

THE WORLD AHEAD®

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EDITORIAL



Roderick C. Meredith
 Editor in Chief

Escape or Escapism?

Speaking of the traumatic and earthshaking events immediately preceding His Second Coming, Jesus Christ said, "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to ESCAPE all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36). However, as most of you probably realize, very few even *read* this passage of the Bible, let alone *understand* it. In fact, very few people really *study* the Bible whatsoever. The God of creation is not "real" to them. If they have any religion at all, chances are it is either based on sterile, formalized ritual, or on singing, chanting and worked-up human emotions. But VERY SELDOM indeed do most professing Christians genuinely *study, drink in of, and meditate on* the Bible, and then *surrender* themselves to BELIEVE and DO what it actually says!

So when the truly COLOSSAL events directly prophesied in your Bible begin to occur in the coming years, most people are going to be really *shocked*. Why? Because they are so "out of touch" with the ULTIMATE REALITY—the true God of Abraham, the God of creation, the God of the Bible.

After describing an end-time invasion of the great city of Jerusalem, Jesus Christ said, "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:25-27). What? People will really SEE these things? YES! **And within the lifetime of many of you!**

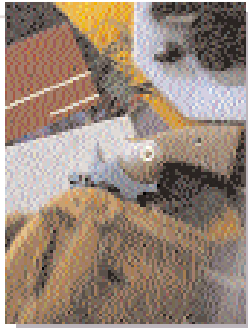
WHY then, seemingly, are so very few people even aware of what is about to occur? Because they have been DECEIVED. Your Bible describes Satan as "that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who DECEIVES the whole world" (Rev. 12:9). And the Apostle Paul was inspired to describe him as the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2).

This master DECEIVER has a way of distracting most people, filling up their time, causing them to be "surface Christians" if they are, in fact, Christians at all. He puts *thousands of hours* of inane television shows in

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Teen Violence

With the mounting tragedy of one schoolyard shooting spree after another, the whole world looks on in horror. What is *wrong* with our society that causes it to breed 11-year-old killers?

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 Is having a good attitude all about "positive thinking"? Or is more involved? How do we *attain* and *maintain* a truly good attitude?



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All scriptural references are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

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Momentous events are destined to soon SHOCK a dazed and confused world. How will your life be impacted?

The year 2000 arrives in less than 18 months. Religious speculation about this last year of the 20th century abounds. Moreover, a number of significant secular events are destined to converge around this time. Together, they will spark the beginnings of a *dramatic change* in the lives of most Americans and British-descended peoples.

And life will *never* be the same again! For the economic, social and religious atmosphere of the entire Western World will be fundamentally altered. Probably starting slowly at first, these events will pick up speed as they go along. Creating a synergism of their own, their combined impact will be such that the sense of stability, pride and basic confidence of most English-speaking peoples will be shaken to the core.

So just what events are we talking about? And how can you prepare to face the challenges that will evolve at the turn of the millennium? What should *you* do?

The Y2K Problem

“Back in the 1960s, computer pioneers unwittingly built a self-destruct mechanism into the computer that appears impossible to defuse. Programmers had to deal with huge IBM mainframes that filled half a

room but held only a small amount of memory. They had to make every byte or character count. They abbreviated the date into two digits; 1960 became 60 in the entry, and 1961 became 61. In the year 2000, the computer will read the last two digits, think it’s the year 1900, and shut down or issue false data. Then the computer must be fixed and restarted. During the time it takes to fix the computer, whether it is two months or two years, records, money and accounts may be tied up. Worse, a minus sign could appear in front of an account balance and it could vanish” (*James Cook Market Update*, April 1998, p. 2).

This is called the year 2000 or “Y2K” problem. And it may be *much more serious* than most people realize! “Some businesses and governments are currently attempting to retrofit their computer and communications systems to rectify the Y2K problem. But it takes so long and costs so much that many systems may not be ready in time. Worse yet, the problem is still being widely ignored.

“Surveys have concluded that only five countries in the world are treating their Y2K problems with due diligence: Canada, the United States, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand. The rest—even Japan—lag in giving this issue the

attention it needs” (*The Globe and Mail*, Jan. 24, 1998).

The Wall Street Journal for May 4, 1998, ran an article on Y2K, authored by Edward Yardeni, chief economist and managing director of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell. Notice what this normally conservative financial analyst states: “A survey released in March by the Information Technology Association of America indicates that 44% of responding companies have already experienced Y2K-related failures under operating conditions, and 67% report failures under test conditions. The entire Y2K problem will not be solved. We must prepare for the possibility of business failures and the collapse of essential U.S. government services, including tax collection, welfare payments, national defense and air traffic control.

“I am a Y2K alarmist, having previously predicted a 40% likelihood of recession in the wake of Y2K computer crashes. Despite many warnings, the situation has only worsened: The recession odds are now up to 60% in my estimation, and there is even a possibility of a depression. The time has come to mobilize against Y2K as if for a war. While we work to minimize government and business exposure to Y2K, we must also begin preparing to soften the

inevitable disruptions that will occur when the millennium bug bites.”

Remember, computers run the air traffic control system, the Internet, the stock market, and even the local phone company and the bank where you keep your money. What if *all* of these institutions were crippled or shut down for weeks or even months by the Y2K problem?

A book titled *Time Bomb 2000* outlines some of the problems we could face if this dilemma is not fully resolved: “You could lose your job and income if Y2K sinks your employer. Fast food outlets and local convenience stores could go out of business. You could be stuck in an elevator or subway if embedded processors malfunction. Electricity, gas, telephone and cable service could terminate. Savings and securities accounts could be inaccessible or wiped out. Home computer data and programs could be corrupted. Planes, trains and automobiles could shut down. Credit cards and bank cards could be useless” (Edward and Jennifer Yourdon, 1998).

The Y2K problem reaches further than the private sector and civil authorities. There are frightening military and national security implications as well. And almost everyone in the know agrees that the *entire* problem cannot be fixed in time!

So when I say on our *World Ahead* television programs, “Everything around you is going to CHANGE within the next several years,” I truly mean exactly that!

The Euro vs. the Dollar

Most of us have probably read about the new currency—the euro—scheduled to be launched by the European Union in 1999 for most of its member states. If all goes according to plan, within 18 months of its introduction the euro will replace the local currencies of 11 nations with a combined population of nearly 300 million people! This alone would make the euro a huge factor in world trade and world affairs.

But—and this is *critical* to understand—the euro may end up *replacing the dollar* as the world’s major reserve currency! If this happens, America’s “free ride” to prosperity might come to a screeching halt. James Goldsborough explains in *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, “It is a monumental notion to launch a common currency on the scale envisaged here, not just for Europe but for the world. The locking of exchange rates by 11 nations next month interests not only Europe, but the United States as well, perhaps affecting the dollar as much as any of the European monies

in the long run. When it is introduced on January 1, the euro will become a rival of the dollar, as a second world reserve transaction and invoicing currency. At present, the dollar has no significant rival” (April 9, 1998).

Historian and financial writer Gwynne Dyer further explains, “Internationally, the biggest loser will be the United States, which profits greatly from the fact that the dollar is currently the only true reserve currency. The United States accounts for only 27 percent of the world’s gross domestic product, but 48 percent of the world’s exports are invoiced in dollars, and 56 percent of foreign exchange reserves are held in dollars. The dominance of the dollar gives Washington extra leverage in the world’s monetary institutions, in financial markets, even in international politics. It is a hidden subsidy for the U.S. economy, since much of America’s trade deficit is covered by just printing more dollars” (*Union-Tribune*, May 3, 1998).

So again, a major CHANGE in world affairs is in the offing. The euro is scheduled to be introduced next January 1, and it will become the *only* legal currency for these European nations by July 1, 2000. As the people of Argentina, Brazil, Japan, Indonesia and many others

diversify their holdings out of the dollar and into the euro, the POWER of the European Union will grow and the financial dominance of the United States will begin to give ground.

Within the next several years, Americans will probably need to work harder, pay higher taxes and tighten their financial belts as the price of imports goes *up* and the value of the dollar goes *down*.

A European Empire

We have been warning for decades of a coming “United States of Europe”—or European Empire!—prophesied in your Bible (please call

rich through the abundance of her luxury” (Rev. 18:3; cf. vv. 11-14).

So this coming European Empire will soon become a HUGE factor in world affairs—affecting the balance of power and the politics of international trade. *Watch for it!*

Troubled Youth

Demographers tell us that an enormous wave of American young people is destined to reach adolescence early in the next millennium. What effect will this have on an already deteriorating society?

The San Diego Union-Tribune reported last fall, “More young stu-

nation [in March] when two boys, aged 11 and 13, gunned down four students and a teacher at a middle school in Jonesboro, Arkansas. Classmate Melinda Henson said 13-year-old Mitchell Johnson claimed to be part of a gang and wore some type of red ‘every day, because he was in the Blood Gang’” (*Union-Tribune*, April 13, 1998). To see more on this subject, please read Raymond F. McNair’s article, “Teen Violence,” on page 14.

Columnist Ann Landers felt impelled to address some of these issues: “Unfortunately, the ‘war on drugs’ has turned out to be a colossal failure. The number of homi-

The Eternal God specifically warned that this very behavior would characterize our society in the last days. “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” (2 Tim. 3:1-5). This particular theme is completed in verse 13: “But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and

Catholics around the world?”

The May 11 cover story of *U.S. News & World Report* addressed this very topic. The authors interviewed quite a number of leading Church men and “Vatican watchers.” Notice a key observation they make: “The next pope... will not be a clone of John Paul II, but he likely will be a man after John Paul’s own heart: as beholden to tradition, as resistant to altering controversial teachings on human sexuality and the role of women in the church, and as committed to strengthening the spiritual discipline of the faithful throughout the world. ‘The definition of the papacy,’ says George Weigel, author

Paul II to reunite the Christian churches and to improve relations with other religions. ‘The world will never believe if we are divided,’ says Cardinal Francis George of Chicago. Church leaders in the years ahead, he says, ‘will have to look at the divisions among Christ’s disciples’ and seek to resolve them.”

A future leader of this religious system will indeed try to “resolve” the divisions within the professing Christian world. Bible prophecy indicates that the final man in this office will exercise awesome power and will command the virtual *worship* of much of the world (2 Thess. 2:3-4). His appearance will be of *great*

Within the next several years, Americans will probably need to work harder, pay higher taxes and tighten their financial belts.

or write for our free booklet, *The Beast of Revelation*). Many factors will probably contribute—the threat of Middle East wars and oil embargoes, a possible reawakening of Russian imperialism, the continuing decline of morals and lack of financial leadership in the United States, and America’s weakened armed forces and diminished ability to be the “world’s policeman.”

The introduction of the euro—an accomplishment of unprecedented *economic* unity—is an *additional* impetus for the nations of Europe to achieve full *political* unity. And Bible prophecy shows that they’ll *succeed*—for a time.

The Scriptures foretell the rise of a vast trading bloc in central Europe—in the spirit of the ancient commercial centers of Babylon and Tyre. This group of nations will share not only a common currency, but a common *religion* and, soon, common political and military goals. Its eventual domination of world trade seems certain (cf. Ezek. 27). The Apostle John was inspired to write, “**The merchants of the earth have become**

dents are using drugs, according to a survey released yesterday that shows rising narcotics consumption among junior high school students ages 11 to 14. Students in grades six through eight reported increases in use of marijuana, cocaine, heroin and other drugs.... White House drug policy adviser Barry McCaffrey said news of higher drug use among younger children is cause for concern. ‘It will get worse if we don’t do something about it,’ he said. ‘I’m not talking about some college sophomore smoking a joint. I’m talking about eighth-graders’” (Oct. 29, 1997).

