

Virtual Christian Magazine

Hope And Encouragement
For The Real World

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."—Jeremiah 29:11

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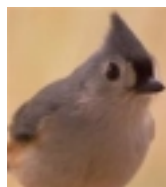


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God's Good Government

By William Miller

God's good government will never fully exist on this earth until Jesus Christ returns to rule as King of Kings. But God wants us to try to do better every day.



MOST PEOPLE CONSIDER THE INAUGURATION of a new president to be very meaningful. How much more significant will it be when one Ruler is established over the whole world!



Each autumn, members of the United Church of God gather at sites around the globe to celebrate God's Feast of Tabernacles and review what good government will look like when Jesus Christ returns to rule as king. The messages during this time motivate and give us insights into the millennial rule of Jesus Christ.

Although we cannot see the future (except where, when and as God reveals it), we can read God's Word and understand the differences between the rule of man and the rule of God.

Some differences

My New King James Version Bible has the subheading "Israel Demands a King" above 1 Samuel 8. Verse 7 then shows God stating, "Heed the voice of the people...they have rejected Me that I should not reign over them." God was clearly telling Samuel that Israel's choice or demand for a king was, in fact, a rejection of God Himself as sovereign Lord. But how so?

God continues in verse 8, “According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also.” They wanted their own way. They did not wish to submit to God’s rule. They wanted to make gods of their own (Exodus 32:8).

In 1 Samuel 8:9, God again repeats His incredible condescension: “Heed their voice.” Why? Why would God allow Himself to be rejected? The rest of 1 Samuel 8 reveals much about human government and why God allows it, especially in Israelite nations. It teaches us that only the rule of God will bring maximum happiness to the majority of mankind. Only submission to the Eternal will result in true freedom.

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Please read verses 11 to 22 of 1 Samuel 8. Notice that not everything the king will do is bad. We could say that being a cook or a baker for the king might be a cushy job. (But remember the baker in the story of Joseph in Egypt? Maybe we wouldn’t want to suffer a monarch’s arbitrary displeasure.) Job titles and duties are not the point.

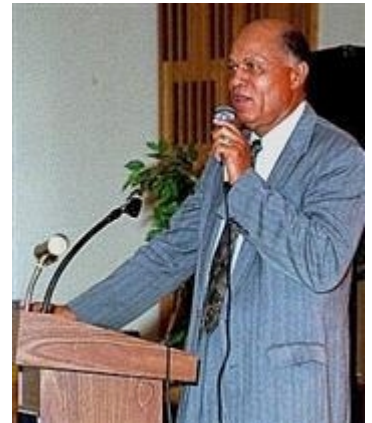
The point is that in the Eternal’s explanation of the king’s behavior, He showed that in a human government, people always serve the king. As Ronald Reagan said, “There are men in all ages who mean to govern well, but they mean to govern. They promise to be good masters but they mean to be masters.” Masters require submission.

There is just no getting around that fact. How many masters can we have?

How does Christ want us to live?

The question is not simply academic. Christians have been called and chosen to become kings and priests. The book of Revelation clearly expresses Christ’s will for His Church. In Revelation 1:6 and 5:10, the idea is unmistakable that government rulership will be our #1 job in Christ’s Kingdom when He returns to earth.

This passage in 1 Samuel 8 will not be our model for how to rule. There are examples of good rulers in God’s Word. Joseph (already mentioned) and Daniel (a member of the worldly government of Babylon), among others, should be studied carefully. They served in high government positions and also submitted to higher authority.



But let’s summarize Jesus Christ’s method of governing by using one chapter in the New Testament—Ephesians 5. The subhead in my Bible reads, “Walk in Love,” but perhaps it could say, “Govern in Love.” Verses 1 and 2 read, “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” These scriptures should be read, understood and followed. Then skip down to verses 15 through 21 and read them as a prelude to good government.

Verse 22 begins our government treatise. “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” If a wife submits to her husband, it could be said that he rules over her. He governs. This verse has been used to abuse wives ever since Paul first wrote it. It should not be so used.

If we husbands would simply read verse 25, which states, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her”! It is incredible that we could confuse the sequence of loving our wives “as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” with “let the wives be subject to their husbands.” Although verse 22 comes before verse 25, Christ sacrificed Himself first before there was even a Church to be subject to Him!

