

THE WORLD AHEAD



A view of today...A vision for tomorrow!

Autumn 1999

***Successful
Parenting***

THE WORLD AHEAD®

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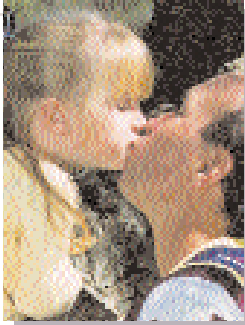
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Successful Parenting

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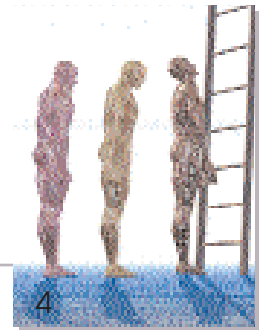
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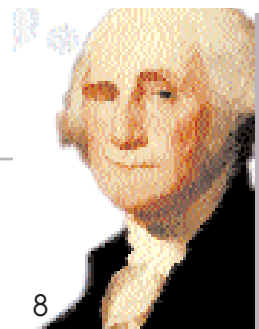


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Postmaster: Send address changes to **The World Ahead**, P.O. Box 501111, San Diego, CA 92150-1111.

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From the Editors

The Next Millennium


Hype is building for the year 2000. Besides the infamous Y2K computer bug, people are gearing up for millennium celebrations around the world. And though some celebrants may simply find interest in the novelty of having three zeros in the calendar year, for many it means something more—the ushering in of a new age for mankind.

Actually, the next millennium (i.e. thousand-year period) does not begin until January 1, 2001—though no one seems to care about that as they wait for the “odometer” to roll over. But 2001 will itself be an interesting milestone, harkening back to Arthur C. Clarke’s science fiction novel and movie, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. In the story, unseen aliens, guiding the development of the human race since its inception, begin the process of taking mankind to a “new level.” The sequel, *2010*, ends with humanity progressing toward international peace as a result. A similar vision of the next millennium was given to us by *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry. In his portrayal, science and technology, with hosts of extraterrestrials assisting, will solve Earth’s problems.

Yet as widely believed in as such a “bright tomorrow” is, many others foresee a *different* future. They look in horror at a war-torn world that cannot solve its problems of famine, disease, crime and other societal plagues. And besides direct *human* causes of tragedy, there are also *natural* disasters—the devastating earthquake in Turkey being the most recent example. As this *World Ahead* issue goes to press, the death toll is expected to rise to as high as 40,000! Yet more ominous still is that, according to Bible prophecy, what we are seeing is merely the *beginning* of catastrophic events. As was pointed out in our last editorial, ethnic strife will, as “birth pains” (Matt. 24:8 NIV), increase in frequency and intensity. And so too will earthquakes (v. 8).

Here, then, is part of what the next millennium holds in store. Since it’s apparent that we are living in what the Bible refers to as the “last days,” the first part of the next millennium, though it may start out with great promise, will ultimately prove to be the worst era in human history! (v. 21). But that is by no means the end. For you see, we *do* look for a new age—indeed, a new Millennium! But it’s not the one that starts in the year 2000—nor even in 2001. In fact, we don’t know *when* it will start. But we know it will start *soon*. And there *will* be extraterrestrial help, but not the kind we know from science fiction.

Jesus Christ will soon return to this earth *from heaven* to set up the Kingdom of God over all nations (Rev. 11:15). The Bible says that the true saints shall then be “priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a *thousand years*” (20:4-6). Indeed, this millennial reign is a central theme of the Gospel Jesus preached (cf. Mark 1:14). In that day, which we call the World Ahead, the nations will come to obey God—learning at last to get along in peaceful cooperation and progress. It will be a time of great rejoicing, as this issue’s article on the Sabbath points out.

Just imagine—for 1,000 years, an entire world at peace under the protection and care of a loving God. What a wonderful time to look forward to. Let us give God thanks for the awesome plan He is working out, and for the tremendous comfort His Truth brings. And let us each be counted among God’s righteous saints, “in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the day of God” (2 Peter 3:11-12). 

Be an Overcomer!

Is man's age-old struggle against human nature and sin a lost cause? Or has God provided a sure way by which everyone can be ultimately victorious?

by Raymond F. McNair

The Word of God assures us that only those who overcome sin will be granted entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God. Christ made that plain in His messages to the seven Churches of Revelation (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). For instance, He promised the Church in Thyatira that “he who *overcomes*, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—and he shall rule them with a rod of iron” (2:26-27).

Furthermore, Jesus promises that all who overcome sin will inherit the entire universe: “He who overcomes shall inherit *all things*, and I will be his God and he shall be My son”! (21:7). Man could hardly have been given a more all-encompassing promise.

But first, we must understand just what needs to be overcome. One obvious answer is that we need to overcome the human tendency to give up in the face of adversity. For God requires Christians to endure to the end of our human lives (Mark 13:13). What, then, are some of the trials that often con-

front God's people during the course of our Christian pilgrimage? Many are the trials faced by everyone. Some Christians face serious health problems. Others experience serious financial difficulties or face perplexing work-related problems. Still others go through gut-wrenching family problems or battles with substance abuse or sexual addiction.

But our most difficult battles are the spiritual ones we fight within ourselves. Man has great difficulty in controlling and overcoming basic human pulls, drives and emotions—such as rage, fear, anxiety, laziness, pride, vanity and hypocrisy. Left to our own human efforts, most could never manage to overcome very many of these pulls of the flesh—let alone all of them.

Notice one of the Apostle Paul's lists of various types of ungodly behavior—sins we must be overcoming if we are to enter the Kingdom of God: “Those who live immoral lives, who are idol worshipers, adulterers or homosexuals—will have no share in his kingdom. Neither will thieves or greedy people, drunkards, slanderers, or robbers” (1 Cor. 6:9-10 *Living Bible*). But does Paul leave the Corinthian saints hanging? No. For although he tells them that “such *were* some of you,” he goes on to say, “But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God” (v. 11).

Yet does being *forgiven* of past sins alone guarantee that we will now stop *practicing* such sins? Again, the answer is no. So how do we go about conquering the “sin which so easily ensnares us” (Heb. 12:1) and instead live godly, righteous lives? It starts by acknowledging that we need help.

Admit Human Weakness

If man is to ever truly conquer human nature, as it has been termed, he must first admit the fact that, by his own efforts, he can't possibly overcome the negative forces in himself that tend to pull him forever downward. Even Jesus Christ said while in the human flesh, “I can of Myself do nothing” (John 5:30; cf. v. 19). Further, “Without ME,” our Savior told His disciples, “YOU can do nothing” (15:5). This tells us that our confidence must be in the Almighty—not in ourselves. We must be those “who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ, **and have no confidence in the flesh**” (Phil. 2:3).

The book of Jeremiah puts it this way: “O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (10:23). In



other words, man doesn't have the innate ability to know how to lead a life pleasing to God. In fact, this same book later tells us why: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (17:9). Perhaps no other scripture better sums up how depraved man's nature actually is than that found in the book of Genesis: "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (6:5).

And it's not just *some* people. It's everyone! "As it is written, 'There is *none* righteous, no, *not one*; there is *none* who understands; there is *none* who seeks after God; they have *all* gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is *none* that does good, no, *not one*'" (Rom. 3:10-12). Then follows a list of the many evils done by carnal men (vv. 13-18).

The Bible clearly reveals that all human beings must struggle against those evils commonly referred to as "human nature." However, it must be pointed out that these evil aspects of man's nature are not inborn! Rather, they are acquired by spiritual influence from Satan's direct "broadcast" of wrong attitudes (cf. Eph. 2:2) as well as by living in this evil world—that is, the society Satan has greatly swayed toward his perverse and destructive way of thinking (cf. 2 Peter 1:4; 2:20).

How should Christians view this world? The Apostle John wrote, "Do not love the world [i.e. civilization] or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15-17). But remember that Satan's influence is not just from societal pressures around us. As pointed out, it comes right into our very minds. And that, *plus* the fact that it has become ingrained in our thinking, is what makes human nature (actually *Satan's* nature) so hard to overcome.

The Apostle Paul explained that this "natural" mind of man, then, is essentially hostile to God and His law: "**The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be**" (Rom. 8:7). And that carnal mind was still with Paul in part, even as a truly converted Christian: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do,

that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me" (7:18-20).

What did Paul mean? He, like all human beings, had "human nature" permeating his very being. That nature tended to pull him in the wrong direction—even *after* he had repented and had begun leading a Christian life. Further explaining this battle within himself—that is, *human* nature versus *God's* nature—he said, "I discover this principle, then: that when I want to do the right, only the wrong is within my reach. In my inmost self I delight in the law of God, but I perceive that there is in my bodily members a different law [i.e. human nature], fighting against the law that my reason approves and making me a prisoner under the law that is in my members, the law of sin" (vv. 21-24 NEB).

This apostle then asked, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (v. 24). Yes, WHO would deliver him from the downward spiral of his human nature? Paul comes right back with the answer: "I thank God—**through Jesus Christ our Lord**" (v. 25). Paul thanked God that deliverance from his weak human nature would be accomplished through Christ living His life in him, as he explained in

Galatians 2:20. Continuing in Romans 7:25, Paul further explained, “So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh [I slip up from time to time and serve] the law of sin” (cf. 1 John 1:8-10).

None of this, it should be mentioned, means that Paul still *habitually practiced* sin as a routine way of life. Otherwise, we could not even count him as being spiritually converted (1 John 3:8). Paul himself tells us in Romans 8, “For those who live according to [impulses of] the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (vv. 5-6). And Paul quickly adds, “You are *not* in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God is in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His” (v. 9)—that is, such a person is not a Christian.

Put on Christ

Just what IS a Christian? The word means one who follows Christ. But it must be far more than a mere *profession* or *appearance* of following Him. Indeed, Paul explained, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have *put on Christ*” (Gal. 3:26-27)—that is, we have taken on His very characteristics. But how is that possible?

Like the Apostle Paul, each true believer should be able to say, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **Christ liveth in me**: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20 KJV). Paul further explains that this knowledge of Christ actively living His life in the believer is part of a great “mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:26-27).

The wonderful truths of this divine mystery are communicated to man from God through His Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:26). Paul further explains this wonderful mystery to the saints at Corinth. “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory... as it is written, ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us

through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:7-10).

Indeed, it is through the Holy Spirit that Christ actually lives His life in us. And it’s what makes obedience to God’s commandments possible (cf. Rom. 5:5; 1 John 5:3). Remember that if we do not have this Spirit, we are not true Christians (Rom. 8:9). For the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit is the sole determining factor as to whether someone is actually a Christian or not. Furthermore, to *remain* a Christian we must be “*led by the Spirit of God*” (v. 14), growing in godly character (cf. Heb. 6:1; 2 Peter 3:18).


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For the Spirit searches all things,
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—1 Cor. 2:7-10

Paul further explains the increased spiritual understanding God’s Holy Spirit brings: “But the natural [carnal, unconverted] man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.... For ‘who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?’ **But we have the mind of Christ**” (1 Cor. 2:14-16). The “mind” of Christ, too? Indeed. Paul elsewhere tells us, “Let *this mind* be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

Many times during the life of each Christian, he or she will come up against some kind of horrible crisis—grave illness, financial problems, seemingly overwhelming temptation, etc. When we come face to face with such difficulties, how can we learn to cope with them? When confronted with what seems to be unsolvable problems, how can God’s children endure them? When faced with what feels like irresistible temptation to sin, how can we overcome it? Just how can we be victorious? The answer is through “putting on Christ.” We just saw that through the





Holy Spirit, the very mind of Christ dwells in us. But how do we *utilize* this incredible mind?

Only through *studying* the Holy Scriptures and *living* by every word therein (Matt. 4:4)—and by learning to walk daily with God in constant communion through fervent *prayer*—can we truly use the mind of Christ to overcome Satan and his sinful world. We must “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). And we should also follow the biblical examples of godly individuals who *fasted* in order to draw closer to God—as did Christ (Matt. 4:2), Paul (2 Cor. 11:27), Daniel (Dan. 10:2-3), Esther (Esther 4:15-16), Elijah (1 Kings 19:8) and Moses (Ex. 24:18).

