

Virtual Christian Magazine

Hope And Encouragement
For The Real World

"Trust you in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength."—Isaiah 26:4 (American King James Version)

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How Secure Is Your House?

By Ed Dowd

Page 3

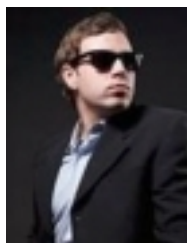


We often worry about our physical houses, but how secure are our spiritual houses?

The Meek, the Lowly and the Wise

By Lorelei Nettles

Page 7



There are many kinds of people in the world, and only a few are selected to be among God's chosen. What characteristics may show us who they are?

The Glory of God—A Brief Moment in Reflection

By Hector Earle

Page 10



God's guiding hand can be seen in the smallest (and largest!) things in the universe.

Reviving the Family Meal

By Rebecca Sweat

Page 13



Mealttime is important family time—and not just on special occasions!

Family Honor

By Robert Berendt

Page 17



While our family name is important, it is not the only name that we must honor and protect.

10 Questions to Ask About Evolution, Part 2

By Dr. Allen Stout

Page 21



What is the difference between science and biblical faith? Can science prove that the Bible is not true? Has science proven that the worldwide floods described in the Bible did not occur? Has science proven the assumptions that age dating methods are based on?

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How Secure Is Your House?

By Ed Dowd

We often worry about our physical houses, but how secure are our spiritual houses?



HAVE YOU EVER SEEN the television program *It Takes a Thief* on the Discovery Channel? Its premise is to show how easy it is to break into a home. The hosts are former burglars, and they interview average families and review their “treasures.”

A typical show scenario: After viewing all that the owners have in their homes, the hosts install cameras throughout the house. The family then waits outside in a van equipped with television cameras linked to their home. The partner thieves proceed to burglarize the house. They give the family dog some meat, steal the goodies, toss mattresses, break windows, etc. Meanwhile, the family members are crying inside the van and actually get angry, even though they allowed the events to unfold. Then the partners drive away in the family’s BMW from the garage.

So how safe is your house? Is it burglar proof?

Matthew 24:43 says, “But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.”

Our bodies are the spiritual temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19). We should be praying daily for God to stir up His Spirit within us. How secure is your spiritual house? Does your guard dog like sausages, and are your doors and windows locked? We need to eat, sleep, think and live God’s way of life. We need to be on constant guard, making sure that all of our windows are locked to protect our spiritual houses—God’s temple—from the master spiritual burglar.



Who is the spiritual burglar anyway?

Who is the spiritual burglar that we are trying to keep out of our house? And who is it that has set up surveillance to protect us?

Ephesians 6:12 states clearly that it is Satan that we need to protect ourselves from. He wants to break into our spiritual houses, ransack and steal our “crown,” our promise of eternal life (2 Timothy 4:8).

We are in a constant battle with Satan to protect our goods—the salvation offered to us from God. His goal is to keep us from eternal life. Satan has many methods to achieve his goal. He plans and schemes against us to deceive, entrap, enslave and ruin the plan God has for us.

Protect your house

We are instructed on how to protect our houses. Let’s look at the following scriptures that guide us:

How secure is your spiritual house? Does your guard dog like sausages, and are your doors and windows locked?

In Ephesians 6:13 we are told, “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

All of Satan’s efforts to burglarize our houses can be thwarted. God prepared or provided a way for us to keep him out and safeguard our houses. We must hold our rank, never give in and—most of all—we must **stand** our ground.

Be prepared!

There are three commands to “stand” in the Scriptures. One involves putting on the whole armor of God. In Paul’s time there were a lot of Roman soldiers, so we can see where these analogies came into play.

Armor of God

Ephesians 6:14: “Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness.”

Be girded with truth (some translations use “belt of truth”). A belt holds your sword, putting it in quick, easy reach, and it protects your lower area or loins. God’s Word is truth; it is our strength in warfare. Unless we know and conscientiously believe it, we cannot go into battle with any hope of success. We must discover who our enemies are, how they come to attack us. We need to know where our strength lies. The truth will prevail, and we must gird ourselves against all false religion and other various winds of doctrine, as cunning men and evil spirits try to deceive us.

Put on the breastplate of righteousness. The breastplate covers the stomach and chest. It protects the heart and signifies the practice of righteousness or living a holy life. We must live a holy life 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We need to practice righteousness. When something comes at us, we need to instinctively and habitually react with godly righteousness, not with vanity.

We are in a constant battle with Satan to protect our goods—the salvation offered to us from God.

Ephesians 6:15: “And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

Keep your feet shod. We need to have habitual readiness as prescribed by God’s Word, being solid and firmly planted. God wants us to react in a consistent manner, not being easily blown away, following every whim. Contentions, strife, quarrels and wars should be alien to us. All are opposed to the nature of God.

Ephesians 6:16: “Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”

Fiery darts come from the wicked and the devil. They are evil thoughts and wrong ideas. They inflame the passions and excite us into acts of transgression.

Take up the shield of faith. A Roman shield was heavy and weighed about 15 to 20 pounds. The arm that carried it was large and strong. We must carry our shields up and ready to protect us from the darts coming at us. While the sword may be sheathed, the shield must always be up and prepared. Abraham is a good example of this way of thinking; he put his full trust in God and used it as his shield.