Another report this spring indicated that “nearly twice as many teenagers reported gangs in their schools in 1995 as they did in 1989, while the number of students victimized by violent crime increased nearly 25 percent.... In central cities, students reporting street gangs rose from 24.8 percent to 40.7 percent; in suburbs, from 14.0 percent to 26.3 percent, and in non-metropolitan areas, from 7.8 percent to 19.9 percent.

“Violence at school shocked the

cides is staggering. Guns and knives are standard equipment among teenagers. It is not uncommon for a teenager to get shot or stabbed for his jacket or his shoes.

“While alcohol is still the most abused drug of all, marijuana and stronger substances like crack cocaine and now heroin again are commonplace in junior and senior high schools. The dropout rate is appalling. Why should a kid stay in school when he can get rich dealing drugs? This is the message too many young people are getting. Suicide is the third most frequent cause of death among young people in this country, behind accidents and homicide. More bad news is that venereal disease is epidemic, not to mention AIDS, for which there is no vaccine and no cure.”

Our youngsters and teenagers are being deceived by drug dealers, cigarette manufacturers, and the countless movies and television shows that promote violence and illicit sex while implicitly encouraging a growing disrespect for parents, teachers and all constituted authority.

being deceived.”

Even if the *present rate* of increase in teen drug abuse, illicit sex and violence continues (and I think things will become *much worse!*), can you imagine the “wave” of rape, robbery and murder that would sweep across the United States in the next five to fifteen years? The virtual breakdown in the behavior of our youth will have a *profound effect* on our society. It will decisively weaken our nations. And it will help usher in the coming Great Tribulation that Jesus Christ predicted (Matt. 24:21-22).

If you’d like more proof about what lies ahead for the United States and other English-speaking nations of the Western World, call or write for your *free* copy of our brochure, *America and Britain in Prophecy*.

A New Pope

With John Paul II frail and faltering at age 78, many are already speculating about who the next pope will be. What will be the impact of this next leader of more than *one billion*

of a forthcoming biography of John Paul II, ‘has been irreversibly changed by this pontificate. Any attempt to go back to a more managerial and bureaucratic model would be a vast disappointment to the church and to the world.’”

So the next pope will likely have a powerful, worldwide influence—spiritually, politically and culturally. The present pope has crisscrossed Europe, repeatedly urging that the nations there reclaim their “spiritual and cultural heritage.” All indications are that the next pope will build on this foundation. He may well be a major player in more fully bringing the nations of Europe together. He will probably wield enormous influence over the development and direction of the European Empire that God’s Word foretells.

Another key area of concern for the next pope will be the ecumenical movement for which John Paul II has been a trailblazer. As the article in *U.S. News & World Report* explains, “there is strong support among the prelates... for strengthening the church’s efforts under John

world significance and will affect the lives of most people tremendously. That’s one reason we’re commanded to “watch” world events and to PRAY for understanding, guidance and deliverance! (Luke 21:36).

War in the Middle East

Biblical prophecy focuses our minds on the Middle East—and especially on Jerusalem. In His inspired Word, God tells us that as this age draws to a close there will be terrifying wars and upheaval in this region. Daniel 11:40-41 tells us, “At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack [the king of the North]; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown.”

Most scholars agree that the ruler of Egypt was, in ancient times

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by Dexter B. Wakefield

Equal IN GOD'S EYES

Some believe that God has created men superior to women, and certain races superior to others. Through the ages, the Bible—God's very Word—has been used by some to justify racial and gender oppression. Now, the Bible *does* have much to say about societal roles for men and women, and the destiny and prominence of certain peoples and races. But does God really prefer one sex to another, one group of people to their fellow men? Unfortunately, many have misunderstood what the

norms of the countries most of them lived in. For in God's purpose and plan for humanity, *every* race and *every* people have fundamental equality: "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all" (Col. 3:11). He adds in his letter to the Romans, "**For God treats everyone the same**" (2:11 *Living Bible*). "It has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be *fellow heirs*, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through

Bible actually says about these important matters. They might be very surprised to learn that the Bible is the very *foundation* for many of our modern ideas about equality!

In the ancient world, the ideas about human equality we often take for granted today were all but unknown. In general, each culture thought of itself as superior to others. Morality wasn't generally a consideration. Rather, the prime concern was power and might—the ability to conquer others. No wonder, then, that slavery was an everyday fact of life in most cultures. Wars of conquest have been regular occurrences throughout history. Even the Greeks, who pioneered democracy, considered

"THERE IS NEITHER JEW NOR GREEK, THERE IS NEITHER SLAVE NOR FREE, THERE IS NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE; FOR YOU ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS."

—GALATIANS 3:28

mankind to be divided into two general groups—Greeks and barbarians—with the Greeks, of course, being far superior. As for women, some cultures didn't even consider them to be fully human. The current notion that every living person has fundamental equality with everyone else would have been unimaginable to most in the ancient world. *To most, but not all*. One group was very different.

A Revolutionary Idea

The Apostle Paul taught New Testament Christians an idea that was undoubtedly quite revolutionary to the societal

the gospel" (Eph. 3:5-6). The Apostle Peter taught the same concept: "In truth I perceive that **God shows no partiality**. But in *every* nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:34-35).

The Bible further shows that equality in God's eyes also extends to women. Speaking to husbands about their wives, Peter writes, "Dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being *heirs together* of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7).

We know that God's basic way of life does not change. So when He inspired the apostles to write on these matters, He wasn't really inventing something new. Many centuries earlier, He had instructed the new nation of Israel, "*The same law applies* to the native-born and to the alien living among you" (Ex. 12:49 NIV). He also said, "For the LORD your God is God of gods... *who shows no partiality* nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, *and loves the stranger*, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for *you* were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deut. 10:17-19). These laws seem socially advanced even for modern times—and *certainly* must have been for this newly formed nation in antiquity.

God did make unparalleled promises of power and wealth to the Israelites and their descendants. But not because He thought they were racially superior. Rather, it was because of a promise He had made long before. When the children of Israel were slaves in Egypt, "God heard their groaning, and *God remembered His covenant* with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob... [saying,] 'I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; **and I will give it to you as a heritage**'" (Ex. 2:24; 6:8). Far from being an inherently *superior* people—or "race" if you will—God often found the ancient Israelites to be especially difficult. "Therefore understand that the LORD your God is NOT giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people" (Deut. 9:6). God favored the ancient Israelites with a tremendous opportunity, but it wasn't because He had created them "better than anyone else"!

Unfortunately, because the Israelites often disobeyed God and rejected His Truth, they also never fully embraced what God had taught them with respect to racial and gender equality. Thus they, like others, saw themselves as superior—often snubbing other peoples.

A "New" Idea

The apostles' teachings on human equality had a profound impact on the thinking of the first-century Church. It was truly a revolutionary idea in the ancient

Pan-Hellenic world where Christianity quickly set down its roots. They recorded God's revelation that there is equality among *all* people—equality that transcends the artificial human barriers of gender, ethnicity and skin color. But after flourishing and expanding for a brief period, the *true* Christian Church went "underground" and this biblical truth was lost to most of the world (for more information, please write for our free booklet, *Christianity's Greatest Deception*). Centuries later, when the printing press made Bibles widely available for the first time, the scriptural teaching of basic human equality reemerged and provided a solid foundation upon which the deeply religious founders of the Western democracies would build. When political equality began to flower in Western civilization, it grew from ancient biblical roots.

Nonetheless, incorporating such a principle into societies and governments required massive social change—even political upheaval. The beginnings were often difficult and violent. In one example, the English Puritan Oliver Cromwell, who assumed control of England, was driven by a combination of religious fervor and 17th-century politics to insist that *everyone* was equal in the eyes of God. King Charles I, however, echoing the age-old idea of the superiority of the nobility, declared, "Lord and subject are clean different!" Cromwell settled the *argument* but not the *question*. As the English Revolution of 1642 gained momentum, Cromwell raised an army, defeated Charles I and beheaded him. For this achievement, Cromwell is called the "Father of English Democracy"—but *real* progress in equality for the common folk was slow in coming.

The heroes of the American Revolution founded and justified their politics regarding equality and freedom on religious belief. The Declaration of Independence, one of the United States' most famous historical documents, states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that **all men are created equal**, that they are endowed by *their Creator* with certain unalienable rights." Because these rights are given by God, they asserted, no man could justly deny them.

Even so, cruel *slavery* was still tolerated. It took Abraham Lincoln and a catastrophic civil war to free the slaves.

But oppression and inequality persisted in America in the form of segregation and the Jim Crow laws that enforced it. The American Civil Rights Movement was born in the nation's African-American churches, and it was with religious fervor and conviction that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called for the end of injustice and inequality in the United States in the early 60s. Progress has been made, but society still has a long way to go.

These are just a few of the many who have struggled

to alleviate the misery of mankind brought on by hatred, bigotry and the rejection of the commandments God gave for our benefit. And although we may not endorse all of the actions, positions or beliefs of the aforementioned individuals, the moral certainty of these individuals with respect to human equality was founded on religious convictions taken from the Bible. *They had absolutes to stand on.*

Eroding the Foundations

Most today who champion human rights can do so only because they “stand on the shoulders” of these past giants, who themselves stood on a firm foundation—God’s Word.

But in today’s world, the moral authority of the Bible is being challenged at every turn. As Western civilization increasingly cuts itself loose from its moral anchor, how far might it drift? We’ve seen massive erosion of family life and sexual morals resulting in great damage to the social fabric. The effects of societal permissiveness include widespread drug abuse, crime and disease.

And no wonder. For when you reject the very principles on which our culture’s morality was built, how do you decide what’s right and what’s wrong anymore? More and more, society is regressing, with its intellectual leaders going back to the ancient notion that *power*—who has it and who gets it—is the only valid basis for moral decisions. Power *is* the principle, they think. As this idea regains popular acceptance, can changes in Western perceptions of political equality be far behind?

Jesus taught that *hating* another person is the same as the sin of *murder* (Matt. 5:21-22). For hatred is simply murder committed in one’s heart and mind.

Now you might say to yourself, “Yeah, I hate the guy, but I wouldn’t want to *kill* him!” But, in a sense, you

toward people of another race or ethnic group retract more and more into their own limited associations. Worst of all, they put a barrier between themselves and God’s way of love and outgoing concern for others. And let’s not forget that it’s mankind’s rejection of God’s way of life as set forth in His Word that is the cause of all the misery and calamity human beings have ever known. God’s commandments are given for our benefit. And in breaking them, we harm ourselves (Deut. 10:12-13).

Family Roles

We’ve already seen that God cares deeply about how we interact with others. After all, concerning Jesus and his Church, the Bible says, “For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood **out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation...**” (Rev. 5:9). But there’s more. The next verse continues, “...and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.” The Bible reveals that resurrected Christians will have great responsibility in the future. But God sees the roles of leadership and wielding authority very differently than does the carnal human mind. So we must properly understand Jesus’ teaching about family relationships, which are the primary “teaching tools” for all of us as “leaders in training.”

Jesus taught that those who lead must think of themselves as the *servants* of those who are led. The greater the servant, the greater the leader. And no one has given or served more than Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. He, the Creator (Eph. 3:9), even *died* for His Bride, the Church.

