



"No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you."—John 15:15

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Seven Principles That Lead to Success

By Jonathan Westrick

None of us wants to fail and there are things we can do to defeat failure. Following these seven steps can lead you on your journey to success!



DO YOU WANT TO BE A MISERABLE FAILURE? Of course not! No one wants to fail, but many have not attained the level of success that they desire. Why not? Because being successful involves following a certain set of principles that many have neglected. In the following paragraphs I have outlined seven principles that were originally defined by the founder of the Worldwide Church of God, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. If applied, these principles can lead you on the pathway to success.

1. Set the right goals

Before you can even begin to work toward being successful, you must set the right goal. Setting the right goal gives you direction and purpose.

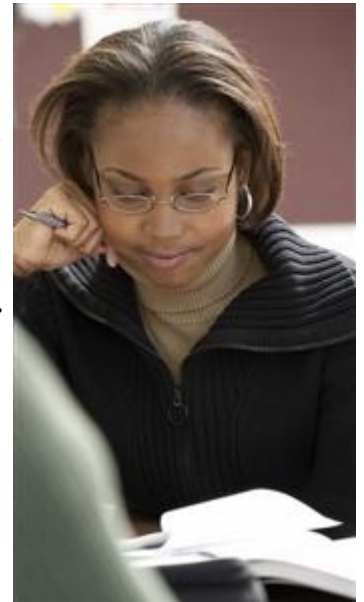
Imagine that you decide to take a trip. Would it make sense to jump in your car and drive, ignoring road signs or directions? It is possible that you might discover an interesting place, but you also might drive around in circles. Would it not be much better to examine a map and consider all of your options and then develop a plan?

To reach physical and spiritual success, you must begin with the right goals. As Christians, our main goal should be to seek first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). After all, our main duty is to fear God and obey His laws (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

2. Education and preparation

In order to be successful, you must make needed preparations and acquire the necessary education that is required to reach your goal. For example, one of my goals is to become an elementary school teacher. Not only does this involve being knowledgeable about the material I will be teaching, but it also requires that I understand how to work with and motivate children.

Another aspect of becoming educated is to find the best sources to gather information. As we strive to become better Christians, our best source in acquiring knowledge is the Bible. Second Timothy 2:15 implies that we are to study to be approved by God. We also find several proverbs that urge us to gain wisdom and understanding (Proverbs 1:5; 9:9; 16:21-23). Wisdom can be gained by requesting counsel from those who are qualified to give advice (Proverbs 15:22).



3. Maintain health

This principle of achieving and preserving good health—physically, mentally and emotionally—is one that can easily be neglected, but it is vital. Can you be truly successful if you are continually ill? Reaching your goals will become difficult if you feel sick or tired much of the time.

Or you may reach a particular goal that you have sought, but if you are in poor health, you will not benefit as much from reaching that goal. There are those who are financially well-off but their lives are very stressful and they have severe health problems. They have indeed been successful in many ways, but unfortunately poor health is preventing them from fully enjoying it.

Glorifying God in our bodies includes maintaining our health (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Achieving good health requires eating properly and getting the right amount of exercise and sleep that your body needs. Since our main goal should be to enter into God's Kingdom, then this principle would also

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include maintaining our spiritual health. We can accomplish this through prayer, Bible study, meditation and occasional fasting.

4. Drive

As with your car, drive is what propels you forward so that you can achieve your goals. It is essential to have zeal and determination if you are to be successful. While pursuing your goals, it is easy to become lethargic and lose energy when you are tired or things seem to be going wrong. But we are admonished to remain diligent and work with all of our might (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

5. Endurance

To be successful at reaching your goals, you should never give up. Most of us have felt like quitting at one time or another, and unless you are steadfast, it is easy to succumb to the temptation to simply give up. But in order to experience success, you must learn to endure trials and difficulties in order to persevere.

Those who run marathon races provide a great example of endurance. Despite pain and fatigue, they push forward and, in many cases, finish what they have started. Our Christian life is compared to running a race (1 Corinthians 9:24; Hebrews 12:1). To successfully enter into God's Kingdom, we must endure until the end (Matthew 24:13). Despite the trials and setbacks in our struggle against Satan and our human nature, we should always remember that God will always be there to see us through (Hebrews 13:5).