Quench the fiery darts. Fiery darts come from the wicked and the devil. They are evil thoughts and wrong ideas. They inflame the passions and excite us into acts of transgression. Inappropriate ways of thinking lead us away from God. We want these to be blocked at all cost.

Our faith must be strong in Christ; that faith acts as a shield to quench the darts. If we walk in God’s way of life and abhor all evil thoughts and never fix on our own passions, we will be protected. The darts will be caught on the shield, blunted, extinguished and ineffective.

Ephesians 6:17: “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”



Take the helmet of salvation. The helmet allows the wearer to be safe while he wears it. It protects the head, and allows the soldier to escape safely from battle. We have hope of conquering every adversary and every difficulty, but this is only possible through Christ’s sacrifice. The helmet that protects the head cannot be penetrated.

Use the sword of the Spirit. It is the effective operation of the Holy Spirit actively working in us. It is the Word of God, and it can cut the

snare that our adversary puts before us. We must act in accordance with the Holy Spirit. In times of peace it is tempting to set the sword aside, but this is not wise; we should always keep it by our sides. We must use it to our advantage.

None of the pieces of armor is light. They are heavy pieces, and it takes a lot of strength and endurance to effectively use them. Our strength comes from our constant communication with God.

The power of prayer

Is this all we need? No. We must be in constant communication with God and ask for continual forgiveness of our sins so that we may be close to Him and grow in His love. Prayer is our strength; it helps with the endurance that we need to carry this armor.

Ephesians 6:18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints."

We need to pray daily to be able to overcome and have God's strength. Paul does not put prayer in the list of armor mentioned above. It is separate from the wearing of the armor, but nevertheless important. Pray that you can successfully resist those principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world and the spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. Ask for the endurance and strength needed for the effective use of these tools. We must always be in the spirit of prayer.

The end of the show

The program mentioned at the beginning, *It Takes a Thief*, does have a happy ending. After the burglary, the items are returned and the family is shown where they went wrong. They are trained on how to be burglarproof. But there is a test. The burglars return at an unknown time to see if they can get in again. Satan will likewise continually attempt to rob us of salvation.



We are admonished to pray and study daily, to fast and meditate constantly on God's way of life. Remember what we are told in Luke 12:37: "Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them."

Let us put on the whole armor of God and make God's temple, His house in us, protected, secured and guarded continually.

Further reading

For more information on putting on the armor of God, listen to the two-part *Good News* radio program on the topic, found at <http://www.gnmagazine.org/radio/the-armor-of-god-part1.htm> and <http://www.gnmagazine.org/radio/the-armor-of-god-part2.htm>.

The Meek, the Lowly and the Wise

By Lorelei Nettles

There are many kinds of people in the world, and only a few are selected to be among God's chosen. What characteristics may show us who they are?



WHEN YOU READ ABOUT GOD'S PEOPLE in the Bible, you get a sense for who they are and where they came from. What about God's people today? Do they stand out from the world, and how might we recognize them? The following three qualities are identifying characteristics of those whom God has chosen and converted.

The meek

We are told in Psalm 37:11, "But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."

We are told Moses was meek, and Christ referred to Himself as meek.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines *meek* as 1: enduring injury with patience and without resentment, 2: deficient in spirit and courage and 3: not violent or strong.

Being meek is having humility and being of a gentle spirit, having a quiet and gentle approach. The Greek word for gentleness is *epieikes*; it is sometimes translated graciousness, courtesy or moderation.



We are told Moses was meek, and Christ referred to Himself as meek. We can be assured that the apostles were meek even though it is not said outright. Even if they weren't, they would have been focusing on becoming that way. They would not have been spreading the message to be meek if they were not expected to be meek themselves.

We, too, should be striving to be meek. It does not come easily. We are constantly under stresses in this world. Technology, while making life seem easier, has also led us away from being as social as we once were. We are continually facing one deadline or another, which leads to impatience, and our lack of socializing can cause us to resent others for the smallest of infractions. We feel injured by the injustices of the world and often find it difficult to forgive. We have become too busy to do Bible study and pray as often as we should. But it is part of what we should be working on as Christians.

The lowly

Psalm 138:6 says, "Though the LORD is on high, yet He regards the lowly; but the proud He knows from afar." And in Acts 10:34-35, "Then Peter opened his mouth and said, 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.'"

The lowly would be humble; the meek have humility. One goes with the other. The lowly and meek do not look to be first; they do not try to prove that they are special among men.

Matthew 11:28-30 says, "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."



A humble or lowly person is not one often recognized in a crowd, and they would not necessarily stand out.

God's people are not usually chosen from the rich, the mighty or the important. Having such things or being such a person often causes one to push out humility and change one's heart. God says He is no respecter of persons, and often with riches and power comes ego. My mother always told me that ego meant "Edging God Out," and I have come to believe it over the years.

Even those with whom we attend church every week can fall into the pitfalls of ego. Have you ever wondered why someone suddenly leaves the church and never returns? Often it is because they became too self-absorbed in one way or another. They may have held higher positions in the church, worked on special projects or just had their own ideas of what should and shouldn't be happening or said in church.

