

Virtual Christian Magazine

Hope And Encouragement
For The Real World

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Does Unfaithfulness Disqualify Leaders?

By Larry J. Walker

Should a leader's conduct in private life be considered part of his or her job qualifications? Is there any connection between one's personal life and public duties?



MISCONDUCT BY PUBLIC OFFICIALS is becoming increasingly commonplace in the news.

Some cry for the resignation of guilty parties, or removing them from consideration for public office. Others insist that the private lives of public officials should not affect the performance of their public duties. They feel that misconduct and persuasive misrepresentation is to be expected in the political arena. Still others say that they should be judged only by their qualifications and job skills, not their morals.

Should a leader's conduct in private life be considered part of his or her job qualifications? Is there any connection between one's personal life and public duties?

More specifically, should adultery disqualify someone from public office?

The Bible acknowledges many parallels between family relationships and public service. The stability of one's family is a prerequisite for other leadership responsibilities (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

Marriage is an important commitment. Breaking or compromising this commitment reflects a serious breach of character that most definitely affects job performance. If someone is unfaithful to his or her mate, will he or she also be unfaithful in other commitments?

Adultery includes other character flaws and indicates a lack of vital leadership qualities. Giving in to sexual temptation reveals a weakness and vulnerability that could be exploited to the detriment of one's constituency.

In principle adultery involves lying, cheating and stealing, literally living a lie.

God condemned the leaders of Israel for this kind of life-style and the effect it had on the whole nation. "They commit adultery and walk in lies; they also strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns back from his wickedness" (Jeremiah 23:14). The latter part of this passage speaks to a leader's influence as a role model.

When public officials, athletes and others in the limelight are allowed to get away with inappropriate behavior, they set the pace for others to follow.

Expositor's Bible Commentary observation about the expression "destroys himself" in Proverbs 6:32 is "In a morally healthy society the adulterer would be a social outcast." So public reaction to the immorality of our leaders and other role models is a barometer of our national moral and spiritual health. Interesting that the first part of this verse in New International Version says, "He that commits adultery lacks judgment." Of course "judgment," the ability to make wise decisions, is a critical quality for leaders.

Sadly, what is condemned in real life often passes for entertainment in the form of television sitcoms, adding to the downward spiral. Today's news stories suggest that, as Jeremiah bewailed, "The land is full of adulterers" (Jeremiah 23:10).

A spouse's support is a significant benefit to anyone in a leadership position (Proverbs 31:10-12,23). But it has been said, "Adultery is to a marriage what a knife is to a back." Many have learned the tragic lesson that adultery can destroy a marriage and ruin lives and careers.

Mercy and forgiveness are basic Christian virtues. But mercy does not remove all the penalties of broken laws. Nor does it qualify a ruler to go on misruling. Neither does forgiveness remove the pain. The Bible warns of devastating, lifelong consequences for sin. Adultery is a prime example. "A man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself. Blows and disgrace are his lot, and his shame will never be wiped away" (Proverbs 6:32-33, NIV).

The family unit has long been considered the fundamental building block of the nation. Stable, happy successful marriages and families make for a strong nation. But, when immoral conduct goes unchecked, whole nations pay the price.

Lessons From a Penny

By Lee Anne Luker

A penny may not be worth much, but the messages on it remind us of some valuable life lessons. Is there a message for you?



LAST MAY, my mother-in-law died quite suddenly and unexpectedly. She was very dear and it was a deep personal loss to me, as well as my husband.

As we were walking across the parking lot to attend her funeral service, something caught my eye. Lying in the parking lot was a penny--our American one cent coin. I picked up this small copper coin and tears filled my eyes. The little penny felt warm in my hand and the message inscribed on it also warmed my heart.

The profile of Abraham Lincoln is engraved on the front of this small coin, as well as the year the coin was minted and these inscriptions--"In God We Trust" and "Liberty." These words comforted me. Yes, I *could* trust God. Mother Luker would live again because God has promised us the hope of the resurrection. I could also trust that He would be with Dad and comfort him, as well as my husband, his brother and sisters. At that moment, those words were an absolute *assurance* to me that God is, indeed, trustworthy!

There was a message of hope in the inscription of the word "Liberty," as well. Mother Luker was now liberated from the sorrows, pain and suffering of the flesh. There was liberty for me in that understanding. I didn't have to worry about Mom's fate or her future. I could "stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free" (Galatians 5:1).