It is incredible that we could confuse the sequence of loving our wives “as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” with “let the wives be subject to their husbands.”

Some human husbands hesitate about which should come first. But Christ would not and did not hesitate to die for all mankind before the vast majority of humans even understood what was taking place.

Without going into more detail, let’s skip to verse 32, “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” I postulate that when Paul speaks of a “great mystery,” part of what he is talking about concerns our future rulership as kings and priests under Christ in the world beyond today.

We husbands are not just being given admonition about how to be good husbands. (Nor are wives just being given instruction about how to be good wives.) We are all being taught how to rule—how to rule as Christ will rule.

Government in today’s world is badly flawed; but it operates by God’s permission. He has allowed mankind this choice, which will reveal that only God’s government will bring true peace and lasting happiness to this world. For now, almost any rule is better than none at all. But the veneer of even acceptable government is stretched thinner and thinner, revealing chaos just below the surface. Satan really wants no other rule than his own, but he will accept chaos as a temporary substitute.

It therefore behooves us to practice and teach good government NOW.



Husbands, love your wives and give yourselves for them as Christ gave Himself for the Church. And wives, respect your husbands. Learn and practice God’s good government by visiting Ephesians 5:21 often. Paul understood the challenge but wrote by God’s Holy Spirit what we all must learn—“submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

For more information about marriage, request our free booklet [*Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*](#).

How to Be a Part of God's Team

By Robert Berendt

Hockey depends on teamwork. So does God's way of life. While God values us as individuals, He also requires a surrender of self that we might accomplish His purpose.



HOCKEY IS A TEAM SPORT. That means each player gives his best effort in a way that is unselfish and in obedience to the rules of the game as well as the advice of the coach. It is a sport I love, and I see the same enjoyment in all the rest of our team members that come out twice a week to play together.

Not only do we get a good, energetic workout, but there is also great warmth of support and dignity for us all. We, as a group, take pride in contributing towards a goal (called an “assist”) or towards doing our part in a defensive effort. Anyone who “hogs the puck” or “lollygags” is not appreciated. The camaraderie is a gift that cannot be bought.

We live in the day of “human rights.”

We live in the day of “human rights.” There is great need for individuality in our lives, and we do recognize the rights of each person to be themselves. But in every institution in our society, there is also the need that we surrender some of our individuality in order to become part of that institution. When “each man does what is right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6), there is chaos. I cannot imagine a hockey team in which individuality was deemed more important than the team.

Of course, we need to understand that properly, because the individual certainly does matter. On our team, anyone who falls awkwardly or seems to be injured is cause enough to stop the game and focus all our attention on the person. I see that in all sports. Athletes know that there are rules to which you surrender yourself. To win at all costs is not on the minds of most athletes—they do draw the line somewhere. There are many athletes, though, to whom winning is everything—to be accomplished at any cost. They are not respected in the same way.



Christianity—God’s team

Christianity means becoming part of God’s “team.” He has very exact rules for being on His team. One of the first demands is to get rid of the self (Romans 14:7; 15:1-3). Being on this team requires a change in our values and sense of individualism. It means loving our enemies—not just our friends and neighbors (Matthew 5:44). It means being ready to do something unpleasant and inconvenient for the group that we are part of. There is no team I know of that demands more of the surrender of self (of the individual) than God’s team—being a converted child of God and follower of Jesus Christ. We can quit most other “teams,” because we have paid an entrance fee of a sort. We must never leave God’s team, because Jesus Christ paid our entrance fee and it was costly to Him.

There is no team I know of that demands more of the surrender of self (of the individual) than God’s team

We all realize the need for well-trained personnel in any organization. Army, navy or air force personnel must give up their own personal comforts—and sometimes safety—for the sake of the group. Anyone shirking their duty or being incompetent poses a danger to others. Travel groups, clubs and organizations, attendance at school and living in a family home are all examples from our everyday lives that require us to exhibit patience, restraint and the willingness to learn and abide by the rules of the institution.

Nothing could be plainer. Yet all too often we chafe at the very cords that make our involvement possible. The causes for the lack of understanding lie in not understanding that it is precisely in the giving up of bad habits or instilled wrong ideas that will lead to opportunity, support and the respect of others. True success comes to the one who is willing to sacrifice his or her personal “wants” for the sake of the team effort.