Somewhere along the line, something changed for them and they took offense. They may have been reassigned in their duties, told their ideas were not acceptable, or the project they were working on may have ended. They no longer felt useful.

This isn't always the case, but it does happen. Sometimes people leave church merely because they get a "better" offer. That offer may take the form of a job, leisure activities, or even family pressures. This too is ego. When our time becomes more important than time with God, we have put ourselves above God.

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first.*

Interestingly, when talking to God's people, you often find they come from backgrounds that may not be very pretty at all. They may have come from very poor circumstances. They may even have been in jail. When we read about Paul, we learn that he was an accuser of the Christians and caused the harm of many. He was not interested in being one of them and yet there he was. God opened his mind, and he was never the same again. He did not come from righteous beginnings and neither do most of God's people.

The wise

Beginning in Exodus, we are told of God giving the spirit of wisdom: wisdom of heart, God's wisdom, wisdom and understanding. In 1 Kings 4:29, we read: "And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore." In verse 31 we read that he was wiser than all men.

Wisdom does not mean that God's people are smarter than anyone else. Wisdom is knowing how and when to do the right thing. Wisdom is defined (again by *Merriam-Webster's*) as the ability to discern inner qualities and relationships and a wise attitude, belief or course of action.

Wisdom is discernment, not just being smart. This is why the Bible tells us we should go to the elders. A faithful and dedicated elder holds the wisdom gained by time. If you are a parent, you understand that your child does not always make the best choices. He is not capable of doing so because he does not have the experience. Experience teaches us what works and what does not. It tells us what actions might cause hurt, and it remembers cause and effect. Many a war could have been avoided if the leaders had learned from the mistakes of previous leaders.

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Not every person might seem to be a potential source of wisdom, but there is wisdom to be found even in the lives of those who may not live properly. Sometimes just seeing someone else's life can give us wisdom. What God wants is for us to seek out His wisdom that He has laid out for us throughout Scripture.

May God continue to transform us, so that being meek, lowly and wise will be three qualities of godly character we possess.

For more interesting reading on God's Church and His people, request the booklet [*The Church Jesus Built*](#).

The Glory of God—A Brief Moment in Reflection

By Hector Earle

God's guiding hand can be seen in the smallest (and largest!) things in the universe.



WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE HEAVENS on a clear night (away from the glare of city lights), the unaided eye can see thousands of stars twinkling and dazzling in the night sky. A moonless, star-filled night can have a sobering effect on the viewer (for me at least) as one observes the vast scope of the power and wonder of our awesome creator. It's no wonder then that the Psalmist David wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1).

Despite the sense of awe and amazement one gets when viewing the heavens at night, it is even more sobering to realize that this is only part of a small fraction of the 100 billion or so stars that make up our little cluster of the Milky Way galaxy. We are told by astronomers that beyond our group of stars lie perhaps over 100 billion other galaxies, with each containing at least 100 billion stars or more. Remember that our sun, the closest star to us on earth, with all its explosive power and energy, is but a small, medium-sized star. There are billions upon billions of other stars (suns) in our universe that are much bigger, hotter and brighter than our sun.

*God not only knows
how many stars
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cosmos, but He
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name.*

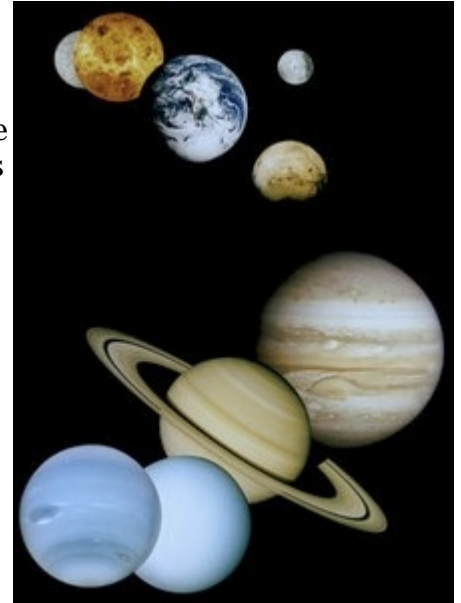
Now, please permit me to do a little math and science to depict that the heavens do indeed declare the glory of God.

Do the math

One hundred billion galaxies containing at least 100 billion stars each? That is 10 to the power of 21. We are not talking about trillions of stars out there, not even quadrillions—but quintillions upon quintillions of stars. Can you fathom that many? I have trouble sometimes just getting my

head around such numbers. Remember, God not only knows how many there are in the cosmos, but He knows every star by name (Psalm 147:4). Our God is an awesome God indeed.

If we assume that every star has a planetary system (this is a fair assumption based on the latest conjectures from the Hubble Space Telescope), then there are just as many planets as stars in space as well. Taking this a little farther, assuming that each star has at least eight planets like our solar system, then there must be eight times as many planets as there are stars out there. That would be too many to count. Taking it one step further still, let's say that each planet has at least one moon (Jupiter has at least 23 visible moons), then think about the number of lunar objects in space as well. Now, with that many stars, planets and moons in space one would think that we live in a crowded universe. Not at all. In fact, scientists tell us that every star is light years away from its neighboring star and that the universe is expanding with more stars being "born" frequently.



