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*"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."—Matthew 7:13-14*

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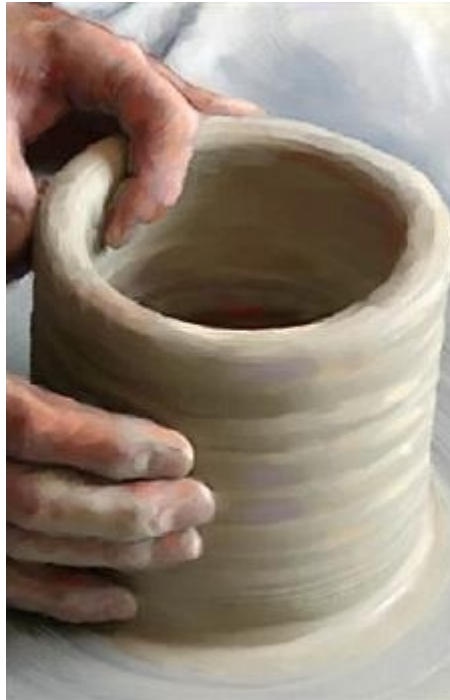
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## Overcoming Adversity Requires Perseverance

By Rod Hall

*While mustering human perseverance can pay off, most people are still not as successful as they could be because they fail to utilize one additional critical key in becoming a successful overcomer. Do you have what it takes?*



**T**HERE IS NO QUESTION that adversity and setbacks will come in life. How you handle them makes all the difference between success and failure. When complications, obstacles or unexpected circumstances appear to block your path, you must be equipped with resourcefulness and perseverance to solve each problem. Being determined to find a way over, under, around or through the obstacle requires “stick-to-itiveness,” or perseverance! You can move mountains, one truckload at a time if your level of resolve remains strong.

As radio talk show host Dr. Laura Schlessinger said, “We don’t find meaning in our lives from the lack of challenges or even misery. We find meaning in our lives by how we face these challenges.”



### Fighting the battles

Just after becoming prime minister of Britain, Winston Churchill addressed Parliament on May 13, 1940. In his first address as prime minister, he soberly described the Nazi threat and rallied his people to face the darkest days of World War II with tenacity and perseverance:

“I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined this government: I have nothing to offer but toil, tears and sweat. We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many months of struggle and suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war by sea, land and air with all our might and with all the strength God can give us...That is our policy. You ask, what is our goal? I can answer in one word. It is victory — victory, at all costs, victory in spite of all terror — victory, however long and hard the road may be, for without victory there is no survival” (William Manchester, *The Caged Lion*, Michael Joseph, London, 1988, pp. 682-683).

With resolute, tenacious courage and perseverance, the British people rallied behind their leader. June 4, 1940, after the major defeat at Dunkirk, Churchill announced to his countrymen, “We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France. We shall fight on the sea and the oceans. We shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air. We shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches. We shall fight on the hills. We shall fight in the fields and in the streets. We shall never surrender” (ibid., pp. 683-684). Against all odds the British people did fight with perseverance and, after the long hard Battle of Britain, they emerged victorious.



Some two decades earlier American President Calvin Coolidge also recognized the importance of persistent perseverance: “Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.”

But human effort alone is not enough. Most people never stop to realize that there is additional help available from a truly omnipotent source.

### **Do you have what it takes?**

While mustering human perseverance can pay off, most people are still not as successful as they could be, because they fail to utilize one additional critical key in becoming a successful overcomer—God’s help and backing. On our own, even with extraordinary effort like that exhibited by the British people, we do not have everything it takes to learn from and master the challenges of life (John 15:4-5).

People trying to exist without the living Jesus Christ in their lives are missing the most practical and valuable asset available. God’s help and backing can produce major physical, mental, financial and spiritual dividends.

I am not referring to blind faith without any personal effort. We need to actively work to overcome obstacles and trials with persistent effort. God expects us to do our part. He wants each of us to use and develop the mind and ability He has given us, and that requires firsthand experience. We need to work like the solution depends on us while relying on God to direct our paths (Psalm 32:8). This provides the added security and powerful backing only our Creator can provide. Active living faith produces effort and work (James 2:18-20). Someone once asked, "If you could hear God whispering to you, 'I am with you,' would you give up and quit?"