6. Resourcefulness

While pursuing your goals, you are sure to face obstacles. Resourcefulness, which includes imagination, creativity and inventiveness, is the principle that helps us cope with emergencies and unexpected setbacks. Successful people have usually "failed" many times, but they keep trying, using new approaches. Though they are fictional characters, superheroes are often good examples of characters that use resourcefulness. No matter what crises they face, they always manage to find a solution to their dilemmas, such as a plan of escape.

In our lives not everything is going to go as planned, and it is wise to have a "plan B" to work around unexpected obstacles. In our Christian lives we can use resourcefulness to confront the temptations of this life. Christ admonishes us to be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16).

7. Reliance on God

The last principle is the most important one of all. This seventh principle is to acknowledge God and Jesus Christ in our daily lives and to include Them in all our endeavors (Proverbs 3:6). This means praying for guidance and help in everything and trusting that God will answer in the ways that are best. We are to put God first in our lives and to love Him with all our heart, soul and might (Deuteronomy 6:5). You need to have God in the picture if you are to be truly successful. Remember that the most important goal is to be in God's Kingdom—God's family—and that certainly requires God's constant guidance and help.

It is easy to become lethargic and lose energy when you are tired or things seem to be going wrong.

These seven principles show the way to true success. By following these principles, there is no need to be a miserable failure. Instead, you can be successful in this life and, more importantly, reach your awesome potential in the next life!

The Golden Rule

By Jim Columbia

Boy Scouts of America was formed because of "one good turn." If we all practiced the Golden Rule, what a wonderful world we would live in.



THE GOLDEN RULE is probably the most well-known thing Jesus ever said. If you were to ask the common man on the street what the Golden Rule is, he could probably tell you.

Matthew 7:12 says, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

It is the summit of ethics, behavior, righteousness and godliness. It is a very simple explanation of God's love, and yet the whole law rests upon it.

The Golden Rule shows us exactly how God's heart longs for us to live. It reveals the heart of God. It is concerned with true love and with positive, active behavior. It is all about looking, searching and seeking for ways to do the good to others that you would want done to you.

A Boy Scout story

When I was about 12 years old, I was a Cub Scout just about to become a Boy Scout. The Boy Scouts were having a huge jamboree in the area. I was ready to step up into the Boy Scouts and was invited to the jamboree with several other Cub Scouts. When I arrived with my older brother, who was already a Boy Scout, I thought I would just camp and tag along with him. Boy, was I wrong. We were separated immediately and he went off with his own troop.

There were thousands of Boy Scouts, and the small number of Cub Scouts looked like a handful of blueberries in a sea of green peas. It just got more interesting for me from there. I had arrived hungry and expected to eat what my brother and I had packed, but they took all of our food and said I had to fend for myself and also find a place to sleep.

The Golden Rule shows us exactly how God's heart longs for us to live.

The Boy Scouts were in groups of four; and I, like the other Cub Scouts, was told to introduce myself to a group of scouts and convince them to take me into their camp, share their food and allow me to participate with them in all of their activities. No Cub Scouts were allowed to stay together.

They told us to be on our way. We stuck out like sore thumbs. As I started out, I had to figure out what approach I would take. I spotted a fairly secluded camp down near a clump of trees. It wasn't too far from the lake. It looked good to me. As I cautiously approached, I noticed the camp was empty. I crept closer and noticed a pot on the rocks next to the campfire. That pot was full of warm SpaghettiOs and a big spoon, and I was starving!! So, I dropped my pack and began to eat as much and as fast as I could shovel it in. It was so good!

Then in an instant, someone jerked me up by the scruff of my neck. The big kid that had grabbed me said, "Just what do you think you're doing, boy? You're dead!!" Then another guy said, "He was stealing our grub, let's cut him up and use him for fish bait." This big scout, who was still holding me clear off the ground, asked the other scouts what they wanted to do to me. One of the others answered that they should hang me. Then they decided to let me explain.