By continually using the tools of diligent Bible study, fervent prayer and fasting to draw closer to God (Is. 58:5-11), we can learn to draw on His inexhaustible “supply of the Spirit” (Phil. 1:19), thereby receiving the *power* from on high to overcome every problem, trial or obstacle that we will ever encounter (cf. Luke 24:49).

The inner changes brought about through the Holy Spirit will produce the visible “fruit” of Christ’s character, which can be seen in our outward actions (Gal. 5:22-23). Moreover, this inner frame of mind of wholly submitting to God will protect us against those who would try to destroy us from the outside. This brings us back once again to “putting on Christ”—that is, as a garment or even a suit of armor. In fact, Paul himself describes it in this very way: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. **Put on the whole armor of God**” (Eph. 6:10-11).

And who are the enemies that we are really up against in our spiritual battle to overcome sin? Paul tells us that the primary enemy is, of course, Satan. He goes on to say that we wrestle “against

principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (vv. 10-12). Our battle to overcome is not primarily against other human beings, but against demonic spirits still in authority over the inhabitants of this planet—evil beings who want to overthrow our faith and see us forever destroyed.

So in order to overcome our sins and to endure the difficulties we all face, we must put on the complete armor of God, which Paul goes on to describe: “Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; **above all, taking the shield of faith**, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one” (vv. 14-16). Indeed, faith is a primary means by which we overcome. As John wrote, “**This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith**” (1 John 5:4). Another essential ingredient is the love of God. For in Romans 12, Paul tells us, “Do not be overcome by evil, but **overcome evil with good**” (v. 21). And goodness, of course, is a direct result of God’s love, which expresses itself through obedience to God’s law—as John stated in the verse immediately preceding the one just quoted about faith (1 John 5:3). Thus, faith combined with God’s love is the “spiritual recipe” for overcoming sin. And let’s not forget that faith and love are both the fruit of God’s Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23 KJV), the product of Christ living in us (2:20 KJV).

Fight the Good Fight

Paul completes the description of our spiritual armor by saying, “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17). Then we must really do battle, “striving against sin” (Heb. 12:4). The same apostle instructed Timothy, “*Fight* the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12) and “endure hardship as a good *soldier* of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3). Concerning himself, Paul wrote, “Thus I *fight*: not as one who beats the air. But I *discipline* my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:26-27). But let’s never forget that this fight is in *partnership* with Jesus Christ living within us. As Paul wrote in Colossians, “**to this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily**” (1:29).

(continued on page 31)

DOUBLE-DEALING

A Sign of the Times

by Bob Devine

Every American schoolchild knows the story of the young George Washington. Having found his cherry tree chopped down, George's father asked him who had done this. The boy who would someday lead the fledgling United States answered, "I cannot tell a lie. I chopped down the cherry tree."

Although this account is almost certainly fictitious, it is not implausible. For George Washington was weaned on biblical morality. The times in which he lived were characterized by a proper fear of God and an earnest attempt on the part of many who lived in what were then British colonies to abide by His laws. And while there were probably not many people alive at that time who were true, Spirit-begotten Christians—just as there are not many today—society nevertheless benefited from the natural blessings that accrue to those who sincerely try to obey God's commands.

Unfortunately, the first president of the United States would probably not even recognize what his country has become were he able to see it today. And it wouldn't solely be a question of technological advancement. He surely wouldn't be able to see his own core values in the people themselves—not the people of the United States, nor those of most of the rest of the Western World. Here was a man who could certainly have

identified with the phrase, "I cannot tell a lie." But 200-some years later, he would find a society in which many people, it seems, *can't tell the truth!* And even if that's a *bit* of an exaggeration, it's *certainly* true that tens of millions in the modern Western World lie and deceive others many times every day!

Call it whatever you will—double-dealing, deception or duplicity—it's a very real problem. Though we don't talk about it much, perhaps we should. For it's a modern-day societal ill that is *plaguing* our nations in every sphere of life—government, education, business, personal relationships, you name it.

"But wait a minute!" one might say. "I know deception is wrong, but you're making it sound like murder or adultery or something. You can't compare a little white lie, or twisting the truth a bit to get myself out of a jam with *those* things. After all, it's not like I *hurt* anyone with what I said."

There's no question that these statements contain an *element* of truth. Most of us find it easier to condemn certain traits of our degenerate society. We deplore the declining public morality that leads to sky-high divorce rates, child abuse and random violence—a moral debasement that's now infected even young children. Many of us may categorize certain sexual perversions as the worst of all possible sins. And in a sense, they are "worse" than a "little bit of deception." Worse because the immediate damage to the sinner and others he or she influences is of a greater scope. If someone is murdered, for example, he's out of action until the resurrection—and the lives of his loved ones are ripped apart. Whereas, if someone is lied to, he may find out the truth

the very next day and basically go on with his life.

But in the far more important sense, we should be able to see that *every* sin carries an *equal* penalty. *Every* sin brings upon us a sentence of death—not until some later resurrection to life, but forevermore! And it is because of *every* violation of God's law that our Savior Jesus Christ submitted Himself to a most terrible death on the cross so that we could be spared the *execution* of the death sentence upon us and be redeemed.

Nevertheless, we live in an age of lying for convenience, shading the truth for personal gain and making decisions according to situation ethics. And lying is by no means the only way to engage in double-dealing. Employees steal from their bosses, business partners swindle each other, wage earners shortchange the tax man, and spouses stray outside of marriage for sexual gratification. Let's look at a few areas of life that are cheapened and damaged by duplicity.

Corridors of Power

In January 1989, George Bush was inaugurated president of the United States—the 40th successor in that office to George Washington. The previous presidency of Ronald Reagan had been marred by scandal—popularly known as *Irangate* or the *Iran-Contra affair*. Charges against the Reagan administration were that the Central Intelligence Agency and other government entities conspired to sell weapons to Iran to gain release of hostages. Profits from the sale were then used to help fund the armed resistance of the Nicaraguan Contras, half a world away. Such activity was in direct

violation of legislation passed by the United States Congress that specifically prohibited any economic assistance to the Contras.

When the scandal broke in 1986, congressional investigations were launched, and indictments and convictions followed. It was rumored that President Reagan and then-Vice President Bush were aware of the illegal operation, but both denied knowledge or participation. Although the allegations were never proven with respect to either of these men, the suspicion followed Mr. Bush even after he succeeded Ronald Reagan as president.

As investigative hearings and criminal trials proceeded well into this new administration, a number of individuals testified that when George Bush was *vice* president, not only was he aware of the covert operations of Irangate, but he was, in fact, present at the planning meetings and a key player in implementing their decisions. President Bush repeatedly and consistently denied any knowledge of these events. *The World Ahead* is not here contending that President Bush was lying in this matter. We have no way of knowing whether or not he was telling the truth. But it should be obvious to all that *someone* was acting duplicitously—either he or his accusers. And whoever it was started a chain reaction that shook the very corridors of power of the Western World. *Someone* was double-dealing with the United States Congress and ultimately with the American people.

More recent—and *far more* duplicitous—is the shameful chapter in the presidency of George Bush's successor, Bill Clinton. On January 26, 1998, having denied persistent stories that he had engaged in illicit sexual relations with White House intern Monica Lewinsky, President Clinton looked the American electorate "in the

eye" on national television, wagged his finger for emphasis and went "on the record" with these words: "I want to say one thing to the American people. I want you to listen to me. I want you to listen, again. I did

and ridiculing the independent counsel and his prosecutors.

Perhaps some of these activities would have been appropriate—or at least *understandable*—had he indeed been innocent of

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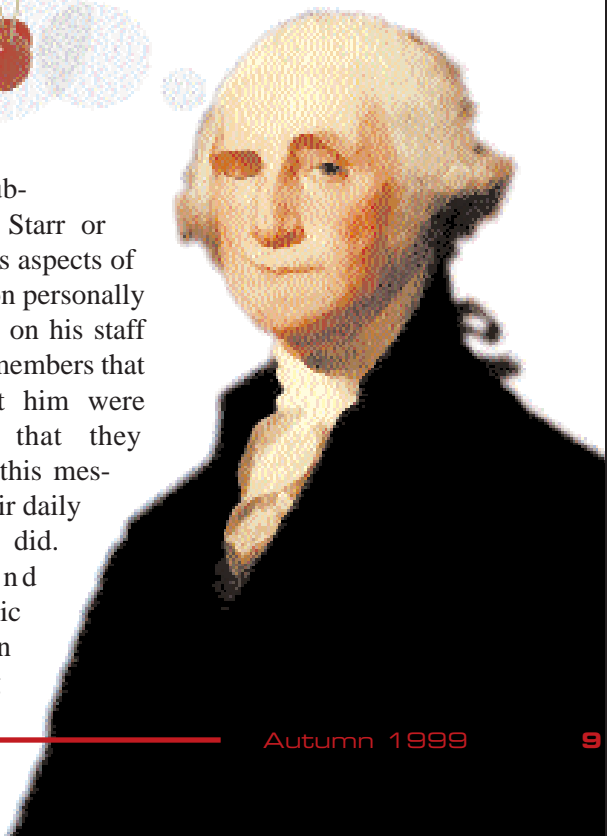
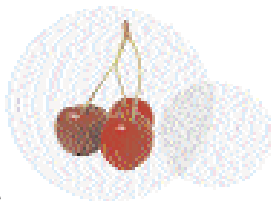
not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky.... These allegations are false and I need to go back to work for the American people." But an independent counsel, Kenneth Starr, was appointed to investigate, forensic evidence was obtained, witnesses were deposed, and in an unprecedented move, a sitting president of the United States of America was issued a subpoena and testified before a federal grand jury.

Mr. Clinton, of course, with seemingly unlimited resources of money and legal talent, fought the independent counsel's investigation at every turn.

Time and again, the president's attorneys appeared before the Supreme Court, attempting to quash subpoenas issued by Mr. Starr or otherwise thwart various aspects of his inquiries. Mr. Clinton personally assured key individuals on his staff and influential cabinet members that the allegations against him were groundless—knowing that they would, in turn, spread this message far and wide in their daily activities. And so they did. And Mr. Clinton and company waged a public relations campaign aimed at discrediting

the charges leveled against him. But such was not the case. On August 17, directly after hours of sworn testimony to the grand jury, President Clinton had a *different* message for the American people: "Indeed, I *did* have a relationship with Ms. Lewinsky that was not appropriate. In fact, it was wrong. It constituted a critical lapse in judgment and a personal failure on my part for which I am solely and completely responsible. I know that my public comments and my silence about this matter gave a false impression. I misled people, including my wife."

Intentionally lying to the entire nation in January. Maintaining that lie for months in the



face of a massive independent investigation. Drawing others into this duplicity as unwitting co-conspirators. Flaunting the American judicial system by lying to a grand jury while under oath. Threatening the bonds of marriage and family. Then, seven months after telling the American people that he had *not* done what he was accused of, grudgingly admitting the truth. And at what cost? We probably don't know the grand total of this "bill," and it may not yet have entirely come due. But this much we do know. The business of the nation ground to a virtual halt as both the American public and the executive branch of government were seemingly totally consumed with the scandal. The credibility of the Clinton administration suffered damage that may undermine the president's effectiveness for the rest of his term of office. Worse yet is that the very *institution* of the presidency may never fully recover from the dishonor that was brought upon it.

And there should be little doubt that the *most* harmful consequences will fall upon those least able to defend against them—our children. The fault will not solely have been presidential shenanigans right outside the Oval Office. It will also have to be borne by an American public that by and large *didn't care* what our president had done with Monica Lewinsky, nor apparently what he had done ever since to cover it up. The American public had been played for fools, yet didn't really mind as long as the economic "good times" kept rolling.

What a **shameful** example to set for the next generation. Our youth were already growing up in a society that didn't care much about deception and double-dealing. But now, the leader of the

nation could apparently dupe everyone and even break the law—not simply with impunity, but with his approval rating actually having *risen* throughout the entire sordid mess. The lesson for our children: If he can get away with it, *so can we*—and others might even approve!