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*People trying to exist without the living Jesus Christ in their lives are missing the most practical and valuable asset available.*

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Yet there will be times when there is nothing we can do to solve a problem or overcome an obstacle. Often when circumstances are beyond our control, it is more difficult to persevere. But when we humbly wait on God and submit our will to His, we grow in faith and character. God may choose to simply work out circumstances to solve the problem, or He may allow the problem to persist to perfect our faith and increase our reliance on Him (2 Corinthians 12:8-10). Regardless, we must persevere to the end.

### God's purpose in trials

If God is involved in our lives, situations, opportunities and even trials will have deeper and more purposeful meaning. God places our spiritual growth ahead of our physical comfort and success. So should we. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4, New International Version).

When we persevere through trials and circumstances—which God allows for our good—godly character can develop. "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11).

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*When we humbly wait on God and submit our will to His, we grow in faith and character.*

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Overcoming trials can produce the character God wants. At the same time we can be comforted in knowing that God will provide a way out of them. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

### Building character

Paul summarized how the character-building process works: "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3-4).

The Bible pictures God as the master potter and we as the clay He is molding to be more like Himself (Romans 9:20-21; Isaiah 64:8). Sometimes God chooses to knock off the rough edges to smooth out our character. In a sense we are clay images of God in the making, composed of the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7). He wants us to be like Him in thought, character and deed.

Paul had to endure many hardships and setbacks (2 Corinthians 11:24-28). But he persevered though the ups and downs of life and encouraged his followers to do the same (Romans 8:37-39). Paul, like Winston Churchill and the British people, knew that the reward in the end was worth the sacrifice and unrelenting persistence today. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

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## Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones

By Jean Jantzen

*It seems people just naturally like to talk about people. But does what we say help or harm our relationships?*



**D**O OTHERS TALK ABOUT YOU? Is it always the good stuff? Or do they sometimes zero in on your flaws, foibles, frailties and faults? And do you talk about others, sometimes in the same way? Telling stories, gossiping about your best friend, your mate, your mother, sister or brother seems to have started way back when we were youngsters.

Remember these words we learned as a child? "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." None of us really believed the chant. We mouthed those words as a defense against the stinging, spiteful words—especially when the words dug deep, carving a gaping wound upon our hearts.



Yet all of us are guilty of gossiping and continue this habit as adults. Have you listened to conversation at a coffee klatch or taken note of elderly people's conversation in a seniors' complex or overheard two people talking on a bus? They are usually talking about someone else. And it's hardly ever about positive, uplifting things. Instead, talk centers about Aunt Beth and her problems with men, or how their mama abused them, or how papa drank too much, or how their daughter neglects them, or how the lady down the hall has weird taste in clothing.

Gossip is information about a person, true or false, that gets spread around. Gossip can work like the old party game Telephone or Chinese Whispers, in which the original information is distorted, changed and made much worse as it is passed on.

### Target: family members and close friends

Families (church families, too) are especially prone to this habit as family members are easy targets. We have easy access to each other's idiosyncrasies, habits or blunders, which is why we see each other's mistakes so vividly. But we have to ask ourselves when we gossip to others, "Is what I'm saying helpful and constructive, or simply tearing down?"

I remember one incident resulting in alienation. In a phone conversation, my mother was innocently giving her opinion to my younger brother about my being too harsh in disciplining one of my children. I was not being fair, she had told him. My brother took offense and didn't talk to me for years. Of course, I had no idea why. Later, he told me about the incident. My mother had failed to tell the whole story or to say how things had actually turned out. I asked my brother why he had never asked me about it. He didn't have an answer.



This sort of thing goes on constantly in most families. Sometimes it has no ill effects, but in other cases it can be destructive enough to break up or even destroy a family. I've gossiped, too, and seen the negative consequences of talking too freely about others. It seems a natural thing to do. But, it seems, we should control our tongue and concentrate on the good things others do.

Words are powerful. As we read in Proverbs 12:18, "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing" (New International Version throughout). Or, as Proverbs 18:21 states, "The tongue has the power of life and death."

We can see an example of this in Shakespeare's *Othello*. The villain Iago vows to destroy the Moorish general Othello for bypassing him for promotion. Iago repeatedly makes statements that Othello's new wife Desdemona is having an affair. He does so often enough that Othello, prone to jealousy, believes him and murders his wife, only to learn moments later that Iago's words were false.