I told them that we had been turned loose out here to fend for ourselves and find a group to camp with and I liked their nice secluded spot that was close to the water. The food was ready, so I just helped myself. I told them that I would have asked, but nobody was around. The big scout said that if anyone my size (and I was *really* short) had enough guts to steal their grub, they'd be proud to have him in their camp with them. They were very kind and good to me throughout the whole campout. As it turned out, they even knew my brother.

The big scout's name was Jim, and this was his and another older scout's last jamboree. They had both just been drafted to Vietnam. It was sad to learn that those four scouts that I spent those three days with all ended up in Vietnam. Two didn't come home. Jim was wounded, captured and tortured. I talked to him once after he came home, but he wasn't the same anymore. I will always remember the kindness and gentleness of those four scouts—especially Jim—and how they took care of me.

If everyone were committed to following and living by the Golden Rule, it would bring about a world of peace overnight, because it makes all men equal.

Micah 6:8 says, “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”

What can you do? Here are some more suggestions:

1. Work for true justice as much as possible in this life. Insist that people be treated justly in all situations.
2. Have and express real love and genuine concern for one another's well-being.
3. Teach and live the Golden Rule because the author is Jesus Christ and it's the whole law, not just a saying.

If everyone were committed to following and living by the Golden Rule, it would bring about a world of peace overnight, because it makes all men equal. God is not a respecter of persons!! He loves us all!

The beginnings of scouting

Have you ever heard how the Boy Scouts of America got started in the United States? It is the story of a good turn!

One day in 1909 in London, England, an American visitor, William D. Boyce, lost his way in a dense fog. He stopped under a street lamp and tried to figure out where he was. A boy approached him and asked if he could be of help. “You certainly can,” said Boyce. He told the boy that he wanted to find a certain business office in the center of the city. “I'll take you there,” said the boy.

When they got to the destination, Mr. Boyce reached into his pocket for a tip, but the boy stopped him. “No thank you, sir. I am a scout. I won't take anything for helping.”

“A scout? And what might that be?” asked Boyce. The boy told the American about himself and about his brother scouts. Boyce became very interested.



After finishing his errand, he had the boy take him to the British Scouting office. At the office, Boyce met Lord Robert Baden-Powell, the famous British general who had founded the scouting movement in Great Britain. Boyce was so impressed with what he learned that he decided to bring scouting home with him.

On February 8, 1910, Boyce and a group of outstanding leaders founded the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). From that day forth, scouts have celebrated

February 8 as the birthday of scouting for boys in the United States.

What happened to the boy who helped Mr. Boyce find his way in the fog? No one knows. He had neither asked for money nor given his name, but he will never be forgotten. His good turn helped bring the Scouting movement to the United States. In the British Scout Training Center at Gilwell Park, England, scouts from the United States erected a statue of an American buffalo in honor of this unknown scout.

One “good turn” to one man became a good turn to millions of American boys. Such is the power of a good turn. The BSA has continued to consistently teach good values. They are written in the scout oath, law, motto and slogan. According to the scout law, a scout is to be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent.

Scout motto: Be prepared

The Boy Scouts are not just a camping club. They have three aims:

1. Build moral strength and character.
2. Foster citizenship.
3. Develop fitness.

These three aims are the bedrock of the American Scouting movement. They represent the long-term outcomes we most want for every boy. It is the mission of the Boy Scouts of America to serve others by helping to instill values in young people and in other ways prepare them to make ethical choices over their lifetime in achieving their full potential.

There is a girl in our congregation who lives by the same ideals and is a Girl Scout. One way she serves is by making sure there is enough food for those who are in need. This is a great example of going above and beyond the call of duty to do good things to others. All who contribute also fulfill that duty.

Scout oath

The Boy Scout oath reads:

“On my honor I will do my best
To do my duty to God and my country
and to obey the Scout Law;
To help other people at all times;
To keep myself physically strong,
mentally awake, and morally straight.”



In this oath, there are four things that are really meaty:

1. To help other people at all times.
2. To keep myself physically strong.
3. To keep myself mentally awake.
4. To keep myself morally straight.