Jesus said, “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” (Matt. 20:25-28).

Jesus teaches us that a righteous leader never uses authority for his or her own personal benefit. Rather, it is used in the *service* of others, because God’s character always acts with love—outgoing concern for others.

Understanding this principle makes clear what Paul taught the Church at Ephesus regarding families. The husband-wife relationship pictures the relationship



between Christ and the Church. The husband is the leader (and thus primary servant) of the family, even as Christ is of the Church. A well-served family accepts this servant-leadership role. If organized as God reveals, Christian marriages function just as God’s government does—that is, the participants greatly benefit, both physically and spiritually.

The Apostle Paul wrote that we are to submit to “one another in the fear of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it... So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies... Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Eph. 5:21-33).

A wise Christian wife would encourage her husband’s leadership role in the family if she knew it was always in her and her children’s service. But what woman would happily accept the arbitrary authority of a man who used it only to serve himself? A husband who misuses his biblical leadership role to serve his own interests *abuses* what God has given him.

Simply put, husband and wife are *partners*. Paul is explaining how the Christian home should be *organized* and on whom the primary responsibility for leadership should fall. But this teaching does not make the husband *superior* to the wife. Rather, the leadership Christ teaches requires service. Now it must be remembered that even proper marriage relationships may differ widely. Every couple develops its own particular relationship *in love* as it best suits the personality of each partner. Thus, husband

and wife are “submitting to one another” (v. 21).

As mentioned earlier, the husband-wife relationship pictures the greater spiritual reality of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Those who incorrectly quote Paul’s writings to justify the *oppression* of women should remember that Jesus NEVER oppresses the Church. Rather, as Paul reminded the Ephesians, He *died* for it. And Christ serves the Church selflessly to this day. Therefore, those who would lead their families in accordance with biblical principles must do so with Jesus’ standard of love and service.


God never authorized the oppression of women. Rather, women are “heirs together” with men (1 Peter 3:7).

Ethnos vs. Ethnos

Jesus said that with increased intensity in the days just prior to His return, “nation will rise against nation” (Matt. 24:7). The word “nation” is translated from the Greek word *ethnos*, which refers to a people or ethnic group. Jesus was saying that there would be greatly increased tensions between different ethnic groups, as we are now seeing all around the world. Ethnic hatred has claimed countless lives in Bosnia, Northern Ireland, the Middle East, Africa, India and elsewhere. Ethnic tension seems to be on the rise almost everywhere you look. And the United States—which preaches tolerance and equality to the rest of the world—has not been immune.

We all need to heed the advice of the Apostle James: “Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?” (James 4:11-12).

And God promised through His prophet, Isaiah, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains.... And *all nations* shall flow to it... For out of Zion shall go forth the law... He shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Is. 2:2-4).

God promises that He will send Jesus Christ as a King of kings to this world to judge it righteously. In that day, the sinful racial and ethnic hatred that has been the source of so much of the world’s misery will finally be a thing of the past! 

RACISM IS NOT ONLY INJURIOUS TO THE VICTIM, BUT TO THE RACIST AS WELL. FOR RACISM POISONS THE RACIST! RACIAL ANIMOSITY AND SUSPICION ISOLATE PEOPLE FROM GOD AND FROM SOCIETY. CAN SOMEONE INTERACT PRODUCTIVELY WITH A PERSON WHOSE RACE HE IS UNCOMFORTABLE WITH OR FEELS SUPERIOR TO?

really *would*. For the same spirit that leads to taking another’s life is responsible for the intolerance of hatred. Therefore, racism is not only injurious to the victim, but to the racist as well. For racism *poisons* the racist! Racial animosity and suspicion isolate people from God and from society. Can someone interact productively with a person whose race he is uncomfortable with or feels superior to? Those who harbor and nourish animosity

Encouragement

Elementary school students learn that plants need four things to grow—sun, soil, air and water. Marigold seeds, planted in cups of potting soil, lined up to catch the sun on the window sill and given a periodic dose of water by student gardeners, will dependably send up dark green, lace-like leaves and orange poms. Soil provides support and structure for the root system and minerals for growth. Water serves as a medium for the uptake of minerals and nutrients through the root system into the leaves. Sunlight radiates energy into the plants' leaves and transforms carbon dioxide from the air into food and plant tissue.

Professional nurseries go beyond pots on a window sill and study what makes for full, healthy plants with multiple blooms, disease resistance, longevity, deep color and hardiness. They monitor watering, regulate sunlight and enrich the soil. They build up the organic content of the soil until its particles promote root growth. And they adjust the acid/alkaline balance of the soil, the pH factor, to maximize a plant's ability to take in nutrients.

Interestingly, the process of planting and watering is referred to in the Bible as a metaphor for Christian growth. The Apostle Paul said, "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6). He stated that we must be about this labor of growth with God, that we are all in it together (vv. 7-9). World events show that the growing season for this era of God's Church is nearing the end. So what can we add to the basics of prayer, study, fasting and meditation to promote enduring growth? What extra care will promote our intake of spiritual food just as surely as an adjustment of the pH unlocks soil nutrients to a marigold? What additional effort will remedy the conditions of indifference, frustration and anxiety that at times infiltrate God's husbandry? Perhaps nothing as much as a good dose of encouragement!

Wouldn't it be encouraging if we could talk with God right now, *face to face*, to ask Him, "How am I doing?" or "What should I be working on?" We would appreciate hearing Him say, "I am well pleased with you," or "Thank you so much," or "I really enjoyed what you did." Or, "I dearly love you and know you are striving to please Me." Truly one of the greatest yearnings we have is to experience God's love for us *now*, to feel like the sons and daughters He considers us to be, to be more confident of the resources He holds out to us.

But life in this world erodes confidence and security. At times we feel like King Saul's fasting Israelite soldiers in need of the energizing effect of a little honey to fuel our war against the Philistines! (cf. 1 Sam. 14:24-26). Paul, knowing that Christians face times of loneliness and discouragement, urged us to take care of one another: "Let us consider and give attention, continuous care to watching over one another, studying how we may stir up (stimulate and incite) to love and helpful deeds and noble actions" (Heb. 10:24 *Amplified Bible*).

Most of us recognize the need for encouragement, but our efforts sometimes miss the target as we slip into instructing, advising, admonishing, exhorting, describing and other forms of communication that seem more comfortable. Take, for example, a father who intends to encourage his son but comes across with a hefty dose of exhortation:

"Son, your mother and I love you, and we have high hopes for your future. You have an opportunity to go to university, and we're working our fingers to the bone so that you can achieve this goal. The world needs young men with good education, and you'll be financially able to do all the things we couldn't do at your age. But you've got to work hard and study, and bring those grades up. It's hard to balance a job and go to school, but you can do it."

Do we ever do the same? Do we *mistake* exhortation for encouragement. With the very best of intentions, do we sometimes try to spur others on to greater success, when the situation actually calls for empathy, listening and comfort?

Note that the words "encourage" and "exhort" are not synonymous, even though they are translations of the same Greek word—just as many words in English have more than one meaning. The book of Hebrews states that we should be "exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (10:25). But the word translated "exhort" in this passage is found elsewhere in the New Testament as "encourage." A closer look at the word "encourage" reveals the Latin word for heart, *cor*. The richer meanings of "encourage" are to inspire with hope and confidence, to hearten, to stimulate by assistance or approval, to cheer or refresh after a troubling time, to recover happiness, to console. In the *Old Testament*, predominantly written in the Hebrew language, "encourage" comes from a word that means to cure, strengthen, help and fortify, and relates a feeling of someone "being alongside" you or "being with" you. Words that encourage are directed toward the heart of the listener to cheer, inspire, approve and refresh. They are addressed as from a fellow traveler, a peer, a comrade at one's side.

"Exhort" contains the Latin word *hor*—essentially "want" or "desire." The expanded meanings of "exhort" convey a sense of urging, advising, admonishing, producing an action or change of state, stimulating a change in motivation, inciting by strong argument. Words that exhort aim at the mind of the listener with the purpose of promoting an action. They impart a feeling of needing to move into the area the speaker occupies or describes. Simply put, **encouraging words console and inspire, while exhortative words call to action.**

Does it make any real difference which we do since both "encourage" and "exhort" are translated from the same New Testament Greek word? Yes it does, because the results differ.

Words of *encouragement* create an environment wherein people are not afraid or anxious, so that the Truth of God can penetrate more readily. If we spend time to *encourage* our families and one another, we create an atmosphere in which people are not focused on failing to measure up or failing to please God. Through the Holy Spirit working in us, we can say the words that make an anxious heart glad (Prov. 12:25), or that energize a weary fellow Christian just as honey strengthened Saul's son Jonathan (1 Sam. 14:27; cf. Prov. 16:24). The Bible refers to these well-chosen words as "apples of gold in settings of silver"

(Prov. 25:11). In this way, Christ within us expresses a measure of God's love—so that we hear the actual words, and experience God's personal care and interest in each of us now in this life.

Words of *exhortation*, though, call for action. Christians who *already* feel encouraged and confident of God's love respond to exhortation sincerely. As long as we are human, we will all at times need admonition, correction and exhortation. When God's Truth is presented to *encouraged* listeners, it will generally promote real growth. Exhortation aimed at those who are *discouraged*, however, creates pressure, friction and superficial conformity (Allender Crabb, *Encouragement*, 1990, pp. 84-85, 91). **Effective encouragement, then, lays the groundwork for successful exhortation.**

Which begs the question: How can we *know* the effect that our words will have on others? A good place to start is to look inside at our own motivation. The power of *encouragement* lies more in the motivation *behind* our words than in the words themselves. Are we trying to comfort, console and strengthen others to move forward with us, walking side by side? If so, our words take into consideration the needs, fears and problems that fellow Christians face. Our encouraging words express sincere interest in the welfare of others and reassure them of God's faithfulness and love. But if a look inside reveals that we are urging others to change their behavior to move ahead, if our words focus on need, urgency and weight of evidence, then we are in an *exhortative* attitude. We are then focusing on the goal, the end result, the future and consequences of present actions.

Though both encouragement *and* exhortation are needed at times, we will, hopefully, more often choose the tool of encouragement—whenever possible!—because it energizes rather than cajoles. Then all encouraged Christians can be restored and strengthened, and can move forward in God's way of life together. Indeed, when we consider that God loves us so much that He sacrificed His perfect Son so that we could have eternal life, can we be anything other than an encourager? And when we meditate on the life of Jesus Christ and His soon-coming return to this earth, how can we not gladly extend hope and love to others?

God's people will be known by the love of the Truth and by the love we have for one another (1 Peter 1:22; cf. John 8:32). Let's make it a personal goal to encourage others, to do what we can to ease one another's burdens, and to gladden one another's heart as we do the Work of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the whole world.



by Raymond E. McNair

Teen Violence

What's behind the dramatic increase of armed violence in American schools? Does the glamorization of brutality in sports, videogames, television and movies fan the flames of teen violence?

In late May, an angry, revengeful 15-year-old student, Kipland Kinkel, allegedly murdered his parents in cold blood, then drove to Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon. He headed straight for the school cafeteria, where around 400 students were eating lunch. Kip calmly entered the cafeteria and opened fire with a semi-automatic rifle and two pistols, discharging 51 rounds of ammunition, killing and wounding 25 classmates before several others wrestled him to the floor and held him until police arrived.

