

# Virtual Christian Magazine

Hope And Encouragement  
For The Real World

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*"Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."--1 Cor. 5:8*

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March/April 2003

## When I Die, Will I Go to Heaven?

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## When I Die, Will I Go to Heaven?

By Gary Petty

*A few years ago a Time magazine poll revealed that 81 percent of people in the United States believe in "the existence of heaven, where people live forever with God after they die." The poll also showed that ideas vary widely on exactly what it's like in heaven. But what does the Bible really say about life after death?*



**I**N MARCH 1997 the people of the United States were shocked to hear of the largest mass suicide in the nation's history. Thirty-nine members of the religious group Heaven's Gate were found in a beautiful California mansion, each dressed in black pants, black shirt and new athletic shoes, after killing themselves with a mixture of drugs, alcohol and asphyxiation.

Police were surprised by the obvious lack of trepidation and, according to videos and letters left behind, even elation, experienced by the cult members as they prepared to leave this world.

Brought together by a religious smorgasbord of Christianity, New Age, paganism and science fiction, and spurred by a belief that the Hale-Bopp comet was an apocalyptic sign, these people died believing that they would travel to a better place of existence.

It is initially unfathomable to consider the suicide of healthy people who want to die believing that a better life awaits them. Sometimes it's easier to understand the death wish of someone who is terminally ill and suffering. Yet, most people hope for and desire an afterlife, a consciousness after this life ends without the suffering and grief. Many Christians believe that when a person dies, he or she goes to heaven.



Over the centuries there have been numerous Christian views of heaven. Heaven often refers to the realm where God dwells. There's been much speculation about what happens to those who go there, from spending eternity gazing into the face of God, to an actual place where the saints interact with God and angels. Mostly, it's thought of as a nebulous hereafter where good people go to experience eternal bliss. In the *Time* magazine poll, 43 percent said they believe in harps and 36 percent in halos in the heavenly abode.

The 1998 movie *What Dreams May Come* starring Robin Williams presents heaven as a place where the departed create their own egocentric universe. It was a lonely, imperfect picture of eternity. Curiously, in this version of heaven, God was nowhere to be found.

### Heaven as the throne of God

When we go to the Bible we find numerous descriptions of heaven as the throne of God. The apostle John claims that he was taken into heaven in a vision and writes about what he experienced in the book of Revelation. He describes heaven this way:

"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this'" (Revelation 4:1).

*Jesus claims that He's the only one who has ascended into heaven.*

John continues in verses 2-6: "Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

"And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Before the throne there was a sea of

glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back."

Is this the realm of the promised afterlife for those who believe in the God of the Bible?

### More than one heaven

Jesus makes a startling statement about heaven recorded in John 3:13. He says in reference to Himself as the Christ, "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man." Jesus claims that He's the only one who has ascended into heaven. If Jesus is the only one to go to heaven, what happened to all the great men and women of faith throughout history?



To answer that, we must first look at some often misunderstood biblical concepts of heaven. Have you ever noticed that many biblical references to heaven are plural and actually say "heavens"? In Scripture, heaven can refer to earth's atmosphere where we see the "birds of heaven" or where the "windows of heaven" open to bring rain.

It can also refer to what we call outer space, the realm of the moon, planets, other galaxies, the physical universe. A third reference concerning heaven is the throne of God. In 2 Corinthians 12:2 the apostle Paul writes about a vision of "Paradise" which he says was in the "third heaven."

The heaven Jesus was talking about is this "third heaven," the very throne of God. John also records another discourse by Jesus Christ where He explains why He came to earth from heaven in the first place.

If you don't have your Bible, go get it and turn to John 6:38 where Jesus says: "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

### The hope of the resurrection

What does Jesus mean when He says that He will raise someone up at the last day?

The resurrection of Jesus as the Son of God is absolutely essential to the Christian faith. In fact, there is no Christian religion without the belief that Jesus rose from the grave, was seen by His disciples and ascended to the throne of God. The Scriptures demand Christians to accept that Jesus died and experienced a bodily resurrection three days and three nights later.

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Now, let's look at what the apostle Paul writes to Christians in ancient Corinth in 1 Corinthians 15:22-23: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."