If we can have these things ingrained in us and we in turn ingrain them into our children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and so on, then we will have gained and left a better generation.

When Boyce formed the Boy Scouts, he said the purpose would be: “To promote, through organization and cooperation with other agencies, the ability of boys to do things for themselves and others, to train them in Scout craft and to teach them patriotism, courage, self-reliance and kindred virtues, using the methods which are in common use by Boy Scouts.”

One good turn to one man became a good turn to millions for American boys. I know my experience influenced the way I react when I see someone in need, partly because I know how it feels to be in need. Such is the power of a good turn. Hence the Scout slogan: “Do A Good Turn Daily!” It sounds a lot like the Golden Rule that Christ taught.

Circle of Friends

By Amy Stephens

Friendships—how can we build our lives. We learn and become



ing a friend is important to hips.

I HAVE A PIECE OF ARTWORK, in the form of a candleholder, called the “Circle of Friends.” It is a sculpture of tribal men hovering over a fire, arms locked together. The symbolism is that they represent each “family,” arms locked together supporting each other, forming an interwoven group that protects the “fire” burning in their midst.

It is only when we allow ourselves to be touched by the genuine concern and affection of others that we can learn how to truly reflect that same character and become a friend ourselves.

The other day I heard a radio preacher saying that friendship has to be given away. What he was saying is that being a true Christian, one who shows love to others, is exemplified in our having friends and being a friend to others. The first step to being that friend is to give of yourself. Not in a tell-all, expose-your-vulnerabilities way, but by allowing others to be a friend to you. Doing for others can be easy—it’s when you have to allow someone to do for you that you can learn about the “circle of friendship.” Sharing your life with others can be difficult. But it is only when we allow ourselves to be touched by the genuine concern and affection of others that we can learn how to truly reflect that same character and become a friend ourselves. Giving of ourselves, sharing our time, investing our emotions—this reflects true friendship.

John 15:12-14 (New International Version throughout): “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.”

Maybe we hesitate because we are insecure with ourselves, or we fear rejection or emotional injury. Maybe we are using a measuring stick to judge others, or ourselves, that isolates us based on how everyone measures up. Sometimes we make assumptions based on experiences, previous encounters, rumors or appearances. This can greatly limit us. We should examine ourselves and try to find what is keeping us from expressing and sharing the love that God and Jesus Christ have expressed to us.

John 15:14-15: “You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

We need human interaction. Some people need communication, some require physical touch. For others, just being around people is enough to make them feel loved. As brethren we should be reaching out to each other, expressing our love to one another. We should be making an effort to know each other’s needs. What would make a brother or sister feel loved? Once you have this answer, make it happen. This is how God says we will be known, by our love for one another.



John 13:34-35: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

It is easy in our society to be enveloped in our work and daily activities, and forget to build the strong friendships in faith that will—if allowed to grow in a loving and godly manner—encourage and strengthen us. God instructs us to build bonds that endure hardships and disappointments and that share in the joys and blessings, as they will, in the end, strengthen the entire body of Christ.



Ecclesiastes 4:9-12: "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Point of Grace performs a song called "Circle of Friends." Its lyrics reflect this attitude of friendship (words and music by Douglas McKelvey and Steve Siler).

We were made to love and be loved
But the price this world demands will cost you far too much
I spent so many years just trying to fit in
Now I've found a place in this circle of friends

In a circle of friends we have one Father
In a circle of friends we share this prayer
that every orphaned soul will know
and all will enter in
to the shelter of this circle of friends
If you weep, I will weep with you
If you sing for joy, the rest of us will lift our voices too
But no matter what you feel inside there's no need to pretend
That's the way it is in this circle of friends

In a circle of friends
We have one Father
In a circle of friends we share this prayer
That we'll gather together no matter how the highway bends
I will not lose this circle of friends...

Friendships take effort, and it is sometimes difficult to know how to get started. There are many ways, but here are a few suggestions:

- Spend time getting to know each other.
- Have meals together.
- Go on outings together.
- Talk to each other.
- E-mail or write one another.
- Talk about something that happened at work this week.
- Share a joke or funny story.
- Have friends to your home.
- Meet at a park.
- Go for a walk.
- Pick up a gift or item that reminded you of them or something you think they would like and give it to them.
- Pray for them.

