

JUNE-JULY 1987

The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW



Peter's Vision
'What God has cleansed...'

See Page 4

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OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

JUNE-JULY 1987

CIRCULATION: 1,040,000

VOL. XXXIV, NO. 5



23



10

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COVER: Did God, through a vision to the apostle Peter, make all animal flesh good for food? Millions think so! Be sure to read "If You Had Seen Peter's Vision . . ." beginning on page 4. Illustration by Ken Tunell.

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Australia: P.O. Box 202, Burleigh Heads, Queensland 4220
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 (Reentered as second-class matter at the Manila Central Post Office on Jan. 18, 1974)
Puerto Rico: G.P.O. Box 6063, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00936-6063
Singapore: P.O. Box 111, Farrer Road Post Office, Singapore 9128
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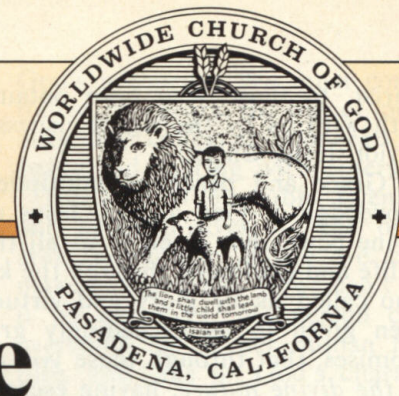
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How SERIOUS Are You About Your Calling?

How many of us really understand God's calling?

God says that those He calls are "sanctified," or set apart for His purpose. But what is that purpose, and how is it to be achieved? Are we really cognizant of it, and are we indeed fulfilling it?

God created human life and placed it upon the earth *for a reason!* It was His desire that human beings, whom He created with thinking, reasoning *minds*, could one day share with Him and the Word the wonderful, glorious, *God-life* — resplendent with the joy, peace and unparalleled accomplishment — that they experience.

God's motive was love. The Father and the Word, now the Son, *are* love. And it is God's purpose for humans that one day we, too, will *become* love, as God is.

But humanity has not followed the way of love. The Word came to earth and lived among men as a man, obedient in all things to the perfect will of His Father, exemplifying in how He lived the *way* that leads to peace, to love and to eternal life in the divine Family of God.

Thomas asked Jesus, "How can we know the way?" Jesus explained: "I *am* the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:5-6).

We are reconciled to God by Jesus' atoning blood if we are willing to demonstrate our acceptance of it by *believing* Him and *following* Him. Jesus said, "Come, *learn* of me!"

As His followers we must come to truly *know* Him and grow to *live* as He lived. His way was and is the way of peace, the way of love. He taught reconciliation, forgiveness, mercy, compassion — in short, LOVE!

He taught *humility*. He explained that a proud attitude *will not* inherit His Father's Kingdom — rather, one that is poor in spirit, or walks in unfeigned humility.

Jesus also taught meekness. Not *weakness*, as

some have interpreted that word, but meekness as Moses was meek (he was called by God the meekest man on earth), becoming one who relies fully on God, looking to *Him* for answers and solutions to life's problems rather than to one's own personal ideas and ingrained habitual responses.

Jesus taught *hungering and thirsting* for righteousness — our deepest longings growing to become identical to Christ's, intensely desiring His righteousness, deeply committing ourselves to lifelong faithfulness to Him and becoming willing vessels for Him to live His life in us.

He taught mercy. He instructed us to pray that God would forgive us — *as we forgive* those who trespass against us. He taught that we should ceaselessly remember God's mercy toward us and treat others accordingly.

He taught willingness to suffer for the sake of obeying Him. He warned that anyone who would be a true follower of His would suffer persecution. Yet He instructed His followers to suffer it patiently (though without compromise, obeying God rather than man), as He did.

Jesus Christ did not just *teach* this way of life, He *lived* it! He set the example, the standard. He showed the way, He led the way and He *was* and *is* the way!

But the world has not followed that way. Greed, selfishness, vanity, hatred, injustice, warfare, oppression — these are the ways mankind has followed — the ways of the devil, the father of lies.

Wherever you choose to look, in every corner of the earth, in every nation, in every city, in every neighborhood, you find sorrow, unhappiness, grief, distress and misery — the *products* of a wrong way of living, a way independent of God.