Notice that Paul says that "all shall be made alive...but each one in his own order." Jesus Christ was the first to be raised from the dead to eternal life. Paul then says, "Afterwards those who are Christ's at His coming."

In numerous places in his writings the apostle Paul refers to death as "sleep." Is it possible that the common belief that people go to heaven after they die is not what the Bible actually teaches?

### **With Christ on earth**

Jesus made some important comments to His disciples on the night before His death as recorded in John 14:1-3: "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

It is important to note where Jesus will be after His return. He will reign as king of the world for 1,000 years while the resurrected saints will rule with Him here on earth (Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6).

So Christ promises to return to earth for His disciples, both living and dead. He nowhere says we will be off with Him in heaven.

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Paul tells us about the resurrection of the dead at Christ's return in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

The resurrection isn't a theory of some ethereal, nebulous existence as a disembodied spirit. It is the promise of a bodily resurrection to life of eternal energy, eternal creativity, eternal goodness as the children of God.

This resurrection takes place not at death, as these scriptures make clear, but when Christ returns to establish His Father's Kingdom here on earth. The Christian future is more spectacular than the view of heaven as a place of eternal repose without meaning or personal purpose.

Why were you born? If you want to have a part in this glorious resurrection to fulfill the future God offers you, the choice is up to you.

*This article is an excerpt from a Good News radio program. This program is heard on stations across the United States. For an Internet listing of stations and times or to download radio programs go to [www.ucg.org/radio](http://www.ucg.org/radio). While on-line, you can also order the booklet that was offered on this program, [Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?](#)*

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## The Story of Stan Musial

By John Ross Schroeder

*In a time when many sports "heroes" exhibit less than heroic character, here's one sports legend who set a high standard.*



I HAVE BEEN A FAN OF STAN MUSIAL'S for over 50 years. Of course, it has been some 40 years since he last swung a bat for the St. Louis Cardinals, but the story of his splendid character on and off the field is well worth telling.

Through the help of a close friend I finally realized an important personal goal by actually meeting and interviewing Stan Musial near St Louis. He was as personable and likeable as I imagined him to be. Of course, not everyone is interested in spectator sports, or baseball in particular, but his essential life story is not about professional sports, but a man's sterling character.

### Overcoming adversity

Back in 1940 he was a fine pitching prospect in the Cardinal farm system, but being a good hitter as well, Stan occasionally played the outfield on "nonpitching" days. In one game, while diving to catch a sharply hit line drive, he injured his throwing arm very severely. So serious was the injury that he was "washed up" as a pitcher. The career of a budding baseball prospect was apparently over.



But it was manager Dickie Kerr who encouraged a discouraged Musial and pointed out that he could still hit and his arm would gradually improve enough so that he could play the outfield. In fact in 1941 his work with the bat was so impressive that he went all the way from a class D classification in the lower minor leagues in the St. Louis farm system to the major leagues in one year, leading three different leagues (D, AAA and the majors) in batting average that year, but without enough at bats to qualify for any one league hitting title.

### Dealing with financial temptation

Salaries in the 1940s were not what they are today. In his rookie year with the Cardinals in 1942 Stan Musial hit .315 (many major leaguers never reach the .300 figure during their entire career) and played on a National League Pennant-winning team that also won the World Series by beating the famed New York Yankees in five games. Yet he and his wife Lillian had \$5 in the bank at the end of the year. They laugh about it now, but they didn't laugh then.

By the mid-1940s Stan Musial was the generally acknowledged leading hitter and ballplayer in the National League. Only Ted Williams of Boston and Joe DiMaggio of New York (both in the American League) could be said to be better ballplayers and both had been playing longer in the majors. Yet Musial's annual salary was only \$13,500, low even for midcentury America.

Along came an offer for a gargantuan raise in salary if Stan would only jump leagues and play elsewhere in another country. By now he had a growing family, but he resisted the temptation and stayed with the Cardinals. If Stan needed any encouragement to turn down the offer, manager Eddie Dyer told him, "You have to look your kids in the eye." That decision was well rewarded in later years.

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*Never before in history have young people needed good examples and consistent role models more.*

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Then after he became the first player in the National League to earn \$100,000 a year, the same temptation came in another form. This time the owner of the Cardinals presented him with a signed salary check with the amount blank. Musial was told to fill in the figures. He penned in the same salary he made the year before.