### What if it's true?

Even if you are saying the truth, it does not justify unnecessarily passing on hurtful information about someone. Remember, it's gossip when true, slander when false. *Both are wrong*. Gossip and slander may ruin families, break up one's marriage or separate friends and brethren.

According to Psychiatrist Antonio Wood, “When you speak ill of someone, you alienate yourself from that person. The more negative your comments, the more distant you will feel from the object. Say bad things about many people and your words will separate you from them.” We’d be wise to listen to God’s advice on gossip in Proverbs 26:20. “Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down.”

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*“Without wood a  
fire goes out;  
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quarrel dies down.”*

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Professor Nick Emler, head of the School of Human Sciences at Surrey University explains that gossip is “all to do with being a human being. You simply will not survive unless you can talk about the people you know, exchange information about them and find out more about them.” He says, “Gossip, however, can be destructive and counterproductive especially when it is about you. It also seems to be necessary to embellish it a little, in the event that the topic of gossip isn’t juicy enough.”



We all have made errors in judgment when viewing others from too narrow a lens. When was the last time we saw someone (probably a family or church member) make a mistake, in our opinion, and then gossiped about it? It is a problem many of us have—defining others by their mistakes, being harsh and critical in passing on information about others, instead of defining them by what is good and positive. I suppose this is why the apostle Paul has to remind each one of us to think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in

others (Philippians 4:8).

Gossiping is something that we come by naturally. Let’s face it. Dialogue is what makes the world go round. We phone or meet someone and, before you know it, they or we are asking about so and so. Now conversation is not wrong, but where do we draw the line? We must learn to choose our words more carefully and remember that God is listening. The apostle Paul wisely tells us, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29).

### Put in Boxes

Speaking ill of others is particularly bad because words, once uttered, can never be recalled. A man in a small Jewish town in Eastern Europe went around slandering the rabbi. One day, feeling bad about what he had done, he went to the rabbi to ask for forgiveness.

“Take a pillow,” said the rabbi, “cut it up and shake out the feathers.” The man did as he was told and then he returned to the rabbi to receive forgiveness.

“First,” said the rabbi, “go collect all the feathers.”

“But that’s impossible,” said the man. “They’ve gone everywhere.”

“It’s as impossible to repair the damage done by your words as it is to recover all the feathers,” said the rabbi.



O the comfort,  
the inexpressible comfort,  
of feeling safe with a person.  
Having neither to weigh thoughts  
nor measure words;  
but pouring them all right out  
just as they are—  
chaff and grain together—  
certain that a faithful hand  
will take and sift them,  
keep what is worth keeping,  
and with a breath of kindness  
blow the rest away.

—Dinah Craik, *A Life for a Life*, 1859

## Sauerkraut—More Than Cabbage

By Robert Berendt

*A recipe from a dying old man taught me about more than just preserving cabbage. God has His own method of preserving—it's called conversion.*



**I** LOVE SAUERKRAUT! I love it in a Reuben sandwich. I love it fried, boiled, on its own or with something else. I love to dip my hand into the sauerkraut barrel to sample the developing flavor. I love it as a side dish or as a main dish—with potatoes and sausage or heated and mixed with ground beef. I like the smell of it as well as the taste. I love to make sauerkraut—though I have not done so for some years now.

Sauerkraut is good for a person physically, and it has some wonderful lessons to teach. It was developed as a method for preserving cabbage and other vegetables when refrigeration was not available. It has special qualities due to the state of fermentation and change that it undergoes.

Sauerkraut can be made in different ways and can have some differences in flavor—but there is an unmistakable taste and smell that sets it apart from all other foods. My method of making sauerkraut was simple. It originated by my visiting an old man who was selling a whole barrel of sauerkraut that he had made. He was ill and was going into the hospital. He gave me a very good deal at a time when our family was feeling a financial pinch, and he threw in his recipe free of charge. That batch of sauerkraut was so good that when the old man died late that year, I decided to make my own.

### Making sauerkraut

I took a cutting board, a good large knife, a large stone crock and the handle of one of my old hockey sticks (that I washed first). I got a good deal on cabbage, bought some pickling spices, salt, onions, real garlic and then I was ready. Some people throw other things into the mix, but I was keeping it simple. I cut up the cabbage into narrow strips and filled the crock. I then cut up the garlic and onions and kept adding a little now and again as I beat the daylight out of the shredded cabbage with the hockey stick. In went the pickling spices and salt.