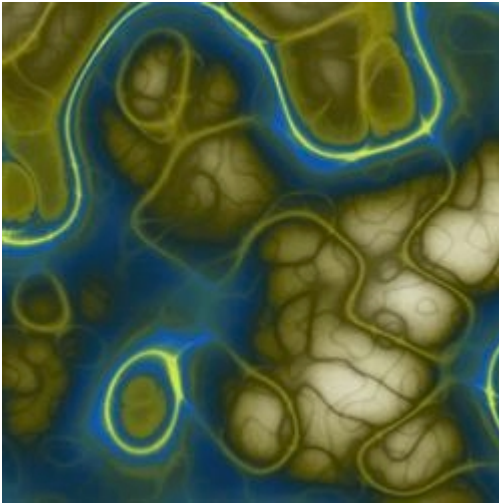
That's the math side of the equation. Now let's consider a little science aspect of God's handiwork in the cosmos.

On the science side

Based on our understanding of our solar system and planetary movements around the sun, we must assume that every planet revolving around every star in the universe must have a set orbit. In order for a planet to travel in a preordained orbit around a star, there must be two equal and opposite forces in play, the gravitational force of the star pulling on the planet and the centrifugal force pushing out on the planet (like a ball on a string). If there are moons revolving around each planet, then there must be the same principle operating here as well. That is a lot of precise movement.

With that many stars, planets and moons in space, one would think that we live in a crowded universe.

Consider next the sheer volume and number of stars, planets and moons (not counting the other types of heavenly bodies out there). Examining the handiwork of an infinite God who not only created all of this but sustains it and keeps everything moving in precise detail and in a perfectly synchronized fashion simply leaves one speechless. It is surprising that more people don't stop (like king David) to consider the incredible handiwork of our infinite Creator. The glory of God is indeed written all over space.



But creation is also amazing when we go downward into the microscopic world of atoms and atomic particles and consider electrons, neutrons and protons, all operating under the same basic physics as the macro world of space. When those tiny units are examined even further, we find many other very minute particles of gravitons, photons and quarks. Some scientists tell us that there are even smaller particles still to be discovered. The knowledge of God is truly infinite. Keep in mind, too, that God not only planned and designed all matter in the universe (be it the micro or the macro), but that He sustains every planetary orbit, every “life” of a star and the motion of every atom, with a precise balance of physics and forces, keeping everything together. It truly is mind-boggling and humbling.

For believers in God, astronomy should not be merely a topic of interest, it should greatly influence our faith in our Almighty Creator who declares, from the beginning, that He made the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1).

In summary, when we consider the awesome size and scope of the universe—God’s universe—operating in perfect order and harmony, it should not only convince us that there is a God but it should help us to truly believe that the Lord God Eternal can solve the petty problems we deal with every day in our lives, even in these times of economic difficulties. It should spur one to cry out as King David did in Psalm 8:1, “O LORD, our Lord, your greatness is seen in all the world!” (Good News Translation).

Astronomy should not be merely a topic of interest, it should greatly influence our faith in our Almighty Creator.

It’s no wonder that Albert Einstein said, “I want to know the mind of God. The rest are details.”

Yes, details for us to discover...to discover the glory of God.

Further reading

We invite you to think more on this subject by reading [Life’s Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?](#) and [You Can Have Living Faith](#).

Reviving the Family Meal

By Rebecca Sweat

Mealtimes are important family time—and not just on special occasions!



WAITING IN LINE AT THE GROCERY STORE checkout, the woman behind me pointed to the bags of apples, flour and sugar in my shopping cart and remarked, “Looks like you’re going home to do some baking.”

“We’re going to have apple pie for dessert after dinner tonight,” I replied.

“Dinner?” she asked in a surprised tone of voice. “Dinner with the whole family sitting around the table? About the only time my family eats dinner together anymore is at Thanksgiving.”

Unfortunately, this way of thinking is becoming the norm for American families. Today both parents often spend full days at the office, commute an hour or more each way, and spend their weeknights and weekends carting their kids from one extracurricular activity to another.

The stress of every day life can make it difficult to find time for family dinners.

Family members often have to eat their meals in shifts; Mom and one child may heat up frozen dinners before heading to music lessons, the teenage son may just pop a burrito in the microwave before going to swim practice, and Dad might have to work late and just grab a burger from a drive-through on the way home.

“The stress and preoccupations of everyday life can make it difficult for parents and children to find time for family dinners,” observes Tom Baranowski, Ph.D., a Baylor professor of pediatrics and psychologist with the Children’s Nutrition Research Center’s Behavioral Nutrition section. “Yet family dinners, and the talk that can happen there, are extremely important.”



According to Baranowski, family meals provide parents with the opportunity to connect with their children—to show and express concern for them, hear their perspectives and ideas, and even share funny experiences and have some light-hearted conversation after a long day at work or school. This can help form stronger bonds between parents and children and promote family unity.

“Eating meals together as a family keeps the doors of communication open,” adds Linda Brock, Ph.D., a marriage and family therapist and assistant professor of family Sciences at Texas Women’s University. “It’s an ideal way to learn more about your children’s likes, dislikes and daily life.”