### Wearing his success well

Star professional players (then and now) fly ahead of the rest of the team and sometimes separate themselves from their teammates by similar actions. But Stan rarely did that unless it was some emergency of some sort and nearly always handled his personal success with humility.

Musial also respected the baseball public--those who bought the tickets and supported the team. Even in the dog days of St Louis heat in August he would often stand around for an hour after playing a grueling doubleheader and sign autographs for children.

At the beginning of the 1946 season Stan had returned from World War II service in the Navy and the Cardinals started the year with a new first baseman who didn't perform up to expectations. So



manager Eddie Dyer soon asked Stan, a star outfielder, to try his hand at first base. This could have adversely affected his hitting because a batter can sometimes relax in the outfield, but playing the infield requires constant vigilance. But since Stan was a team man, he agreed and the decision did not seem to adversely affect his hitting. His year-end average was a major league leading .365. That year St. Louis did win the National League Pennant and afterwards the World Series against the Boston Red Sox and Ted Williams.

### MUSIAL, STANLEY FRANK



"1920- , American baseball player, b. Donora, Pa. At 17 he signed with the St. Louis Cardinals in the National League and after three years in the minor leagues he joined (1941) the Cardinals. One of the great hitters of all time, Stan the Man, as Musial is known, won the National League batting championship seven times (1943, 1946, 1948, 1950-52, and 1957) and the league's most valuable player award three times (1943, 1946, and 1948). He retired with a lifetime batting average of .331. He hit 475 homeruns... He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1969" (*The New Columbia*

*Encyclopedia*, p. 1864, 4th edition).

Actually during his career Stan was moved about on the field quite a bit. He played left, right and even center field as well as first base. To be frank, most great hitters would never allow themselves to be moved about from pillar to post like that. But Musial always was an unusually good team man and never allowed his personal success to get in the way of the team's fortunes.

Once in a scoreless tie game with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1957 (now the Los Angeles Dodgers), he came to the plate with runners on first and second and nobody out. Leading the National League in hitting, he was asked to lay down a sacrifice bunt in order to advance the runners to second and third base. Great hitters are not normally ever called upon to perform such a humble task. They would always expect to hit away in that situation. But Musial laid down a perfect sacrifice bunt and accordingly the next batter drove those two runners home.

### Gratefulness to others

In the course of a lifetime many other people help us along the way. It is all too easy to forget their contribution to whatever we have been able to achieve. This Stan did not do. Dickie Kerr (Musial's former mentor) and his wife had fallen on very hard economic times. Kerr was soon presented with the keys to a brand-new house in Houston, Texas.

*The owner of the Cardinals presented him with a signed salary check with the amount blank. Musial was told to fill in the figures.*

Of course, Stan was not always able to accommodate friends in every circumstance. His family and that of Horace Stoneham, the owner of the New York Giants (now the San Francisco Giants), were great pals and sometimes got together for dinner when the Cardinals played that New York team. One night in May of 1954 after a relaxing and affable dinner together, Stoneham asked Stan "to take it easy on us tomorrow." Stan had a reputation for being rough on Giant pitching.

Musial was accommodating as usual and said, "Don't worry, Horace, it'll be all right." But Stan hit five home runs during the next day's doubleheader in St Louis--a major league record equalled by only one other player, Nate Colbert, who when still a boy just happened to be in the stands watching that Sunday doubleheader in 1954.

### **A consistent role model**

Never before in history have young people needed good examples and consistent role models more. They need ballplayers with outstanding character on and off the field--players who are good with their families.

It was a very rare sight to ever see Stan Musial argue with an umpire over a decision. Maybe it happened once or twice in his 22-year major league career. But he was never thrown out of a game by an umpire--a rarity among baseball players who perform regularly, many of whom play 150 games a season and over.

Somehow even Stan's lifetime statistics are a testimony to his consistency. He scored 1,949 career runs and batted in 1,951. Of his 3,630 lifetime hits, 1,815 were at home in St. Louis and 1,815 were on the road-- an almost impossible career statistic.

If ballplayers were misbehaving and they saw Musial walk in the room, it soon stopped. Some have speculated that as long as he was active in the game, he actually held back some of the unfortunate trends we see in baseball today. One man's outstanding example counts for a lot.