We have the freedom to make choices—good or bad. Once we are clearly able to see the value of good choices, we will embrace them fully. We will realize that we as individuals are often wrong in our attitudes and interaction with others, and we will make the changes so that we open the door to a wonderful world of opportunities, of friendship, of service that is given freely and gladly. Therein lies the keys to a happy and contented life.

God's "Way"

There are a number of scriptures that refer to God's "Way." It is not a way designed by men—God makes all the rules and calls the infractions. He coaches the team and helps the players work on their problems. Other New Testament books refer to it in various forms, but the book of Acts has the largest number of references to this "way."

*True success comes
to the one who is
willing to
sacrifice...*

Some examples are: Apollos, who had been instructed in "the way of the Lord" (Acts 18:25), had "the way of God" explained more accurately (verse 26). There was "a great commotion about the Way" (Acts 19:23). Paul worshipped God "after the way which they call a sect" (Acts 24:14). Acts 24:22 refers to Felix "having more accurate knowledge of the Way." There are other scriptures that describe the rules God demands we play by.



God wants His followers to learn to care for one another and to work together as a team. Paul wrote that we ought to consider one another to stir others up to do good works (Hebrews 10:24). We are to love our neighbors "as" we love ourselves (Matthew 5:43). It is known by people who observe and study human behavior that we need a respect, honor and love for ourselves before we can give respect, honor and love to another. The key is to do this "as" you love yourself, not less than or more than. God knows the value of this important piece of knowledge. That is why He gave His only begotten Son before we repented or asked for this help (John 3:16; Revelation 13: 8).

God starts us off at the beginning of our spiritual lives by giving us self-respect and love and allowing us to honor ourselves. It is not because we have done anything to deserve this, but it is God lifting us out of the pit into which we have fallen. When God forgives our sins, they do not exist, as far as He is concerned. We need to forgive ourselves and have faith in the blood of Jesus so that we can know (and know that we know) that God has accepted us because of Jesus' sacrifice.

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Playing by God's rules

Once we have been given that "contract" from God—forgiveness upon true repentance—we play by His rules. We are to resist sin and the author of it, Satan (Hebrews 12:1-4). We are to allow Him to be our coach and correct our errors (Hebrews 12:9-10). We are to look carefully at ourselves to see if we have in any way fallen short (Hebrews 12:15). Doing this and more, we grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18).

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and correct our
errors.*

That is the recipe for the success of any hockey team. Know the rules, play within them, listen to the advice of a good coach and be concerned about the whole team. God wants every person to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), and Paul explains how we are to "carefully" follow the rules God has given

through His ministry. Our manner of life, purpose for life, faith in Him and perseverance are all part of the process. God is grooming His “team” to be the star team for all eternity.

The keys are right there in your head—take them and live! Interestingly enough, there cannot be “human rights” for anyone unless everyone is willing to “surrender,” so rather than saying “Surrender or Human Rights,” we might say: “Surrender is Human Rights.”

For more interesting reading, request the booklet [Making Life Work](#).

Eleanor Had It Right

By Debbie Werner

Fear can hobble us in life. Facing fears with God's help can make us grow in ways we cannot imagine.



“Do one thing every day that scares you.”

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, but just *reading* that quote scares me, mainly because it involves stepping outside of my comfort zone on a regular basis. I like my comfort zone. It's safe, it's cushy, and it's really comfortable! But former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was definitely onto something.



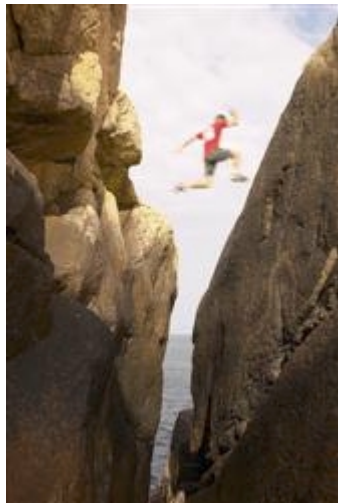
Some fear is good (say, the kind that makes you put on running shoes when you stumble across a mama bear and her cubs in the woods). But most of us don't experience that kind of fear on a daily basis (and if you do, maybe you need a new job).