Main Street

We needn't stalk the halls of power to encounter double-dealing—it's all around us. It's even in our homes. Studies consistently show that more than half of all married men and women will cheat on their spouses at some time during their marriage. And little wonder, for we're exposed to examples of immorality every day. Not only did the president get away with it, but it's featured in movies, sitcoms, soap operas and novels. The mass media are feeding the Western World a steady diet of broken laws and immorality. Double-dealing in marriage—that is, adultery—is being looked on more and more as the norm! Some in the field of "pop psychology" even believe it to be healthy—promoting stronger and more enduring marital bonds.

But let's get real—that's just nonsense! All the "psychobabble" in the world can't hide the trail of misery and suffering that the duplicity of adultery leaves in its wake. We mentioned earlier that more than half of all spouses will cheat on their mates. It's surely no coincidence that half of all marriages in the United States will end in divorce! It can likewise be no coincidence that children of broken homes consistently perform below those from stable two-parent homes in school and are far more likely to run afoul of the law. And this is just *part* of the price we are paying for marriage vows "till death do you part" having come to mean no more than "till the novelty wears off"!

If perchance you want to seek refuge from the duplicity that exists in far too many Western homes, you probably can't find it at work. Double-dealing on the job, in its many forms, is also everywhere to be found. Far too many employers deceive and abuse frightened or unsophisticated employees. In the United States, poor men and women, often with limited command of the English language, illegally enter the country from the south, leaving Mexico and other Latin American nations in search of a better life. Now it's true that there's normally no excuse for these individuals to violate American law by entering the country illegally. But there's also no excuse for what befalls many of them when they arrive.

Illegal aliens can indeed find work, but that doesn't always mean the better life they dreamed of. Many will end up working as seasonal, migrant farm hands in California and southern states. They will work from dawn to dusk at below minimum wage. Others will end up in large cities, working in so-called "sweatshops" under slave-like working conditions: constant peak production required, no breaks or meals, inadequate bathroom facilities. Pay is often late and below minimum wage as well. Those employers who would thus prey on the weak routinely prepare fraudulent documentation to show immigration and labor officials, deceiving the "watchdogs" into believing working conditions do meet legal standards. It would be wrong to imply that *most* businesses engage in such predatory hiring practices, *but far too many do*.

And it's not just employers who deal deceptively with their workers. It cuts both ways. John Case is a certified protection professional with more than 25 years experience in prevention of employee theft. In his

booklet *The Profit Killer*, which is posted on his web page (www.employeetheft.com), he cites statistics from numerous government agencies that indicate employee theft runs between 60 and 120 billion dollars per year in the United States alone. He goes on to say that nearly every business experiences theft by its employees, which is more costly

What Can Be Done?

Men and women everywhere are *compromising* themselves day in and day out—probably not even always realizing it. But that’s what duplicity is—compromise with the truth and compromise with our own integrity. And as the integrity of individuals is eroded, so is the integrity of all of

Men and women everywhere are compromising themselves day in and day out—probably not even always realizing it. But that's what duplicity is—compromise with the truth and compromise with our own integrity.



to corporations than shoplifting. He also notes that a worker’s pay is not relevant to his likelihood to steal from his employer. The primary cause of employee theft, then, is not economic hardship. Shamefully, it is instead the mere *opportunity* to do so.

Once again, we see the pervasive acceptance in our society of deception and double-dealing. And once again, there’s a price to pay. Employee theft, along with consumer misdeeds such as insurance fraud and shoplifting, are so damaging to a company’s profitability that their cost must be added to the price of the company’s goods or services. Who pays for an employee’s duplicity on the job? We all pay.

society. American author Norman Mailer wrote, “Each day a few more lies eat into the seed with which we are born, little institutional lies from the print of newspapers, the shock waves of television, and the sentimental cheats of the movie screen” (*Advertisements for Myself*, 1959). Ralph Waldo Emerson tells us the result of this ubiquitous behavior: “Every violation of truth is not only a sort of suicide in the liar, but is a stab at the health of human society” (First Series of Essays, 1841, “Prudence”).

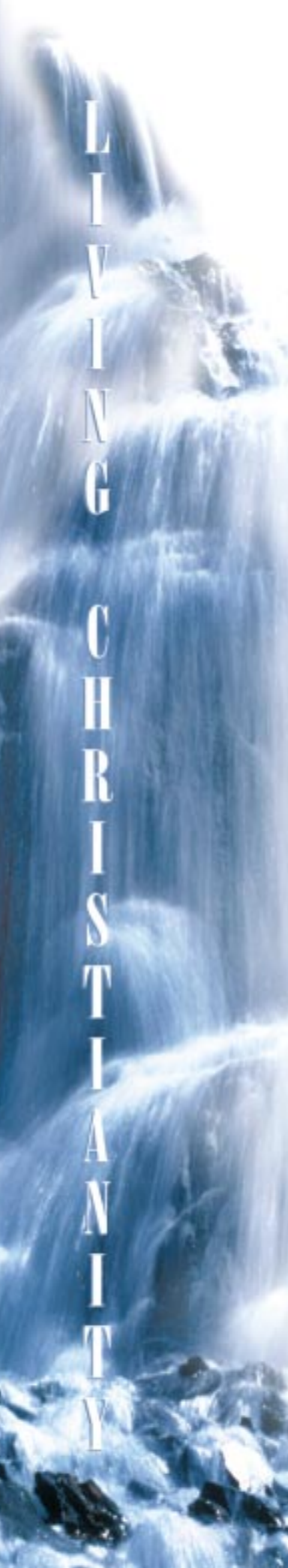
The Word of God has similar warnings for those who practice duplicity. The book of James talks about being double-minded. We read that a man who doubts and

wavers in faith is “unstable in all his ways” (1:8). When we act duplicitously, we are being double-faced, hence the term “two-faced” used to describe a double-dealing individual. It is no stretch of the imagination that being double-faced carries the same consequence of instability as being double-minded. When we vow marital fidelity to a spouse, then turn to others in adultery, that is being double-faced, and that surely results in unstable families and communities. When we solemnly agree to tell the truth, yet proceed to lie, that also is a two-faced act. That, too, causes instability in personal relationships and in the pursuit of justice.

Jesus Christ encountered many double-faced and double-dealing individuals. Of all the instruction and warnings He gave during His 3 1/2-year ministry in the Holy Land, His most scathing rebuke was aimed at the Pharisees for hypocrisy—just another word for duplicity. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” (Matt. 23:25-27).

Despite our personal desire to please God and obey Him, it’s clear we can’t turn the tide of moral degeneracy by human effort. Indeed, the entire world seems to have become like a man “unstable in all his ways.” What

(continued on page 19)



Family Bible Study

by Sanford Beattie

Whether it's just you and your spouse, or a family of ten, studying the Bible together can be an important part of your daily life. We are admonished to take heed and learn from scriptural accounts (1 Cor. 10:11-12), of which there are literally hundreds. These examples are there to help us lead our lives according to God's instructions—which certainly includes teaching biblical lessons to our children (Deut. 4:9; 6:5-7). One way to do this is through family Bible study or related Bible-oriented activities. But for many of us, this is easier said than done. Of course, families vary greatly in their makeup—in how they communicate and in their educational background. Therefore, we will look at a variety of ideas, at least some of which may be useful to you. And, of course, we can *all* benefit from family Bible study—even if we have no children at home. Those with access to the Internet can also benefit from a new learning tool on our web site that we feel is especially useful in this regard.

The simplest place to begin in creating a Bible study program, of course, is to just read from the Scriptures. When working with young children, you'll want to begin in a section that best captures their imagination. Good starting points might include the Gospels, the creation account and the Great Flood in Genesis, or the many fascinating stories from King David's life found in Samuel and Kings. Read a portion as a family each day—a chapter or two, or perhaps 40 to 50 verses. It's important not to read too rapidly. Allow time to mentally absorb what's read, and encourage questions and discussion. And don't worry if this carries you off on some tangent. Such digressions are just the thing to keep younger minds interested.

The Global Church of God has recently introduced an ongoing program to read through the entire Bible over the course of about two years, and afterward repeating. We are currently reading daily passages from the New Testament, and will do so until the end of this year. Then we will start through the Old Testament. Details of this program can be found on our web site at www.worldahead.org. Oftentimes, the day's reading is accompanied by a short commentary on the material, and at times we offer full-length articles related to the subject matter as optional reading.

Of course, any reading your family does together needs to be geared as much as possible to the maturity level and interests of any children involved. Perhaps you can simplify the words for very young children. If you are using our web site, we will link you to a Bible web site (<http://bible.gospelcom.net>), where you can read the verses in a variety of translations, some perhaps easier to understand than others.

If you have the talent, embellish your reading to make it more dramatic and colorful. If the text you're reading involves dialogue—when David confronts Goliath, let's say—try to *orally interpret* the material. As best you can, try to sound like two different people by changing the tone and pitch of your voice. This is a tried and true method for holding children's interest. And as the children get older, *they* can be encouraged to do some of the reading and oral interpretation.

Another idea for older children and those more familiar with the Bible is to read a section and then ask them to find a passage elsewhere in the Scriptures that is somehow related. This can be extremely simple—especially if the Bibles they use have cross-references. But it's an interesting way to get everyone involved. It's also fun sometimes to see what creative connections people come up with. Once, our family was reading about

Jesus crossing over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, where He healed the sick, cast out demons and fed the multitudes. We expected our son to cite another story about healing or perhaps about providing food. Instead the passage he came up with was Joshua 3. The relationship? The Israelites crossed over to the other

side of a body of water—in this case the Jordan River. It wasn't what we expected, but it *was* a related passage. And most importantly, it got him to *actively think* about the Word of God.

With a bit more work, you can create a formal Bible study. The easiest way to do this involves using some of the many Bible study tools available from bookstores or the Internet. A variety of study Bibles are available, containing notes and cross-references. A word of caution here, though, is to keep in mind that study notes and commentaries are not themselves Scripture and, as such, should be read with the understanding that some of their conclusions may not, in fact, reflect God's Truth. Nonetheless, many of them are generally very helpful. Some of the truly useful books include concordances (indexes of almost every word in the Bible and which verses they occur in), *Nave's Topical Bible* (which lists scriptural references under topic headings), and the *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* (an extensive list of related Scriptures for nearly every verse of the Bible). Those with computers can find these and more in Bible software programs or on the Internet at such sites as www.biblestudytools.net.

A Bible study on "hypocrisy," for example, could be created simply by looking up the word in a concordance and reading some or all of the verses where it is found. *Nave's Topical Bible* can also be used to this end—and it goes one step further. It will give you additional verses where the *subject* is discussed, but where the word may not actually be used (e.g. Matt. 7:21-23). Or perhaps you are studying a passage such as Luke 12:1-3, where Jesus warned against hypocrisy. By looking those verses up in the *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, or even the column references found in many Bibles, you are pointed to other verses related not only to *hypocrisy*, but also to *leaven* and *the revealing of hidden things*—additional topics in the passage—as well. Reading these related verses can add greater depth of understanding. Several examples of Bible studies based on sections of Scripture can be found at our web site, listed under *Mini-Studies*.

There are other Bible-related family projects that go beyond reading verses. When God wanted to make an impression on the children of Israel, He had Ezekiel build a model of Jerusalem and portray a siege against it (Ezek. 4). Visual and hands-on projects can be very effective teaching aids. Puppets, dolls and stuffed animals can come to life for the speaking parts in many stories of the Bible. Some children may enjoy drawing pictures to illustrate Bible stories. Others could have fun using building bricks to create a scale model of Noah's ark—the measurements are given in Genesis 6:15. It is amazing and instructive to see the relative dimensions—and then to imagine the full-scale size!—of this massive vessel. For the more ambitious, try constructing a model of

the temple from the measurements given in Ezekiel 40-42 or 1 Kings 6 and 2 Chronicles 3. When our children were small, we tried this with building bricks—then later with cardboard and plaster. Recently, one of our boys used a computer-aided design (CAD) program to create an on-screen model of the millennial temple complex described in Ezekiel—complete with opening doors and other interactive features! These passages describing the temple aren't always thought of as the "most exciting" sections of Scripture. But they became truly fascinating when translated into a visual model.