The good deeds of Stan Musial are legendary in the baseball world. Today he continues with them being very active in charity work. His services are constantly in demand even though he is an octogenarian.

There have been more talented baseball players than Stan Musial, but it is highly doubtful that there has ever been one before or since with such splendid personal character.

#### **Interview With Stan Musial**

By John Ross Schroeder

*JRS:* You have a wonderful reputation for character, like your attitude toward salary, that sort of thing. There are a lot of stories I've read over the years and, of course,

it down.

*SM:* Back in those days, I think I was making \$13,500 at the time and they did offer me a lot more money. But I didn't have any illusions about going down. My mind was made up, no matter how long or how often they called to talk to me.

*JRS:* I think it's a consensus that you set a wonderful example for all young people, and I was wondering if you thought that the players of the day were measuring up to that.

*SM:* In our day we took care of the fans after the ball games. We signed autographs and visited. And in the winter we had a hot stove league promoting baseball. We realized that fans were supporting our game and we took care of them.

*JRS:* What happens to kids if ballplayers that they look up to turn out to be drug users?

*SM:* Athletes and ballplayers have to be the role models, and these young fans look up to the athletes, not only in baseball, but football, golf... So I think their responsibility in that regard is not to be involved in drugs.

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## The Earth Is Full of His Goodness

By Jerry Webb Sr.

*A father-and-son winter camping trip in the mountains becomes more than a battle with the elements as God's creation presents a breathtaking show of color and light.*



***"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:1-3).***

Camping out in the wintertime, my son and I snuggle into our way-too-tight long johns purchased at a discount from a local sporting goods store. And now we're ready to insert ourselves between two lengths of flannel lining encasing the last feathers of a wayward duck, protected on the outside by a waterproof synthetic bag in which we'll sleep. Yes, we are mountain men and have the beginnings of frostbite to prove it.

The winter breeze up here in the mountains has become a howling wind with temperatures that would frost the paws off a polar bear. Nestled in our sleeping bags, we are scrunched in a pyramid-shaped, water-and-wind-resistant wilderness house called a two-man pup tent--built by city folk to fit only 1 1/2 men. Yet we have warmth. We are like two warm biscuits grandma used to make, tightly wrapped in tin foil. But come the morning there will be no grandma to call us to breakfast. It's just the two of us in the wilderness--with God who created it all watching over us.

***"The day is Yours, the night also is Yours; You have prepared the light and the sun. You have set all the borders of the earth; You have made summer and winter" (Psalm 74:16-17).***

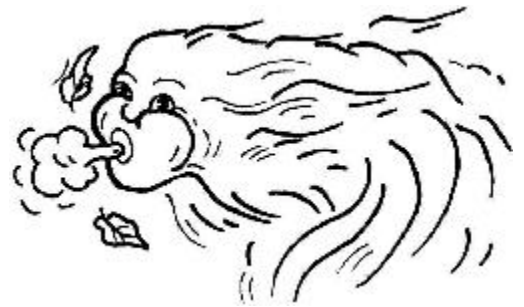
It's as if winter, which has overtaken a short autumn, is laughing at us. The wilderness forest waited patiently while we laboriously pounded in our tent stakes and tied the tent down. The stakes belong to it now, for its frozen earth has crept up to entrap them, making sure they will never leave the ground again. And now it waits for morning when we will venture outside into its pine-scented forest and its beckoning, ice-laden arms.

The first morning comes too quickly. Overnight, the weather had breathed a thick layer of frost and ice across our campsite. I awake warm and toasty, happily snuggled deep in my sleeping bag, waiting for breakfast and saying to my son, "You got a campfire going yet?" After a couple of grunts from my son, who still doesn't realize how old his dad is, he replies, "Morning, Dad. You said last night that you were gonna' fix the first breakfast."

But that was last night in front of a warm, roaring campfire. He never listened to me that closely 10 years ago when he was 16. Why now? I had said I would make the first breakfast, just to show him how it's done up here in the great outdoors. And now I'm wishing I had played ignorant and said, "I don't know how to fix breakfast anymore...I'm getting old, need help; I'm sure glad you're here son or I'd starve for sure. Please fix breakfast for your old man, okay?"