I kept beating that cabbage until it began to release some of the water content. The idea was to beat much of the fluid out of the cabbage and bruise the cells. Then as the water level rose and the stone crock was finally completely full, I selected a large glass plate and found a good stone to place on top of it. The plate just fit into the top of the stone crock and as the stone was placed on, the fluid level rose and covered the plate. I needed to be careful that no cabbage was floating, because that would develop mold. Only the fluid was to come above the glass plate.

*I beat the daylight out of the shredded cabbage with the hockey stick.*

Presto, the job was complete—that is, my part was complete. The rest of the job of fermenting—and the real change into sauerkraut—were just beginning. I knew I would have to wait for some time, but the wait was made easier by dipping my hand into the crock from time to time to “sample” the developing sauerkraut. That tasted good too! In a short time, I knew it was ready.

Allowing the cabbage to be treated and stored this way makes it last for a very long time without decaying. I could not help but think about the process we humans must go through at the hands of the greatest “sauerkraut maker” of all—our Heavenly Father. Cabbage is cabbage, but when it is converted it becomes sauerkraut!

### God's conversion process

Almighty God does not allow anyone to mess with His process. John 6:44 tells us that only the Father can draw a person to Himself. That calling and our response is the beginning of a wonderful process—one that will result in eternal life for the chosen, a condition that will never see corruption. We first need to be humbled and beaten up just a little. In Acts 2:38 we are told that the first step is to repent. Psalm 51:1-4 gives a good description of the inner emotions and understanding that we are to arrive at. Job also expressed his understanding in Job 42:6 when he stated that he abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes. We cannot enter the process until we come to that state.



It is interesting to me that the next step in Acts 2:38 is to be baptized, that is, full immersed under water. Baptism removes the guilt for our sinful life as Jesus Christ pays the penalty. Just like the beaten cabbage is protected from the corruption of the air, God's Holy Spirit given at baptism protects us too. It preserves us in the sight of God and allows us to come to Him boldly through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:16). In 1 John 1:7 we read that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

In 1 John 3:4-6 we see that we are to shun sin for the rest of our lives. The process of learning to think according to God's way continues in us until the day of our resurrection or judgment. Paul states in Romans 6:1-4 that a converted person (under grace) should not sin. We walk in newness of life. Sin is defined by the commandments of God. Knowing those commandments and keeping them faithfully is an imperative for a converted person.

### **Sauerkraut differs, so do we**

Just as it takes a while for the beaten cabbage to ferment into sauerkraut, so, too, it takes time for a human who embraces Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior to develop into a converted child of God.

The spices, garlic, onions and salt add to the flavor and can be thought of as ingredients God adds to every one of us. We all have different experiences and different backgrounds. God gives us different responsibilities and different gifts so that we can be useful to Him. Sauerkraut differs as well. Each batch is slightly different depending on the cabbage used and the quality and amount of the other ingredients. But it is all sauerkraut just the same.



We, too, differ within the Body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul points out the differences among the members of the Body of Christ. He calls some of them the hand, some the eyes and some the hearing, but all are part of the body and work together. The lessons learned in loving one another is the real work that goes on inside of God's sauerkraut barrel. We find in 1 Corinthians 13 a description of the final product that we are meant to become.

Jesus Christ stated that the words He spoke were the words of the Father and His actions were the will of the Father (John 5:19, 30, 36; 8:28). Jesus Christ and God the Father were one, so much so that Jesus could flatly tell Philip that "he who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Thus we humans have a good look at God the Father through the life of Jesus Christ.

*The spices, garlic, onions and salt add to the flavor and can be thought of as ingredients God adds to every one of us.*

Many years ago, I asked myself the question of whether I was a Christian, that is, a follower of Jesus Christ. As I studied into His life, I realized that I had much to learn, and to change. I needed to conform to Him and in doing so I was conforming to God. Paul acknowledges that “it is God who works in [us] both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). He is faithful to complete and finish the work He has begun in you and in me (Philippians 1:6).