We can grow in this perfect (here meaning “mature” or “complete”) love for God that John talks about by *trusting* Him to see us through our fears. The Greek word translated “casts” means to throw or to send. It is an action—a choice we need to make!

Giving God our fears doesn't mean we won't still feel them, but it does show God that we are willing to work with Him to move past the things that limit us in this life. That way we can have more energy to devote to developing the character He wants each of us to have.

Every day is full of opportunities to face our fears.

I don't know about you, but I think I have a particularly thick skull when it comes to growing in spiritual wisdom, so I ask God to spell things out for me with neon flashing lights so that I can get it. I had one such "well, duh!" moment recently after hearing a statement someone made on a television program I was watching: Praying for faith doesn't mean God will give you faith; it means He will give you opportunities to exercise your faith.



We know that faith is a gift God gives us through the Holy Spirit. But obviously, faith is only meaningful when we put it to use. And God also gives us plenty of opportunity to exercise our faith.

Every day is full of opportunities to face our fears. Doing so allows us to examine a situation or an action in the light of truth—and not with the distorted thinking generated by fear. Once we do that, we discover that there is something better at the other end: growth and an abundant life (John 10:10), not to mention a deeper relationship with God. Courage is needed to do the right thing even when you feel afraid.

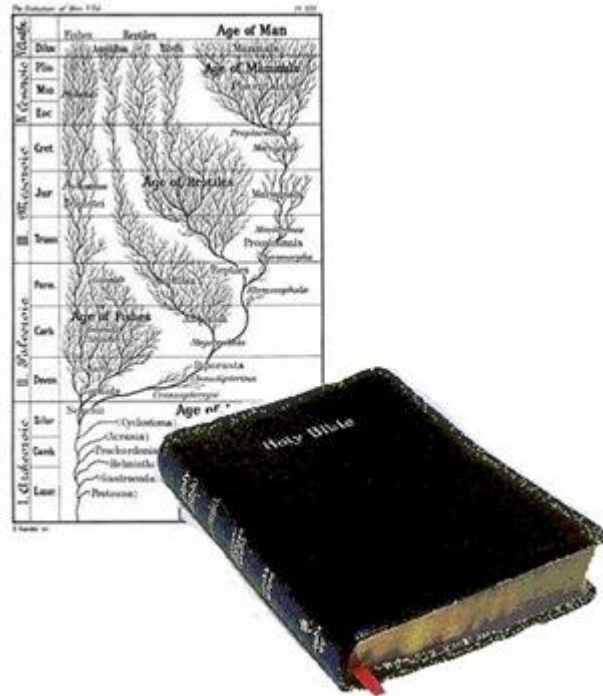
Just doing one thing, every day that makes us afraid—while praying for God's help—brings us that much further down on the path of peace, contentment and spiritual maturity.

Request the free booklet: [*You Can Have Living Faith.*](#)

10 Questions to Ask About Evolution, Part 1

By Allen Stout

How did the universe, the heavens and the earth, come into existence? How did life begin? Does your life have a purpose? Can science answer these questions? What does the Bible say?



CONTROVERSIES HAVE RAGED FOR YEARS over science, evolution and the Bible. Evolutionists successfully appealed to the U.S. court system to expel the biblical creation and intelligent design narratives from being taught in science classes as an alternative to the theory of evolution.

Creationists then made a nationwide drive to allow time for teaching biblical creation as an explanation for the origin of the earth and human life. To counter this drive, the National Association of Biology Teachers created a Fund for Freedom in Science Teaching for combating any legal challenges to classroom activities.

In a 2005 court case, creationists were ridiculed and thoroughly trounced again in court. ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) lawyers challenged the Dover, Pennsylvania, school board's efforts to require that intelligent design be taught as an alternative explanation to the origin of the many forms of life on earth.

Does evolution really have all the answers? Or is it really just another religious faith held by many scientists?

The judge ruled against the teaching of intelligent design, apparently on the grounds that to do so would be paramount to Congress establishing a religion. The U.S. Constitution's First Amendment states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion"; but it also adds, "or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech."