***"LORD, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am" (Psalm 39:4).***

I drag myself out of my sleeping bag, dressing in so many layers of clothing I look like the Pillsbury Doughboy. Waddling out of the tent I am met with the most frightening thing you can confront in the mountains during winter-- **reality!** It's really, really, really cold! Surely God would not let me freeze to death here. I need to get a fire going quick! I am tempted to dive back into the tent and wait for lunch.



***"Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work..." (James 1:3-4).***

Have you ever yelled at a piece of wood? I mean frozen wood, frozen wood chips, frozen kindling? Have you ever prayed for a stick match to light?

Not doing so well with patience and forgetting I'm the big "mountain man," I get the gasoline can out of the truck, splash it over the wood, back off 20 feet and strike and throw that last match to the wood, yelling, "Burn, baby! Give me some heat!"

That gets the campfire burning pretty well. Then I open the ice chest, wanting to crawl inside because it's warmer in there than it is out here. But another dilemma faces me: how to thaw the pancake batter. Even the eggs are frozen enough to play nine-ball on any pool table back in town. Back in town? Restaurants? Yeah!! No, wait a minute. I can do this. All I need is to have patience and to stand a lot closer to the fire. As my backside begins to toast, I look around at the stark beauty of this winter wonderland God has created and allowed us to share.

***"Unto You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near" (Psalm 75:1). "Many, O LORD my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done; and Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to You in order; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered" (Psalm 40:5).***

While the eggs and pancake batter defrost next to the campfire, I begin noticing the faint, almost hushed pink and light orange on the horizon as the sun peeks over the edge of the world. I kneel in awe as I look from our mountain towards a horizon now brilliant with pink, yellow, orange, red, blue and green. The sun's top edge is only a sliver of radiant orange nudging a dark blue sky, but the colors radiating and emanating from it in all directions take my breath away. I am watching the birth of a brand-new day.

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*The sun's top edge is only a sliver of radiant orange nudging a dark blue sky, but the colors radiating and emanating from it in all directions take my breath away.*

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There are only short minutes to stare in wonder. Then the rising sun splits the sky with crimson arrows, and its rays momentarily blind my sight. Blinking my eyes to regain my vision, I realize it is time to slap some flapjacks on that heated griddle, along with some scrambled eggs and diced potatoes. I pour orange juice, and call my son. Being the great son he is, he offers to prepare breakfast the next morning, so I can stay in the warm tent. Yeah, sons are like that. "No problem, I'll handle it," I tell him. "I'll be up early tomorrow morning anyway, so I'll go ahead and fix breakfast again."



That night, after a great day of hiking around our wilderness, I explain what I'd experienced while watching the sunrise. The next morning we are both out of bed at the same time. We yell at the frozen wood for only a few seconds because we don't need a campfire. The cold doesn't bother us this morning. We are up to share the mountain sunrise together. With our arms across each other's shoulders we both feel warm as we kneel and watch the spectacular birth of that new day.

The same colors of pink, yellow, orange, red, blue and green flare and rise from the horizon. Radiating in brilliance, as if to herald the arrival of royalty, the sun's edge captures the harsh blackness of space and softly transforms it into the beautiful, soft blue of a morning sky.

***"O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth, who have set Your glory above the heavens!...When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man, that You are mindful of him...?" (Psalm 8:1, 3-4).***

Shoulder-to-shoulder, we kneel, humbled by what we see. As those many colors transform into bright blue sky, my son catches his breath and whispers, "Only God could create something as beautiful and awesome as this." I nod in agreement.



***"...The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth...Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm 33:5-6, 8-9).***

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## Does Arrogance Really Work?

By Robert Berendt

*The lowly house cat has what appears to be an arrogant demeanor. It seems to get what it wants from its unsuspecting owners. What lesson can Christians learn from the relationship between a cat and its owner?*



**W**HILE READING THE MORNING PAPER and enjoying a cup of coffee, Chester, my cat, decided it was time to be petted. He leaped up onto the counter, sat right in the middle of the paper and looked me in the eye as if to say "stroke me." And of course, I did just that. Still, I got no respect, not even an expression of thanks.

Most would agree that the house cat exudes an independence that borders on arrogance. A friend of mine who owns two cats told me that "dogs have owners, cats have staff." Just ask any cat lover, and he or she will ditto this observation. It's remarkable to watch how completely a cat can control its "staff." A cat demands certain feeding hours, specific foods and even a temperature-controlled environment. Only on rare occasions, does this produce a small token of acknowledgement from the feline dictator.