- Laugh with them.
- Make time for them.

I am sure that you can think of many other ideas to add to this list. Taking these concrete steps can help us build relationships. We need to build friendships that will strengthen and unify us as the body of Christ. We need our “Circle of Friends.”

For more helpful information on strengthening relationships in your life, read our free booklet [Making Life Work](#).

Star Wars III: What Makes a Hero Go Bad?

By John Gould

As the Star Wars series finally comes to a close, what lessons can we learn from its story line and characters?



BEGINNING WITH THE INITIAL OFFERING of the saga of *Star Wars* in 1977, we watched with fascination as Luke Skywalker battled the evil Darth Vader. In many ways the six episodes were as suspenseful as an old-time serial melodrama. If you’re an older person, you may recall the ones they showed, 10 minutes at a time, in the local movie theater. They kept us on the edge of our seats, and we came back to the theater over and over again until we saw the end of the series.

Throughout history, people have loved epic stories with heroes. Some conquered dragons and saved maidens from sure death. Others fought the invading enemies; and even if their own lives were lost, they saved the lives of many others. Some followed complex paths of one demanding task after another, until the authorities were satisfied that the hero was really a prince in disguise, and gave him a crown.

What happens, then, when such a hero turns bad? That is the underlying theme and question behind the *Star Wars* saga.

To the cynic, *Star Wars* is either a massive effort to make money in the name of entertainment or it is a gigantic retelling of a heroic epic based on the continual struggle between good and evil.



You make the choice!

The six-part epic is based on a simple premise: We are responsible for the choices we make. Almost all literature has a theme of choosing between good and evil. This probably goes back to our original parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden. When they ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge (Genesis 3), they accepted both good and evil into their lives.

Anakin Skywalker was born to a woman of lowly status, who supposedly had never had sexual relations with a man. As a child, he gains knowledge and skills far beyond his own contemporaries, and is recognized as having the potential to “bring balance to the Force.” In other words, he is perceived as a “hero” but, as yet, an untrained one.

As he reaches the stage of young manhood, he is tempted to use his powers in a situation, that is above the law, thus becoming a law-breaker, all as a result of his anger at the death of his mother. In seeking justice, he oversteps the bounds of social responsibility, and turns to vengeance. The act is an irreversible one, in which he eventually turns away from the path of truth (including the path of protecting the weak from evil) to a life of focusing on gain and self.

There is a moral to the story of Anakin Skywalker: “The choices we make define our destiny.”

In the Bible, Judas Iscariot faced a similar crisis. Judas was chosen by Jesus to become one of His closest companions. He participated in the early evangelistic tours—God’s miracles and healing went with them, and even demons were subject to their commands. He was even treasurer of the group, but the power of such responsibility turned his heart; he became a thief and eventually betrayed Jesus.

Star Wars IV follows a new hero, Luke, the son of Anakin, from a humble beginning to learning the ways of truth and the difference between right and wrong. He is the hero that his father could have been. He sticks with obedience to law and a commitment to restore right behavior in the universe. He then becomes a Jedi knight, and a champion who fights against the evil that seduced his father.

In the end, there is a battle, a contest of the will between Luke and what his father had become. It is a struggle, and there is temptation. He can either die or turn over to a lust for power, control and selfishness. This is what George Lucas has termed the “dark side of the Force.”

There is a moral to the story of Anakin Skywalker: “The choices we make define our destiny.” It is equally true regarding our human potential. God created mankind with free moral agency. He instructed the first man and woman to follow His ways and laws or face death. And today He presents us with the same choice. If we will submit to Him, and follow His plan for success, we will eventually become like God.



Behind this story, we realize Anakin was strongly influenced by his mentors. Both Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon had strong streaks of independence! We see this same streak of independence repeats itself—a resistance to listen to the advice of friends or to the wise opinions of the Jedi Council. Eventually, Anakin decides to allow the dark side, which is in reality his own selfishness, into his life.

