrew roots are translated “goodness” in the Old Testament. They both describe God’s own goodness.

The first, *tuwb*, refers to the fairness of God, to His concern for the welfare of people, to His joy and His desire that life go well.

David exclaimed to God, “Oh, how great is Your goodness [*tuwb*] which You have laid up for those who fear You” (Psalm 31:19).

The second Hebrew word, *cheched*, refers to God’s mercy, pity and kindness toward others.

“He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness [*cheched*] of the Lord,” says Psalm 33:5. This same word was used to describe the goodness of kings Hezekiah (II Chronicles 32:32) and Josiah (II Chronicles 35:26). This means humans, inspired by God’s spirit, can express the same kind of goodness, mercy and pity toward others that God does. It means *you* can express goodness as a fruit of God’s spirit in you!

What does goodness do?

Herbert W. Armstrong, the founder of this magazine, observed that people in this world want to *be* right, but they don’t want to *do* right. It’s the same with goodness. People want to be seen by others as being good—indeed, they want to see themselves as good—but they don’t want to *do* the things God defines as being good!

So some confused people want psychiatrists to help them rationalize away the guilt they feel for ugly actions they commit. It’s not that they want to stop the actions—they just want to be able to feel good about committing them.

Certain artists take pride in creating works—and

G.A. Belluche Jr.



in many cases, winning prestigious awards for those works—that attack the family, marriage, authority and other right values.

Some educators feel they must teach subjects to their students in what they call a “value-neutral” way, taking pains to avoid giving any impression that they believe what they are teaching is either good or evil. They wouldn’t think of trying to impart morality to young minds!

Is it any wonder God thunders, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20)? Proverbs 20:6 asks, “Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, but who can find a faithful man?”

God’s goodness leads Him to call us and to perform His works through us. Paul wrote the Thessalonians: “Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power” (II Thessalonians 1:11).

God’s goodness leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). It leads us to turn from the evil of deciding for ourselves what is good and to living according to God’s definition, found in His perfect laws.

God’s goodness fills us with knowledge of His wonderful way and makes us want to share that way with others: “Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another” (Romans 15:14).

God’s goodness makes Him provide every good thing for us to enjoy, both physically and spiritually, because He loves us.

God’s goodness, in short, encompasses a whole way of life that will continue forever—unlike the ways of this world, which will end forever very soon now! As Psalm 52:1 asks: “Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The goodness of God endures continually.”

In *your* life, God’s goodness, which you can express only through the power of God’s spirit in you, will make you want to live God’s good way, based on His law.

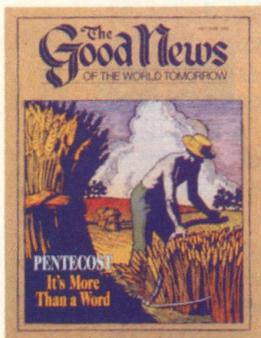
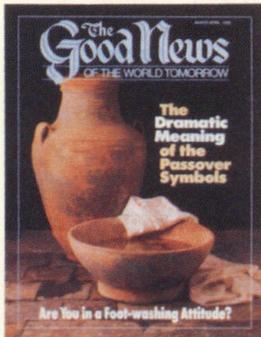
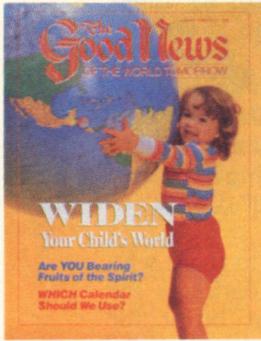
It will make you want to help others learn to live that way.

It will make you want to support God’s Work of warning this world about the consequences of choosing the *wrong* way to live.

It will make you want to be more like God, to give to others, to share with others, to make life more pleasant for others, to forgive those who have wronged you, to take pity on those less fortunate than you, to think less of *self* than you may have in the past, to be thankful for all the blessings God has given you, to be a blazing example of *all* the fruits of God’s holy spirit, which flow from the first one—love (Galatians 5:22-23).

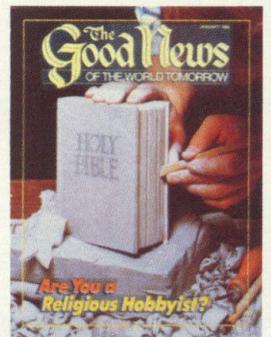
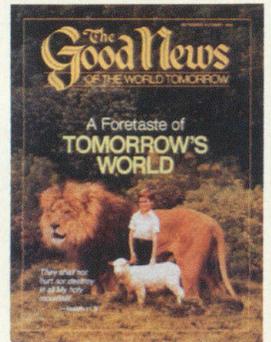
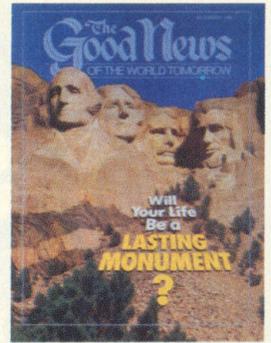
So pray that God will express His own goodness through you, and “Walk in the way of goodness” (Proverbs 2:20)! □

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As the Roman-calendar year of 1989 begins, what is the greatest resolution you should make?

◆ **What You Need to Know About the Spirit World**

What's behind "channeling," horror movies, heavy rock music, hypnotism and the "New Age movement"? What must you know about satanic influence and demon possession?

◆ **Is God's Faith in You?**

Without faith, you can't overcome or do what pleases God. Without faith, you won't be in God's Kingdom! Are you sure you have the right kind of faith?

◆ **Fight the Good Fight!**

Imagine yourself as a soldier in the greatest war in history. Sound farfetched? Not according to the Bible!

◆ **Teaching Your Children About Sex**

Your children will learn about sex whether or not you teach them! But if you want them to have right knowledge, you must take responsibility for what and how they learn. Here are practical guidelines to help you educate your children about sex.