### Arrogance opposite of godliness

There is, however, no reason for arrogance for a servant of God. In fact, it is the opposite of the way of true godliness. Arrogance is the assumption of self-importance. In other words, it is the mind-set that the universe revolves around the self. It often intimidates others and destroys relationships.

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*Jesus came to serve and not to be served. It was He who washed the feet of His disciples and commanded them to do the same (John 13:14).*

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However, our Redeemer, Lord and Savior walked in this world to set an example for everyone who would follow Him. His life was one of honor, nobility, dignity and courage. Jesus came to serve and not to be served. It was He who washed the feet of His disciples and commanded them to do the same (John 13:14). It was He who gave up His glory to become flesh and die for our sins (John 17:5). And it was Jesus who told us to take the lower seat (Luke 14:8-9). Jesus taught by word and deed that the highest level of love Christians can exhibit is to lay down their lives for others (John 10:11; Mark

8:35). In the Gospel of Mark Jesus is quoted as saying He came to serve and not be served (Mark 10:43-45). You might say He did not view His disciples as "staff," but as fellow servants.

### More excellent way of life

The Creator God has revealed a way of life for humans to follow which will prepare them to one day inherit all He has created (Romans 8:16-17). This way of life decries a greedy, demanding, self-serving lifestyle. Instead, it is a way of service and love for others. Paul expresses this as the "more excellent way" in 1 Corinthians 12:31 and clarifies it in the following chapter. Here we read about the opposite of arrogance. This way of life produces people who are kind, longsuffering, patient, humble, not seeking their own and full of hope (1 Corinthians 13:1-8).

There is no room for arrogance in the life of a Christian. The value of one human being is immensely greater than the value of any animal. Eternal life with membership in the family of God is the ultimate destiny for those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21). The fact that one day those who humbly obey their Creator will become joint heirs with Christ is almost incomprehensible (1 Corinthians 2:9). The glimpse God gives should motivate us to strive to live godly lives.



Don't be arrogant like the lowly house cat. Walk humbly before God because an arrogant attitude cannot exist in the mind of one of God's "staff."

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### Virtual Christian Magazine Editorial

## Inside This Issue...

By Tom Damour

**I**N THIS MONTH'S ISSUE of *Virtual Christian Magazine*, a variety of articles have been compiled to help you to learn more about God's way of life. There is more than one way to learn about God, and it is our hope that as you read each article you will see this for yourself.

### When I die...

In his article, "[When I Die, Will I Go to Heaven?](#)," Gary Petty confronts a question which has long haunted mankind. This article shows what the Bible says about this crucial subject and exposes the commonly held misconceptions surrounding the fate of the dead.

As you read this article, vital truths will be revealed about the overall plan of God for the human race. For example Mr. Petty writes, "Now, let's look at what the apostle Paul writes to Christians in ancient Corinth in 1 Corinthians 15:22-23: 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.'"





Other scriptures show that Christ is the first of the "firstfruits" (Romans 8:29, James 1:18). The importance of what Paul taught concerning firstfruits is lost on most people because they do not observe the biblical Holy Days. Be sure to order your free copy of [God's Holy Day Plan](#) and learn what Paul meant when he said some would be included as the firstfruits of God at Christ's second coming.

### Earth is full of His goodness



Today's crime-ridden cities and our world of electronic gadgetry seem a far cry from the world Jerry Webb describes in his article; "[The Earth Is Full of His Goodness](#)." In this straight-from-the-shoulder article, Mr. Webb reminds us that God is as near as the next sunrise or sunset. Here is just an example of what you will find in Mr. Webb's article: "Shoulder-to-shoulder we kneel, humbled by what we see. As those many colors transform into bright blue sky, my son catches his breath and whispers, 'Only God could create something as beautiful and awesome as this.' I nod in agreement."

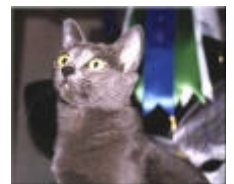
### Stan Musial

It has often been said that sports create character. While there may be some truth to this statement, it is more accurate to say sports *reveal* the character of a person. John Ross Schroeder hammers this point home in his article, "[The Story of Stan Musial](#)."