I walked on into the chapel, glancing at the coin as I sat down. The profile of Abraham Lincoln caught my eye. He had been a man of conviction and courage. He didn't just talk about his convictions, but LIVED by them and died for them. Mom, too, had lived by her convictions. She was a woman who loved God and loved her family, an honorable woman. She lived and died, holding fast to those values. Like Lincoln, she, too, had come from humble roots and background. She had been born on a farm in northern Tennessee and that simplicity remained with her all her life.

I turned the penny over and for a moment was surprised. I had forgotten that the back of the coin was engraved with the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. How fitting that seemed! Many people were coming into the chapel, all there to honor and remember Mother Luker. Mom's gentle spirit and tenderness would always be remembered by those who had known her. There would be no large memorial erected for her--just a simple grave marker. But, the biggest memorial to Mom would be her family--her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She influenced all their lives by her love.

Just above the engraving of the Lincoln Memorial on the penny were the Latin words, "E Pluribus Unum." Though it has been many years since my Latin classes, I recognized the concept from the words: "From many, one." Here, in this little sun-lit chapel, people were gathering for Mom's funeral service. *Many* different religions were represented. As I looked around, those Latin words seemed very significant. Ultimately, through the plan of God, we will all be united into one family, the family of God. The power of God will take MANY and make them ONE!

I turned over the penny once again and the year it was minted caught my eye, 1986. Twelve years ago. The copper was dull brown with age, the engraving worn in places. But the value of this coin was not diminished by age. It was still worth one cent. With cleaning and polishing, it could even look new!

Mom was 82 years old when she died. She had experienced many things in those years and many changes. Like the penny, she'd been around a while. She was also "worn" by life. Her hair was gray, her face wrinkled; but just like that penny could be restored, I knew God was going to restore Mom. She was going to be raised incorruptible, immortal--shiny and new.

To some, she may not have seemed all that "valuable" either. She wasn't famous. She wasn't rich. She wasn't brilliant. She was just *one* simple, humble woman, like this *one* cent coin. Yet, she was very valuable to God. As He gathers all of us, one-by-one, our value is increased, just as pennies gathered become \$1, \$100, \$1,000 or even \$1,000,000!

I slipped that little penny into my pocket, thankful for the messages and comfort it had given me. The next time you find a penny, pick it up. Take a moment to think about it. Is there a message for you?

Extending Our Hand to the Grieving

By Joan Osborn

We will all come in contact with someone who has lost someone close to them. What's the best thing to say and do? Probably the same things you'd like to hear.



THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE can be devastating. As a friend we often need to help someone cope with such a loss. Often we are unsure of how to help our friends and family as they cope with their grief. Should we offer assistance or should we give them space, time, and privacy?

Uncertain about what will be best for the grieving person, we sometimes choose to avoid those who have just suffered a loss. Though this choice may be the easiest, it is not the best. Those who are grieving need the support of their friends and family--they need our helping hand.

God offers us comfort in His scriptures for our benefit during the difficult time of bereavement. Even with the assurance of God's presence and His comfort, there will still be a time of suffering, for grief is a natural process. This process can take quite awhile before it actually subsides. We need to be sure to remember our grieving friends and relatives far beyond the few days and weeks after the funeral.

Grief can take on a number of steps. The last of those steps is closure. For some this closure may be years in coming, for some it may never come. Perhaps this is why James tells us that part of "true and undefiled religion is to visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction" (James 1:27). Even those who seem to be handling their loss well are still under stress and need consideration. This is especially true after the initial shock of death begins to wear off.

Four months after my father's death, my mother mentioned that she often found herself

wandering aimlessly around the house trying to focus. She had spent 61 years of her life using her energies for her husband and family. Now her husband was gone and her children were grown and gone from her household. My mother needed to be gently reminded that what she was going through was natural. She needed the reassurance that her children understood what she was going through and cared about her deeply.

As Christians there are a few things we can keep in mind when considering those who are grieving:

1. Remember that James' admonition about helping the widows and fatherless in their affliction shouldn't be limited to physical help. Anniversaries of the death, wedding anniversaries, birthdays, family reunions, and holy day seasons will be especially hard times for the bereaved. These are times of togetherness for most families. Now part of their family is missing. Some people want to be alone at these times; others need contact to help them through this rough period. It never hurts to ask what you can do to help.
2. Remember that everyone handles grief differently. Mrs. Jones may appear to be adjusting well after the death of her husband, showing no outward signs of sorrow. On the other hand, Mr. Smith's sorrow may be evident by the tears he sheds. Dealing with grief is a very personal matter. Even if Mrs. Jones seems to be doing well, inside she may be feeling very sad and lonely. People do not always wear their emotions on the outside. Mr. Smith may actually be coping more effectively with his grief because he is venting more of his emotions, or because he is physically manifesting his grief. It is important to remember the old parable about reserving judgement of a man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins. Mrs. Jones and Mr. Smith deserve the same love and respect, along with the understanding that their methods of coping with loss may not be the same.
3. Remember that all loss is devastating. The loss of a spouse in a long-term marriage is of course horrendous, but the loss of a parent can be equally devastating. This is true regardless of the age of the child involved. Certainly a young child or a teenager will not have the benefit of a father or mother's guidance and loving presence. On the other hand, an older child is losing someone they have known for much longer. There will be a great void in their lives as well. As Christians we should be sensitive to everyone's feelings no matter what their age or relationship is with the deceased loved one.
4. Remember to offer reassurance when it is needed. Many widows and widowers, especially the elderly, feel they have no purpose after the death of a mate. Show them that they are important to you as a parent, a friend, a brother, or a sister in Christ. Help them to see that you appreciate, value, and love them, and that they are needed in your life.

A colleague of mine recently lost her mother after a long illness. Her father had been the primary caretaker for several years. She invited her dad to her home for a while. Soon her father was busy reorganizing and cleaning her garage. He threw out a few things she probably would have kept, but she realized the greater good of her dad having a reason to get up each morning. He felt needed and purposeful and she received a benefit as well.

5. Remember that grief does not follow a specific time frame. Some people may be healing very well after a year. Some may never heal entirely. Continuing concern for those who have suffered loss is somewhat like follow up visits by the doctor. It is good to keep checking in on the patient to see what their needs might be.

Continuing to send notes and cards can be very encouraging. Something as simple as "Hi, I'm thinking about you!" can easily brighten a gloomy day. The act of sending notes and cards is becoming a lost art in our technological age of phone, fax, and e-mail, but it is a gesture that shows you took a little extra time to do something personal for them.

So when is the grieving process over? For some, who have suffered the devastating loss of a spouse, child, or parent, it may never be over in any formal sense. This lack of closure may be especially true in the elderly, who have spent most of their lives with their mates. Grief may be the reason why many older widows and widowers often follow their spouses closely in death.

The person we have lost will always be a part of us. If you have never suffered the loss of someone close to you it may be hard to empathize fully with someone who has; yet, as Christians we have a responsibility to show each other loving concern under all circumstances. Remember James' words about the fatherless and the widows and be an example by extending your helping hand.

For Further Reading

What really happens at death? Why do we even have to die? Can we know if there is life beyond the grave? Where can we go for meaning and believable answers? To find out, just [click here](#) to get your free copy of ***What Happens After Death?***

What Disability Can't Do to You

By Cecil Maranville

For some, disability means an end to a real life. But, for others it's a challenge to adapt and do things they never thought they could do.



A LITTLE GIRL walks through the shopping mall, tightly gripping her mother's hand as they pass by a man in a wheelchair. With disarming innocence, the child loudly asks, "Mommy, why is that man in a funny chair?"

The child isn't rude; she is simply frank and open. She has noticed that this person is different from the average person and is honestly curious. Mom, however, is horrified by her child's openness. Embarrassed, she whispers, "Shhh!" and quickly leads her daughter away. The disabled person was "different" -- a fact which was both curious and awkward.

If you are the one with the disability, you cannot simply walk away from the awkward challenges it presents.

If you are the one with the disability, you cannot simply walk away from the awkward challenges this situation presents. "Why is that man in a funny chair?" can now be asked about me, for I have often needed a wheelchair for long periods of time. I have also become familiar with the mental lows which often accompany disability. There has been an overwhelming sense of a loss of control over my life. All standards by which I once

measured success -- my career, the freedom to pursue any hobby, the ability to play sports, participating in rough 'n tumble activities with my children -- collapsed along with my health.

What about you? How do you feel about yourself now that you have a disability? Are you worth less to yourself? To those around you? Do you struggle with feelings of inadequacy?

I was left, in my pain and fatigue, with a profound feeling of worthlessness and hopelessness. Does that sound familiar?

You know his name, but do you know his story?

The following letter was written by a woman to a friend about a mutual acquaintance on November 14, 1921:

"I am staying up here with a dear friend. It's a lovely region, but tragedy rather overshadows this once so happy and prosperous family, for their only son was struck down in August with a terribly serious case of infantile paralysis [polio]. He is only 39 -- both too old and too young for such a germ to disable him. He's had a brilliant career. Now he is a cripple -- will he ever be anything else? His mother is wonderfully courageous and plucky, but it's a bitter blow."