Kip had previously bragged about cutting up squirrels and cats, claimed to have blown up a dead cow, and had also been charged with throwing rocks at cars as they passed under a freeway bridge. Shortly before he went on his murderous

shooting spree, Kip had been arrested, charged with possession of a stolen firearm on school property and expelled from school. After his shooting rampage and subsequent arrest, police found a grenade, several bombs and other incriminating evidence at his parents' home. Significantly perhaps, in Kip's middle school yearbook, his classmates labeled him as "Most Likely to Start World War III."

This fatal shooting is merely the latest in a series of bloody massacres on American school campuses. These gruesome mass shootings underscore the fact that **something is terribly wrong with the way children in America—as well as in much of the Western World—are being reared.** What is *wrong* with a society that produces young people capable of shooting their own

classmates in premeditated, cold-blooded murder?

Not long before, a similar massacre in Jonesboro, Arkansas, dominated headlines throughout the United States and in much of the world. The April 6 edition of America's three leading newsmagazines all gave it important coverage. The cover of *Time* displayed a picture of 11-year-old Andrew ("Drew") Golden—dressed in camouflage and holding a rifle—with the words "Armed & Dangerous" written across it. The magazine's feature article, titled "The Hunter and the Choir Boy," began by saying, "Two boys, with two very different lives, come together in a **crime of precocious sophistication.** How did childish games and grudges turn into an all-too-bloody resolve and an *American tragedy*?"

Time also ran an accompanying article, "Toward the Root of the Evil," in which it said, "Jonesboro is the fourth student shooting spree on school grounds in the U.S. since February 1997" (p. 38). And of course, there have been others since (see list below).

Newsweek's April 6 cover depicted Jonesboro's 13-year-old Mitchell ("Mitch") Johnson holding a pistol in front of his chest, with the caption, "The Schoolyard Killers." Its article, "The Boys Behind the Ambush," stated, "One is 13; the other 11. Raised around guns, they're accused of opening fire on their schoolmates and teachers.... **Why do kids kill?**" (pp. 21-22).

A Nation in Shock

What really happened at Jonesboro's Westside Middle School? On Monday, March 24, the day before the

massacre, Mitch Johnson had reportedly told his classmates, "I got a lot of killing to do!" But nobody took him seriously. The following day, Mitch feigned a stomachache to

convince his mom not to make him attend school. As she left the house to go to work, he told her to leave the keys to the family van so his stepfather could have it repaired. But shortly afterward, Mitch drove the van to the home of his friend, Drew Golden, who owned a crossbow, a shotgun and two rifles. They then drove to the home of Drew's grandfather, broke into the basement and stole an assortment of four pistols, three semiautomatic rifles and more than 1,000

Kipland Kinkel, 15, is escorted into the Lane County Circuit Court in Eugene, Oregon, on May 22. Kinkel is facing multiple murder charges in connection with an early morning school shooting spree on May 21 that claimed the lives of two students and his parents
—Reuters.

rounds of ammunition.

Then it was on to Westside Middle School. Drew allegedly set off a fire alarm before rejoining Mitch at a predetermined firing position. When their classmates, accompanied by a teacher, came pouring out of the school, they ran straight into the assassins' field of fire.

Dressed in camouflage and armed to the teeth, these young killers took aim and began blowing their schoolmates away. They cold-bloodedly fired 22 shots, scoring 15 hits in less than a minute—killing four students and a teacher, while wounding 10. Pandemonium reigned for the next 15 minutes until police could reach the scene. Upon arrival, the authorities apprehended both youths without further incident.

In the aftermath of the Jonesboro massacre, neither the police nor school officials could make sense of it—one of the latest episodes in a series of deadly shootings at American schools.

Yet again, the country—even the world—watched in horror, searching for answers. How could two young boys deliberately plan and execute such a brutal mass murder? Across America, many were asking, "When will it all end?"

Recent Schoolyard Shootings

February 2, 1996: In Moses Lake, Washington, 14-year-old Barry Loukaitis killed his teacher and two students, wounding another.

February 19, 1997: In Bethel, Alaska, 16-year-old Evan Ramsey opened fire, leaving the school principal and one student dead, and two wounded.

October 1, 1997: In Pearl, Mississippi, 16-year-old Luke Woodham killed his mother and two classmates, and wounded seven others—and then claimed demon influence.

December 1, 1997: In West Paducah, Kentucky, 14-year-old Michael Carneal brutally killed three students and wounded five others.

December 15, 1997: In Stamps, Arkansas, 14-year-old Joseph Todd killed two fellow students.

March 24, 1998: In Jonesboro, Arkansas, 13-year-old Mitchell Johnson and 11-year-old Andrew Golden ambushed their school, killing five with handguns and rifles.

April 24, 1998: In Edinboro, Pennsylvania, 14-year-old Andrew Wurst attacked people at his school dance, killing a science instructor with a handgun and wounding three others.

April 28, 1998: In Pomona, California, a 14-year-old boy killed two students playing basketball at an elementary school.

May 19, 1998: In Fayetteville, Tennessee, an 18-year-old honor student killed a classmate days before graduation.

May 21, 1998: In Springfield, Oregon, 15-year-old Kipland Kinkel killed both his parents at home and then two fellow students in the high school cafeteria, and wounded 19 others.

Root Causes

So what's really behind these repeated incidents of campus violence in the United States? What causes children as young as age 11 to embark on a virtual killing spree? How do little boys turn into little "monsters"? Allegedly, Mitch Johnson had used cocaine. According to his classmates, he was a bully. His parents had divorced, which was apparently quite traumatic for him. Further, he and his girlfriend had reportedly just broken up. Any or all of these factors may have contributed to the Jonesboro nightmare. But for Drew Golden, there are no such obvious contributing factors. He apparently came from a solid family background. He may simply have succumbed to unhealthy peer pressure or societal influence.

Time magazine addresses some of the root causes of teen violence: "Psychologists are wary of speculating about specific causes in the Jonesboro killings.... [But] professionals share the assumptions of most parents. These days **Mom and Dad are not always home much. The extended family of the past is gone.** A feckless popular culture has moved into the vacuum" (Feb. 1997, p. 38).

Time also quotes from Stanton Samenow's book *Before It's Too Late: Why Some Kids Get into Trouble and What Parents Can Do About It*: "But a youngster who is already inclined toward antisocial behavior hears of a particular crime, and it feeds an already fertile mind.... If you have a child who increasingly is *lying* instead of putting some value on the truth, a child who is becoming more *ruthless* and unprincipled—

you need to take some of these signs seriously" (p. 38).

The article further states, "In a great many households, work, divorce or both have removed parents for much of the day. Mitchell Johnson, the older boy accused in Jonesboro, didn't see a lot of his father, who split from his mother in 1994. When the grownups are out, or even when one is there but not mindful, **children are left to the mercies of a peer culture shaped by the media, the ultimate in crazed nannies**" (p. 38). To see more about this, please refer to the box on "Video Violence" below.

According to this same article, "child-development experts say that for kids who never develop an internal brake ["Thou shalt not..."] on their own aggression, the pop-pop culture of weaponry makes a difference" (p. 39). Since fully one-third

of all United States' households have at least one gun (there are about 200 million guns in U.S. homes), *easy accessibility* to those weapons often leads to injury or death! "The *violence* in the media and the *easy availability* of guns are what's driving the slaughter of innocents," says Barry Kristbert, president of the National Council of Crime and Delinquency in San Francisco" (p. 39).

And the dangers are worse for teen boys, since adolescent boys and girls differ in the way they handle emotional pressures. "Girls are more likely to decline into such inward-directed aggressions as depression or eating disorders. They are more likely to put their feelings into words, **an early warning that boys don't always offer....** When boys are ready to detonate, the signs are harder to read" (p. 39).

The *Time* article concludes by saying, "The psychic stresses of the 1990s are not so easy to evade when so many of them, from TV to being a latchkey child, are right in the home. There they can easily act on any kid who believes that 'the world has wronged me'—a sentiment spoken from the darkest part of the human heart" (p. 39).

So what, if anything, can we learn from the Jonesboro massacre? Can we correct the real *causes* of schoolyard violence? Can we in the United States—and in the Western World at large—do anything to *prevent* our precious young people's minds from becoming so twisted by societal pressures that some of them are driven to commit senseless acts of mass murder?

Was the Jonesboro incident totally the fault of these two young boys? Or must a great deal of responsibility be placed squarely on the shoulders of our "bloodthirsty" society—a society that glories in

lurid gore and violence?

It's high time we all come to realize that **violence breeds more violence!** (Matt. 26:52). As parents, we must face up to the challenge of finding more time to spend with our children, teaching them *right* from *wrong* (Eph. 6:4; Prov. 22:6, 15; 29:15-17). We must show them the proper example by ourselves rejecting violent or perverse "entertainment," which is so prevalent in our society.

Violence Prophesied

Today's teen rage merely reflects the *adult* violence to which our youth have been exposed. This 20th century has undoubtedly seen the most violence and bloodshed of any century in man's entire history.

Yet most people have little or no real conception of just how bloody our recent history has been. Anyone who regularly watches television will note that so much of history concerns *violence* between nations. Our Western culture calls itself "Christian," and is supposed to be based on the teachings of the Carpenter of Nazareth, who urged all humans to "turn the other cheek" and "love their enemies" (cf. Matt. 5:38-48). Why, then, has a disproportionate amount of the human blood spilled during the last 100 years been shed by one group of professing Christians fighting another? How many *tens of millions* of innocent lives have been snuffed out through senseless war and deliberate genocide during this 20th century?

Former U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski gives us the appalling figures of those who have needlessly perished during the last 100 years. In his book, *Out of Control*, Brzezinski states that "**probably in excess of 175,000,000**" were **slaughtered during this turbulent**

century (pp. 9-11, 17).

Many fail to recognize that Jesus Christ was not only a great *Teacher*, but also a *Prophet*. He foretold that during the close of this "age of man," there would be a marked increase in "wars and rumors of wars"—with various groups of nations fighting against one another (Matt. 24:6-7). In fact, He said that humanity would bring itself to the very brink of annihilation: "For then there will be great

Pall bearers carry the casket of 12-year-old Paige Ann Herring at a Jonesboro cemetery March 27. Police have two youths in custody for the March 24 shooting rampage that resulted in the death of a teacher and the injuring of ten students—Reuters.

tribulation" (v. 21). And "unless those days are shortened, all mankind will perish" (v. 22 *Living Bible*). Jesus also prophesied that this time of worldwide violence would be similar to the bloody carnage that occurred in the time of Noah—just before God Almighty blotted out all humanity except "eight souls" (1 Peter 3:20). "**As the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be**" (Matt. 24:37).

What were some of the horrible evils that afflicted human society in the days just prior to the Great Flood? At that sad moment in earth's history, the Creator God "saw that the wickedness of man was great in

(continued on page 19)

Video Violence

So much of today's trouble with our youth has its roots in television, movies and even video games that actually *glorify* violence. Here's what some leading newsmagazines have to say:

U.S. News & World Report states, "Some, like President Clinton, who was told of the killings in [Arkansas] while on a visit to Africa, **blame the glamorization of violence in popular movies, television shows, and video games**" (April 6, p. 22).

Newsweek's April 6 article on the Jonesboro massacre agrees: "Among the *root causes* of last week's tragedy, it was confidently asserted, were **videogames, violent TV shows and inadequate male role models.** A widely disseminated photo of a 6-year-old Andrew Golden squinting down the barrel of a very businesslike-looking pistol gave rise to much derisive speculation about the rural Southern culture of guns and hunting" (pp. 22-23).