Not only that, but by planning regular meals at home for the family, you can ensure that your children will be eating a well-balanced diet. Left to themselves to find something to eat kids are likely to choose a diet of toaster pastries, potato chips and frozen pizza.

So you’re convinced—family meals *are* important. But what if your family is indeed the proverbial super-busy 21st-century family, and you can’t even remember the last time you had dinner together? Or maybe you do have meals together, but because you’re all worn-out, nobody’s in the best mood and it’s not exactly a positive experience. Whichever may be the case, you can make family meals a reality and you can make them truly enjoyable. Here’s what experts suggest:

Strong family relationships are more important than chairing a fundraiser.

Set your priorities

If you and your family rarely have meals together, try to cut out some of your kids’ extracurricular activities, optional night classes, meetings you might be involved with, overtime at the office, etc., to give you the time your family needs. “Strong family relationships are more important than chairing that fund-raiser or having your child play on another team,” Brock says.

Decide how many nights you’ll eat together, and do it

Aim for at least three or four family meals per week. “To make family meals a reality, schedule them on the calendar,” advises Anne VanBeber, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Nutrition Sciences at Texas Christian University. If it’s on your calendar, it’s more likely to happen. But don’t think a family meal always has to be dinner. “If breakfast is easier to plan than a dinner meal, make a commitment to gather in the morning several times a week,” VanBeber suggests. Try to figure out when most family members are available for a meal and adjust your schedules accordingly.



Get everyone involved in meal preparation



Make mealtime a family project—from preparation through clean up—rather than expect Mom to do it all (especially if she’s been at work all day!). The whole family can be in the kitchen together; one person setting the table, someone else doing the stir-fry or grilling burgers, another making a salad. And everyone can help clean up afterward.

Even young children can have a part to play. Sonia Miller of Chicago says her 5- and 7-year-old sons are great helpers. “They’ll pitch in by filling the water glasses, rinsing raw vegetables, washing lettuce for a salad, serving dessert, and clearing the table,” she relates. “It makes them feel needed, and it really does take some of the load off me.”

Be creative

Try to come up with unique menus now and then—just to make mealtime more fun. Backyard cookouts, TV trays on the porch and picnics in the park are all enjoyable meal alternatives for the summer months. Try ethnic food themes. One night everything you serve might be German and another night might be Italian or Chinese. Fondues, making personal pizzas together and Mexican dinners with plenty of tortilla chips and salsa are also fun. And they slow mealtime down, allowing for more time to talk.

Eliminate distractions

Turn off the television and radio during dinner, and let the answering machine pick up phone calls. If there is a favorite television show, which comes on during the dinner hour, record it to watch later. Don’t allow your kids to bring iPods, cell phones or other electronic devices to the table. The goal is for family members to focus their attention on each other.

The goal is for family members to focus their attention on each other.

Keep conversation pleasant

Be ready with some good conversation starters. Ask your children how their own day went at school, get their thoughts about any interesting news stories you heard about today, talk about the family’s plans for the weekend or elicit their ideas for family projects. If you heard a new joke or if something funny happened to you that day, share it.



The family meal is not the time for discipline, power struggles, lectures, arguments, nagging, criticism or sulking. Discuss your son’s failing test grade with him at a time other than dinner. If your daughter tells you at dinner that she is upset about a problem, reassure her that you want to hear what she has to say, but suggest the two of you talk after the meal. Try to keep table conversation happy, positive and upbeat.

Create traditions

By creating family traditions with your meals, you provide your children with a sense of unity and stability for today, and happy memories for the rest of their lives. Traditions can be simple, like every Saturday morning, you have blueberry pancakes, or on Friday nights you have banana splits for dessert. Every Fourth of July you may have your special cake, decorated with strawberries and blueberries to look like the American flag. Maybe after church, your family always has a formal dinner with the good china, candles and a fresh flower centerpiece.

Dora Jennings of Murphy, Texas, says a mealtime tradition in her household is that for every Wednesday dinner, she and her kids make homemade pizzas. “After dinner we play games such as Clue, Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader? or canasta,” she says. It’s become a weekly ritual that she and her kids look forward to.

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Choose easy entrées

Even if you don’t have a lot of time to cook, you can still have some wonderful family meals at home. Put a roast and some veggies in your Crock-Pot so that dinner is ready when you get home from work. Have a pizza delivered for dinner so all you have to do is make a salad. A “sandwich bar” is another easy dinner idea. Just pick up some croissants, hoagie buns, sliced meats and cheese, relish, lettuce and tomatoes, and arrange everything on the table assembly-line style. Take shortcuts, such as buying pre-washed lettuce for salad, brown-and-serve dinner rolls and precooked rotisserie chickens. Remember, what matters most is that the family gets together—not that everything you serve has to be gourmet quality or homemade.

Just keep in mind that, no matter the fullness of your schedule, family time is of the utmost importance. Pulling your family together over favorite meals (and desserts) will strengthen the family bonds, and create many memories. Bon appetit!

Further reading

Want to strengthen your family more? Read our free booklet [*Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*](#).

Family Honor

By Robert Berendt

While our family name is important, it is not the only name that we must honor and protect.