One definition of the word *religion* in *Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary* is “a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith.” According to Robert Jastrow, former director of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies and a professed agnostic in religious matters, “There is a kind of religion in science; it is the religion of a person who believes that every event in the universe can be explained in a rational way as the product of some previous event. This faith is violated by the discovery that the world had a beginning under conditions in which the known laws of physics are not valid, and as a product of forces we cannot discover” (“Have Astronomers Found God?” *Reader's Digest*, July 1980).



Has science proven the theory of evolution in the 150 years since Charles Darwin published his theory in *The Origin of Species*? Does evolution really have all the answers? Or is it really just another religious faith held by many scientists? Can a lawyer or judge determine what is scientific or religious truth?

What is the real truth? The following are some questions we should ask about evolution before discounting the biblical revelation.

1. Can science prove there is no God or that the God of the Bible does not exist?

Many scientists believe in a God based on scientific logic and belief in the laws of cause and effect, which are a foundation of all true science. Albert Einstein, for example, believed that “the existence of God was proved by the laws of nature, that is the fact that there was order in the universe, and that man could discover it” (“Have Astronomers Found God?”). Scientists admit that it is impossible to disprove the existence of God, so the philosophy of science is to simply exclude anything supernatural from the realm of science, rather than challenge it directly.

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Christians don’t need to defend God—He is able to answer for Himself and does so in His Word, the Bible. Nor can anyone persuade others to believe in the biblical God against their will. This series of articles is about avoiding being deceived by hypothetical philosophies and reasonings of men in the name of science.

Atheist Richard Dawkins in his book *The God Delusion* simply passes off the biblical revelation with the statement: “Although Jesus probably existed, reputable biblical scholars do not regard the New Testament (and obviously the Old Testament) as a reliable record of what actually happened in history, and I shall not consider the Bible further as evidence for any kind of deity” (p. 97).

The Bible admonishes: “Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). It also says, “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men” (Colossians 2:8). Make no mistake: God, who is invisible (Colossians 1:15), is able to reveal Himself to anyone, as He chooses, and will in His time, as He has in the past (Isaiah 52:10; 59:1-3; Matthew 24:30; John 6:44; 2 Peter 3:3-9).

What are proofs God exists? The apostle Paul answers: “What may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world [Greek *kosmos*, the universe] His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:19-22).

David, a great king of ancient Israel who knew God, wrote: “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God”” (Psalm 14:1). For, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1).

2. Can science discover or prove how the heavens and the earth came into existence without God?

Evolutionists try to explain the creation as a process of natural forces and random chance, but admittedly they cannot explain the origin of those laws and natural forces, or of the energy and matter everything supposedly evolved from.

Dr. Jastrow explains, “The scientist’s pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation. Who or what put the matter and energy into the universe? Was the universe created out of nothing, or was it gathered together out of pre-existing materials? ...science cannot answer these questions.

“Now we would like to pursue that inquiry further back in time, but the barrier seems insurmountable. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream: He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been there for centuries” (“Have Astronomers Found God?”).

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God asks Job and anyone who questions Him, “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me if you have understanding” (Job 38:1-4).

The creation is evidence and proof of a Creator—nothing can come into existence without a cause (Romans 1:20; Isaiah 45:9, 12, 18, 21-22). But some argue, “What created God?” God answers, “Thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy” (Isaiah 57:15). “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable” (Isaiah 40:28).

Their question is moot. God, who created all things (Colossians 1:15-17) is eternal, from everlasting to everlasting, having no beginning or ending. The Creator of the universe also created time itself and is not controlled by it.



3. Can science prove that life originated from nonliving matter?

The law of biogenesis states that living things can only come from living things. They cannot generate spontaneously from nonliving materials. An earlier theory from ancient times was that life arose spontaneously from nonliving substances (abiogenesis). No one has ever been able to demonstrate or prove this, but it was disproved by experimentation in 1668 by an Italian biologist, Francesco Redi, and later by French chemist Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) and other scientists (*World Book Encyclopedia*, 50th edition).

All evidence in nature continues to prove that living things cannot come from nonliving things. However modern evolutionists are reexamining the theory of spontaneous generation, as it is at the crux of the theory of evolution.