We do have a large part to play in learning, developing and exercising our will to follow in Jesus’ footsteps. But God the Father is the superior “sauerkraut” maker of all time. To Him alone belongs the glory and honor of the completion of His Creation. Cabbage has no will, but we do. God waits for us to be “willing cabbage” in His Hands. He will turn us into that everlasting “sauerkraut.” God wants us all to be saved, to gain the gift of eternal life.

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## Head-to-Head and Heart-to-Heart

By Larry J. Walker

*Communication is one of the most important processes of human life. Yet in many ways, it is an area with the greatest need for improvement.*



**R**ECENT SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES in brain research, especially concerning emotions, offer valuable information for improving the quality and effectiveness of our communication. We now know that the part of our brain that process emotions is different than the part used for rational thought. This fact alone should revolutionize our approach to communication.

As usual, the Bible is way ahead of the scientific world. The Scriptures differentiate between the mind and “the heart.” Many have missed this all-important distinction, which is the foundation of many practical principles of communication and human relations.

Let’s discover how the mind and the heart identify two distinct “languages”; “head-to-head” and “heart-to-heart.”

## Characteristics of head and heart languages

The degree to which we understand the differences between these two languages and apply them to our communication can be a major factor of success or failure in any relationship.

Daniel Goleman states, “Emotional life is a domain that, as surely as math or reading, can be handled with greater or lesser skill, and requires its unique set of competencies. And how adept a person is at those is crucial to understanding why one person thrives in life, while another, of equal intellect, dead ends” (*Emotional Intelligence*, p. 36). The ability to communicate heart-to-heart is a major part of what the author calls “emotional intelligence.” Unfortunately, schools offer courses in many languages yet neglect to train students in the universal language of the heart.



Head-to-head communication is limited to written and verbal messages. Heart-to-heart communication encompasses a much wider range of nonverbal communication. Touching, smiling, winking, hugging, even silence are all-important forms of meaningful heart-to-heart communication. Job’s friends spent a whole week comforting Job without saying a word (Job 2:11-13)! That has to be some kind of record. Unfortunately, they shifted to a head-to-head language, which was misguided and counterproductive. They engaged in a “fix it” approach, which is another characteristic of head-to-head communication.

One definition of language is “a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventional signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings” (*Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th Edition). Notice the mention of both ideas and feelings.

## Language differences of men and women

Stereotypically, men tend to specialize in head-to-head communication. The emphasis is on information and cognitive content. Logic and factual details are paramount.

Women usually are more adept at heart-to-heart communication. Author Carol Botkin explains, “Although some women manage to become concrete thinkers, ...many are more emotional than logical” (*What Men Hate About Women* by C. S. Neile, p. 27). Our brains are structured differently, which accounts for much of this emotional dissimilarity.



As a rule, women tend to be more emotionally expressive than men are. Our culture has cast men into a tough guy role, suggesting that “real men don’t cry.” Women seem to find it easier to cry or act out their emotions. Dr. Herbert Hoffman, of the psychology department at Queens College in New York, explains, “Men are brought up to repress their emotions, and they are bewildered and feel helpless when confronted by an emotional female” (*ibid.*). This helpless feeling stems from lack of ability to communicate in the language of feelings. The situation is not unlike someone from the United States trying to talk to someone from another country who doesn’t understand English.

However, lest we overdo the stereotype, let's remember that all of us (men and women, adults and children) need heart-to-heart communication in certain circumstances in life. Unfortunately, we often receive head-to-head communication instead. For example when a loved one dies, many people tend to feel helpless because there are no words they can say to change the situation. A heart-to-heart communicator will be effective in offering needed comfort.

### **Communication and leadership**

Being bilingual is essential to successful leadership. A leader must understand and be proficient in both head-to-head and heart-to-heart communication. He must know which language is needed in what circumstances and be willing and able to engage in the appropriate form of communication.

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*Touching, smiling, winking, hugging, even silence are all-important forms of meaningful heart-to-heart communication.*

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One of the main differences between a leader and a manager can be stated in terms of the two languages. A leader inspires people to follow him; a manager simply carries out and gives orders. Put another way, a leader communicates heart-to-heart and not just head-to-head. A manager often lacks the capacity to reach the heart. The language of the heart is essential to servant leadership.

Let's consider some specific areas of application. The differences between these two languages are important in many activities of life.