This same *Newsweek* magazine also featured an article titled "Why Children Turn Violent." It stated, "**Movies, videogames, loose guns, alienation**—there's no one reason kids kill, but there are warning signs.... But why would boys of 11 and 13 spray bullets into a crowd of their peers? How could such young hearts turn that cold?... **It's clear that kids who grow up surrounded by violence—on the street, in the home, on the tube, in electronic games—become less sensitive to it.** And there's no question that when children have ready access to firearms the odds of a tragedy rise" (p. 24).

Time magazine notes, "As for the *media violence*, the debate there is... over. Few researchers bother any longer to dispute that **bloodshed on TV and in the movies has an effect on the kids who witness it.** Added to the mix now are video games, at least the ones built around the model of hunt and kill" (April 6, 1998, p. 39).

The article further states, "Armed with video-game joysticks and TV remotes... kids are whiplashed from one bit of blood sport to another, from *South Park* and *Jerry Springer* to *Mortal Kombat* on Nintendo. Ordinary kids may be a bit *desensitized* to violence. More-susceptible kids are pushed toward a dangerous mental precipice" (p. 38).

These statements all speak with one voice: *violence from television, movies and videogames* all tend to incite America's youth to imitate that violence. As long as America—and the entire Western World—continues to feed young people on this "virulent culture of violence," we can't expect that the tragic killings in Jonesboro and Springfield won't be repeated elsewhere.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



WARNING THE WORLD

I very much appreciate and was thankful to God for your May–June 1998 *World Ahead* magazine and your focus on prophecy and world events. We have a responsibility to warn the world about what's happening as it relates to God's Word. Keep up the good work!

Sandra Bays
Cincinnati, Ohio

RACISM?

I received your *World Ahead* magazine and read the editorial, "Will You Walk in the Light?" (March–April 1998). As an American of African descent, I was concerned by two paragraphs that mention the American and British-descended peoples of the world. And on a recent program you claim that these nations are the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. I feel this is a topic of concern, especially since racism is rearing its ugly head.

When I search through the Scriptures, I don't search for genealogies, although they may have their place. I search for truth and spiritual guidance. Why is it important that you mention your genealogy in print—especially when you know that God is impartial? In Revelation 7:9 it speaks of the *great multitude from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples and languages*, standing before the throne and before the lamb, robed in white, etc. In Colossians 3:10-11, it says that we are clothed with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its Creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and

Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all in all!

Peter exhorted Christians about Paul and his writings and how some were hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures, etc. (2 Peter 3:14-18). This can happen with these words in question. In John 3:16 it says, "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, so that *whoever* believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Cedric Tidwell
Rockford, Illinois

Longtime readers of The World Ahead will recognize that many of our articles refer to the English-speaking, British-descended peoples as modern-day Israelites. This is not simply our opinion. There is a wealth of proof, both biblical and secular, that these modern peoples are indeed the descendants and heirs of the ancient, righteous patriarch Abraham. As such, they are likewise heirs of his son Isaac, and heirs of Isaac's son Jacob, later renamed Israel—hence the term "Israelites."

Although the proofs of this historical fact are far too numerous to list in this forum, we invite you to write for our brochure, America and Britain in Prophecy, which thoroughly examines this subject. It will be sent to you free of charge.

As for your contention that "racism is rearing its ugly head" with respect to our publishing the biblical identity of certain modern-day nations, frankly we are somewhat perplexed. We, like you, believe that each and every individual human being is loved by God, should be loved by his fellow man, and has the awe-

some potential to become a glorified, born-again son of Almighty God at the resurrection from the dead. You quote some very key scriptures. And we wholeheartedly agree with them. Spiritually speaking, there is no longer Jew nor Greek. And to quote from our above-mentioned publication "No true Christian should believe in or teach racism in any form, including 'white supremacy' or 'anti-Semitism.'" And, "Nothing here implies that one skin color is somehow better than another. They are just different."

To learn more about what the Bible has to say on the subject of equality, please read Dexter Wakefield's article titled "Equality and the Bible," beginning on page 8—ed.

KING DAVID

How thankful I am to receive this great literature, the *World Ahead* magazine. An article in the January–February issue titled "Answers to Unanswered Prayer" by Roderick C. Meredith really gave me something to think about.

Also there's another marvelous article titled "What Is Predestination?" by Raymond McNair. It was of great encouragement to me.

And finally, the best of all is the article by Martin Fannin titled "King David—A Man After God's Own Heart." I must try to follow his example.

After reading these three articles, I was very pleased with the message of truth. They have helped me too in my walk with the Lord.

Alfred Konia
Vella Island, Solomon Islands

THEY WILL LIVE AGAIN

I wish to convey my sincere thanks to Gerald Weston for his article titled "They Will Live Again." This reminds me that God is forgiving and full of love and compassion. There is fear and sadness in my heart when I think of the millions of innocent babies who have died. But after reading your article, I feel assured that they will have their chance. I pray that God will continue to inspire you with wisdom and knowledge, spirit and truth.

Wesley Jouiarine
Tortola, British Virgin Islands

ADVICE FROM DAD

First of all, thank you for the *World Ahead* magazine, which I have been receiving since last year. My family and I always spend ample time reading the vivid and inspiring articles and are eager for the next issue to arrive.

I wish to comment on your *Living Christianity* feature titled "Some Advice from Dad" by John Ogwyn (March–April 1998). I greatly appreciate what he has written, for it does not only concern the husband and wife but also their children who will be married in the near future.

Marie Grace Rosario
Bayombong, Philippines

COVER TO COVER

The World Ahead is the only magazine I have ever read cover to cover. I have enjoyed every single edition so far and every single article contained in them. Thank you so much for the insight and joy they have all brought me.

P.J.H. Peter-Bowyer
Stilfontein, South Africa

ENLIGHTENING ARTICLES

I received my first issue of your magazine (March–April 1998) and was really impressed with two of the articles.

"On the Brink of Genocide" by Raymond McNair really enlightened me about the evils around me every day. "God and Man—A Universe Apart?" by Thomas Robinson showed me just how small we are in relationship to God and even though we are a minute part of God's picture, just how great and awesome He is to care about us so much! I can hardly wait for the next issue.

James Bresset
Tulia, Texas

We welcome your comments, criticism or questions. Please mail letters for this section to "Letters to the Editor" at our U.S. address. Be sure to include your name, address and daytime phone number. We reserve the right to edit your comments for clarity, propriety or space.

TEEN VIOLENCE (continued from page 17)

the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart" (Gen. 6:5-6).

How bad had things become? "The earth also was *corrupt* before God, **and the earth was FILLED with violence...** for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to

Parents and students hug each other on their way to a counseling session at Parker Middle School in Edinboro, Pennsylvania, on April 25. Andrew Wurst, a 14-year-old student here, is alleged to have shot and killed Parker teacher John Gillette during a graduation dinner at a local restaurant the evening before—Reuters.


Noah... "I will destroy them with the earth" (vv. 11-13).

The Apostle Paul also described the spirit of our times: "Remember that there will be difficult times *in the last days*. People will be selfish, greedy, boastful, and conceited; they will be insulting, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, and irreligious; **they will be unkind, merciless, slanderers, violent, and fierce**" (2 Tim. 3:1-3 *Today's English Version*).

Let's face it! We really are living in an unbelievably *violent age!* Teen rage on school campuses is merely *symptomatic* of the "virulent culture of violence" that has infected most of the modern world.

So is there still *hope*? Is there a *solution* to today's pervasive mindless violence? Yes. It involves all men coming to really *believe in* and *practice* heartfelt obedience to the most perfect law ever given—God's *Ten Commandments* (Ex. 20:1-17; Rom. 7:12, 14). Mankind must *reject* violence as a way of life in favor of loving his neighbor as himself (Matt. 22:39-40). He must come to really believe that "love"—*outflowing concern* for others—"does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:10).

If mankind wholeheartedly embraces the "Golden Rule"—to always **do unto others as we would wish them to do unto us** (Matt. 7:12)—then we will have truly found the way to peace and overflowing happiness. Only then will violence and war vanish from this planet!

And as this magazine frequently proclaims, there *will* be universal peace and prosperity—when Jesus Christ returns to rule the earth (Is. 2:1-4). To learn more about this truly "happy ending," please write for our free booklet, *Do You Believe the True Gospel?* 

The GIFT OF TONGUES

Once a curiosity of widely ridiculed Pentecostal churches, speaking in tongues has now gone mainstream! *Newsweek* magazine, normally noted for its hard-hitting coverage of secular news, recently published a major feature on charismatic renewal. What was at one time a phenomenon confined to a narrow niche in the professing Christian world is now spreading across the entire denominational spectrum. Charismatic renewal

charisma, meaning “gift.” Various forms of this word are used frequently in the Greek New Testament and, in addition to the word “gift,” are often translated as “grace” or “favor.” Most often the reference is to the freely bestowed gifts that God offers His people. Charismatic renewal is used to refer to a revival or renewal of spiritual gifts in the modern-day Christian Church. Many professing Christians regard manifestations such as speaking in tongues as part of a

has become the world’s fastest growing religious movement. It’s no longer only *Pentecostals* who speak in tongues but, rather, Episcopalians, Methodists, Lutherans and even Catholics have all gotten into the act.

What *is* charismatic renewal? And what about speaking in tongues? Doesn’t the Bible mention such things? Is modern America and much of the rest of the world on the verge of a true religious revival? Today we are certainly living in a wilderness of religious confusion. How can we know what is real and what is true? People are increasingly seeking something to fill the void in their lives. A secular, materialistic society has not offered satisfying answers to life’s really big questions. Does the charismatic renewal movement now sweeping America truly represent a latter-day outpouring out of God’s Spirit? Will it supply the answers people are seeking?

If not, then what *does* it portend?

What Is Charismatic Renewal?

The English word “charismatic” is derived from the Greek word

renewal of the biblical gifts mentioned in the New Testament.

To begin with, let’s understand the origin of the modern-day tongues movement. What is now sweeping across denominational lines had its beginnings with the Pentecostal movement in the early part of the 20th century. On January 1, 1901, Agnes Ozman, a young woman attending Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, claimed to have received a special “baptism of the spirit” and to have been given the gift of tongues. Shortly afterward, others at the college began to report similar experiences and, motivated by a newfound zeal, sought to evangelize, beginning in Missouri and Texas. “One of their converts was William J. Seymour.... In 1906 in the Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission on Azusa Street [in Los Angeles], Seymour was used to launch the real beginnings of modern Pentecostalism” (*The Dictionary of Bible and Religion*, p. 797). The 1906 Azusa Street Revival is reckoned as the origin of the modern Pentecostal movement. Groups such as the Assemblies of God, United Pentecostal Church, International Church of the Four-Square Gospel, and

Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) all had their origins in this movement.

For much of this century, people involved in the Pentecostal movement were derisively referred to by outsiders as “Holy Rollers.” Their services were generally characterized by an emotionally charged atmosphere generated by both style of music and style of preaching. Emotional “testimonies,” along with “faith healing” and “speaking in

tongues,” all played an important part in the services. Because many Pentecostals lacked formal education and adherents were most numerous among blacks and poor whites, members of other denominations generally looked down on them.

But through tent revivalists such as Aimee Semple McPherson, A.A. Allen and Oral Roberts, growing attention was attracted to the charismatic movement in the first 50 years of its existence. During the 1960s, the charismatic movement began a crossover from the various Pentecostal groups into mainline Protestantism. And in the last couple of decades, its popularity has skyrocketed.