WE WERE LATE—MY DAD HAD TRUSTED ME to drive the family car to Cadomin for a dance, and we were getting home late, really late. The family car was loaded with boys and girls from the dance, and one boy asked if we could drive him home (about 25 miles away). We did, but two flat tires and a bad road delayed us. Usually, we would have dropped off all the girls and just the boys would be left. This time the girls wanted to come for the drive; and as it turned out, it was about 6:30 a.m. when my friend Del and I dropped the last girl off at her home. It was late!

Actually, it was too late. Her dad had already gone to work in the coal mine and he knew she was not home—so we were in trouble. Del and I dropped her off and raced to the mine to see if we could reassure her dad that she was okay, but we were too late then too. I took Del home and drove up to our house just before 8 a.m. Sunday morning.

My dad was waiting for me! I knew I was in trouble since he usually slept in on Sunday. My greatest fear was losing the privilege of driving the car because this gave me great leverage with my friends. I should hasten to add that we were a pretty innocent bunch of teens.



Anyway, I began nervously spluttering on about what had happened with the tires and road when my dad stopped me and said, “Louie was here this morning on his way to work.” That explained why my dad was up so early—Louie’s daughter was the last girl we dropped off!

I frantically began to tell him how we had driven to the mine to see Louie (expecting the sky to fall any minute) when he quietly said, “Bobby, I told him that if his daughter was with my son, he had nothing to worry about; she would be okay.” That is the moment that family honor really struck home with me. I was a member of the Berendt family, and what I did would reflect on the honor of the whole family.

“I told him that if his daughter was with my son, he had nothing to worry about; she would be okay.”

Living up to the name

I have tried to live up to that trust all of my life. Though I cannot say I succeeded 100 percent of the time (to my own satisfaction), when my dad died 43 years ago, he knew that the family name was important to me. My sisters and my brother have also tried to be positive members of our family. I know my parents worried more than they ever said; and as a parent, years later, I’ve come to know the feeling.

Our children are sort of an extension of ourselves. They are a reflection of our beliefs and successes or failures. They represent all we are and all we have.

The Fifth Commandment states that we should honor our mother and father. Proverbs 10:1 states, “A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother.” Proverbs 15:20 tells us that “a wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother.” Proverbs 17:25 tells us that “a foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him.”

There are many similar scriptures that express the manner in which the deeds of the children are either painful or joyful for the parent and, thus, the whole family. Family honor is a responsibility that each child bears. It is to be noted that in this modern age, many families have despised the honor they should carry and treasure. There are great lessons to be learned from our own family relationships, since God is developing a family Himself.

[Our children] are a reflection of our beliefs and successes or failures.

It is important to note that God refers to His chosen people as sons and daughters. In 2 Corinthians 6:18 God states, “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.” God the Father must have been filled with tenderness and love when He was able to state that Jesus was “My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

It must have given God a great deal of pleasure to have trust and confidence in Job. This book has always fascinated me. When God confidently told His adversary that Job was “a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 1:8), God expressed His pleasure. Satan was allowed to severely afflict Job, yet Job would not curse God or shame his Creator. What a victory was won that day!

When we disappoint

God places trust in His children, just as my father did in me those many years ago. That trust is calculated, since God knows we are human. Humans can make mistakes. David was a hand-picked child of God. He was selected while yet a shepherd and given great blessings, position and power. He was also taught about God and His laws. David slipped one day; he forgot who he was and what he represented.

God recorded His comments to David in 2 Samuel 12:1-15. In verse 14 God told David, "You have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme." David disappointed God and hurt his Heavenly Father and the family in which God placed him. He had a bitter lesson to learn; but like all loving fathers, God wants His children to learn from their mistakes.

God places trust in His children, just as my father did in me those many years ago.

Parents are merciful and loving. They are forgiving, even if the pain caused by the child is great. God is the perfect parent and He knows how to "fix" a problem. None of His children are perfect, but they are learning to be like Him. Part of that is to accept the responsibility to uphold the family honor.

The book of 1 John explains how the love of God has cleansed us from sin and released us from the grip of God's adversary. Chapter 1, verses 6 and 7 tell us that if we walk in "darkness" we are lying and not practicing the truth. If we walk in "the light as He is in the light," we are cleansed from sin through Jesus Christ and have fellowship, or brotherhood, with Him.

We are a family. Humans are destined to be children of God, and we shall be "like Him" (1 John 3:1-2). In our human families, we carry the traits of our parents. The relationship with our Heavenly Father will be much deeper and much clearer. Our "family" will be close, and each one will bear the responsibility of "family honor" with dignity and perfection.

Giving honor to our Father

Some say that actions speak louder than words, and I guess they do. I recall the life of my father and his determination to take care of the family. I remember him going back to the mines after cave-ins and explosions that nearly claimed his life and did take the lives of others. I remember him working until he had no strength left when he was dying of cancer.



I remember the times we would go to my uncle's farm for vacations because we really could not afford anything else. My dad always worked during that time. He would build a shed, a fence, or something—anything—because we were not "moochers." We worked for a living. There was a dignity and correct sense of pride in that. I value the lessons of family I learned as a boy.