Although it takes some preparation, activities can be created for children. We have some posted on our web site. One idea given there is a Bible story presented as a "Readers' Theater," based on the narrative in John 9 of Jesus healing a blind man. Each member of the family is assigned a part to read. Other activities involve puzzles—word search or crossword puzzles—based on topics or sections of Scripture. Also included, and perhaps the simplest Bible study aid to prepare on your own, is a list of discussion questions on parables and other reading topics. It has been said that perhaps the most important thing to know is how to ask the right questions—for therein lies the key to learning.

Discussion questions don't have to have only one short, simple, correct answer. The best ones, in fact, don't—but are instead designed to help the listener apply the Scriptures to the question posed. Let's look at the story of Jesus casting out demons in Mark 5:1-20. The demons asked to go into a nearby herd of swine. But *why*? Why did Jesus *permit* this? And what caused the pigs to *react* as they did? What *happened* to the demons when the pigs drowned? Was this *fair* to the owners? Why did the townspeople ask Jesus to *leave*? Each of these questions could have many answers. It may be possible in some cases to cite other scriptures to support an answer. (For example, Matthew 12:43 might be used to guess at why the demons wanted to go into the swine in the first place.) Other answers may be based on biblical principles or knowledge of human nature.

Whatever the method, whatever the tools, the goal is to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3), being reminded by Jude that "the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe" (v. 5). And from where does the necessary belief or faith come? Paul wrote, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by **the word of God**" (Rom. 10:17). In studying the Bible, we hope to learn the lessons of history, which are examples for us (cf. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6).

God has given us the responsibility of directing our children to His Word (cf. Mal. 4:4-6). Let's make sure we take it seriously.



Successful Parenting

by Larry R. Salyer

Following this summer's recent tragic death of John F. Kennedy Jr., a number of friends, relatives and former mentors came forward to recount the young man's childhood experiences. Commenting on his reputation among those who knew him well, *Newsweek* remarked, "The one child of the 1960s who had the greatest chance of growing up strange and insecure turned into one of the most centered and easygoing guys around" (July 26, 1999, p. 52).


How could this young man, raised with all the publicity and pressure focused on the Kennedy family, turn out to be so normal? What struck me in reading and hearing the analyses of his life in the media was the repeated reference to his mother Jackie's determination to bring her children up with just that goal in mind. I'm not asking anyone to leap to the conclusion that Mrs. Kennedy was a paragon of child-rearing know-how. We might not even precisely share her vision of what a child should become. But I do want to emphasize that she had a specific goal and was willing to expend considerable effort toward achieving it. Speaking of her efforts to protect her children from danger, *Newsweek* continues, "She kept them away from the worst excesses of their cousins, some of whom were living fast and loose and experimenting with drugs." Concerning the later relationship between Jackie and her then-adult son, *Newsweek* comments, "He loved his mother dearly and spoke often and intimately with her" (p. 47). Many parents today would count themselves successful if their children would speak to them at all!

What is it that causes children to become the kind of adults they do? How is it that one tiny, innocent baby can grow up to be a selfless humanitarian, while another becomes a mass murderer? Virtually all authorities on child development conclude that the adult "product" springs from both its genetics and its environment. In other words, few disagree that the adults whom children eventually become are determined by "nature *and* nurture." What is not so widely agreed upon is the relative proportion of these two influences. Let's briefly examine this and then look at what we can do on the nurturing side.

Cultivating Through Love

Notice what one mother and author says in her book, *I Didn't Plan to Be a Witch: and Other Surprises of a Joyful Mother*: "Contrary to what we may have heard, children are not like clay—which we can mold





into whatever we want if we try hard enough. They are seedlings. The seed of what they are has already been planted from the moment they began their existence. Some may be orange trees and others might be lemons. It is our job, as their gardeners, to observe, water, expose to the sun, weed, provide fertilizer, and nurture, in order to make the most beautiful plant possible from the seedlings we are given” (Linda Eyre, 1996, p. 107).

The gardening analogy is certainly appropriate. Christ Himself used this symbolism many times. In the book of John, He tells us, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (15:1-2). This is of critical importance as a foundation for child-rearing principles since God, as our Heavenly Father, is bringing up *spiritual* children. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul tells us, “It is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are *children of God*” (Rom. 8:16 NRSV).

In fact, when we study the Bible carefully, we come to understand that God is actually focused on a tremendous goal for His children. He is working to make us just like Him. That’s right! He *works* at it—just as Jesus described in the book of John. All His efforts are for our *ultimate good* and for our *eternal benefit*. He loves us beyond measure and wants to give us every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). And in His love for us, He has allowed us, too, to become “creators” in this physical realm. After He had placed the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden, God instructed them to “be fruitful and

multiply” (Gen. 1:28). In the Psalms we read, “Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them” (127:3-5).

It should be understood that the right foundation of all effective child-rearing practices is true love for our children—godly love that focuses on their well-being and ultimate success.

Children, therefore, are given to us as blessings. Not only are they to be a source of joy and strength, but are intended to present to us an opportunity to pour out our love upon them. This is one way our Heavenly Father teaches us to be like Him. It should be understood, then, that **the right foundation of all effective child-rearing practices is true love for our children—godly love that focuses on their well-being and ultimate success.**

We know that a mother’s love for her child is an emotion that’s part of her feminine nature. Yet even this love—one we think of as so pure and natural—is often self-directed. We see this in some mothers’ desire for their children to live in a way that enhances their *own* image. This may be common, but it doesn’t reflect the perfect, outgoing love that God has for us. The good news is that God *can* and *will* give us that kind of love for our children—if we *ask* Him for it. For our part, we must strive to measure all of our actions against His perfect standard. If we do, it will have an immediate and powerful impact on the way we interact with our children!

If you will stop and think about the conflicts you may have with your children, you’ll likely be able to see that they often result from the child wanting to act in a way contrary to the image—present and future—you have in your mind. Children don’t always fit neatly into the molds we create for them—even those that are solely for their own benefit. But even if they *might* “fit the mold,” perhaps they’re not doing so because we haven’t properly explained what we expect from them. Without such communication and instruction, our goals for our children’s future are probably doomed to failure. For given the difference in maturity levels, there’s little chance of parents and children *accidentally* visualizing the goal in the same way.

Life Is a Classroom

In the book of Ephesians, we find instruction on child rearing from the Apostle Paul. He says, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath...” (6:4). We’ll look at the rest of this verse shortly. But for the moment, let’s consider this question: Why would he say such a thing? Maybe it’s because this problem was as common in the first century as it is today. Why *is* there so much friction and anger in parent-child relationships? Present-day experience tells us that provocation of children, most often young teens, results from what we refer to as the generation gap. In reality, this is nothing more than a conflict of interest between parents and children. It may be the result of selfish motives on either side. Or it may stem from differing visions or goals for the future that we’ve already discussed. And this generation gap can be a formidable stumbling block. For there aren’t many things more frustrating than someone you love vehemently disagreeing with you when you’re sure you are right!



The Circuitry of Mental Development

Researchers probing the ways babies and children learn are finally discovering some basic principles that underscore what Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 6. With recent advances in technology, scientists are now able to observe not only actual behavior, but also the brain activity that regulates it.

A *Time* magazine special report titled “How a Child’s Brain Develops” offers some insight: “RAT-A-TAT-TAT, RAT-A-TAT-TAT, RAT-A-TAT-TAT. If scientists could eavesdrop on the brain of a human embryo 10, maybe 12 weeks after conception, they would hear an astonishing racket.... Evidence is growing that the staccato bursts of electricity that form those distinctive rat-a-tat-tats arise from coordinated waves of neural activity, and that those pulsing waves, like currents shifting sand on the ocean floor, actually change the shape of the brain, carving mental circuits into patterns that over time will enable the newborn infant to perceive a father’s voice, a mother’s touch, a shiny mobile twirling over the crib” (Feb. 1997, pp. 48-50).

This fascinating report reviews the latest advances in the knowledge of the very mechanisms of learning. Studies have been conducted on infants to measure the effect of outside stimuli on brain development. *Time* reports, “**Deprived of a stimulating environment, a child’s brain suffers.** Researchers at Baylor College of Medicine, for example, have found that children who don’t play much or are rarely touched develop brains 20% to 30% smaller than normal for their age.... Rich experiences, in other words, really do produce rich brains” (pp. 50-51).



Mom and Dad often seem to assume that their children will just naturally see things the same way they do and will thus fulfill their vision. They may assume that if a child does not conform to this vision or image, he or she is simply rebellious. However, in my experience as a long-time teacher, counselor and—let me admit—guilty parent, I’ve found that the culprit is most often something else. It’s the failure of the parents to properly convey how they expect their son or daughter to behave—as well as the failure to provide them with the necessary tools to *learn* and *adopt* that behavior.

Now, think about children who are very young. As soon as most toddlers learn to draw or color pictures, they like to proudly present them to their parents. Imagine just how *crushed* a little child would be if his father were to scold him for having drawn a stick man because Dad wanted to see a picture of a tree. A ludicrous example? Of course. But it serves to drive home an important point. Though all of us would label such a parental reaction as outrageous, we may be doing the same kind of thing in relation to behavior and personality traits. So often, I have observed in a grocery store or some such public place a mother shouting at a toddler to behave. But what do you suppose the word “behave” really means to the youngster? Even for adults, “behaving” is a complex concept, molded by such diverse factors as our *own* parents’ values, our social environment, cultural mores and

God’s spiritual law. The point is that we cannot expect from our children instant and automatic conformity to what most of us only learned after many years in the “school of hard knocks.” We should hold them responsible only for what we have thoroughly and patiently taught them. Doing otherwise would be correctly perceived by them as *unfair*.

Now let’s look at the rest of Ephesians 4:6: “...but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”! Paul completes the previous thought about not provoking children to wrath by encouraging parents to teach and nurture their offspring in the spirit of love and concern evident in God’s attitude toward *His* children. Nurture and admonition work hand in hand to motivate and direct a child toward effective growth and development.

Let’s pause to reflect on a sad truth. All too many mothers and fathers either never intended to become parents in the first place, or never understood in advance the incredible amount of effort and commitment that raising children would require. As a result, many are frustrated with the lack of time and freedom to pursue their own interests after children come along. In far too many cases—and, of course, even *one* would be too many—parents develop actual *antagonism* toward their own flesh and blood. The cause can be jealousy, selfishness, competition, vanity or any number of other wrong motives. And the antagonism will only be eliminated when the parents become spiritually mature enough to put their children’s welfare at least on a par with their own. The work of educating and training a child the way God wants us to is a *labor-intensive* job. It requires a level of personal sacrifice that does not always come naturally to us. We will succeed in it only if our true motive is the kind of love for our

children that *God* has for *His* children on a spiritual level.

When the Almighty called His people out of Egypt, they had been wrongly educated for centuries. They had lost all knowledge of the instruction the Creator had given to their forefathers. So, in His love, He took the time to carefully instruct them in His detailed way of righteous living. Then, through the Prophet Moses, God exhorted them to *preserve* His way of life by passing it on to their children, from generation to generation. In so doing, He also gave them—and us—an important formula for instructing and guiding the young.

We can glean much practical wisdom from a few short verses in Deuteronomy 6: “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart” (v. 6). **Note that true and effective moral or ethical teaching must be rooted in personal conviction.** We can hardly expect our children to internalize a way of life that we don’t believe and practice ourselves. Our words of instruction would be hollow indeed. And there would be no proper parental example to *reinforce* our instruction. But once we are committed to the right way, Moses charges, “You shall teach [God’s words] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (vv. 7-9).

Without examining every detail, let me point out here that Moses is using terms that describe our everyday routines. He’s talking about a *way of life*, not some peculiar ritual. Nevertheless, I’ve known parents in the Church of God who’ve tried to apply these verses using a strict,

literal interpretation of each activity mentioned. The religious instruction of their children was scheduled according to these daily routines. I’ve also observed that parents who take this approach usually have very little natural interaction with their children. For some, such a legalistic view became a trap that obscured the priceless instruction God was *really* giving.