Evolutionists tend to reject proven scientific laws that don't fit their theory. Richard Dawkins, using the convoluted reasoning of a philosopher, writes, "Scientists invoke the magic of large numbers... Now, suppose the origin of life, the spontaneous arising of something equivalent to DNA, really was a quite staggeringly improbable event. Suppose it was so improbable as to occur on only one in a billion planets...here we are talking about odds of one in a billion. And yet...even with such absurdly long odds, life will still have arisen on a billion planets—of which Earth, of course, is one..."

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He admits, "Any probability statement is made in the context of a certain level of ignorance..." But, "The beauty of the anthropic principle is that it tells us, against all intuition, that a chemical model need only predict that life will arise on one planet in a billion, billion to give us a good and entirely satisfying explanation for the presence of life here..."

"Even accepting the most pessimistic estimate of the probability that life might spontaneously originate, this statistical argument [he proposes the anthropic principle as an alternative to the design hypothesis] completely demolishes any suggestion that we should postulate design to fill the gap" (*The God Delusion*, pp. 136-139).

How does a staggeringly improbable event demolish the argument for design? It doesn't. It just exchanges an intuitive and satisfying faith that gives meaning to life for one that Dawkins admits goes "against all intuition."

Science can describe chemical processes of life, but can't explain how it began or what life is. The Scriptures reveal that life is given by God.

According to the fundamental logic of the law of cause and effect and the law of biogenesis, all living things require a Creator and Giver of life.

In part 2 of this series we will cover additional important questions to consider about evolution. In the meantime, check out the carefully researched booklets [Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?](#) and [Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?](#)

Dr. Stout was trained as a scientist and has worked as a veterinarian, college professor, researcher and consultant.

A Lesson From the Rechabites

By Graemme Marshall

An Old Testament family vow can teach us even deeper lessons today.



ISRRAEL AND JUDAH WERE IN CRISIS (only they didn't know it yet). Under Ahab and Jezebel the nation of Israel had made worship of Baal the state religion, and idolatry and witchcraft abounded. The nation of Judah, too, had succumbed.

God acted by having Elisha send a servant to anoint a military commander named Jehu to bring about reform (2 Kings 9). Jehu killed both kings and potential family heirs and destroyed the idols of worship. Then he set about eradicating the priests of Baal. He led them to believe he was going to give a sacrifice in Baal's temple, and commanded all to attend. When all were inside, he had his troops surround the building with the instruction, "If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escapes, whoever lets him escape, it shall be his life for the life of the other" (2 Kings 10:24). It was a bloodbath. All were slaughtered, and Jehu's men also broke down the pillars and images of Baal.

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Walking alongside Jehu all this time was a zealous patriot, similarly incensed at Israel's pagan lifestyle, named Jonadab, son of Rechab.



But it would seem Jehu's initial enthusiasm to see Israel cleansed of Baal and witchcraft lessened. He didn't follow through completely with what God had intended. At times Jehu went to an extreme in senseless slaughter, as indicated in Hosea 1:4 where God said, "I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu." His bloodbath may have been more motivated by political concern. Getting rid of Baal was one thing; getting rid of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan was another. If he destroyed the calves, the people would go to worship in Jerusalem, which was the concern of another former Israelite king, Jeroboam.

Jehu did much of what God told him, but he did not obey with his heart. For a while he was God's instrument, but he did not fully become God's servant (2 Kings 10:29-31). As a consequence, God began to reduce the size of Israel.

Although Scripture doesn't record the timing or the reasons, Jonadab at some point made a family decree to be forever nomadic and not drink wine. It may have been because of Jehu's incomplete reforms, along with invasions and loss of territory, that Jonadab and his family retreated into this nomadic existence. Remarkably, his descendants obeyed this down to Jeremiah's day.

In the agricultural society of their day without our modern technological distractions, being nomadic perhaps didn't make a lot of lifestyle difference. It did preclude tending a vineyard so they were never to sip any wine.

Jeremiah's lesson

It was the siege of Jerusalem. The city was close to collapse. God intended the Jews be given a lesson on loyalty. With invading armies in the countryside, the Rechabite nomads had sought refuge behind Jerusalem's walls. God instructed Jeremiah to invite Rechabite representatives into the temple for bowls of wine. It doesn't indicate whether Jeremiah expected them to do any less than drink the wine. Despite being in the presence of a priest and prophet and in the temple, they resisted the offer and proceeded to explain their family's unique commitment (Jeremiah 35).