Now I look forward to the revealing of the great family of God. I want to do my part to give dignity and honor to Him. I want my life to reflect His trust and love. I want to carry His name with the honor it deserves. I do not want Him to be

ashamed. God is our Father and the Church is our mother. The precious blood of His Son is one of the many gifts He has given. His name is another. May we all live carefully and joyfully with the responsibility and trust we have been given. Let's do our best to uphold the honor of our personal family and the honor of God's family!

For more information about how God is building His family, read [*God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*](#).

10 Questions to Ask About Evolution, Part 2

By Dr. Allen Stout

What is the difference between science and biblical faith? Can science prove that the Bible is not true? Has science proven that the worldwide floods described in the Bible did not occur? Has science proven the assumptions that age dating methods are based on?



LAST TIME [WE EXAMINED](#) three fundamental issues about what science can and cannot prove about the existence of God, how the universe came into existence and how life originated. Now let's look at four more fundamental questions to ask.

4. What is true science and how is it proven? And what is the difference between science and biblical faith?

All true science is defined by the scientific method, which is an objective, unbiased way to discover (and prove) truth based on the study and discoveries of a highly organized "nature" governed by laws. The scientific method requires three basic steps: gather all the evidence, formulate a hypothesis to explain the evidence (based on the fundamental laws of cause and effect) and use deductive logic to apply and test the hypothesis to prove its validity.

Not all that is called science is true science, nor is all that is called religion the true religion of God.

Scientific investigation, however, can be speculative, sometimes based on hypotheses that have not been adequately tested.

According to E. Bright Wilson in his book *An Introduction to Scientific Research*, "The collective judgment of scientists, insofar as there is substantial agreement, constitutes the body of science. The fact that there are very large areas of agreement, in spite of the individualistic anti-authoritarian nature of science, is partial evidence for the validity of scientific methods. However, there are cases where universal agreement has been attained for an untruth... Unfortunately, in many fields, especially on the borderlines of science, hypotheses are often accepted without adequate tests..."

“The difficulty of testing hypotheses in the social sciences has led to an abbreviation of the scientific method in which this step is simply omitted. Plausible hypotheses are merely set down as facts without further ado. To a certain deplorable extent this same practice occurs in medicine as well” (1991, pp. 26-27).

Archaeologists continue to unearth more and more evidence verifying biblical history and fulfilled prophecies, which historians had written off as myths.

The same can apply to evolution, cosmology and geological history. According to geologist William Stokes, “Most events with which geologists deal were not directly witnessed or recorded by anyone and cannot be repeated at our convenience like a chemical experiment. For this reason, the usual methods of scientific proof involving experiments that can be repeated and mathematically analyzed are not applicable... If the facts are not sufficient to justify immediate and positive answers, the investigator may have to substitute a theory or ‘educated guess’ until additional information is discovered” (*Essentials of Earth History*, 1960, pp. 3, 5).

Unfortunately many of these theories and “educated guesses” become accepted as fact and are taught as such in schools even though they can’t be supported by scientific proof.

Statistical analysis of tests is used to determine the scientific significance of a hypothesis. Results such as 99.9 percent probability would indicate high significance, with only 1 possibility in 1,000 that the results were due to just random chance. But the evidence for life coming from nonliving matter is 0.00 percent probability, making the probability for a Lifegiver 100 percent. (In contrast, evolutionist Richard Dawkins would propose a probability of 0.0000001 percent.)

Though the odds are completely against them, evolutionists won’t give up trying to prove the opposite, even if they consider it as only 1 chance in a billion as proposed by Professor Dawkins. Is that science or is it a blind faith in Darwinian evolution?

What is true biblical faith? The order and laws of nature reveal the wisdom of an incredibly complex and intelligent Designer, Lawgiver, Creator, Lifegiver and Sustainer (see Psalm 104:5-30; 139:13-16; Ecclesiastes 8:16-17; Hebrews 1:2-3; James 4:12).

True biblical faith is a spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 12:1, 4, 9) that encourages the same three steps as the scientific method, except that the hypotheses are revealed by God throughout the Bible.

The first step is to examine the evidence: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1, emphasis added; see also Psalm 19:1).

For the second step God says, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18). The law of cause and effect is fundamental to true faith as it is to true science: “A curse without cause shall not alight” (Proverbs 26:2).



The third step is to “test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). You prove it by applying it (Psalm 111:10; Malachi 3:10; see also the promised blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience listed in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28).

Not all that is called science is true science, nor is all that is called religion the true religion of God. Paul admonished Timothy to be “avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge” (1 Timothy 6:20). Paul told the Colossians to avoid error and “deceit, according to the tradition of men,” whether it be scientific or religious (Colossians 2:8; see also Isaiah 8:20; Matthew 15:3, 9).

God inspired the Bible as a revelation to provide mankind with a foundation for understanding all truth: “Your [God’s] word is truth” (John 17:17).

Sedimentary layers of strata (up to 30,000-feet deep in some areas) of the earth’s crust provide literally mountains of evidence of at least two catastrophic worldwide floods.

The psalmist was inspired to write: “The fear [reverence] of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments” (Psalm 111:10). “You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies... I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts” (Psalm 119:98-100).

5. Can science prove that the Bible (the original Hebrew and Greek Scriptures; translations often contain errors) was not inspired by God or prove that it is not true?