"He's had a brilliant career. Now he is a cripple -- will he ever be anything else?" Therein lies an assumption we need to shake out of the folds of our minds.

"Cripple" is an unpleasant-sounding word. It comes from an Old English word meaning to creep or to go low to the ground. It is used in the above letter to convey a sense of pity for "the poor man."

(You may wonder why I do not use the term "handicapped." Most organizations which work with people with disabilities, as well as government agencies, are shunning its use due to its origin. The word comes from an Old English game, literally called "hand-in-cap". Players each contributed to a common fund which an umpire held in a cap. The umpire decided who was in need and gave the cap's contents to him. Hence the term "handicap" carries a connotation of condescension with it.)

Did you ever analyze what it is that makes a person "whole"? Is it 20/20 vision in both eyes? Is it full use of both arms, hands, all ten fingers and both thumbs? Is it the ability to be ambulatory, that is, to walk around? Is it the ability to run? Is it "perfect" [whatever "perfect" is] hearing? Is it being pain-free and constantly energetic? Is it never aging?

It is oh, so easy to assume that a "whole" or "normal" person is one who possesses the average physical abilities of the general population. The negative continuation of that assumption is that a person with a disability -- who clearly has less than average physical abilities -- is somehow less of a person.

Here is a surprise which challenges that assumption! The prosperous and successful family in the 1921 letter was the James Roosevelt family. The son who was crippled at age 39, of whom it was assumed he could never be anything but "a cripple", was Franklin Delano



Roosevelt! His career was far from being over. With his previous success in serving as an Under Secretary of the Navy he went on to become the longest serving President of the United States, leading it through one of the most challenging times in human existence.

Who today thinks of President Roosevelt as a "cripple" whose worth ended at age 39? Yet, it is true that throughout campaigning for and serving as President, Franklin Roosevelt could never walk more than a step or two without leaning on someone, usually his son James. Even at that, Roosevelt could never walk without an uncomfortable, cumbersome brace. Most of his time was spent in a wheelchair.

Millions of people with chronic pain have benefited from Roosevelt's great accomplishments in a field far removed from political service. He developed and pioneered many fundamental techniques of hydrotherapy, enabling the exercise of painful limbs in warm water.

The source of the letter and other information included in this article is a Roosevelt biography, *FDR's Splendid Deception* by Hugh Gregory Gallagher, "the moving story of Roosevelt's massive disability -- and the intense efforts to conceal it from the public." You might find it inspiring reading.

Gallagher adds this shockingly blunt historical sketch of societal and cultural attitudes towards people with disabilities:

"Throughout history -- with specific, glorious exceptions -- the crippled [disabled] have been cursed, tormented, abandoned, imprisoned, and killed. The Spartans hurled their disabled citizens off a cliff to their death. Martin Luther believed deformed children were fathered by the devil and killing them was no sin. The Jews banished their cripples, forcing them to beg along the roadside. American Indians took their deformed newborn and buried them alive. In the eighteenth century, the handicapped were confined to asylums -- to be cared for, perhaps, but also to remove their deformed appearance, offensive to sensitive persons, from the streets."

Why does disability strike?

There is an almost irresistible human urge to ask and answer the question, "Why?" when we see a person with a disability.

No less a distinguished group than Jesus' early appointees to the ministry demonstrated this fact. The scriptures record their open question to the Teacher when they happened upon a man who had been blind since birth. "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" [Gospel of John, chapter 9, verse 2]

To answer this question, they made an assumption, "This man is blind because someone did something evil. The blindness is the resultant curse." Assuming that to be true, they skipped right to, "Who was the offender?" It is an astounding commentary on human nature when we stop to realize that these men were willing to believe the blind man may have caused his own disability.

Following such reasoning, the people believed the man was born blind because he had "sinned" in the womb, as ridiculous as that sounds! Are there still absurd assumptions made about why people have disabilities? Is there a chance that you, or others have assumed that your disability is a result of someone, somewhere having done some evil deed? Don't we all ask the question "Why"? And don't we all make assumptions about the answer?

It is hard to lie awake, awash with pain, and not ask "Why me?"

We must change our thinking

We need to examine our assumptions and be willing to change them! It is a myth that somebody has to have done something evil to bring on either his own or his loved one's disability! It is a myth that a vindictive God is dealing out disabilities as curses.