Of course, it’s *fine* if you want to literally write out the Ten Commandments on the doorpost of your home. You could make it an interactive Bible project that would be both instructive and fun for the whole family. But how tragic it would be if you *substituted* the rote, legalistic task of writing words for what God *really* wants for all Christians: “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: **I will put my laws in their HEARTS, and I will write them on their MINDS**” (Heb. 10:16 NRSV).

God wants us as parents to be committed to *living* by a set of righteous values and then to pass them along to our children throughout life. And this is to be done, not in a formal way only, but also through all the typical daily activities that bring the family into natural togetherness. I have known many parents who complained that their children hated to sit still for daily Bible study or just showed no interest. From the instructions God gave, it’s clear that He anticipated this a long time ago! For so-called religious instruction, *apart from practical examples and application*, is usually of little value.

If conducted properly, the process of teaching through daily experiences that God outlined for families would require **quality time** spent between parents and children as well as the continual communication that stimulates mental development (see box: “The Circuitry of Mental Development”). This is the

nurture to which the Apostle Paul referred in Ephesians 6:4. God, who designed and built the marvelous human brain and body, foresaw the need for such nurturing. We neglect providing it to the peril of our children and ourselves. Yet, as crucial as teaching by word and example is, it still does not always prevent a child from making mistakes or choosing to disobey.

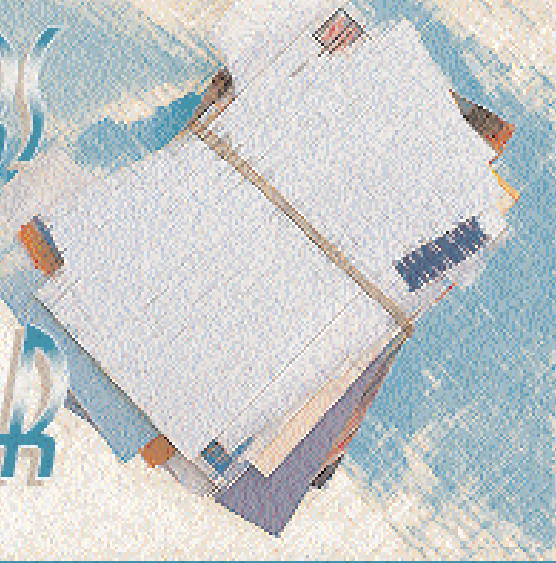
Dare to Discipline

Sadly, most children do not live with the constant companionship of their parents and siblings. Some are even left in daycare centers from *infancy*, often deprived of critical contact with their parents except for short periods in the morning and evening. Nor are they educated exclusively by their parents. School, scouting, summer camps and a whole host of other endeavors throw them into regular contact with other children and adult supervisors. They may be exposed to a wide range of personalities and examples. To a point, of course, this is good. Children need varied life experiences and social contacts to learn to live in the real world—an often *inhospitable* world.

But there’s a downside as well. For our children are thereby subjected to information and influences that often contradict the teaching and examples given at home. Moreover, no matter how well we train them, they are subject to the vagaries of human nature and the influences of a very real Satan, the god of this present world (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). The pleasures of sin are not limited to adults, but beckon to the very young as well. Mistakes and wrong behavior will *inevitably* occur. When they do, parents must be the first to be willing to impose a suitable penalty to call attention to

(continued on page 30)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



RETURN OF THE MAGAZINE

Thank you for the recent *World Ahead* magazine (May–June 1999). I'm glad to know you are able to publish the Truth of God again. I very much missed the magazine as the recent crisis within the Church caused such a setback. It affected all of us who believe in God and the Gospel of Jesus. Every publication from the Global Church of God has been "Good News" to me. Please keep up the good work and thank you.

Donald L. Phillips
Gold Creek, Montana

I am truly rejoicing over my latest issue of *The World Ahead*. I cannot adequately express how much this magazine means to me. I started reading *The Plain Truth* magazine approximately 25 years ago. I must say that during the four months of silence you probably lost some credibility. However, this can be quickly regained with more of God's precious truths. Personally, I was confused about structure in the New Testament Church until I reread the book of Acts. It is very clear by the appointment of Matthias and by the handling of circumcision that one-person dominance is not scriptural. I pray that you will continue to go forward in our Father's Work. He has called all true believers to a great Work, which only He can achieve through us.

Frank Kellam
Anderson, South Carolina

It certainly was beautiful last Monday to see an issue of the *World Ahead* magazine waiting with my mail. The recent absence of the magazine makes

for its appreciation all the more. Through the years, the flow of articles has kept me educated, up-to-date and careful to give no quarter to anything but the Truth. I think everyone who's gotten behind the Work the Global Church of God was raised up to do feels deep dismay over all the trouble that has come. The reappearance of *The World Ahead* is all the more uplifting and reassuring after a winter season like this past one. I rejoice with you in its return.

David J. Hearn
Obrien, Oregon

EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS

I just finished reading the May–June issue of *The World Ahead* (cover story: "Europe—The New Babylon?"), and I must say how immensely impressed I was at your accurate details in all categories, always supported by the Sacred Scriptures. I love reading Christian literature, and I hardly have any knowledge of politics, but I was able to gain a better comprehension due to your magazine. I can't wait to receive your next issue in my mailbox.

Pina Iacobelli
Scarborough, Ontario, Canada

Shortly after the publication of our last issue's story on European unification, there was an incredible new development in the process. A New York Times headline from June 4, 1999, proclaimed, "European Union Vows to Become Military Power: Move Toward Unified Defense Policy Offers Possibility of Acting Without U.S. Aid"—a second header for the same story stating, "New

Army: Europe Creates Military Czar to Provide a Unified Defense."

The story began, "Cologne, Germany, June 3—The leaders of 15 European countries decided today to make the European Union a military power for the first time in its 42-year history, with command headquarters, staffs and forces of its own for peacekeeping and peacemaking missions in future crises like those in Kosovo or Bosnia." So prophecy marches on! We will continue monitoring such developments—ed.

COMMANDMENTS Q&A

I wanted to write and congratulate you on such stimulating articles! Thank you. Having read through Jacob's life several times—and having sat through a sermon on it too!—I had never been aware of just how significantly he had "reaped" what he had "sown." I now read it through "new eyes" and am amazed!

One point of difference, though. On your "Questions & Answers" page, you argue that we are still "under the law." Colossians 2:14 clearly states that the written code was "canceled" and "nailed to the cross." 1 Timothy 1:9 states that the law is not made for the righteous but for "lawbreakers," "rebels," etc. Hebrews 8:13 states that "by calling this covenant 'new,' he has made the first one obsolete." I could go on.

I'm not arguing that we shouldn't live by "the commandments." They are obviously good laws (and laws you wouldn't break if you loved one another as the New Testament demands), but I don't read the above scriptures as demands to live under. If you read them differently, please let me know. And concerning the seventh-day Sabbath you preach, how do you read Colossians 2:16? I am not trying to find fault. I'm just trying to lead a Christian life. And if I'm *living* at fault, I want to know. I look forward to receiving your magazine and eagerly await the next issue and having "new eyes" again.

Allison Whitehouse
Talywain, Wales, U.K.

We never said that we are still "under the law"—as this terminology means condemned unto death. Christians are now "under grace." But that does not free us from the obligation of obeying God. Colossians 2:14 is speaking of the record of our SINS being nailed to the cross (see this issue's "Questions & Answers," p. 23). As to the law being for the righteous, the

Bible says that there is "none righteous, no, not one.... For all have sinned..." (Rom. 3:10, 23). Even converted Christians still sin (1 John 1:8-9). We need the law to tell us what sin is (Rom. 3:20; 7:7)—so that we can strive with God's help to cease from sinning. The New Covenant, rather than abolishing God's commandments, is all about having them written on our hearts and minds (Heb. 8:10). As for Colossians 2:16, it's explained on pages 49-51 of our booklet, *The Holy Days—God's Master Plan*—ed.

TOO MUCH ON SABBATH?

You need to do better research on the Sabbath. The way you write, it's God, Christ and the Sabbath for salvation. Who is deceived? Open your eyes.

Name withheld
Internet e-mail

We have done a great deal of research on the seventh-day Sabbath over many decades, a small part of which can be seen in our booklet, *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath? Beyond that, we certainly take umbrage with the assessment that, according to us, "it's God, Christ and the Sabbath for salvation." Of course, all three ARE necessary. Keeping the Sabbath is necessary because that is one of God's commandments. And Jesus Christ said, "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19:17).*

Yet we do not consider the Sabbath to be more important than the rest of God's law. We do often give special attention to it because, though it's a special "test" commandment (cf. Ex. 16:4) that God says to "remember" (20:8), it's the one that people most try to forget—even in professing Christianity. It's also an identifying "sign" of God's people (31:12-17), though not the only one—others, for example, being the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23). While there are some people who have practically made a "god" out of Sabbath regulations like the Pharisees did, we deplore this approach. We keep the Sabbath out of obedient love to our Creator, who commands us to do so for our own good—ed.

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.


Double-Dealing (continued from page 11)

other conclusion could be drawn from ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, mass murders in one American school after another, and the ever-present threat of terrorist attacks for any number of political or religious causes.

Yes, we live in a double-dealing world. Nothing human beings can do will change that fact in this age. But with God's help, we can begin to change *ourselves*. If we have a proclivity to lie, cheat or betray others, we can pray to God to help us overcome such tendencies. We can be strengthened by reading accounts in the Bible of men and women who obeyed God, even when that meant things wouldn't be so expedient. We can examine Hebrews 11 to see what happened to people who wouldn't lie or cheat to get themselves out of trouble.

We can read about the Patriarch Joseph in Genesis 37-48. Although sold to the Egyptian Potiphar as a slave, Joseph would not compromise his values. He refused to lie to his master or betray him by giving in to the seduction of Potiphar's wife. It would have been more expedient if he *had*—in the short run. For Joseph was then *falsely accused* by this woman and was thrown into prison—for years. But Joseph made the right choice in keeping his integrity. God not only eventually delivered him from the prison, but also bestowed upon him great power and honor—making him the "prime minister" of all Egypt! He used Joseph to save those of his own family from starvation and in the process ensured their continuity. And let's bear in mind how great a blessing that was, since it was *this very family* that would eventually grow to become God's great nation of Israel!

We can learn and draw strength from this example and others. There's no guarantee that God will make any of us a powerful ruler over an entire nation in this age. He probably won't. But our personal example will surely not go unnoticed. Christ wants us to be *lights* to the world. He wants our example to be seen by others to influence them positively (Matt. 5:14-16). He knows that what we do won't turn the whole world around right now. But if we allow Christ to work through us by using our example to bring His way of righteousness to just a few sinners—or even just one!—it counts for very much indeed. Jesus said, "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance"! (Luke 15:7).

The single-minded pursuit of truth, honesty, faithfulness and integrity might be the last bastion of sanity in a world unstable in all its ways. Let us, then, refuse to give in to the pull of double-dealing for the sake of expediency or gain. Let us instead reflect on the constant, steadfast and faithful nature of God—asking Him to help us develop *His* nature as our own! 

The People of God—

Keeping His Sabbath

When God's people meet on the weekly Sabbath and annual Holy Days, it is possible we can fall short of fulfilling the fourth commandment without even being aware of it! Our forefathers historically let down in their worship of God, especially in the matter of Sabbath-keeping. In explaining why ancient Israel had gone into captivity, God said, "They greatly defiled My Sabbaths" (Ezek. 20:13-21). And the same thing has happened in modern Israelite nations: "They have not distinguished between the holy and unholy... and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them" (22:26).

Now no one holding fast to the Truth would willfully disobey God. But human nature tends to lean toward its own desires rather than what God desires (Rom. 8:5-7). So unless we stay alert to keep the Sabbath the way He commands, we may drift into observing the day as we see fit, yet failing to keep it holy.

True Worship

God created the Sabbath as *holy time* (Ex. 20:8-11; cf. 3:8, 15, 58, 13). It was given to benefit man (Mark 2:27). This benefit is realized by the activities of *rest* and *worship* (Lev. 23:3). We choose how to spend holy time—what proportion in rest and what proportion in worship. And in whatever we do on these days, God wants us to distinguish between what is appropriate and holy for the Sabbath and what is inappropriate and profane. That process of discerning how to keep the Sabbath holy helps us become more like God (Matt. 5:48).