Speaking in Tongues

The focal point of the Pentecostal movement, and now of the entire charismatic movement, is the emphasis on speaking in tongues, or “glossalalia”—a term derived from the Greek words for tongue and speaking. But just what does the Bible mean when it mentions speaking in tongues? Is it identical to what happens in the modern charismatic movement?

The Greek word for tongue, *glossa*, is used primarily in three ways according to the *Arndt-Gingrich Greek-English Lexicon*. In one case it simply means the tongue, the organ of speech. In another it refers to a language. The third usage refers to a phenomenon found in pagan Hellenistic religion with the broken speech patterns of people in religious ecstasy (p. 161).

First, let’s look at the little-known role played by speaking in tongues in ancient pagan religion. The concept of ecstatic speech, unintelligible to the hearers, was well known in ancient Greece. The shrine of Apollo at Delphi, a short distance from the city of Corinth, was the site of the most famous oracle of the ancient world. The priestess of Apollo would work herself into a religious frenzy and then fall down to the ground, often in a sort of convulsive fit, and come under the “possession of the god.” While in this state she would babble unintelligible words (the language of the gods) that were written down and “interpreted” by the priests. Similar events happened at other oracles throughout the Mediterranean world.

Ecstatic speech in the ancient world, however, was not limited to priestesses at the oracles. When the Eastern mystery religions spread westward into the Hellenistic world, they also incorporated the phenomenon of ecstatic speech. It was deemed to be communion with the gods. Thus, the use of frenzied, unintelligible speech, called by the ancient Greeks “speaking in tongues,” was well-known in the first century.

But is this at all akin to what the Bible describes? The most detailed account of speaking in

tongues as a gift of God is given in Acts 2. There are several points that should be noted.

First, the phenomenon was manifested suddenly (v. 2). The

Worshippers at a Nigerian Pentecostal church on March 15, 1998, in the capital city of Lagos—Reuters.

words that began to pour from the mouths of the apostles weren’t the result of an emotionally charged meeting. They weren’t working themselves up through frenzied music or the repetition of certain religious phrases. This was a miracle of God that came on instantly.

Second, there is no mention of any of the apostles falling to the floor “under the power,” or of any of the other excesses that so often characterize modern Pentecostal meetings. The emphasis given in Acts 2 is not one of putting on a show. Rather, it’s one of delivering an important message. There were miraculous signs accompanying the message to authenticate it.

An important key that must be noted in Acts 2:4-12 is that the apostles were not using so-called ecstatic speech. Instead, they were speaking in known languages that members of their audience clearly understood. This was the time of Pentecost, the second of the three annual pilgrim Festivals given by God to the ancient Israelites. There were Jews who had gathered in Jerusalem from all over the known world for this occasion—Jews who each spoke the language

of his homeland.

It wasn't long before increasing numbers recognized their own native language (v. 8)—though initially some, who didn't understand the particular language they were hearing, supposed the apostles to be drunk (v. 13). Since this was a time before electronic amplification and public address systems, it is reasonable to suppose that the apostles stood at some distance apart and faced in different directions, all preaching the message in a different language—languages known to the listeners, but *unknown* to the apostles themselves! Those who understood a particular apostle began to gather closer to him to hear what he had to say. Acts 2:14-42 emphasizes the *content* of Peter's speech. He wasn't repeating the same catch-phrases over and over. Rather, he was relaying a vitally important message.

Of course, the mechanics of this special Pentecost meeting may have happened a little differently than the description we've just given—the Bible does not give a precise account. But this much is indisputable—Peter and the other apostles were speaking in foreign languages that were *intelligible* to their listeners. Thus, the gift of tongues was a tool of evangelism.

Clearly God's true gift of tongues differs vastly from what masquerades as that gift today. It is not uncommon for a hyper-excited, worked up Pentecostal to sway, moan, "dance in the Spirit," laugh hysterically or shout out in unintelligible speech, or even meaningless guttural gibbering. How very different from the biblical example!

Baptism of the Spirit

Is being baptized with the Spirit something separate from initial conversion? Those in the charismatic movement would generally say it is.

But what does the Bible really teach?

In Acts 1:5, the apostles were told that though they had earlier been baptized with water, they would shortly be baptized with the Holy Spirit. In verse 8, Christ equated this with receiving the Holy Spirit and being empowered to carry out the task that He had set before them of preaching the Gospel. They had not received the Spirit at the time they were baptized because the Holy Spirit was *not available* to them until after Christ returned to the Father (John 7:39; 16:7). In Acts 2:4, we read that on the Feast of Pentecost they were suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit.

Clearly, it is receiving the Holy Spirit that truly makes us converted Christians (Rom. 8:9). How, then, *do we receive the Holy Spirit?*

Peter explained in his sermon on Pentecost, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). In Acts 5:32, Peter emphasized that God gives His Spirit to only those who OBEY Him. And having the Holy Spirit within us is what makes us a true Christian—God's begotten child (Rom. 8:16).

However, every spiritual manifestation isn't necessarily from God. The Apostle John exhorted his readers, "**Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God**" (1 John 4:1). What, then, is the true evidence of the Holy Spirit?

For one, God's Spirit is only offered to those who believe the Gospel message that Jesus brought and have truly repented as a result. They have unconditionally surrendered their lives to their Creator and have therefore begun to obey Him. Next, there is fruit that the Holy Spirit bears in our lives. This fruit is described in Galatians 5:22-23 as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

gentleness and self-control. In other words, the Holy Spirit changes our lives and fills us with God's love, which enables us to obey His holy and righteous law—showing evidence of His very nature within us (Rom. 5:5; 13:10).

The initial bestowal of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was accompanied by miraculous signs. In addition, there are at least two other occasions recorded in the book of Acts where miraculous signs, including the gift of tongues or languages, were given.

Several years after that first New Testament Pentecost, we read of Peter going to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile soldier who had been seeking God. After preaching the Gospel to the members of his household, Peter and those with him were astonished to see the Holy Spirit come upon these Gentiles and grant them the miraculous gift of speaking in other languages (Acts 10:44-47). Note that the language they were given was one that Peter and those with him understood (v. 46). It took this miracle from God to convince Peter and the other Church leaders that God would accept physically uncircumcised Gentiles as well as Jews (11:17).

In Acts 19, we have an account of individuals who had years earlier been baptized by John the Baptist and who now considered themselves to be disciples of Christ. When the Apostle Paul talked with them, it became clear that they hadn't fully understood the Gospel and knew nothing about the Holy Spirit. Thus, they had never been truly converted. So Paul baptized them again—this time in the name of Jesus Christ—and then laid hands on them so that they would receive God's Spirit (v. 5). In this instance also, the Spirit came with miraculous manifestations, clearly showing the distinction

(continued on page 28)

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Your publications sometimes mention something called "laying on of hands." What is meant by this and what is it for?

Hebrews 6:1-2 lists "**laying on of hands**" as one of the "elementary principles of Christ," the basic doctrines of the Church. Indeed, examples of it can be found throughout the Bible.

The laying on of hands is a literal act with symbolic meaning. For the one with hands laid on him, it represents being set apart and receiving spiritual blessings, authority and power. For example, this is the way a blessing was often conferred in the Old Testament. Notice that the patriarch Jacob **laid his hands** on Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, in passing on to them blessings their descendants would receive from God (Gen. 48:13-20).

In the New Testament, newly baptized people are shown having hands laid on them as a step in receiving God's Holy Spirit. Observe the account in Acts 8 of a number of people in Samaria who had been baptized: "Then [the Apostles Peter and John] **laid hands on them** and they received the Holy Spirit. And... through the **laying on of the apostles' hands** the Holy Spirit was given" (vv. 17-18).

Notice also Acts 19, where the Apostle Paul encountered people who had received the baptism of John the Baptist and didn't even know about God's Holy Spirit (vv. 1-4). "When they heard [what Paul had to say], they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had **laid hands on them**, the Holy Spirit came upon them" (vv. 5-6; cf. 2 Tim 1:6-7).

When those in need of healing go to God's ministers for prayer and anointing as they are commanded to (cf. James 5:13-15), the laying on of hands also comes into play. Jesus gave the pattern: "All those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He **laid His hands on every one of them** and healed them" (Luke 4:40; cf. Mark 6:5). And the apostles *followed* this pattern: "And it

happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he **laid his hands on him** and healed him" (Acts 28:8).

The laying on of hands is also employed in ordaining people to various offices in the Church. Notice the ordination of deacons in Acts 6: "When [the apostles] had prayed, they **laid their hands on them**" (v. 6).

What is the *significance* of the laying on of hands? As we can see from all these examples, it shows that *God works through human instruments* to help other people. There is *government* among His people—and we are to operate through the *proper channels* He has established.

The word "amen" is considered the traditional closing to prayer by most Christians and Jews alike. What does this word mean?

When Israel was preparing to enter the Promised Land, Moses restated God's blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. Israel gave an affirmative response: "Amen!" (Deut. 27:12-26). In essence, the Israelites were saying, "So be it!" or "Let it be so!" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, 1985, p. 25). The use of *amen* throughout Scripture implied affirmation to what was said, and became the custom in both the Old and New Testaments to end congregational prayers (Neh. 8:6; 1 Cor. 14:16). Saying *amen* was an acknowledgment that one clearly understood and desired to make the prayer his own.

Used in normal speech as an adverb, the Hebrew word *amen* means "verily, truly" (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1972, p. 53). Christ often used it this way. There are many places in the *King James Version* of the Bible that quote Him as beginning some pronouncement with, "Verily, I say unto you..." The word "verily" here, rendered "assuredly" in the *New King James Version* and "truly" in the *New Revised Standard Version*, is translated from the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word *amen*. And, as stated, this word certainly

does carry these meanings. In the book of John, Christ is always quoted as repeating the word—i.e. "Amen, amen, I say unto you..."—thus intensifying the affirmation.

In addition, *amen* is one of the titles of Jesus Christ. "These things says the *Amen*, the **Faithful and True Witness**" (Rev. 3:14). He is the "faithful [*amen*] God who keeps covenant and mercy" (Deut. 7:9) and "the God of truth [*amen*]" (Is. 65:16). It is through Jesus Christ that all of God's promises are established "and in Him *Amen* [faithfulness and truth] to the glory of God through us" (2 Cor. 1:20).

Christ ended His model prayer (i.e. what has come to be known as the "Lord's Prayer") with *amen*, leaving us an example to follow (Matt. 6:9-13). The importance of this ending now becomes evident. "The *Amen*, the Faithful and True Witness" wants us to know that we are praying to a Father who *keeps* His promises. God's **faithfulness**, revealed by Jesus, and the **true promises** of His soon-coming Kingdom are paramount! In addition, Jesus wants His disciples to pray according to **God's will** and not self-will (Luke 22:42). Therefore, Jesus concludes this prayer with: "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen!" **Let it be as GOD says!**

It should also be noted that when we say "amen" at the end of our prayers, we are not telling God "goodbye"—as if we are then no longer in contact with Him. Rather, we are to be in a mind-frame of prayer throughout our day (cf. 1 Thess. 5:17). For we are to remember that God *never* leaves us (Heb. 13:5)—that He, in fact, constantly watches over us (cf. Luke 12:6-7) and even lives *within* us (John 14:23; 1 Cor. 6:19). Indeed, rather than being a "so long" or "farewell," the word *amen* welcomes God's immediate and continuing involvement in our life. Thus, we should always think "truly" or "so be it" when we say it—trusting that God, who is true and faithful, will never fail us.