Why is someone, why is anyone, disabled? Why am I disabled? I could spend a lot of time puzzling out the possibilities -- and I have! But I found this to be a useless pursuit.

Have you ended up feeling angry because you have a disability? If so, perhaps you have been frustrated in your own pursuit of the "Why me?" question. Universally, disability seems unfair.

Let's turn the question around. Why not?

There are approximately 49 million United States citizens who have disabilities.

There are approximately 49 million United States citizens who have disabilities. That means that between one and two in every ten citizens has a disability! Disability is found at all social and economic positions, as well as at any age level. Until you joined our ranks, you may not have been aware of the statistics, but we all see people with disabilities in the general public every day.

That means that between one and two in every ten citizens has a disability!

Think about what the statistics are telling us: in this present world, it is normal to have people with disabilities.

Think that through further. With so many millions in that category, is it sensible to say, "People with disabilities are abnormal"? The sheer numbers declare them to be common. It is, therefore, often fruitless to give any consideration to why any one person may have a disability.

It may well be impossible to say for certain. The fact of the matter is, you will find disabilities of various kinds among all peoples. That's always been true!

We must shake ourselves free from superstitions of the past, which are still with us in some ways, and come to acknowledge and accept the facts. Paraphrasing another statement of Jesus, "People with disabilities you will always have with you!"

You and I just happen to be amongst their number.

Some think a disability is an advantage

President Franklin Roosevelt had an adviser named Harry Hopkins. During his years of service to the President, Hopkins was dying of cancer. Peter Drucker, in his book *The Effective Executive*, uses him as an example of the extraordinary effectiveness so often attained by people who are ill or who have a disability:

"A dying, indeed almost a dead man for whom every step was a torment, he could only work a few hours every other day or so. This forced him to cut out everything but truly vital matters. He did not lose effectiveness thereby; on the contrary, he became, as [Sir Winston] Churchill called him once, 'Lord Heart of the Matter' [for his ability to incisively get to the important part of any issue before the world's nations during World War II] and accomplished more than anyone else in wartime Washington."

Look at Stephen Hawking. Does he have a disability? Rarely will you see a body more tormented, more limited, to the observer. But who would say that this brilliant physicist, scientist and author is limited?

What "enables" a person? It isn't his sight, hearing or his limbs. It is his mind! Because of that fact, some actually find that a disability can be a boon in disguise. Physical limitations can free the mind of a person who has a disability from matters with which "average" people need to busy themselves.

When I say "the mind" I'm including spirit along with intellect. This spiritual feature separates humans from animals; animals cannot create, reason, invent, or achieve anywhere close to human ability.

Journalist Terry Anderson endured a terrible ordeal as a hostage of terrorists. Read what he said of the value of his experience as a captive:

"We come closest to God at our lowest moments. It's easier to hear God when you're stripped of pride and arrogance when you have nothing to rely on except God. It's pretty painful to get to that point, but when you do, God's there."

*"It's easier to hear
God when you're
stripped of pride
and arrogance
when you have
nothing to rely on
except God."*

He was not physically disabled in the traditional sense. Yet, his captors prevented him from free movement; he had a narrow choice of allowed activities. So, in a real sense, his captivity was much like a disability.

But his richly revealing conclusion tells us that his mind was not limited, even though his freedom of movement was! To the contrary, he found his mind or spirit, was actually made keener because of his physical limitations.

Obviously, having a disability is not what made Roosevelt, Hopkins, Hawking or Anderson accomplish what they did. That's not the point. The point is: everyone who has a disability can accomplish as much as anyone else -- and just maybe more than he otherwise would -- and, if he allows that physical disability to motivate instead of discourage him.

Is every person with a disability automatically made stronger in mind as a result of his physical limitations? No! It depends on the individual, and what he decides to do with his life. The encouragement and understanding of those around him, including family, friends and

co-workers, helps so very much.

What do you expect of yourself?

Is it easy for you to see yourself, restrained by the invisible prison of pain, as normal?

A quadriplegic friend of mine in his forties confided in me (years before I was disabled), "People think I am not normal when they see my crippled form. But underneath this exterior, I have all the drives, interests and needs of any man." Now I understand him completely.

People with normal drives, interests and needs contribute to their families and communities.

We need to admit to ourselves that our contribution will not be in the typical way neighbors might exchange help: "I'll cut your lawn this month while you're on vacation; in return, you can cut mine next month." Often the reality is that we pass along the help we receive to people other than the ones who help us. For example, someone has been cutting my lawn, and I can't "return the favor." Instead, I am using my ability to write this article to help you. I am in essence passing along my neighbor's help to another neighbor.