Out of this world of spiritual *darkness*, God has called a little flock to make up His Church. He gives each of us whom He calls — upon our true repentance and baptism — a small portion of His "divine *nature*" in the form of His Holy Spirit.

Notice what the apostle Peter wrote in II Peter 1:1-4: "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus

Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these *you may be partakers of the divine nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

As we stir up that spiritual gift of God’s Holy Spirit (II Timothy 1:6-7), we *grow* spiritually according to His purpose and grace.

He refers to us as “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). We are to shine as lights in a dark world as we become solidly rooted *living examples* of the way of life Jesus Christ taught and lived.

We are *His* servants, His true *followers* — because we *REALLY believe* and *obey* Him! We *AGREE* with Him! We *believe* His *WAY* is the *best* way. We are so convinced and convicted that we are wholeheartedly *committed* to *LIVING* that way, according to “every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

We are the “salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13). We are envoys or ambassadors of a *NEW WAY OF LIFE* — a way of life the world has not known or understood! We are not only to proclaim the *message* of the coming Kingdom of God, but also to be living examples of it *now* — *in advance!*

After the return of Christ and the establishment of God’s government on earth, humanity will live in a world governed according to the *law of God*.

But let’s understand that the Church of God, the body of true followers of Jesus Christ to which we have been called, is made up of those who are governed according to God’s law *today*, in this godless and faithless generation.

One day all mankind will benefit from the faith and character developed by God in His “firstfruits,” as He refers to His Church. They will reign with Christ for a thousand years as priests (Revelation 20:6), teaching the nations the ways of God, so that all who are willing to repent and grow spiritually may ultimately receive the gift of salvation God has in store for them.

Can you imagine what a tragic shame it would be one day when those of this rebellious generation come to repentance in their time, according to God’s merciful plan, and find that some of you God has called to be His firstfruits had cast away your calling to join in with the society around us?

Can’t you hear what they might say? “What?” they would surely ask. “You mean you preferred to follow our wicked, rebellious ways even though you *knew* all about God’s law and His purpose for man? Why, we didn’t know where we were going or what we were doing. We were deceived. But you

weren’t! Why did you neglect your magnificent calling and follow us?”

The apostle Paul drew a vivid analogy to portray how *much* our calling means to God: “The creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. And not only they, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:21-23).

God has seen fit to reveal to His firstfruits the way that is going to bring an *end* to the suffering of mankind. We need to take a good, long look at ourselves to see whether we are *living* and *thinking* the way Christ taught.

Are we growing in humility, or do we still have to prove our “rightness” at all costs? Are we learning how to accept correction without anger, bitterness or resentment? Is our conversation really what it should be, or is it not really all that different from the world’s? On the job, are you a fine example of hard work and honesty, or “just one of the guys”? Do we “hunger and thirst after righteousness,” or after alcohol, money, pornography and worldly “importance”?

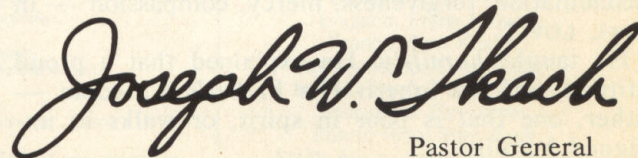
In short, are we followers of Jesus Christ, or followers of our own habits, lusts and appetites?

Let’s *LIVE* the way Jesus Christ taught and lived! Let’s fulfill what God has given us to do! Let’s make the *most* of the time that remains before Jesus Christ returns. We are His sheep. He is the Good Shepherd. He will give us all the help we need to be successful. He will give us encouragement, support, strength and *power*. At this very moment He is at the right hand of God, making intercession for us — *IF WE ARE WILLING* to repent, to grow, to overcome, to *FOLLOW HIM!*

Let us diligently employ God’s help to be the example to the world that He has called us to be — a city set on a hill, that cannot be hidden (Matthew 5:14).

“As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty’” (II Corinthians 6:16-18).

Never fail to take this great calling *SERIOUSLY!* It is the *most serious* and *important* thing in our lives! Thank God for His mercy, and His infinite *LOVE!*



Pastor General
Worldwide Church of God

What Would YOU Change?

If you had the power to change any one part of this evil world, what would it be?

By Norman L. Shoaf

A group of teenagers taking part in an essay contest were asked to write their answers to the question, "If you could change any one thing in the world, what would it be?"