To give some scientists, such as Copernicus and Galileo, the credit they deserve, let’s acknowledge that they disproved some of the errors of authoritarian theologians. These religious leaders were adamant that the sun revolved around the earth and the earth was the center of the universe. Theologians have often misinterpreted the Scriptures, even as many still do today.

However, neither scientists nor historians have disproven the validity of the Holy Scriptures. Archaeologists continue to unearth more and more evidence verifying biblical history and fulfilled prophecies, which historians had written off as myths. (For more on this subject, see [Is the Bible True?](#))

6. The Bible reveals two worldwide floods (Genesis 1:2 and Genesis 6-8). Has science proven they didn’t occur? What is the evidence?



Sedimentary layers of strata (up to 30,000-feet deep in some areas) of the earth’s crust provide literally mountains of evidence of at least two catastrophic worldwide floods.

Scientists formulated a theory of uniformitarianism, popularized by Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* in 1830, stating “the present is the key to the past.” This theory that geologic strata were laid down gradually, as opposed to through the catastrophic floods of the Bible, heavily influenced Charles Darwin and his ideas about

gradual evolutionary changes. But now even many supporters of the theory of uniformitarianism acknowledge the role of occasional catastrophic events (see [“Mystery of the Megaflood,”](#) NOVA and Psalm 104:5-9, 29-30; Matthew 24:37-39; 2 Peter 3:3-6).

Some theologians mistakenly try to fit the mountains of sedimentary strata and ancient fossils buried there in a 6,000-year time frame and consider only one flood. But the Bible allows for a much longer time since the original creation of the universe. The word translated *was* in Genesis 1:2 can be translated *became*.



“In a beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth [became; from the Hebrew *hayah*, to exist, be or become] without form, and void [*tohuw*, a desolation, and *bohuw*, ruin]; and darkness was on the face of the deep [*tehom*, depth, abyss—as a surging mass of water]. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:1-2). Isaiah 45:18 shows that God did not originally create the earth in “vain” (also from the Hebrew word *tohuw*). So something happened after the original creation to ruin the earth. This is explained in detail in [“Earth’s Age: Does the Bible Indicate a Time Interval Between the First and Second Verses of Genesis?”](#)

Some strata of the Paleozoic and Mesozoic eras could be evidence of the worldwide flood described in Genesis 1:2. This destruction was apparently caused by the rebellion of angelic spirits who became the adversaries of God and man (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-17; Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:3-4, 7-9).

Genesis 1:3-31 reveals the beginning of God’s restoration to renew the face of the earth to prepare it for man (see also Isaiah 45:18; Psalm 104:30).

Genesis chapters 6, 7 and 8 describe the events of a worldwide flood in Noah’s time. Some strata of the Cenozoic Era are evidence of this worldwide flood. They contain fossils of the mammals and man created by God in the six days described in Genesis 1. (For more about Noah’s Flood, see [“Was Noah’s Flood Universal?”](#))

7. Science uses assumptions to formulate theories to explain the unknown. Has science proven the assumptions that age dating methods are based on?

All age dating methods are based on assumptions that certain conditions existed and were basically constant throughout the period the dating methods cover. Scientists often disagree because science cannot prove the validity or accuracy of the assumptions of the variable conditions of the past.

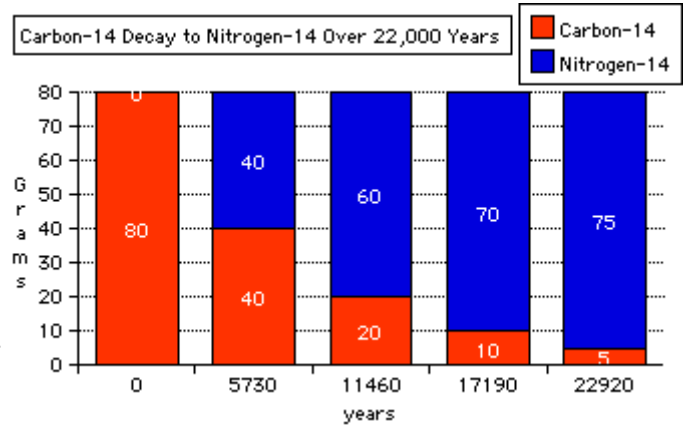
Strata were originally dated by “guesstimations” based on the assumptions of uniformitarianism, and fossils were then dated by the age of the strata, and then



strata began to be dated by the fossils! This circular reasoning was all based on the original assumptions and guesses.

Radioactive dating methods hold more promise for accuracy, but still are based on some unproven assumptions. For example, one of the assumptions of the radioactive carbon-14 dating method is that the ratio of atmospheric carbon-12 to carbon-14 was constant historically. But this would only be true if the amount of cosmic radiation converting nitrogen in the atmosphere to carbon-14 were constant and carbon-12 levels were constant in the atmosphere.

Scientists, however, have proven this is not true for many reasons, one being huge amounts of atmospheric carbon-12 were deposited as coal, oil and limestone in ages past, as well as being stored in the oceans and glacial ice, which would change the ratio. Also today's atmospheric carbon-12 levels are increasing because of its release from the burning of fossil coal and oil. For more on this subject, see ["Serious Problems With Dating Methods."](#)



Next time we will address three more important questions.

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