It hasn't been easy for me to come to this realization, for I am the kind of man who is too embarrassed to depend on the help of others for things I used to be able to do without difficulty. (It hasn't even been easy for me to ask my children to help me carry a cup or open a door!) But a community is made up of many individuals, each making his unique contribution.

If we stop contributing to our families and communities because we now have some level of disability, it is because we choose to stop, not because having a disability made us stop!

If we stop contributing to our families and communities because we now have some level of disability, it is because we choose to stop, not because having a disability made us stop! Our contribution will likely be different in some ways than before a disability challenged us. Not less; just different.

Don't allow pride, the temptation to give up, or feelings of bitterness over your situation block the opportunities you have. You've got to find where you can contribute.

I am not trying to make disability sound so attractive that people will be lining up (or falling down -- pardon the humor) to join our ranks! However, since disability is a part of life, I am trying to help us live with it. Too often a person with a disability uses it as an excuse, rather

than a prompt.

We who have disabilities may frankly find it easier to surrender to the negative pulls of human nature -- to complain, be depressed, cranky, impatient, selfish or unreasonable. But we are not excused from the healthy exercise of self-control! That exercise in itself makes a valuable contribution to any home or community!

It can be uncomfortable to have others tending to physical duties and needs which we would much prefer to do ourselves. Sometimes our dignity and sense of privacy suffer. To use the biblical ritual of "foot washing" as an analogy, there is a time to be served. If you recall the

story, Jesus performed a job usually done by a common household servant by washing the feet of Peter. That brought a vehement protest from Peter. Jesus pointedly explained that there is a time to sit still and let others serve you! That requires a measure of humility.

Now, if we sit still and allow others to do everything for us while we do nothing, that is an unhealthy dose of vanity! (And maybe a touch of self-pity?)



How often as a minister have I gone to see people who were suffering through terrible physical ordeals, with the purpose of encouraging them, only to come away from the meeting greatly encouraged myself! I was uplifted by their inner strength. It showed in their cheerfulness, their positive outlook, and their ability to think of the needs of others during their time of great personal need. Truly, they were contributing richly to the community. Do you see yourself as that kind of person?

Isn't everyone limited?

Aren't all people limited? Can we fly? Can we walk through walls? Can we survive without food, water or shelter? Can we live forever? Can we prevent heartache and trouble from striking our loved ones? Everyone is limited. It's just that not everyone realizes it!

We tend to see ourselves in comparison to others, as well as in comparison to the way we used to be. If we use that standard alone to judge our self-worth, we will be deeply discouraged. "I am less than other people -- less of a person than I used to be." It is a short step from that to "I am good for nothing, anymore".

Have our modern cultures left behind those superstitious attitudes about people with disabilities? Even though they aren't thrown from cliffs or hidden from public view, people with disabilities are not yet fully integrated into society. Maybe we still labor under a false assumption or two. What you and I do will have something to do with shaping current thinking.

Here is the conclusion of the matter: the strength of the spirit must be our focus, not the strength of the body.

Here is the conclusion of the matter: the strength of the spirit must be our focus, not the strength of the body.

What are you worth, now that you have a disability? Frankly, your net worth has not changed at all. You are normal. Will you become an even stronger member of your family and community? That depends upon you!

Virtual Christian Magazine Editorial

Virtual Christian or Virtual Magazine?

By John Rutis

YOU ARE READING *Virtual Christian Magazine*. When the managing editor chose this title he was thinking that the word "virtual" applied mainly to the magazine, but he also caught the vision of something greater. He wrote, "In the title of the magazine the word 'virtual' modifies 'magazine.' The contributors and editors assembling VCM are all over this planet. The virtual aspect should not be limited to the word magazine. Hopefully, this product will also develop a body of virtual Christians."

Many people today are familiar with the term virtual reality. The term is often used to describe a computer generated environment that, while it closely mimics reality, is, and always will be, only a pretense of the 'real' thing. So I was, at first, a bit concerned with the title *Virtual Christian Magazine*. After all, the magazine is meant to be a real magazine. The Christians who are hopefully to be its product are to be Christians in every real sense of the word.