How would *you* respond?

Many of the teens replied that they would end war or famine or ill health in the world. Some focused on problems they saw at their schools, or troubles in their own families.

But what about *you*? In a world beset by so many problems and evils, what one thing would *you* change?

Maybe you would answer as these teenagers did. Perhaps you would stop strife between nations, or world hunger, or sickness and disease. Maybe you would just like to make peace with your family. Maybe the biggest problem in your life relates to finances, or your job, or some other trial you find yourself in.

Of course, no one person can solve all the evils of this world. But there is one area where every person — yes, you, too — can make a difference. There *is*

something you can change for the better!

The place to begin

A philosopher once asked, "If you were to set out to change the world, where would you start — with others, or with yourself?"

Ah, now, perhaps, we see where each one of us can begin to have a part in ultimately changing the world. We must begin with ourselves!

The only area where you really have control, when you get right down to it, is yourself. You and only you decide how you think and act in every life situation, no matter what happens around you or what others do. You can and must change *you*!

Solving all the world's problems in the coming world tomorrow will involve replacing carnal human nature with God's divine nature in every individual.

Romans 12:2 commands: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Each of us must work to root out of ourselves every selfish attitude, every wrong desire, all hostility, resentment, rejection of

God's authority. We must come to live, by nature, the way of love, outgoing concern, cooperation, peace and sharing with others.

But here's the trouble: Even in our personal lives — the only area, remember, where we can make changes now — we can't do it by ourselves. No person can overcome his or her human nature, and take on God's character, alone.

As Jeremiah 10:23 says, "It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps."

So how can we change?

The power to change

When we turn from our own way to live God's way, the power we must use is the same power God will ultimately use to change the entire world — the power of God's Holy Spirit!

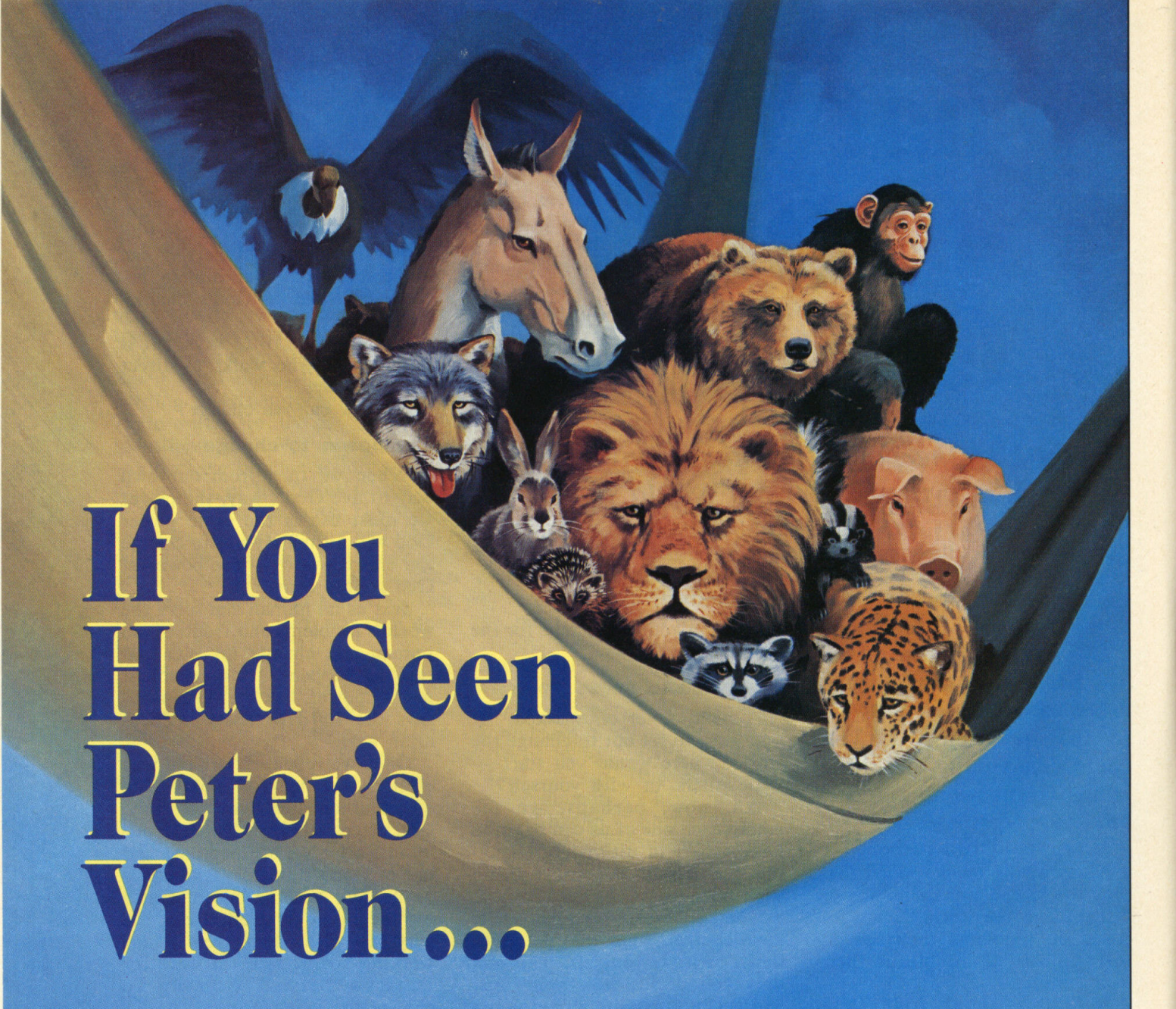
Just as no human can solve the world's problems and troubles, no human can change his own nature. It happens "'not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