Jesus spoke about worshipping God in a conversation recorded in John 4:15-24. Christ and the disciples stopped by Jacob's well near Mount Gerizim in Samaria. Here, centuries before, the patriarch Jacob had sunk this well to water his flocks, and now it served the Samaritans in Sychar. Jesus rested at the edge of the well while His companions went to buy provisions in the village. While He waited, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus asked her to give Him some of it to drink, to which she replied, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" (v. 9).

She was surprised that a Jewish man would so much address her, since the Jews believed contact with



Samaritans defiled them. These two peoples had long viewed one another with distrust. In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Samaritans opposed the work of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. They worshiped at a rival temple on Mount Gerizim, where they thought Noah's ark had rested at the end of the Flood.

The Samaritan woman introduced the subject of worship into the conversation: "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

order God commanded, beginning with the Most Holy Place containing the Ark of the Covenant with its mercy seat, and moving outward to the courtyard curtains. "Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.... For the cloud of the LORD was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys" (Ex. 40:34, 38). They had an ever-present, visible reminder of who, how and where to worship.

God desires spiritual worship from us on the Sabbath as well as our physical rest from work. He commands us to keep the Sabbath holy because we, too, are to become holy, just as He is.

He answered, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship My Father.... The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (Jy. 21, 23).

Time and Place

During the years in the wilderness, Israel had a specified "place" of worship—though that place often moved. God gave Moses the "reprints" for a portable tabernacle of tent-complex work. He would dwell with them in the tent, and they would worship Him during their travels. He described the Most Holy Place containing the mercy seat above the Ark of the Covenant; the Place with its furniture; the courtyard with its golden utensils, and fine woven curtains hanging from brass pillars around the perimeter. He also gained the appearance of priestly garments set with gemstones. Furthermore, God listed fine ingredients for making perfumed incense and arranging on the outlined the duties of priests and the portions of sacrifices, chose craftsmen, and endowed them with spiritual gifts to express His vision. God, therefore, was interested in every detail.

He drew the people into His plan by requiring them to bring select offerings: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple, scarlet, thread; fine linen, goats' hair, skins of rams and badgers; oil, spices and precious stones. Scholars who study this tabernacle in the wilderness see that God had a spiritual purpose pointing forward to His future coming as Jesus Christ. Israel, that hard-hearted people, saw only the physical structure come together, but the Israelites shared a sense of awe as they saw their offerings transformed into a dwelling for God. Moses raised up the first

And they also knew *when*. Besides having a fixed *place* of worship, the Israelites also had a fixed *time* to worship God—the Sabbath. Though it was of course acceptable to worship God at *any* time, this was the day the people of God were specifically *required* to assemble before Him at the tabernacle of meeting. Therefore, the Sabbath was a very important day for the *work* of the tabernacle.

Worshiping on the Sabbath Today

Christ explained to the Samaritan woman, we do not have a fixed *place* of worship today—for we ourselves, who are in God's Church, constitute His spiritual temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; Eph. 2:19-22). And the important work of building up *this* temple goes on. But to that end, the Sabbath remains as a fixed *time* for our worship (Heb. 4:9 NASB), as it is part of God's spiritual law.

God desires *spiritual worship* from us on the Sabbath *as well as* our physical rest from work. He commands us to keep the Sabbath holy because we, too, are to become holy, just as He is (Lev. 19:16; 20:7; 25:2; 26:10; 26:31). We are to be like Him in character (1 Pet. 1:16). We are to be on the same level as He is (1 Pet. 3:12). We are to be perfect in character (1 Pet. 1:16). We are to be glorified in the Father's

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image. For our spiritual focus is *intensified* when we rest from work and truly worship God in properly observing holy time. With this in mind, then, just how do we *worship* God on the Sabbath?

1) Prepare. God made clear in Exodus 16 that we should prepare for His holy time. The manna that He sent from heaven to feed the Israelites during their sojourning fell on the first six days of the week only—the time they were to do the work of gathering it—not on the Sabbath. Instead, God sent a double portion the day before, and commanded the Israelites to gather and prepare on that day for both itself and the next. The Gospel accounts of the death and resurrection of Christ refer to the work the women did on the preparation day before the Sabbath (Luke 23:54). Drawing on such examples, we should finish our work, grocery shopping and major food preparation before sunset Friday.

2) Enter holy time. Paul explained a wonderful truth in Hebrews 10:19-22. At the death of Jesus Christ, the heavy temple veil was ripped apart from top to bottom, throwing open to view the Most Holy Place. Before that symbolic miracle, only the high priest could enter into God's presence in this place, and then only on the Day of Atonement. But because of Christ's sacrifice for sin, we can now *all* go directly before God at *any* time: "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is His flesh... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." And this is especially true on the Sabbath, which God has given us as a day to draw even closer to Him. So as the sun sets on Friday evening, we can choose to, in a sense, "step through the veil" and enter into the presence of God. For remember that God's *presence* in the Sabbath is what makes it holy. Paul urged Christians to make every effort to enter Sabbath rest in this manner (cf. 4:10), rather than letting it just "happen upon us." Of course, this does not mean we should neglect to come before God's throne in prayer the *rest* of the week. But again, it is

especially appropriate and essential on *this* day.

3) Be careful in thought, word and deed. The book of Isaiah says that we are not to be "going [our] own way... doing as [we] please or speaking idle words" on God's Sabbath (58:13 NIV). In admonishing us to not be "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together," as we must on the Sabbath (see point 5), Hebrews 10:23-29 exhorts us to take care that we don't "trample the Son of God under foot" and thus "insult the Spirit of grace." So treading wrongfully upon God's Sabbath—by careless words and actions, for example—may put us on the road to ultimately rejecting Him.

God Himself says we should not do any real *work* on the Sabbath (Ex. 20:6; Jer. 17:22). Now unlike the religious leaders of Christ's day, He gave general principles rather than spelling out in great detail all that constitutes work. The scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day promoted *their own traditions* in place of God's teaching and led the people into error (Matt. 15:1-9). Jesus confronted them on several occasions about their erroneous manner of keeping the Sabbath. They had compiled wearisome ordinances to "protect" the Sabbath without considering the higher spiritual intent of the day. They made long lists of "work" one should not do on the Sabbath, even debating over whether it was permissible for a parent to pick up a child in his arms. Might even *that* somehow be labor? (Alfred Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 1,049). Christ said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). God didn't create the Sabbath for men to smear its intent with "human hand-prints" of custom and obligation. Rather, He expects us to use spiritual wisdom in judging our thoughts and actions *according to scriptural principles* to see if they fit into holy time or if they in fact profane it.

4) Seek spiritual joy. In the same passage quoted above, the book of Isaiah tells us that the goal of Sabbath rest is finding our joy in the Lord: "If you keep... from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a *delight*... and if you honor it... then you will *find your joy* in the LORD" (58:13-14 NIV). Indeed, joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22) that is sure to find greater expression as we learn more of God's precious Truth and fellowship with others in His spiritual family. In fact, Paul refers to those who teach us that wonderful Truth as "fellow workers for [our] joy" (2 Cor. 1:24). Moreover, the Sabbath pictures the millennial rest of God's Kingdom (Heb. 3-4), and Christ refers to attaining that Kingdom with these words: "Enter into the *joy*

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Does Colossians 2:14 mean that the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross?

Let's look at this verse in context. The Apostle Paul, writing to Gentile converts, stated, "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, **having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross**" (vv. 13-14).

First of all, notice the phrase "forgiven you all trespasses"—but trespasses of *what?* Of God's law, of course. For such trespass is sin (cf. Mark 11:25-26), and "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4 KJV). So do these verses in Colossians mean that God forgives us of breaking His law because He *abolished* it? No—that doesn't make sense. Especially when we consider that just a few verses earlier, Paul said, "In [Christ] you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by **putting off the body of the sins of the flesh**, by the circumcision of Christ" (v. 11).

These Gentiles were now to be putting off sin—that is, ceasing from breaking God's law and striving to keep it. They did not need to be physically circumcised, but they did have to obey God. Paul said elsewhere, "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, **but keeping the commandments of God is what matters**" (1 Cor. 7:19). And commandment-keeping is counted as *spiritual* circumcision: "If an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?" (Rom. 2:26). In fact, Christ lives within us so "that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us" (8:4).

So, since God's law is still in force, just what was "wiped out"? Paul calls it the "handwriting of requirements" or, as the King James Version renders it, "handwriting of ordinances." As we've

just seen, this *cannot* be the written code of God's commandments, as some try to make it. For besides the fact that Christians are to be keeping the commandments, God's law is certainly not "against us" or "contrary to us," as this handwriting of requirements is. Rather, referring to the Ten Commandments, Paul says, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Rom. 7:12). God's laws *never* harm us. Rather, they always work toward our benefit and well-being: "Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and **in keeping them there is great reward**" (Ps. 19:11).

What, then, *is* the "handwriting of requirements"? This phrase is translated from the Greek *cheirographon tois dogmasin*. As the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* relates, *cheirographon* is "an expression used of any document written by hand.... [Commentator] Scott, for example, points to its use in ancient times for an indictment drawn up against a prisoner, and understands the apostle [Paul] to be employing the word similarly (cf. Phillips). Barclay calls it 'a self-confessed indictment,' 'a charge-list which, as it were, they themselves had signed and had admitted was accurate' (p. 170). Others point to the use of the word for a note of hand, an IOU. Bruce, for instance, calls it a 'signed confession of indebtedness' (p. 238)" (vol. 11, p. 201).

The *Good News Bible* translates the phrase as "the unfavorable record of our debts with its binding rules," i.e. obligations. The *Jewish New Testament* calls it the "bill of charges against us." According to *The Living Bible*, God "took this *list of sins* and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross." Actually, this all fits together since sin constitutes a sort of spiritual indebtedness to God. The terms "sins" and "debts" are used interchangeably in what has been called the "Lord's Prayer" (Matt. 6:12; Luke 11:4), and debt is used as a metaphor for sin in Matthew 18:21-35. But what is "owed" for sin? Its *penalty*—which must be "paid." That penalty is death (Rom. 6:23). **Thus, the handwriting of requirements is the record of our sins—the note of our guilt—with its obligatory debt of death owed to God. That is what was nailed to the cross!** And how was this

accomplished? When Christ was physically nailed to the cross, God had laid everyone else's sins upon Him (Is. 53:6, 12). So Jesus was at that time "made... to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21), as He "bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).

Thus, the law of God was *never* nailed to the cross. In fact, neither were *any* laws of *any* kind! Rather, only three things *were* nailed to the cross of Christ: Christ Himself, the sign above His head that Pilate had written and the record of our sins calling for our death. So, recognizing the fact that Christ died in our place as full payment for our lawbreaking, it is now incumbent upon us to walk in God's commandments—which are *still* in force.

Does Matthew 27:9, where a prophecy of Zechariah is attributed to Jeremiah, show that the Bible cannot be relied upon?

Let's look at this account. Judas Iscariot returned the money he had been given to betray Christ to the chief priests and elders, who then used it to purchase a field owned by a potter (vv. 3-8). "Then was fulfilled what was spoken by **Jeremiah** the prophet, saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me'" (v. 9).

There does indeed appear to be a problem here. For no such prophecy concerning 30 pieces of silver can be found in the book of Jeremiah—nor in Lamentations, which is also attributed to him. The book of **Zechariah**, on the other hand, tells us, "Then I said to them, 'If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain.' So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, 'Throw it to the potter'—that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter" (11:12-13).

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The Bible—

the Holy Scriptures—is the one book owned by more people than any other. It is believed to be the first book ever reproduced by Gutenberg's printing press around 1455. It has sold more total copies than any other piece of literature in the centuries since then, and astoundingly is the perennial "bestseller" of all books even today. No other literary work has been translated into as many foreign languages and dialects. Yet author Bruce Barton calls it "The Book Nobody Knows." And rightly so. For if you're like most people, the Bible in your home generally goes unread—much less *studied*. For many, it rests on a shelf or table collecting dust. So why would so many people want to own a book they don't intend to read?