I decided to look up the word *virtual* in the thesaurus and see what it had to say. I was pleasantly surprised at what I found. *Virtual* was, indeed, a very fitting name for this new magazine. Here is what I found:

Virtual, adjective: being such in essential character; Synonyms: implicit, constructive, practical; See also: absolute, complete, unqualified, wholehearted, genuine, real

The term *Christian* is applied to a person who tries to follow Christ, models their life on Christ and attempts to allow Christ to live His life in them. They are trying to be "such in essential character," just as the thesaurus definition states. This is exactly what Christ wants for each and every one of His followers. He wants them to be a virtual Christ or to come as close to being Christ-like as possible.

One of the stated objectives of *VCM* is to reach those inquiring about answers to life's biggest questions. Isn't one of life's biggest questions how we can become more Christ-like? The folks involved in putting together *Virtual Christian Magazine* would like to help everyone who reads this magazine make becoming more Christ-like their goal. It is our hope to help them toward that goal.

The synonyms for virtual are very positive as well. If we are implicit Christians, anyone who has more than a fleeting relationship with us should see plainly and obviously that we are different. They should see that we are "constructive" Christians and "practical" Christians. Christians who have actually put on the mind of Christ. It's how we think which results in our good works. Christianity is a minute-by-minute constructive, practical way of life. It's who we really are. It's not just something we mimic, or put on as a show.

The thesaurus also provides words that are not quite synonymous with virtual but are similar enough to be instructive. All of these words can and should apply to Christians. A Christian should be an "absolute, complete, unqualified, wholehearted, genuine, and real" Christian.

The word *virtual* is derived from the word *virtue*. *Virtue* is defined as follows: Noun; moral excellence, goodness, righteousness. Synonyms includes: goodness, integrity, uprightness, justice, probity, rectitude, and prudence.

These words should also characterize a Christian.

It takes work to produce ***Virtual Christian Magazine***. It takes work to put on the mind of Christ. As virtual Christians we are still learning, still growing. Just as the magazine will have an occasional typographical error that gets by the editors, so we, as Christians will have some sins that sneak by unnoticed. When these are brought to our attention, we make corrections and continue on. We depend on Christ living in us to bring each of us closer and closer to the goal of being a Virtual Christian.

Letters to the Editor

Rekindle the Flames of Fellowship



Thank you very much for your article on "Rekindling our Flames of Fellowship." Our area has had quite a few people leave our church in this past year. I really believe that if some of them had heard a powerful message like this one, some may still be here with us today.

The church area we formerly attended before moving here was a very close knit people. (I am going to suggest that my husband give a sermonette on this very same subject...

Again, thank you..

-- HMB



I really appreciated the "Rekindle the Flames of Fellowship" article by Dan Taylor on VCM. First time I've visited the site. It's great! Thanks for your efforts.

-- Mike



Thanks for your article. It is very helpful because I see where I have been judgmental of others who have not tried to fellowship in the way I think they should. Will God bring new people into a congregation with this environment?

Also, it seems more that being out sight is being out mind. If one in a congregation has a problem and stops attending, it's as if they don't exist any longer.

Please continue with this subject not only through this medium but with the ministry and the church as a whole. The ministry is still the beacon for everyone to follow. The ministry and leadership of a congregation set the tone and condition of the congregation. Thanks again for your article and help.

-- CC



Can a Christian survive as a loner? It's possible, but it's much better to be with others as we face our life's challenges.

I have read D. Taylor's articles before.

God brings man's experience to the loneliness of being alone as in the case of Job to bring about man's need of God, Joseph to bring about the power and the glory of God, Paul in prison to complete the word of God, etc. Have we considered Elijah's "I am the only one left" or Jesus' Gethsemane, "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?"

I find the article full of "hope" for one naming the name of Christ out of a clean heart.

Job's realization, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee" is farthest to the consummation of a loner's expectations because a loner's focus is on him/herself rather than his/her God. Christ is focused on the will of the Father.

Congratulations on the new VCM endeavour.

-- EV



I enjoyed your article very much. This seemed to fit me to a "Tee" (and no I don't golf). I've had a lot happen to me since I quit congregating since about 1985 or so.

I won't go into detail, but I watched Mr. Armstrong on TV and when he died I really started studying the Bible and requesting a lot of literature (which I still do). I would study at home on the Sabbath and on God's holy days for about 2 or 3 years before I finally called the church and talked to a minister. I never realized how much different it was to study in a group than by yourself. I could feel God's spirit with us way more than when I would try to study by myself which I still notice to this day. I know Satan has pulled me away from God as he tries to do with all of God's people. I never was baptized; I kept waiting for what I thought was the right time. I know now that if I would have kept congregating and was baptized back then and obeyed God's commandments that Satan would have never drawn me from God so easily.