For further information on the subject of seeking God in prayer, please request our free reprint article, "Answers to Unanswered Prayer."

Develop a GOOD ATTITUDE

by Jonathan W. McNair



When I was 16, I went to a “Success Rally” at the Milwaukee Arena with my grandpa. Former Green Bay quarterback Bart Starr gave an inspiring speech about his football days under the coaching of Vince Lombardi. Motivational speaker Zig Ziglar told us to “meet him at the top” of the ladder of success. And Norman Vincent Peale, a Protestant evangelist, talked about having PMA—a “Positive Mental Attitude.”

In the 90s, famed management/leadership guru Stephen Covey teaches the attitude of “thinking win-win.”

In other words, in all of our dealings with other people, think about what will benefit the other person *as well as* ourselves.

All these ideas are helpful. They all have merit. But when we begin to wrestle with the question of how we can actually acquire a “good attitude,” do any of these

ideas really give us the full picture?

Does having a good attitude mean to always be in a positive frame of mind? Does “accentuating the positive” always work? Should we always “put on a happy face” to make all our problems fly away? What about a “can-do” attitude? Maybe we really “can’t do” for reasons beyond our control. Can we always think win-win?

When we toss around the expression “good attitude,” what are we really talking about?

A Godly Attitude

Catch phrases like “positive mental attitude” and “thinking win-win” attempt to encapsulate a successful approach, perspective and feeling toward other people. They are prescriptions for how to act when faced with life’s problems. But every one of them falls short,

giving only a *glimpse* of a solution to the fundamental problem of how to approach life. Having a truly *good* attitude—that is, a *godly* attitude—is the real solution.

So let’s establish a working definition of “attitude” in this context: Our attitude is the outward reflection of our mind, character, knowledge, wisdom and spirit. It is not simply our “mood,” or even our “perspective” in any given situation. Rather it reflects the fundamental way we look at life and how we act as a result.

In Galatians 5:22-23, the Apostle Paul was inspired to describe the fruit of God’s Holy Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These should all be facets of our overall attitude toward God, our neighbor, ourself and the situations we face.

In other words, a *truly* good attitude reflects God’s Spirit living in us or working with us. Obviously, a godly attitude is not just having a pious look on our face or talking about God a lot. **It’s actually taking on the mind of Christ** (Phil. 2:5)—so that everything we think, say and do reflects that fact.

We must also find out what *our part* is in developing a godly attitude.

The Starting Point

Most people don’t even think about their attitude, much less actively and purposefully work to change it. For most of us, attitude is something we have by default. If someone complains about it, we think, “Thank you very much, but it’s *my* attitude and its really none of your business!” Some people are even proud of their attitude, adopting it as a sort of “trademark” for themselves. Some adolescents, for example, want to “act tough,” pretending that nothing fazes them and showing apparent disregard for all but their closest peers.

And true enough, it usually is “their attitude.” But it’s not true that it’s no one else’s “business.” For our attitude affects most everyone we come in contact with. An ungodly attitude will tend to hurt others—one way or another. But if we’re not convinced that our attitude must change, there won’t be any change!

Yet God’s Word reminds us that our heart, the seat of our attitude, is wicked and deceitful (Jer. 17:9). And our deceitful heart tends to convince us that the way we think about things and the approach we take is okay—no need to be changing things around.

But we *do* need to change—all of us. Now we can fool ourselves into thinking we’re the “exception to the rule.” But we naturally reflect the attitude of the society we live in. Our own ideas—which determine our attitude—are less of our own making than we might want to admit. Greatly influenced by others, most people do not actively choose and decide what their attitude is going to be.

In 2 Timothy 3, Paul paints a picture of the prevailing attitude of society in the last days: “Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (vv. 1-4). Can we fool ourselves into thinking that we can live *unscathed* by this prevailing attitude of hedonism and godlessness?

It can be tempting for us learn about the Truth given in God’s Word, yet never coming to accept that WE, personally, are “out of sync” with God in our whole outlook toward life. Acts 8:9-24 recounts the story of Simon the Sorcerer, who believed what Philip told him about the Gospel. So far, so good. But he didn’t see any *personal need* to change. So Peter said to him, “Your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity” (vv. 21-23).

Ironically, Simon’s reply revealed his attitude, despite the fact that he believed what he was taught. He said, “Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me” (v. 24). He sought pardon and favor, but never saw the need to repent of his fundamental attitude, which was self-seeking and self-promoting.

We must not make this mistake. We must not think that our natural human attitude is “just fine, thank you.” For attitude is what repentance is all about—understanding our personal need to be forgiven of our heart and mind. God doesn’t ask us to just change our point of view, our perspective, our beliefs or even our habits. He asks us to change the very way we *think*—that is, our *minds*! Here, then, is the starting point—realizing that our attitude *needs* to change.

Be Willing to Listen

I’ve met a number of people who feel that God talks to them in all manner of ways. They believe that virtually everything that happens to them is some kind of message from God. It’s raining outside, so God must be telling them they should stay home and not go to work. They read a prophecy in the Bible and think that it refers to them specifically. Some believe that God personally speaks to them, inspiring them to come up with fresh doctrines and exciting new understanding. But did God really communicate in this way?

Of course, it’s possible. Yet I’m afraid that God gets credit for many things in which He has no part. Ironically, the vast majority of those who believe that God is talking to them in a most singular and extraordinary manner never look to the most *fundamental* way that God certainly does speak to us—through His laws, His principles for living.

Ask yourself, “Why did God establish His law anyway?” To start, let’s look at the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5. God says, “I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself any carved image—or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above.... You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.... Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (vv. 6-12).



Now why did God give the ancient Israelites these commandments and establish them in the Old Covenant? Was it just to control what they did? Was it just to have the “contract” on paper so that future “grievances” could be avoided? So that if something wasn’t done exactly right, one party or the other could “sue for damages”?

NO! The fundamental reason God gave His laws was to teach an ATTITUDE—a proper inclination of the mind toward God and toward fellow human beings! Moses later spoke to the Israelites, explaining the bottom line of God’s expectations: “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul” (10:12). He said, “Therefore **you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul**” (11:18).

A fundamental reason, then, for God giving us His laws is to coach us, teach us, direct us into a godly attitude—one that will act and react in a godly way even when God *doesn’t* give us specific directions.

Chapters 21 through 23 of the book of Exodus are full of guidelines as to how to treat our fellow man. When God tells us, “You shall not circulate a false report” (23:1), He’s giving us a general example of the attitude we should have toward others. That is, we shouldn’t be tearing others down with untruths. Rather, we should be building people up.

Hopefully, we follow the same approach with our children. We shouldn’t simply give them dozens of “dos and don’ts.” Rather, we should give guidelines that will help them develop a *proper attitude* that will guide them into making a good decision, **no matter what the circumstances are**. What we should really want is to mold and shape their fundamental approach toward God and toward others, rather than having them memorize the response to every specific situation we can think of. The inadequacy of this method of child rearing should be clear—there will *always* be situations they face that we *hadn’t* anticipated. Then how would they react?

Christ had the same objective. The instructions and parables that He gave focused on the development of the fundamental attitude that we should have, in all its facets.

Matthew 6 is a good example. Jesus said, “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees

in secret will Himself reward you openly” (vv. 1-4).

Was Christ’s point really about not using musical instruments when giving alms? Was His literal meaning that we should give a donation with one hand behind our back so that it can’t “see” what the other is doing? No. He was teaching an *attitude*—the attitude of generosity without ulterior motives.

If we really are convinced that our attitude has room for improvement, we’ll listen more closely to God to steer us onto the right path.

Learn from Godly Examples

There is another way that we learn to take on a godly attitude. And that is from seeing it in “real life.”

We have the benefit of reading not only Christ’s words, but also accounts of what He did. When we read John 13, we learn about the activities at the last Passover that Jesus kept with His disciples. “And supper being ended... [He] rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded” (vv. 2-5).

What a remarkable way for Christ to *illustrate by example*. He had already spoken at length about humility and service. But this was a real-life *example* of the fundamental approach—the fundamental *attitude*—that Christ was trying to teach. Surely this example of His humility and service left a powerful impression upon the disciples.

This is what the Sermon on the Mount is all about. Christ explained to His disciples that He had no intention of destroying the law He had revealed in the first place (Matt. 5:17-20). And throughout Matthew 5, 6 and 7, He gave general guidelines as to how to approach all types of situations in life in harmony with that law—that is, what the underlying attitude should be. For example, He told them, “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (v. 44).

Now He wasn’t telling them to walk around and look for someone who would curse them, so they could bless the person. Rather, He was trying to help them understand the *fundamental attitude* they should have



toward other men and women. And His words were powerful. Nevertheless, as forceful as His message was, it didn’t drive the point home as much as the *example* they saw with their own eyes some years later.

“And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him.... Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do’” (Luke 23:33-34). Christ’s example **SHOWED** in stark reality the attitude that He had taught all along. It gave the people a *model* to imitate. And some did!

In Acts 7, we read of the example of Stephen. “And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (vv. 59-60).

What *words* could Stephen have uttered that would have illustrated his godly attitude half as powerfully as did his real-life *example*? How many Christians were heartened and encouraged by what he *practiced* instead of just what he *preached*?

Clearly, then, we can learn about attitudes from watching others. This is most obvious with respect to children. My family and I recently moved from New York to Louisiana. As a result, our children are even now beginning to pick up a Southern accent! But picking up an *accent* happens at a snail’s pace compared to how fast children pick up *attitudes*. Try taking your kids to a McDonald’s “Playplace,” or a Chuckie Cheese’s Pizza Restaurant, where they can play with dozens (it seems like hundreds!) of other children. Observe just how quickly attitudes rub off. Children just seem to **ABSORB** them!

Matthew 18:1-5 cites the example of Christ calling a child to Him, sitting down, and teaching His disciples some lessons. In verse 3 He said, “Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” Perhaps one of the ways we need to emulate children is to be *impressionable*. But the “imprint,” or “impression” we need is one of a godly attitude. So watch for people who set *proper* examples. Learn from them. And emulate them.

Learn from Experience

Experience *also* shapes our attitude. And learning the right lessons from our experiences is crucial if we are to develop a godly attitude. On the night Christ was arrested, His disciples had a shocking experience. When Jesus was taken to the house of the high priest for questioning, Peter followed and watched what was going on. In the process, Peter three times denied that He even *knew* Christ (Luke 22:54-62). In verse 60, we read of Peter’s third denial, in

which he said, “I do not know what you are saying!” At that instant, “The Lord turned and looked at Peter” (v. 61).

Peter then went out and wept bitterly. He felt guilty. He felt he’d betrayed Christ, no less than had Judas Iscariot! But Jesus later comforted him and all the disciples, and reminded them of the necessity of His suffering and death. Nonetheless, this experience left Peter a changed man. His attitude of boldness and self-confidence was shattered. What emerged in its place was an attitude tempered by confidence in Christ rather than in his own strength.

We all go through experiences that can shape our attitude in life. Raising children certainly shapes a husband and wife’s attitude about family life. A death or some other tragedy in our family helps shape our attitude. As do financial problems or trials of one kind or another. But we need to go through some of these experiences to put the instruction we’ve heard and the examples we’ve seen into practice ourselves.


Ultimately, God’s biggest Work on this earth is helping to mold our hearts—to build within us His holy, righteous character. It is a process in which we have a part to play. When our heart is properly molded, our attitude will so reflect it. And we can thus handle *any* situation that arises. We’re not simply obeying specific laws and statutes of God by rote until a situation comes along that’s not specifically addressed.