Many see the Bible as having the sentimental value of a family heirloom passed from one generation to the next. Others view it as the traditional standard by which to judge right and wrong. However, they *don't* see the need to check up on what it says. They trust that their parents, religious leaders and others have already told them what's in it. Still others believe the Bible to be chock

full of errors, inconsistencies and contradictions. For them, it's nothing more than a curiosity.

But perhaps the *biggest* reason people fail to study the Bible is that they think it would be a cumbersome and tedious chore that someone would do only as a duty—born out of fear—to a stern, harsh and dictatorial God. On top of that is the belief that time so spent would be wasted since there is just *no way* to understand all that spiritual "mumbo-jumbo." And worst of all, if they perchance *did* come to some greater understanding—like finding a command of God they had been ignorant of—it would be just one more bothersome religious requirement!

The Instruction Manual

Why do people think this way? It's because they have not *known* God. They have not come to understand who and what He really is. Failure to read and study the Holy Scriptures with the right *approach* has resulted in all kinds of wrong *i d e a s*

Approaching the Holy Bible

by Thomas E. Robinson

about the Great God. It is also why so many misunderstand the very *purpose* of the Bible. But if we'll honestly and sincerely open our minds, we *can indeed* know that purpose.

Let's consider a modern-day analogy. What would you do if you just bought a new VCR and wanted to learn how to program it? You could just experiment by randomly pushing a few buttons, of course. But that might result in setting the wrong date or time, or perhaps causing some other malfunction. The smarter move would be to read the instruction manual. It would tell you not only how to program and maintain the unit, but even explain exactly what it was designed to do.

Now how can we find out what we, as human beings, were designed to do? Is it possible to know how *we* are supposed to function? The vast majority of people have sought instructions from the wrong sources or have simply experimented by "pushing a lot of wrong buttons." And the result? Nothing less than all the problems facing our world today! But there is a way *out* of our troubles and confusion. That way is made plain through the instruction manual for mankind—the Holy Bible. It was given to us by our "Manufacturer"—the Creator God—to tell us *how to live* and *why He created us*.

Notwithstanding accusations of scriptural inaccuracy and contradictions, **the Bible is the absolute Truth.** When rightly understood, according to principles covered in this article, you will find that the inspired text contains *no* contradictions at all. And although many have disregarded it as ancient, dead literature, **it is, in fact, the inspired, LIVING Word of God!**

The Bible is the only book that has accurately prophesied, centuries in

advance, the world conditions and growing turmoil of the late 20th century and beyond. Of all books, the Bible *alone* has unerringly foretold the rise and fall of specific nations and the destiny to which *our present civilization* is running headlong to embrace. No literature conceived by human thought has ever accomplished the like. None ever could. Rather, such amazing prophecies are *proof* that the Bible contains God's own instructions—His holy and inspired Word.

The Holy Scriptures, we will come to see, are the very FOUNDATION of knowledge! They are God's divine revelation, which we are incapable of learning by our own devices. Though man has sought solutions to his problems for thousands of years—through science, philosophy, religious tradition, psychology and even the occult—he has utterly failed in finding them. Why? Because he has refused to prayerfully *study* and *obey* this written revelation from his Creator—the only source of true and lasting solutions to human woes.

So let us never disdain or ignore this most precious of all gifts. For the Bible reveals that God is LOVE (1 John 4:8, 16)—His very focus is outflowing concern for others. He is not some cruel tyrant. The Bible clearly attests that God's desire is for *all of us* to lead happy, abundant and fulfilled lives. Therefore, let us realize that the instructions He gives are *for our good*—they protect us from harm and are the only sure way to peace and happiness. God wants our lives to be full of interesting and gratifying experiences. And once we begin to understand God's written revelation to mankind, we will find that studying it is one of the most interesting, fascinating and rewarding journeys on which we could ever embark.

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Why So Misunderstood?

Before examining how to understand the Bible, let's look at why it has been so greatly misunderstood. Ask ten people what the real message of the Bible is and you'll probably get just as many answers. Few, even within the same denominations of mainstream Christianity, seem to concur on what the Bible really means. The primary reason for the confusion and misunderstanding is something we've already mentioned—people don't carefully *read* God's Word. They accept what *others* say about it—if they accept anything at all. But the Bible warns against such an approach: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man” (Jer. 17:5). Revelation 12:9 informs us that “the great dragon... that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan... *deceives the whole world*”! Yes, as hard to believe as it seems, virtually all of mankind has been led into religious and spiritual error of the most egregious nature!

Now most people don't like to hear this because “the whole world” includes *them*. None of us likes to admit to being wrong. We resent it when someone points out that our opinion, religion or philosophy is off-base. We hold tightly to the notion that the values and principles we have accepted are true, even though most people's values were instilled in them from infancy on—long before they were mentally equipped to *evaluate* what they were learning. For many people, it's even *humiliating* to admit error. Yet, in this present “Babylon” of religious confusion (cf. Rev. 17), *everyone can't be right*. The one, true God *cannot* be the Catholic and Protestant Trinity, *as well as* the Earth-Mother Gaia of the New Age Movement, *as well as* a crew of aliens driving a spaceship behind the Hale-Bopp Comet! *Someone has to be wrong*. In fact, *a whole lot of people have to be wrong!* Do you have the courage to admit that one of these people might be *you*? If you hold spiritual beliefs you haven't yet proven from the Holy Bible, then God help you to do so!

The Apostle Paul wrote under divine guidance that all Scripture is profitable for,

Bible Study for Understanding

1 Recognize That the Bible Is Inspired

The entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the inspired Word of God. When studying, keep in mind that He inspired the words you are reading—God is directly speaking to you through them. (2 Peter 1:21; Phil. 2:5; John 6:63)

2 Plan Time for Study

It's easy to let everyday things interfere, so schedule study time in advance. This will give you something to look forward to every day.

3 Pray for Understanding

Be prayerful when studying God's Word. Before you begin, ask Him to guide you by the Holy Spirit and to show you His will. Remember that it is God who gives true understanding—you cannot gain it on your own. (Ps. 119:33-40; Prov. 3:5-8; 1 Cor. 1:25-29; Jer. 9:23-24)

4 Keep an Open Mind

Be willing to admit you are wrong and change when appropriate, even if it means you have to let go of a long-held belief or tradition.

5 Look for Instruction and Correction

Approach the Bible with a teachable, humble attitude. The Word of God judges our innermost thoughts—it can show us who we really are. It can reveal every flaw in our character, so be ready to heed its correction. (Jer. 10:23-24; Is. 66:1-2, 5; Rom. 8:6-9; Matt. 5:48; 2 Tim. 3:16; Prov. 6:23)

6 Let the Bible Interpret Itself

If something seems confusing or contradictory, let clear passages shed light on those that are difficult to understand. Scriptures do not contradict one another, rather they complement each other. Also, to properly understand a verse in the Bible, don't force your personal point of view into it, instead use the context and other scriptures to find the correct meaning. (2 Peter 1:20; John 10:35; 17:17; Is. 28:9-10)

7 Study by Topic

Concentrate at times on one subject, doctrine or book. Use a concordance or other study aid to put together all the scriptures relevant to an entire subject. This will allow you to see all that God has to say about a particular topic.

8 Read the Entire Bible

Go through the entire Bible from cover to cover. By reading every section of the Bible, you give yourself a broad familiarity and perspective. Our Bible Reading Program (at www.worldahead.org) provides a convenient schedule for accomplishing this goal with others.

9 Take Notes

Jot down notes and explanatory comments in your Bible or a notebook. This will help you remember key ideas or related scriptures. Some people also use a marking system, such as colors or symbols, to mark key verses by various categories (e.g. doctrine, correction, prophecy). This can help you save time when looking for a particular section of Scripture.

10 Use Study Aids

Many Bible study aids are very useful. They can provide valuable historical background or point you to other scriptures which add clarity to what you are reading. Aids include concordances, lexicons, dictionaries, bible maps and commentaries. However, always keep in mind that commentaries are not Scripture and can sometimes be wrong.

11 Meditate and Review

Take time to ponder what you have been learning. If something seems hard to understand, take some time to consider its meaning, using what you have already learned as a basis. Reflect on what the Bible is really saying and on how the verses can be applied in your everyday life. (Ps. 1:1-3; 119:97-99; 139:17-18)

12 Prove God Right

Put God's Word to the test by practicing the things you are learning. Acknowledge how His ways bring positive change in your life. The best way to determine that God's commands and teachings bring true peace and blessing is by actually living them. (1 John 3:22; John 10:10; 8:31-32; Mal. 3:10)

among other things, reproof and correction (2 Tim. 3:16). But let's face it—we don't like to be reproved and corrected! We want to be *praised* for what we do. We don't want anyone judging our behavior. When a character flaw is pointed out, we don't really want to hear it. But the Bible is a great spiritual mirror. It reveals every defect or imperfection in our thinking and behavior, reflecting how we *really* are—not how we *imagine* ourselves to be. **The Bible reflects how GOD sees us!**

Rather than acknowledging their faults and changing, many try to justify what they do or believe by forcing the Bible to agree with *them*—reading their *own interpretations* into it through twisting and perverting Scripture in every way imaginable. Yet the Bible itself says that it is *not* to be privately interpreted (2 Peter 1:19-21). Nevertheless, for centuries people have demanded of their religious leaders, “Do not prophesy [preach] to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits” (Is. 30:10). And religious leaders have done just that! So now, the clear, simple meaning that God intended is often lost amid the hundreds of ridiculous and even bizarre human *interpretations* of His Word!

In essence, then, instead of yielding to God's revealed Truth and His plain commands, the vast majority of human beings attempt to bend the divine will to accommodate their own. The consequences are staggering. Because man has chosen to go his *own* way, society is wretched and miserable—so much so that it now teeters on the brink of complete self-destruction! As a whole, the human race has *rejected* the sound, biblical knowledge that would have prevented all the chaotic conditions it now faces. No wonder God tells us, “My people are *destroyed* for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6)—that's to say, for lack of true, *spiritual* knowledge!

The Path to Understanding

It should be obvious now why people don't understand the Bible. They use the wrong *approach*. They do not submit to the will of God. Many even fear what *other people* will think of their beliefs and practices. Some *justify* this by thinking that what God wants is so far beyond their comprehension that it can be of no real concern anyway. Such thinking shows that God is not *real* to most people—so they generally ignore Him. **But rest assured—God is VERY real!** And He will not allow *anyone* to ignore Him indefinitely. We would do well to realize this and begin to earnestly *study* His Word—with the right approach and using

the right method.

What, then, must our *approach* or *attitude* toward the study of God's Word be? The Almighty says, “You will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will *seek* Me and *find* Me, when you *search* for Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:12-13). He further tells us, “This is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite [repentant] in spirit, *who trembles at my word*” (Is. 66:2 NRSV).

In essence, then, instead of yielding to God's revealed Truth and His plain commands, the vast majority of human beings attempt to bend the divine will to accommodate their own.

So we must set our hearts to truly *seek* God in earnest prayer since He is the Creator and Ruler of the entire, vast universe! We must have proper *fear* or *awe* of, and the deepest *respect* for, the holy Word of that great and wonderful God who made us. And each of us must come before His Holy Scriptures in humility—filled with sorrow and regret for past transgressions of His way and now ready to obey every command He gives us.

Do *you* have this approach? Ask God to help you develop it if you don't. For without it, you cannot even *begin* to truly understand spiritual Truth. That's because proper fear of God in an obedient attitude is just the *starting point* of learning His incredible way of life. God Himself makes this abundantly clear: “The fear of the LORD is the *beginning* of wisdom; a good *understanding* have all those who do His commandments” (Ps. 111:10). Right here is an amazing principle: If you want to really understand why God gives us certain commands, then start *obeying* them! Everything will soon begin to make sense—more so than anything you've ever experienced!