### **Ministerial and counseling relationships**

Ministers are expected to be on the giving end when it comes to people's needs. There are a lot of hurting people in their congregations who need heart-to-heart communication.

The more that counselors understand and use both head and heart languages, the more effective they will be in counseling; and their efforts will be more appreciated by those they counsel.

We have often been reminded that active listening is sometimes more effective than any advice we might hastily deal out. James 1:19 verifies this principle. Conveying concern by active listening is an important dimension of the language of the heart.

### **Marriage and family relationships**

We have already discussed the predominant male and female language preferences. Many marriage problems and difficulties result from the language barrier presented by lack of ability to understand and converse in the other mate's language. Men tend to "translate" the very subjective, heart-to-heart language into the objective terms of head-to-head language.

When a woman says, “I wish I were dead!” she is likely to get a lecture from her husband on why she shouldn’t say such things. What she really means is, “I am really discouraged.” The problem is that he hears only the words, because he is thinking head-to-head. He fails to hear the underlying message. What she really needs is his understanding and some reassurance in heart-to-heart language. She needs some time spent in active listening, a hug and words that indicate understanding and concern for her feelings.



Someone should write a dictionary of heart-to-heart terms! Lacking that, women can help their husbands (during more calm times) to understand their terminology. Dr. Hoffman suggests, “A woman should assure her mate that when she cries or lets off steam, he’s not always expected to ‘fix things’” (ibid.).

The more we can learn each other’s language, the better we can understand and help each other through the challenges and problems of life that we face together.

Children also need to be reached heart-to-heart and not just head-to-head. Feeling loved, appreciated and capable is vitally important to the development of their identity and sense of worth.

### Work relationships

The most successful companies are those who tend to the emotional needs of their employees. Happy employees work harder for their company than unhappy employees. This means heart-to-heart communication, not just head-to-head. Managers and supervisors are in a position to make a significant difference on the job by seeking to reach the heart of fellow employees.

Understanding emotions is relatively new to our culture. The fact that so many people use the terms “I think” and “I feel” interchangeably reveals a lack of understanding in the difference between thoughts and feelings. It is no wonder that meaningful heart-to-heart communication is often lacking. So often physical details of performance are emphasized without sufficient concern for matters of the heart.

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*Let’s remember that  
all of us need heart-  
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circumstances in  
life.*

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### Our relationship with God

The heartless legalism of the scribes and Pharisees was a performance-based religion. Jesus’ ministry emphasized the needs of the heart (Matthew 23:23; 12:7). God is certainly concerned with our performance and our thoughts, but even more, He is concerned with our heart, because our heart is the source of our commitment and motivation.

We are all familiar with the famous passage, “For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (I Samuel 16:7). The downside of this passage speaks to the predominant failure of humankind to relate to each other heart-to-heart. As we gain more of the mind of Christ, we will seek to improve our heart-to-heart communication in every area of our lives.

## Learning to communicate

We all have much to learn in the area of communication. However, we should at least consider a few specific points of practical application that apply to virtually all areas of heart-to-heart communication.

One of the most powerful statements about the responsibility of a minister tells us they are to help promote joy (II Corinthians 1:24). We all know that joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Heart-to-heart communication seeks to share that joy with others.

Let's think about the language we use with our spouse, with our children, with fellow church members, in Internet chat rooms, in e-mail messages, with employees or employers, and in our prayers. If most of what we say is giving orders, giving instructions and pointing out errors and problems, where is the joy? Instead of limiting communication to factual data, let's send more messages of love and appreciation. We have so many means of communication at our disposal, the telephone, e-mail, fax machines, greeting cards... and of course direct personal contact which is even better.

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The so-called "Golden Rule" suggests that we treat others as we would like to be treated. We all want to feel loved and appreciated. We all want to be happy. If we concentrate on communicating love and appreciation in all our relationships, we can all benefit from the process. Let's learn more about communicating heart-to-heart and not just head-to-head.

For more information on how to communicate in our relationships and lead a life focused on serving God and humankind, request our free booklets: [Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension](#) and [Making Life Work](#).

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## Would Jesus Christ Be Elected to the White House?