Consider the Rechabite code of conduct as contrasted with Israel's inability to obey:

- The Rechabites kept their vows to a fallible human leader; Israel broke its covenant with the infallible, divine God.
- Jonadab told his family *once* not to drink, and they obeyed; God commanded Israel *time and again* to turn from sin, and they refused.
- The Rechabites obeyed laws that dealt with earthly issues; Israel refused to obey God's laws that were of heavenly concern.
- Rechabite descendants had obeyed for hundreds of years; Israelites disobeyed from the Exodus.

Without argument, society today is happy to observe customs that are just handed-down traditions: Santa Claus, Christmas, Easter and Halloween, for example. Yet God's laws are rejected. Much more should God's Word be obeyed, because it is eternal.

Retreat from life or retreat from sin?

The Rechabites obeyed the vow and command of their patriarch, Jonadab. Certainly, God did not command anyone to be nomads and never drink wine. But the Rechabites were used as an example of obedience in contrast to Judah's rebellion (Jeremiah 35:13-14). And they were blessed because of their commitment to and faithfulness in fulfilling Jonadab's command (verse 18).

It was the siege of Jerusalem. The city was close to collapse.

The heart of the matter is that the Rechabites obeyed the word of a human forefather. In contrast, the people of God disobeyed the divine word of their spiritual Father.

Saints begin their converted walk with God through obedience to His Word, baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit.

In New Testament times, the apostle Paul corrected a misunderstanding in the Corinthian church. When he wrote that they should not keep company with sexually immoral people, some thought he meant to withdraw from society. He corrected it by explaining that to avoid sexually immoral people in the world would mean having to leave the world altogether. His inspired teaching was, instead, to avoid the company of people who, while claiming to be *brothers*, were immoral, covetous, idolaters, drunkards, revilers or extortionists. In fact, he instructed Church members to not even eat with them (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). This was read around God's Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Paul was not advocating withdrawing from society into a reclusive lifestyle to avoid the world. But rather, by God's Spirit he urged the people to have the courage to avoid the evils of the age and live righteously.

Keeping the Father's Word

The Rechabites faithfully obeyed their forefather. Under God's inspiration, Jeremiah called for a change within hearts by a return to obedience (Jeremiah 18:11). The bottom line for us today is: Do we live honorably by keeping our Father's Word?



Saints begin their converted walk with God through obedience to His Word, baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit. The promise of God's Spirit makes it possible to live a new life. Yet saints are chagrined at times to discover that a baptized brother or sister is guilty of fornication, adultery, stealing from another, lying, swearing or drunkenness. It hurts the heart of an obedient member of God's Church to encounter this. It is a painful reality that some professing Christians can teeter-totter on the edge of worldliness.

Yet the solution can be as simple as just keeping our word. Seemingly small things can help us grow in strength of character.

For example, do we make an arrangement but fail to keep it? We might justify, “Oh, they won’t mind if we cancel.” Our age is awash with address changes without notice, last-minute cancellations of travel plans or changes in accommodations. We are confronted at times about being honorable to our commitments—perhaps a Feast booking or an intended offer to serve at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Last-minute changes happen and people go elsewhere, often without any notice to those involved. Is this honorable? Psalm 15 becomes instructive about honor by saying, “He who swears to his own hurt, and does not change” (verse 4).

Learning to live honorably comes by conversion to God’s way of life. For more information, please request the free booklet [*Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*](#).

A Better Way

By Ruth Bailey

Like a bird that’s flown into a building, sometimes we can have troubles getting out of difficult situations. Sometimes we simply cannot do it on our own.



WHILE TRAVELING TO VISIT MY BROTHER recently, my husband and I stopped at a fast-food chain to get a salad and hamburger. As we sat enjoying our lunch, one of the managers sitting at a table across the aisle from us called for one of the restaurant workers to come to her immediately. As she called him, I looked up above the door, and there sitting quietly was a beautiful titmouse bird. It looked searchingly around without the appearance of fear.

The manager announced to her assistant in a loud voice that there was a live bird in the building. All eyes soon found the tiny creature. It flew to the back corner of the room amid screams from the young ladies as they dashed from the table closest to the door. I hear a small voice say, “Shouldn’t we open the door?” Much scurry and noise came from behind me.