This process bears a strong resemblance to what turned Lucifer from a beautiful angel of light into the devil, a process that was revealed when he decided, “I will be[come] like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:14).

At the end of episode VI, Luke gains the self-control needed to become and remain a successful Jedi knight. He seems destined to become a leader of a new dynasty, a family of rulers that will serve for the greater good of all life.

It is much like the promise that God made to humanity in Revelation 19 There is a hero, Jesus the Messiah, riding in from outer space (heaven) to fight against evil and restoring good to all humanity. He then leads us toward a wonderful world tomorrow.

Recommended reading

For information on how to stick to the light side of God’s real plan for you, read our free booklets [*What Is Your Destiny? The Book of Revelation Unveiled*](#) and [*You Can Have Living Faith*](#).

The Seed Savers

By Colin Ogles

People all over the world save the seeds of their favorite fruits and vegetables. As important as this is, the role of spiritual seed savers is even more valuable.



SAVING YOUR OWN HOMEGROWN SEEDS, whether of vegetables or flowers, is very rewarding. It must be done with care, of course, to ensure that each strain is kept true to type. I find that the seeds harvested from my garden germinate much better than commercially produced seed.

All over the world individuals, seed saver clubs and farmers nurture and multiply seed. The reasons for this are many and varied. For some it is an absolute necessity. For others, it is to keep treasured heirloom varieties from being lost forever. Fullness of flavor and reliability is another good reason to retain these tried-and-true types.

It is a God-given blessing for us to be able to save our own seed. We find this “God-given right” in the first book of the Bible. “Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth’; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:11-12).



I was therefore very disturbed to discover that the ability to save our own seed may be taken from us by stealth. I was shocked and dismayed. How could this be? Read on. Big multinational seed producers have developed, perfected and patented a technology called zero reseeding (opponents call them terminator or suicide seeds). This technology prevents the seed they sell from reproducing fertile seed. In other words, this seed has been deliberately corrupted. It is done to

prevent the new genetically modified plants, such as wheat and rice, from being utilized by others. Now, *every* seed-bearing plant or tree can be made to produce infertile seed.

It's just too awful to think what would happen if these big seed producers were to have a crop failure and be unable to supply their customers with seed.

Unfortunately, pollen from these crops can contaminate the seed of unsuspecting farmers and growers nearby. In turn, their crops become less fertile and eventually sterile. As this contamination spreads, more and more growers will have to purchase their seed from these biotech seed producers. But farmers in third world countries are often too poor to buy seed. They save and breed their own seed, which is more suitable for the often-marginal land they farm. Also, it is estimated that these farmers feed up to 1.4 billion people.

It's just too awful to think what would happen if these big seed producers were to have a crop failure and be unable to supply their customers with seed. (Further information about terminator seeds can be found at www.etcgroup.org.) Perhaps this new technology might contribute to some of the famines prophesied by Jesus Christ in Matthew 24. Only time will tell.

Spiritual seeds

The seed savers I know are generous people who enthusiastically share their seed with others. For Christians, God puts it this way: "Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God" (2 Corinthians 9:10-11).

Regarding these verses, *Barnes' Commentary* says: "The allusion is to the act of sowing seed. The idea is, that when a man scatters seed in his field God provides him with the means of sowing again. He not only gives him a harvest to supply his needs, but he blesses him also in giving him the ability to sow again. Such was the benevolent wish of Paul. He desired not only that God would supply their returning needs, but he desired also that he would give them the ability to do good again; that he would furnish them the means of future benevolence."

God is sowing, through His Church, the gospel (good news) of the Kingdom of God to all who will listen and understand.

The idea of the seed savers is to multiply and share good seed. Jesus commissioned His disciples to likewise go and share the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:2). In Matthew 13:11, Jesus tells us plainly that only His disciples will understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. The implication is that, to be a disciple, we need to come to an understanding of this mystery.