By Howard Davis

*Jesus Christ remains one of the most respected and controversial leaders the world has ever known. Most people acknowledge that He was good; many believe He was a uniquely great man, but would people be willing to vote for him?*



**T**HE QUESTION ISN'T THAT FAR-FETCHED. After all, He said He was destined to rule the Kingdom of God, bearing authority over the earth. The Bible calls Him King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So could Jesus Christ be elected president in today's America?

The blunt answer is *no*. Most Americans would not tolerate Jesus of Nazareth in the White House if they had a choice.

### What kind of platform?

We can reach no other conclusion when we examine the electoral process and the priorities the American people use in selecting their president. Jesus Christ does not stand a chance based on the platform He would advocate. After all, the American people demand that an electable leader be in agreement with them on a range of issues.

Americans want religious freedom (or freedom from religion) to define God or gods in any way they want, freedom of choice to select abortion for unwanted pregnancies and freedom to enjoy whatever entertainment they desire—including films, music, books and television drenched with violence and illicit sex. Many Americans demand unrestrained sexual freedom between consenting adults. They want and fully expect unhindered and total freedom of speech.

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*What Christ's platform would be, and how that would impact the American voter, is easily discernible from His teachings.*

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Americans want full freedom to define culture and lifestyle issues in their image. They want unrestrained freedom to divorce. True, Americans claim to want fairness, justice, economic and educational opportunity for all. But all freedoms and social values must be defined in their terms.

Above all, they want the ability to get the leader who they think best suits their desires and to get rid of a leader they don't like or get bored with when he fails to bring utopia. They want that choice on a very regular basis. They view this as a sacred right.

What Christ's platform would be, and how that would impact the American voter, is easily discernible from His teachings. After all, the Bible says Jesus is "the same, yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Read the Bible and you will know His platform.

### **Redefining the mission of government**

First, Jesus Christ would make major changes in the governing documents that define citizens' and government's roles. He would permanently change the intent and nature of government. His new constitution would be designed to fulfill the ultimate purpose for the creation of every man and woman. He would explain that His new government is designed to prepare people to live forever in the Kingdom of God.

He would call for a new world order based on His Father's law and advocate creating a perfect society of peace, human development and love. His new constitution and government would guide all policies toward the spiritual transformation of physical man, created in the image of God, into the divine man with the nature and character of God. All education and social policy would be directed to this objective.

This purpose is far greater than the founding fathers' intent in creating the Constitution of the United States in 1787. While a marvel of human wisdom, the American Constitution—and the Declaration of Independence Thomas Jefferson penned in 1776—limited men to a humanly defined purpose for government and social policy.



In pursuit of ultimate good, the founders thought American government should be based on what they acknowledged as the God-given rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Jefferson, however, did not fully comprehend God's ultimate purpose for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The purpose of life is not found in the U.S. Constitution. And sadly, the Constitution is now subject to interpretation in such a way that people are exercising supposed rights that take away life for some and forfeit the freedom from corruption and evil influences for many. Through exercise of "rights" many are destroyed as they pursue "happiness."

The problem is that the aspirations of the Constitution, though high in human terms, are too low. Neither Thomas Jefferson nor the other founding fathers ever conceived of the Constitution as a framework for the development of human character in the divine image of God's nature.

Yet that purpose is the essence of Jesus Christ's purpose for governance. That is the platform He would use, were He to run for president.

That's a tragic omission in the American system, founding documents and way of life. While filling these with wonderful-sounding phrases, some of which were borrowed from the Bible, the founding fathers never fully understood the ultimate purpose of government as revealed in the Scriptures.

Most of them considered themselves Christian. Yet none fully grasped the intent and nature of Christ's pronouncements on government as He proclaimed the Kingdom of God.

### Reaction to Christ's platform

How would the idea of a new constitution go over with the American electorate today? A plan to abolish the Constitution and replace it with one authored by Jesus Himself would be the ultimate campaign killer. But many more positions Christ took would eliminate His chances of being elected.

For example, Jesus advocated that the Ten Commandments be universally taught and kept as the standard for human behavior. "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets," He said. "I did not come to destroy but to fulfill...Whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17, 19).

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*While a marvel of human wisdom, the Constitution limited men to a humanly defined purpose for government and social policy.*

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There goes the atheist vote, agnostic vote and, oddly enough, much of the Christian vote—at least from those who believe the Ten Commandments are too invasive when it comes to their personal freedoms.

The First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me," would be considered a major violation of religious freedom.