The young man designated to catch the bird had pulled a stocking cap over his hand to prevent himself from getting hurt. The bird darted under a table and then under the bench. Another small voice from the other side of the dining area suggested that the door should be opened. The bird flew from under the bench and soared toward the door on the opposite side of the room.

Several voices in unison from all over the dining area called out that the door needed to be opened. As the door swung outward, the relieved bird quietly and swiftly flew to freedom. Seeing the bird exiting its self-made prison created by bad choices brought thoughts of problems I have experienced in my life and tried to solve all alone, creating a private prison for myself.

Getting help to solve the problem

I have learned the best way to solve a problem is to talk to God about it first (James 5:13-18). Just go to a private place, get down on your knees and talk to Him about it and ask Him to direct your thoughts. If a private place isn't available, just pray silently wherever you are. This sounds like such an easy answer, but many times it is the most difficult thing in the world to do. Just do it.

After talking to God, I pull my old *Cruden's Concordance* or *Nave's Topical Bible* from the bookshelf and look up a key word about the problem I am trying to solve. These books show me the scriptures that relate to the problem (2 Timothy 3:16). I turn to every scripture, read it aloud, and many times write out the scriptures. Thinking, reading and writing at the same time helps my mind better understand (2 Timothy 2:15). The more senses I get involved, the better I understand. I am seeing the Word, hearing the Word, thinking the Word and writing the Word at the same time.



I also seek advice from my husband. He gives me the male perspective about the problem or situation I am trying to solve. I value his expert advice. Sometimes I bounce the situation off close friends to see what they think. I try to always present all the facts—as Joe Friday always said, “Just the facts ma’am”—and not my biased opinion.

Quiet time alone

After doing these things, I like to do yard work, such as weeding a flower bed or vegetable garden, so I can be alone thinking and talking with God in my mind about the solution to the problem. Doing some rote job that allows my mind to be free while keeping my body occupied can help me come to the final decision on how to solve the problem. For you it may be cleaning the kitchen or the bathroom alone (these are tasks that no one else really wants to do) or taking a long walk while you think and allow God to guide your mind (1 Timothy 4:15).

I have learned the best way to solve a problem is to talk to God about it first

How long?

Getting the bird out of the fast-food restaurant was accomplished in a relatively short time—10 minutes or so. But, we think, I need an answer now! God doesn't work on our timetable, but His. A thousand years to us is one day to God (Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8). The answer may not be immediately revealed. But keep bringing it to God and asking Him to give you the answer (Luke 18:1-8).

The bird knew what to do to get out of the building. Several customers knew what to do to help get the bird out of the building. When the manager listened to the advice, opened the door and allowed the bird to fly to freedom, the problem was solved. The same is true for humans. The key to solving our problems is going to the right source for the answers. *Knowing what is the right thing to do and doing the right thing are not the same.*

*Do we listen to God,
or do we allow
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thing?*

Do we listen to God, or do we allow physical factors to influence our decision and lead us to do the wrong thing? So many times we try to solve our problems all by ourselves. Listen to God (John 10:3-5). Just as the many still small voices of the customers were telling the manager how to free the bird, God speaks to us many times in a still small voice revealing to us how to solve our problems.

Ask for our free booklet ["Who Is God?"](#)

Letters to the Editor

Thank you!

I want to give all glory to God and I want to thank you for bringing the word of faith to millions worldwide through your magazine and publications. I want to thank God for reviving my life and raising me up from my sickbed after four years. I also want to thank Him for enabling me to make progress in my academics after a long period of inactivity.

— Adetoye McValiant

Set Your Anchors!

I just read the article listed above and wanted to tell Dianne Clark what a great message she gave us about how we can anchor our lives to God. Our grandson and his wife just had their second miscarriage and were so excited about having a child of their own. [It goes] without saying this is a very large and hard trial for a young couple who want to start their family and also for us in the family, grandma and grandpa included. Thank you for the words of encouragement you gave us. We constantly need to be reminded to stay close to our loving Father at all times because we never know when we will need His help.

— Colleen Erickson

Some feedback messages are edited for space and/or clarity