Seeds of the gospel of the Kingdom

In Matthew 13:19 Jesus is explaining the parable of the sower. "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart." The seed spoken of here is the gospel of the Kingdom of God. But notice what it says—the seeds can be taken from us. How? By failing to understand what God's Kingdom is all about. In verse 23, Jesus explains that understanding the Kingdom is necessary before we can bear fruit. "But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and

understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”



God is sowing, through His Church, the gospel (good news) of the Kingdom of God to all who will listen and understand. Understanding what this kingdom is all about is absolutely necessary for us. Peter, writing to believers, points out that we must be born again, “not of corruptible seed but incorruptible” (1 Peter 1:23) if we are to be in God’s Kingdom. The corrupted seed that comes from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil can never bring life, but the incorruptible seed of God’s Kingdom will bring life, when it is understood and acted

upon.

Another aim of seed savers is to multiply seed that is true to type. God too, desires a crop of true to type children. They are to have all the characteristics of the seed of the tree of life, Jesus Christ. “And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man” (1 Corinthians 15:49).

It is a God-given blessing for us to be able to save our own seed.

Being born again not of corruptible “seed” but of incorruptible “seed” is embodied in the message of the Kingdom of God. In the gospel of the Kingdom lies the meaning of salvation and our destiny. It’s the good news brought to us by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

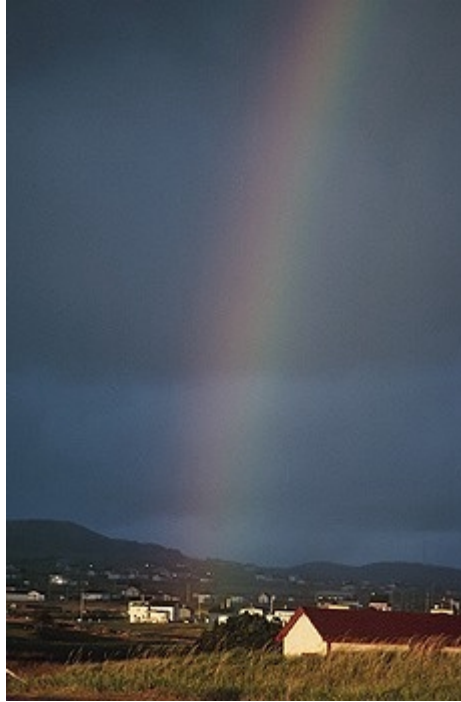
Recommended reading

Before we can believe, we need to understand what this gospel of the Kingdom of God is all about. We need to know why it’s so important that we believe in it and act upon it. In this gospel are the seeds of truth that we need to treasure and plant in our hearts and minds. The booklet [The Gospel of the Kingdom](#) explores the biblical answers. Begin your voyage of discovery into the mystery of the Kingdom of God.

Why Rainbows?

By Jim Anderson

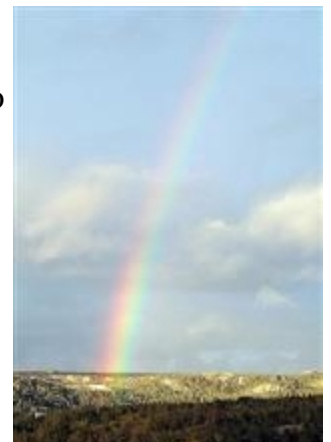
Are rainbows just pretty reflections we see in the sky after it rains? Or is there something more to them? God's creation holds many designs and messages.



WHY DID GOD MAKE RAINBOWS? No doubt it was partly to bless us with a wonderful visual treat, but the Bible tells us that God gave it as a token or sign of one of His covenants with mankind. For centuries, rainbows have been considered a symbol of prosperity, peace and hope. For some they have represented a false hope. Take, for instance, rainbow chasers, looking for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. This pot of gold can be representative of the many things we go after in life.

But the rainbow has a genuine and important significance. Let's look at Genesis and pick up where the Flood had just ended and God spoke to Noah.

“And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said; This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations. I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh” (Genesis 9:11-15, King James Version).



Notice that God called it “My bow,” although it came to be known as a “rainbow.” In Revelation 4:3 we read: “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.” (See also Ezekiel 1:28.) So God had a “bow” in heaven long before the Noachian Flood.