This is the point Christ was making when He responded to the question, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” His answer: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.... You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:36-39).

Are you committed to an attitude overhaul? I hope we all are. For our attitude is not just important—it’s vital. It is nothing less than the way we think! Our attitude forms a template on our heart and mind. It affects the way we make decisions. And it determines our reaction and approach to trials and successes, wealth and poverty, praise and criticism, good times and bad.

And what God is doing is preparing our core—our heart—to be able to deal with any situation in a godly way.

“Can-do” thinking can be valuable. When the mind is cemented into a “positive position,” there can be powerful change in our life. But it is only a shadow of the impact that can be made if we will take on the attitude of God—having boldness without being aggressive or obnoxious, having humility without weakness, having joy with empathy for others.

If our heart and mind are being filled with *God’s* mind on the inside, our attitude will reflect a mirror image on the outside. Then *our* attitude will truly be the same as *God’s* attitude. And *His* character will have become *ours*. 

TONGUES
(continued from page 22)

between the baptism that John offered and that offered by Christ.

There is no statement in the Bible that receiving God's Spirit is commonly accompanied by some miraculous display. In fact, God's Word says that, in general, "tongues are for a sign, *not* to those who believe but to *unbelievers*" (1 Cor. 14:22). So we should not *normally* expect to see such a manifestation among us. However, in the specific instances just mentioned, and most likely at the time of the initial conversion of some in

As for tongues or languages, Paul explained that it was better to speak just a few words that were understandable and helpful, rather than ten thousand words in a language no one could understand.

Samaria as well (Acts 8:14-18), there was miraculous evidence of God's Spirit. All these events were definite "firsts." So presumably, God did things in a special way in order to make clear His involvement and blessing with these never-before-seen phenomena.

Spiritual Gifts

This is not to say that miracles were limited to the first century. Just as the Spirit of God is the spirit of love and of a sound mind, so it is also the spirit of power (2 Tim. 1:7). The Greek word translated as power is *dunamis*, a term generally meaning miracle-working power. God offers us His Spirit to transform our nature and to fill us with His love. His Spirit also imparts a soundness and balance of judgment in applying the principles of His Word to everyday life. But in addition to all of this, God's Spirit is the power or agency through which He works in miraculous ways. It is the means by which the Almighty

imparts gifts to His people.

Spiritual gifts are good. Paul discussed the wide variety of such gifts available (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:6-11) and taught that we should *desire* them (14:1).

But he also made it plain that the Corinthians, as many have today, had greatly *misunderstood* spiritual gifts, especially the gift of tongues. This was because of their pagan background (12:1-2). Having grown up only a few miles from the Delphic Oracle, many Corinthians confused the miraculous gift of languages given by God on Pentecost and other occasions with the sort of "speaking

in tongues" they had heard about all their lives. So, also, do many today.

Paul emphasized in 1 Corinthians 14 that the gifts God gives are for edifying or strengthening the Church. He encouraged his readers to seek God's gifts for the purpose of *serving others*—not for self-aggrandizement. As for tongues or languages, Paul explained that it was better to speak just a few words that were understandable and helpful, rather than ten thousand words in a language no one could understand (v. 19). For unless the content is helpful and instructive, words in and of themselves lack benefit to the hearers (v. 6, 9).

A prophecy in Joel 2:28-32 foretells an end-time outpouring of God's Spirit in a miraculous way. Peter quoted this scripture and applied it to the miracle that occurred on the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection from the dead. It is apparent upon close scrutiny, however, that a much greater fulfillment of this prophecy is for the time just prior to the Day of the Lord (v. 31). Thus, many of the

miraculous outpourings of God's Spirit that happened in the first century will undoubtedly occur again in the end time.

However, from what we've seen, it should be clear that the "speaking in tongues" commonly seen today in the charismatic movement—with its incoherent babbling often accompanied by uncontrollable shrieks and spasms—is most certainly NOT from God. "For," as Paul says in his discussion on tongues, "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Cor. 14:33).

Indeed, we may rightly discern that most of the "speaking in tongues" that goes on today has a *different* author—either demonic spirits or simply human imagination. For just as demons were involved in the pagan Greek religion of long ago with its babbling oracles (cf. 1 Cor. 10:20), so are they involved in false religion today (for a more detailed exposition on this subject, please write for our free booklet, *Christianity's Greatest Deception*). And if the author of certain ecstatic speech is the human mind, it is either an outright fraudulent act, some form of mental illness or simply a frenzy of human emotion.

True miracles, however, aren't brought about by human emotion. They are, rather, the result of God supernaturally working through His true servants—those who genuinely obey Him and are yielded to His will.

As mentioned at the outset, in the spiritual confusion of modern religion, many today recognize a great void in their lives. Without real understanding of God's ultimate purpose and plan, they are *pursuing a feeling*—and are therefore setting themselves up to be deceived by the end-time *false* miracles that Christ warned of (Matt. 24:24). We should seek *God* and His *ways*—not feelings. If we do so with all our heart and continue to genuinely walk with Him, the *true* miracles will certainly follow in God's own time. WA

2000
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at least, "the king of the South." Will *modern* Egypt be part of a coalition of Arab states (cf. Ps. 83:1-8) that attacks the end-time power of the "North"—by this time the coming European Empire?

Will the Europeans respond with a powerful "blitzkrieg" or swift counterattack to gain control of the vast Middle Eastern oil fields for their war machine? Will they take over the nation of Israel and Jerusalem its capital?

Notice what Jesus predicted: "And Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). Although thousands of Gentiles now live in Jerusalem, the Israelis are still in firm control. So Jesus is clearly indicating that *another* war will be waged in Jerusalem just before His Second Coming.

The inspired prophecy of Zechariah also indicates that Jerusalem will be conquered and occupied in the years *just before* Christ's return: "Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley" (Zech. 14:1-4).

The European-led takeover of much of the Middle East may well be prompted, in part, by a broad-based oil embargo. Yet no matter

how it happens, this will have a profound effect on all our lives. And it will lead right up to and culminate in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as King of kings.

Terrorism on the Rise

Worldwide terrorism is destined to increase. Although the United States has thus far largely escaped a full-scale assault from foreign terrorists, the day will soon come when they will strike at the very heart of this nation. In fact, the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York was only a small prelude to what is certain to follow. In Stockholm, Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat told diplomats in February 1996, "We Palestinians will take over everything, including all of Jerusalem.... We plan to eliminate the State of Israel and establish a Palestinian state" (*Intelligence Digest*, 1997).

And what do the Palestinians see as the main obstacle preventing the Arab states from eliminating the State of Israel and thus "solving"—in *their* minds—the Middle East problem? The *American* military! So what can they do?

By threatening the use of nuclear "suit-case bombs," along with chemical and biological weapons, Middle East terrorists will do all they can to neutralize the influence of the United States and her closest allies. Over the next several years, there may be "no place to hide" in much of the world. Jesus Christ prophesied of this fearful time: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.... and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven" (Luke 21:10-11).

The term "fearful sights" may also be correctly translated "terrors" (RSV). So this prophecy no doubt *includes* a coming time of

worldwide violence, apprehension and sheer **TERROR**. It will be a time fraught with *danger* and *death*. It will be a time filled with *religious apostasy* and the rise of a great **FALSE RELIGION** that will briefly dominate most of the world.

But—for those who understand the **TRUTH**—the early years of the new millennium will also be years of enthusiasm, excitement and hope. For Jesus Christ told His true servants, "**Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near!**" (Luke 21:28).

Let me say to those of you who really *believe* the Word of God: **TAKE HOPE!** For as these prophesied events unfold, we are that much closer to the **END** of this age of confusion under the evil "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). We're that much closer to the literal return of the *real* Jesus Christ as King of kings. We are that much closer to the opportunity *we* will have to **RULE** with Christ and, under His guidance, to really straighten out this sick and sinful world.

Always remember what Jesus directly promised in Revelation 2: "He who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the potter's vessels shall be broken to pieces'—as I also have received from My Father" (vv. 26-27).

So let us *prepare!* Let us truly *overcome!* As we face the year 2000, let us **BELIEVE** God and His inspired Word. Let us *surrender* to let the true Jesus Christ live His life within us through the Holy Spirit (Gal. 2:20 KJV). And let us always hold on to the inspired promise Christ gave to His faithful servants in Revelation 22:12: "Behold, I am coming **QUICKLY**, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work." WA

(continued from page 3)

front of them that subtly—and often not so subtly—endorse violence, illicit sex, perversion, hedonism, and disrespect for parents, teachers and virtually all in authority.

And there's more. As the "prince" of this world's atmosphere—controlling, overall, the media most people watch and listen to—Satan literally *bombards* the minds of countless millions of human beings with movies and television shows about aliens and intergalactic struggles for control of the entire universe. Seemingly innocent to many people, these make-believe "escape" films and television shows often touch upon, put a perverted "twist" on and so CHEAPEN some of the very things the Great God of creation says are going to happen!

VERY clever.

Since this powerful spirit being, Satan the Devil, basically knows what God says is going to happen, he is able to use modern media to project into the minds of the masses a *false version* of future events. And after viewing countless hours of violence, war, intrigue, and "alien invasion," how excited, how humbled, how "moved" by God's prophecies will tens of millions of our youth be?

Indeed, when the gnome-like Yoda tells Luke Skywalker to "use the FORCE," it perhaps takes some of the excitement away for young people when they are later told that the most powerful force in the universe is God's Holy Spirit.

Remember Paul's words: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of POWER and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). But for far too many, reading about GOD'S "power" in black and white is not *nearly* as "real" as hearing about the *fictitious* "Force" in some big-screen film presentation, complete with Technicolor and digital surround-sound!

This is not to say that there is no legitimate entertainment value in some of these productions for those who know God's Truth. But even here, we must be extremely careful with the amount of time we invest in this area and what ideas we allow to seep into our minds.

My dear readers, we are *all* involved in a spiritual WAR, whether we realize it or not! The "prince" of this earth's atmosphere seeks to control our minds and the minds of our young people. He will use every conceivable stratagem, every device, to win the battle for our minds. One of his primary tools is to use the "escapism" syndrome so prevalent in our modern society. For since most people do not truly "know" God and lack a knowledge of His *purpose* for their lives, they indulge in untold hours of escapism—watching movies and television, reading fiction, etc. Satan *can* and *does* plant in their minds all kinds of false concepts of right and wrong—including false concepts of the very nature of God and His purpose. And by mimicking and cheapening some of the prophetic events of the Bible, Satan is able to PERVERT the understanding of millions of human beings. Speaking of this entire Satanic system, God tells us, "COME OUT of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4). And the Apostle Paul was inspired to write, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing EVERY THOUGHT into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

The battle for *your mind* goes on day and night. Will you RESIST Satan? Will you COME OUT of this human society in a true, Christ-led ESCAPE from sin and not allow the devil to mess with your mind through countless hours of movies and television exposure? Will you SEEK GOD by actually *studying* your Bible and allowing *God's* thoughts and *His* concepts of right and wrong to dominate your thinking?

The choice is *yours!*

Again, may God help you to genuinely PROVE that His Word, the Holy Bible, is directly inspired. May He help you to *take control* of your time and what you see and hear, so as to really *escape* the false concepts and images that this society's *escapism* promotes so heavily under Satan's influence. And may God help you to *study* His Word as never before so that His ways may become the ultimate REALITY in your life.