Stan Musial is truly a man of character. The wonderful game of baseball did not produce his character, but served as a platform for him to demonstrate it. Asked about the importance of professional athletes setting the example for today's youth, Mr. Musial said, "Athletes and ballplayers have to be the role models, and these young fans look up to the athletes, not only in baseball, but football, golf... So I think their responsibility in that regard is not to be involved in drugs." I'm sure you will agree with me that Mr. Musial is the kind of person we want our children to emulate.

### Arrogance

Robert Berendt, in his lighthearted approach to a very important subject, illustrates that arrogance in one species is not a fitting example for those called by God. Learn from the lowly house cat that arrogance, while appearing to work for our feline friends, is the antithesis of the Christian way of life. In his article, "[Does Arrogance Really Work?](#)," Mr. Berendt writes, "Our Redeemer, Lord and Savior walked in this world to set an example for everyone who would follow Him. His life was one of honor, nobility, dignity and courage. Jesus came to serve and not to be served."



God is preparing a people for Himself. Each issue of *Virtual Christian Magazine* is designed to help you in developing the very character of the Creator. It is our hope that you will enjoy reading this month's issue as much as we enjoy bringing it to you.

## Letters to the Editor

### [St. Valentine, Cupid and Jesus Christ](#)



Thought you'd want to know we linked your article, "St. Valentine, Cupid and Jesus Christ" to our TV station's Web site (<http://www.WTVM.com>) Friday. I'm a UCG member involved in producing newscasts for the station. Your article was mentioned briefly on the air as an "alternative view" on Valentine's Day to the hype commonly heard. (I invited my pastor to do a live phone interview on the topic, but he had another commitment.)

-- Richard Burkard, Columbus, GA

### [Guilt Addict](#)



I loved the article on guilt in the February 2002 issue, and much of it is a story of me. I try to keep centered on God by reminding myself that "even though whoever doesn't love me or considers me a family misfit, God is the only one who matters!"

I think married women especially have a problem with this since some of us think that we should never tell our husbands "no" for fear of not being submissive! Thankfully the church has been helpful in dispelling that particular guilt inducer.

-- Marilyn Braley



I just want to thank Ms. Treadway for writing "I Am a Guilt Addict." I appreciate her candor and willingness to share her childhood experiences which led to an adulthood filled with grief. I am beginning to understand what living with guilt does to a person--basically it cuts off your peace in God and Christ. It's true, it grieves the Spirit and should not be seen as a virtue, rather a character flaw than needs to be overcome.

Thanks for sharing... Ms. Treadway's openness should be commended. There are some people who need to say "no" more, and many who need to start saying "yes" or asking how they can help.

Thanks again!

-- JG

## Praise



I was just searching our Web site and was reading some of the articles in the Virtual Christian Magazine. Can we have this magazine sent to our home? Thanks.

*We are sorry, but VCM is only available on the Internet. You are, however, free to print the articles you find on the site for your personal use. Additionally, you may find printed booklets and magazines that can be delivered to your home free of charge, at the Web site or by going to [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org).*



I print VCM and make copies for church friends. Thank you very much for all of your service to God's people!

-- VB

## Prayers for a Prisoner



Three cheers for the prison article. We need more like this. I was wiping tears away since I can strongly identify having had a son in prison. Thankfully there are many like my son who learn their lessons and are productive members of society. He has been out nearly three years, and it is heartwarming to receive Mother's Day cards thanking me for all I have done for him and saying that he couldn't ask for better parents!

He always said that those who are visited and receive mail do better. The average inmate receives a letter every two months and very few visits. This does not help them to connect to the real world which I knew was a very important need for my son. I would also recommend keeping up with prison issues in order to understand what your inmate is going through. The prison guards are aware of those who have family support and those who don't. Thank God my son changed. I can't imagine the heartache of a parent whose son doesn't. Knowing his fantastic attitude, along with God's help was the only thing that kept me going through those horrible years!

-- M.B.

## But You Look So Healthy!



I just wanted to write to let you know how much I appreciated reading your article on meaningful hope for Christians with chronic illnesses. I live with a serious, chronic illness. And my faith has grown even stronger through so much suffering. Thank you so much for posting this article on-line. May God bless you.

-- Joyce