Another aspect of our approach must be to bear in mind God's warning that, in our age of religious confusion, even many of God's own people would “turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to *fables*” (2 Tim. 4:4). **According to God's Word, then, many traditional religious views are a pack of lies!** Don't assume that your *own* religious heritage has been free from error. Neither should you blindly believe what you read in *The World Ahead*. Rather,

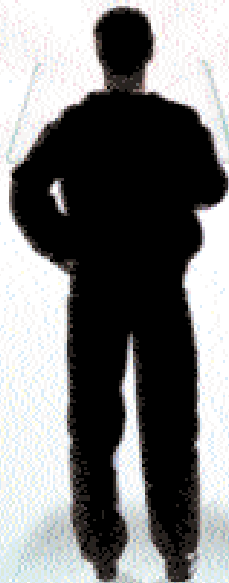
believe your Bible! Believe God! We *invite* you to hold our articles up to the standard of God's Word. For you must make sure to "PROVE all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21 KJV).

How do you do that? In the New Testament, the people of Berea heard Paul teaching something quite different from anything they'd ever learned. Initially, they didn't know if he was a servant of God or a false prophet. So what did they do? They "received the word with all readiness [without prejudice], and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). It is just as vital that we free *our* minds today from prejudice and past assumptions. Then, we too must search the Scriptures to find out what they *really* say!

The first thing to do is to get your Bible, blow the dust off of it and open it up. Next, decide on a course of action. Now there are several *different* Bible study methods. For instance, you can simply read

Through studying the Word of our Designer and Creator, and learning to follow His instructions, the otherwise unanswerable questions of human existence will be answered!

through books, fixing the context of verses clearly in your mind. Or you can do "word studies" to find out what various expressions mean. A word study is an examination of many different verses—perhaps *all* the verses—that contain a certain word or phrase from the original Hebrew or Greek. (Beginning Bible students should be especially careful when doing word studies of English expressions since many times the *same* English expression has been used to translate *different* Hebrew or Greek expressions. As a beginner, this could cause you to "link" certain Bible




passages together in your mind that the original text does not warrant.) Helpful tools for Hebrew and Greek word studies would be *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* or comprehensive Bible computer software that should be easy to find in religious bookstores, computer stores or on the Internet.

You can also read the Bible for inspiration or encouragement. The book of Psalms and chapters 5–7 of Matthew—known as Jesus' Sermon on the Mount—are helpful sections of Scripture for inspirational reading.

Perhaps the best way to glean hidden biblical truths and doctrine, though, is the topical or subject-study method. Many people try to inductively "reason" an entire biblical teaching from a single scripture. But that is not the way to understand God's Word! Unlike most books, the message of the Bible is, in some ways, like a jigsaw puzzle. Only when all the pieces are arranged properly can a clear picture emerge: "Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message?... For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little" (Is. 28:9-10). To find out what the Bible really has to say on a subject, we must look up all the verses that bear on it, comparing scripture with scripture (cf. 1 Cor. 2:13). Then, rather than human interpretations of God's Word, we will have God's *own* explanation of what He means!

We hope we have piqued your interest to start your own trek through the Holy Scriptures. We invite you to join our new day-by-day **Bible Reading Program** with supplementary reading material, which can be found on the Internet at www.worldahead.org. The program will cover the entirety of the Holy Scriptures in about two years time. It doesn't matter where we are in the program when you begin, since the sections we've already read will "come around again" when the program is repeated. So we welcome you to join with us *right now*.

Through studying the Word of our Designer and Creator, and learning to follow His instructions, the otherwise unanswerable questions of human existence *will* be answered! Wonderful and awesome mysteries beyond your imagination, which have been hidden from ages past (cf. Col. 1:26), will be unlocked and *opened* to you! Your whole outlook on life will be altered. Nothing will be the same! For you will know the very *meaning of life*, the very *reason* for which you were born!

May the God of all knowledge and wisdom greatly bless you in your efforts to understand His awesome Truth. 


of your lord” (Matt. 25:21-23). Thus, we experience a foretaste of that future joy every Sabbath.

5) Assemble for worship. Except for unusual conditions, we should assemble together on the Sabbath with our brethren in God’s Church and observe a holy convocation (Lev. 23:3). Even in smaller groups, Christians can meet together in a spirit of peace to worship God and encourage one another. When we do so, God bestows His blessing on us (Heb. 10:23-25; Ps. 133). He promises to delight in His people, crowning us with salvation and granting us a great inheritance (Ps. 149; Is. 56:4-7; Ex. 31:13).

*This day is the perfect time to
brighten the lives of others—
our families, the elderly, shut-ins,
and those who need prayers and cards.
Enhancing their Sabbath experience
is a sure and certain way to
enhance our own.*

6) Do good works! Christ told the Pharisees that “it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (Matt. 12:1-12). They refrained from doing acts of kindness for fear of breaking one of their man-made “rules.” We must view the Sabbath with a broader understanding, just as Christ magnified our understanding of other commandments in the Sermon on the Mount. This day is the perfect time to brighten the lives of others—our families, the elderly, shut-ins, and those who need prayers and cards. Enhancing *their* Sabbath experience is a sure and certain way to enhance our *own*.

The way we worship God in spirit on the Sabbath, then, is to prepare mentally and physically for holy time, to cease from our own work and daily concerns, to find delight in this special opportunity, to assemble with others of like mind, to discern what conversation and activities are valuable in holy time, and to encourage one another in the process of becoming like God.

When Israel built a physical tabernacle for worship, God called by name Bezaleel and “filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts—to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship.... to do the work just as the LORD has commanded” (Ex. 35:30–36:1 NIV). Now God has called each of *us* by name (John 6:44) and has given us His Spirit to participate in the building of a far more glorious temple—a *spiritual* temple. And the Sabbath is a day to concentrate even more fully on that important work than we do at other times. Let’s make sure, then, that we “remember the Sabbath day to *keep it holy*!” 

There *are* verses in Jeremiah 18 and 19 concerning a “potter” and a “potter’s house.” And Jeremiah even buys a field for 17 pieces of silver (32:6-15). But this doesn’t seem connected with Matthew 27. And yet, according to all authoritative Greek texts, the person quoted by name in Matthew is Jeremiah and not Zechariah. So, since Jesus Christ tells us that “Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35), what are we to make of Matthew’s “mistaken” attribution?

One possible explanation is that in biblical interpretation of that day, it was “common to bring passages together based on words they had in common (this is the second of Hillel the Elder’s seven rules of interpretation). In this case, it is clear that Jeremiah and Zechariah have several words in common, especially *potter* and *shekel*... (Matthew... is certainly focused on the Jewish community. Thus he reflects the usage of Scripture in such communities)” (Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F.F. Bruce & Manfred T. Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, 1996, p. 400). The concept is that Matthew’s quotation blends together elements of both Jeremiah and Zechariah, yet cites only one author.

But there is, perhaps, a simpler explanation. Notice exactly what Matthew states: “Then was fulfilled what was **spoken** by Jeremiah the prophet...” So this appears to have been something Jeremiah said verbally. If he or his scribe *did* write it down, neither of them included it in the texts that were later made part of the Holy Scriptures. It may even be that Zechariah, writing later, was inspired to record the same prophecy uttered by Jeremiah—with only slight differences in the way it was worded. After all, two prophets recording the exact same prophecy is certainly not unheard of in the Bible. Read, for example, Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3. These two passages, though they are from different biblical authors, are *nearly identical* in wording.

The truth is that the Bible *never* contradicts itself. There is *always* a valid explanation for an apparent self-contradiction. Let’s be open-minded in this regard, and not assume God to be a liar (cf. Titus 1:2)—especially when a bit of effort on our part will prove Him to be completely truthful every time.



Parenting
(continued from page 17)

the inappropriate acts and help the child learn to discern between right and wrong (cf. Prov. 22:6; 29:15).

Let's return to the example of God's instruction to the nation of Israel. "And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God" (Deut. 28.2). We see that God promised special blessings to His people if they would obey His voice. But there was a flip side to this "coin." For if the people would *not* obey, there would be a very *different* result: "But it shall come to pass, if you do *not* obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these *curses* will come upon you and overtake you" (v. 15). These prophesied blessings and curses reveal the principle of *discipline*. There are *rewards* for obedience and *penalties* for disobedience. This serves as advance warning that right and wrong will lead to different results and consequences. Some of those, of course, happen automatically, as we all discovered as children. But other forms of correction must be imposed by a loving parent—following God's example—to help steer a child through the difficult character-building stages of life.


We find this principle echoed in the New Testament: "For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?" (Heb. 12:6-7). This passage and following verses make it clear that some form of chastisement—that is, punishment—is necessary to direct children toward the right way of living. It reveals that **correction and punishment are appropriate acts of parental love**. Parents who truly love their children will establish values and standards, educate their children in them, and provide a system of discipline to help young minds learn the difference between right and wrong. Carried out in a timely and consistent manner, appropriate discipline in the early years can save a child from a great deal of pain and trouble later on. Notice this counsel given in Proverbs: "Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction" (Prov. 19:18). The phrase, "while there is hope" makes it plain that the penalty is for the long-term good of the *child*, not for the "satisfaction" of the *parent*.

And here, a slight warning may be in order. Acceptable and legal methods of punishment vary from culture to culture and may not be permitted at all in some. Wisdom and discretion must be exercised by parents at all times. **Child abuse is a very real crisis in today's societies, and it has no place at all in the Christian home!** It is not within the scope of this article to discuss *methods* of disciplining children. Such matters must be governed first by a right motive—love for the child—and then by the practical considerations. Continuing in the passage we read earlier in Hebrews 12, we see a potential problem. Referring to human fathers, the author writes, "For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but [God chastens us] for our *profit*, that we may be partakers of His holiness" (v. 10). In contrast to our Heavenly



Father, as flesh-and-blood fathers, we may punish according to our limited understanding, and perhaps at times with a wrong motive. All discipline *should* be done in love, without antagonism, and be accompanied by a clear and objective explanation of the wrong behavior and the right alternative. And while there can, and sometimes *should*, be a degree of “righteous anger” involved—at the sin and not the child—punishment should **never** be a lashing out at our children over personal hurt or offense they’ve caused us. But as we just saw from the Scriptures, human parents don’t always succeed in this regard.

Volume after volume has been written, and many more will follow, on the subject of healthy child development and effective parenting. Much of what is being learned by experts in the field today is valid and helpful. When it is accurate, you’ll find it to be in harmony with the Bible—for God *created* the family unit and He *designed* the laws that govern it. There’s still much we can *all* learn. But the most important thing is to diligently and consistently apply the principles we *already* know. We have here covered the three broad, fundamental elements of parenting—love, instruction and discipline. It is our hope that Christian parents will continue to educate themselves and keep abreast of new scientific insight and knowledge that is in harmony with the foundation of *all* knowledge, the Bible. God has given us the responsibility of rearing our flesh-and-blood children, who all have the potential to ultimately become His own *spiritual* children. We owe it to Him—and to them—to succeed. 

Overcomer (continued from page 7)

Once we are protected by God’s spiritual armor, striving to serve our Creator and to walk in His way, then no outside force can overthrow us! “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39; cf. John 10:27-19).

And as we enter into spiritual battle when various trials come upon us, let us also remember one of the greatest promises in the Bible: “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, **who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able; but with the temptation will also make the way to escape**, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).


Fortified with Christ’s many

sake you” (Heb. 13:5). So when facing any severe test, what are God’s Spirit-begotten sons and daughters to do? “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”! (4:16).

Having donned God’s spiritual armor—thus being filled with His dynamic faith, love and power—we **WILL** be victorious! We **WILL** overcome all our trials and problems. And then, what will be the *reward* of the overcomers? As we saw at the beginning of this article, the overcomers will inherit the entire universe! But beyond that, God promises, “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life”! (Rev. 2:10).

Yes, it is not enough to stress the mystery mentioned earlier of “Christ in you” (Col. 1:27). We must understand the purpose, which, as the verse goes on to show, is “**the hope of glory.**” The true Christian’s only hope is that through Jesus Christ living in us by God’s Holy Spirit, we will be spiritually *glorified* in the future—that is, as 1 Corinthians 15 explains, we will someday be changed from mortal to immortal, from corrupt human flesh to glorified, spirit beings (vv. 50-54).

So in the end, we shall overcome even death—our ultimate enemy (v. 26). And when that glorious moment arrives, “then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ O Death, where is your sting? O Hades [the grave], where is your victory?” (vv. 54-55). So like Paul does in verse 57, let us all say,

“Thanks be to God, who gives US the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”! 



reassuring promises, we can know that “He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor for-

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