A large percentage of the electorate believes that observing the commandments and law of God would force a breakdown of the separation of church and state. "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17)—Christ's position on the Ten Commandments—would be an affront to those who believe that grace does away with a need to keep those Commandments.

Another factor is that Jesus was Jewish, a member of an ethnic minority against which there is still considerable prejudice in America. Jesus' customs and teachings would appear far too Jewish for most voters, including most Christian voters. For example, He kept the Passover (and told His followers to follow His example) and never observed Christmas, Easter or any other nonbiblical religious celebration or practice not found in the Word of God.

Jesus in fact kept the biblical Sabbath (from Friday sunset until Saturday sunset). He even said He is "Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). His Sabbath observance would offend many of those who choose to observe Sunday instead.

Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, so He would offend the vast majority of Jewish voters who would consider this claim blasphemous.

### What kind of leader would He be?

Ironically, Jesus' teachings and practices are the same factors that would make Him a perfect leader. His perfect integrity, compassion, miraculous powers of healing, love for all and willingness to die for the sins of mankind—including people of every race, religion and economic status—set Him apart.

Jesus is the ultimate model of leadership —uncompromising but compassionate. With perfect ethics, Jesus taught fairness and concern for the well-being of all, demonstrating virtue and truthfulness in every action. He taught the value of the family, said marriage was inviolable and directed that we should honor and care for our elderly and the disadvantaged.

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*Jesus taught fairness and concern for the well-being of all, demonstrating virtue and truthfulness in every action.*

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Yet Jesus—though perfect in His leadership—will never be elected president.

Christ, you see, would never run for the office to start with. He would never attack others for self-promotion. He would not compromise the truth or His ethics and values. He would not curry the favor of special interests in exchange for campaign donations.

We must remember that Jesus was not interested in political maneuvers or in exercising worldly political power in this age. “My kingdom is not of this world,” He said. “If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight...; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36).

### **Destined for a higher office**

We should have no regrets over the fact that Jesus of Nazareth will never be elected president of the United States or any other nation of this world.

He has, after all, already been selected for *an infinitely higher office*.

He currently serves at God’s throne in heaven as the High Priest for truly converted Christians. And He promises to return as earth’s ruler—under the auspices of His Father—and to take the reins of all authority when mankind needs God’s intervention to save us from the corruption and collapse of human leadership.

As Jesus told the Roman governor Pontius Pilate: “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (John 18:37).

The message of the Bible is that we cannot rightly rule ourselves. We need a perfect ruler who has demonstrated ultimate love and concern for others to show us the way. Jesus Christ has perfectly qualified. And He will be that ruler.

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*Jesus of Nazareth has already been selected for an infinitely higher office.*

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The Bible says Jesus will one day rule all nations directly from His throne in Jerusalem in what the Bible calls the Kingdom of God. Not only will it bring peace and prosperity undreamed of even by the prosperous Western nations today, it will accomplish nothing less than the transformation of human beings into the divine nature and state of being like Christ Himself.

A totally new form of government under the administration of Jesus Christ will bring all of the earth’s citizens directly under the governance of the Kingdom of God. Only then will all Americans, and the citizens of the world, truly experience “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

It was Christ Himself who said nearly 2,000 years ago: “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). He will found the first truly great society, one that surpasses the most optimistic visions dreamed about and proclaimed by politicians.

When Christ comes, there will be no need for a democratic process to elect the nations’ top leadership. He is a king. In fact, He has already been chosen King of Kings. And He has already issued a series of executive orders.

He does not endorse human political leaders today. But He does tell you to believe the good news and accept Him as your leader both now and for all eternity. Are you willing to make that choice?

### **Recommended reading**

What kind of leader was Jesus of Nazareth when He walked the earth 2,000 years ago? What kind of leader will He be when He returns again to earth? What kind of difference will His rule make for every man, woman and child on earth? Discover the answers in our free booklets [Jesus Christ: The Real Story](#) and [The Gospel of the Kingdom](#). Both are yours free for the asking.

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## **Letters to the Editor**

### **VCM for lunch**



Have only just “twigged” that this magazine is here and have read the whole of the issue instead of going for lunch. How inspiring it is.

From a fellow Christian in England,

— J. Irwin

Some feedback messages are edited for space and/or clarity