I plan on contacting UCG soon and talking to a minister about returning to church again, I know that God is still calling me to serve. This time when I go back I feel that there won't be no turning back as I did previously.

I hope to see you soon, on some Sabbath or Holy Day maybe the Feast of Tabernacles.

KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!!!

-- TLS

Virtual Christian Magazine



I am glad to see the VCM finally up and running. I know that this is an encouragement to all

of us.

-- RH



I just had a chance to look at your new on-line magazine. It looks to me as though you have a winner. Keep up the good work! Mr. Gerald Waterhouse gave a sermon a while back stating that the church was going to eventually get on a big "Superstation." That "Superstation" is the Internet - a terrific tool for spreading the Gospel around the world.

-- TR



You and your team are doing an important work. It will help our group of 35 or so here in Lawton, Oklahoma.

-- GB



I just finished printing the entire January 1999 VCM. I'm going to place it on the info table at church next week, and offer to make copies for anyone who would like their own.

So far, I've just skimmed through it as it was printing, but it looks like it has a little something for everyone. I'll let you know how it's received at church.

Question: Are you in need of any articles for the VCM? If so, any particular subjects that come to mind? Looking forward to more VCM's in the future,

-- JJ

ED: We are always looking for good material. Please [read the editorial](#) in the first issue of Virtual Christian Magazine to see what kind of material we're looking for.



Can I subscribe to Virtual Christian Magazine? I would like to have hard copies for my library. If so, what is the cost and how often is it issued?

-- JW

ED: Sorry, but VCM is an online magazine only. If you want hard copy articles, articles, you will have to print them yourself. We are very flattered by responses like yours from our first day online. Any suggestions for improvement would be greatly appreciated.



I think what you and the Church are doing is wonderful. As one who lives in a somewhat isolated area and not always able to gather every week with brethren, the Internet has been a great tool for keeping in touch and further my knowledge of the Gospel of Christ and the soon coming Kingdom of God.

Shaping the Heart and Soul



"What greater challenge than to help shape a young person's mental, physical, and spiritual growth? What greater responsibility than to help a young person develop to their fullest potential?"

Thanks for the VCM, and the lead article "Shaping the Heart and Soul". My wife and I are just beginning our family. We have a son of 8 months and hope to add one brother or sister, beginning sometime in 1999. We will appreciate any help you can offer with 'shaping our children's hearts and souls.

We, of course want to do everything we can to help them develop to their full potential. And that includes their spiritual potential. Please provide information in the future about how to teach them "when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" [Deut. 6:7]. Hearing instruction on this most important responsibility over and over from God's ministry will be essential for the development of the next generation of God's church.

Also, please include any hints that may have been learned over the last few decades about how to positively share God's Truth with those who are "second generation Christians" growing up in God's Church.

Thank you for your superb work.

-- LD



My compliments to Joanne Rutis. I appreciated her article. I have "been there, seen that," as the saying goes. I've been the adult helping out, as well as the mother watching what happens to her kids. She had some excellent points. Thanks.

-- NC



I'd like to comment on the article by Joanne Rutis on influencing the kids-- her article is a

really good example of something many other articles and sermons lack-- she used lots of real life examples and didn't pull any punches about them. I'm of the firm conviction that our publications, while they certainly proclaim the truth with integrity, they have always lacked a personal side.

Examples of real life to learn from seem to be, for a variety of reasons avoided, or if used they are often poor. Our kids really need the personal connection in the sermons. So do the rest of us really. I often think that behind this tendency is a reluctance to appear emotional. But it takes more than dry truth to convert the heart.

-- SH



As a parent of 4 young teenagers in God's church, I can not thank the church enough for the articles and bible studies. We parents have a hard time dealing with the pressures that this world throw at our teenagers. The bible studies gives my wife and I a resource that our parents did not have when we were growing up in the church.

At that time we were accepted to do what we were told and when we were told to do it and not ask "why". I was fortunate to have a mentor. She started out just being a tutor for English, but she taught me more than just English. She taught me that the world is not just black and white that God created color.

As I look at my own sons and try to be the best parent I can, I must understand my shortcomings and that's where the bible studies come in. To study for myself is no problem but to help my sons understand is where I have a difficult time, the bible studies help my wife and I to understand different angles of the subjects that we have been taught from a young age.

The ideas brought out in this article only build on the principals that my mentor taught me. I can see if we as parents would open our eyes and minds and take to heart what we are being taught, our children will benefit more. Who knows we just might become closer to children.

-- JJ Jr.