God had a special purpose for putting it here on earth; it is a symbol God gave to the world. Although we understand what takes place scientifically—the refraction of light through raindrops—God created everything, including the laws of science. (But how does one explain a “rainbow” in heaven? I doubt there was any rain over God’s throne.)

It may have been terrifying to the people of the earth to have water falling from the sky.

His bow

God gave us something from His very throne as a sign of His covenant. The rainbow promises us that mankind will never again be destroyed with a flood.

“And, behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die” (Genesis 6:17).

It is possible that it had not rained until that time, but that the earth itself had always provided the water.



Notice Genesis 2:5-6: “...Before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.” So it seems possible that from the time of Adam and Eve, and even up until Noah’s time, rain had not been seen. It may have been terrifying to the people of the earth to have water falling from the sky. Therefore, there may not have been a rainbow before the Flood. God changed the weather from apparently a mere mist to weather that included rain.

Yes, God was willing to share something from His very throne as a sign of His covenant (promise) with mankind, that He would not destroy the world in this way again.

Rainbows aren’t just pretty; they have a special significance that points us to God. I hope this knowledge will help you to better appreciate just how special God’s bow, the rainbow, truly is.

Jesus Christ used the example of Noah to reveal attitudes that would predominate near the end. To learn more, read our free booklet [Are We Living in the Time of the End?](#)

Letters to the Editor

[“The Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ”](#)



I am puzzled. If heaven is just now empty apart from God as I got from these two articles, why does it say in Luke 23:43, “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise”?

Thank you. If you have interpreted this correctly, it is the clearest explanation of Revelation I have ever read. But obviously the above point concerns me.

May you all have abundant lives in Christ.

— Mary S.

Thank you for your feedback and your question. Most people mistakenly assume that the thief was “saved” when Jesus said to him: “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). Two important principles of Bible study are to read a difficult-to-understand verse in its context and then in the broader context of the entire Bible. The meaning of this verse must agree with the rest of the Bible, for “the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

So let’s look at the context in which Christ made this statement. He was replying to the thief’s plea, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom” (Luke 23:42). Obviously, then, “paradise” means the Kingdom of God—not heaven, a meaning that people attempt to read into verse 43.

What does a broader context of the entire Bible tell us? The Kingdom referred to is the rule of God’s government over the entire earth, with Christ as its King. Who will enter that Kingdom? The “sheep” of His flock, or Christians, will inherit the Kingdom at the return of Christ (Matthew 25:31-34; Daniel 7:27). Human beings, “flesh and blood,” cannot inherit that Kingdom, only those converted and remaining faithful in their obedient service to God (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

It is unreasonable to think that the thief was instantly converted. He may have been sorrowful for his mistakes, but he did not have the opportunity to seek baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit (which comes through prayer and the laying on of hands by God’s ministry). Moreover, he had no opportunity to live a life of obedience to God—all aspects of the biblically revealed process of conversion. Contrary to stories people tell of “deathbed repentance,” conversion does not occur instantaneously. The thief merely made a positive comment about Jesus Christ, and Christ spoke comforting words to him in return.

We also need to answer this question: Did Jesus Himself enter “paradise” that day? By His own mouth, He was in the grave for the next three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40). This, in itself, tells you that the thief did not join Christ anywhere that day. After being resurrected,

Christ told Mary Magdalene, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father...’” (John 20:17).

What, then, is the accurate way to understand what Christ said to the thief? The New King James Version reads, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” However, the Greek text of the Scriptures has no punctuation; translators added it, thinking to smooth out the text. In this instance, they misplaced the punctuation due to a lack of understanding of the above factors.

If we simply delete the comma after “you” and instead place it after “today,” the meaning changes significantly—and agrees with the rest of the Bible. It reads, “Assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with me in Paradise.” Christ gave the thief the absolute promise on the day they were dying that he would (eventually, but not that same day) be with Christ in His Father’s Kingdom.

Our booklets [The Gospel of the Kingdom](#), [What Happens After Death?](#) and [Transforming Your Life—The Process of Conversion](#) add more information about these topics. Thanks again for your feedback and if we can be of any further assistance to you, please feel free to contact us.

Some feedback messages are edited for space and/or clarity