Once we repent of our old way of life, turn to God and decide once and for all to live God's way, God places His Holy Spirit in our minds, after we are baptized and one of God's ministers lays hands on us. We become one of God's own begotten children, one of the very few with whom God is now working to prepare the way for Christ's Second Coming to change the whole world.

And we can draw upon the very power of God to change our lives for the better in every area! We learn to rely on God to guide us in our lives and to show us what to do in every situation.

This process is known as *conversion*. It is the process by which we are changed spiritually and prepared to assist Jesus Christ in changing — saving — this world in the world tomorrow.

If you deeply desire to change *your* life — to give your life to God to use as He sees fit — then you need the information in our booklet *Just What Do You Mean . . . Conversion?* Write for a free copy now. □



If You Had Seen Peter's Vision...

Did Christ, by a vision, make all unclean animals, reptiles and birds of prey good for food?

By Herman L. Hoeh

Suppose you had lived in the days of the original apostles, and you were hungry at noon-time as Peter was. The meal was not yet ready as you were praying in private upon the housetop.

Suppose, suddenly, *you* saw in vision "heaven opened, and something descending, like a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air"

(Acts 10:11-12, Revised Standard Version).

And suppose, further, a voice from heaven ordered *you*, "Rise . . . kill and eat" (verse 13).

What would *you* have replied?

Would you have decided that swine, rabbits, dogs, ants, snails and ravens had somehow suddenly become clean and fit for human food? Would you have replied, "Yes, Lord, I'll kill and eat, for I have always wanted to taste unclean creatures"?

Peter, Jesus' chief apostle, had just such a vision (Acts 10:9-16). Most Christians have casually

read this account. They have assumed Peter decided, on hearing "Rise, Peter; kill and eat," that "creatures of every kind, whatever walks or crawls or flies" (verse 12, New English Bible) are now clean and fit for food.

If you have thought this was Peter's decision, you are absolutely wrong!

What Peter did decide

Look at Acts, chapters 10 and 11, again. They do not record what most people think!

The events surrounding Peter's vision on a housetop in Joppa do not begin in Joppa at all. Nor was there any controversy in the Church over clean and unclean meats that needed settling.

The account begins in Caesarea, the Roman capital of Palestine. Stationed in Caesarea (by the sea) was a considerable Roman garrison. Among its officers was Cornelius, commander of a hundred men.

Cornelius was "a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:2). Yet he was an Italian — not a circumcised Jew. Further, one afternoon as he was fasting, he had a vision. In it he was commanded to "send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter" (verse 5).

Cornelius obeyed. He "called two of his household servants and a devout soldier . . . So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa" (verses 7-8).

It was a 30-mile trip from Caesarea to Joppa. As the three gentiles approached Joppa next day it was about noon. Peter was at that moment on the housetop of Simon the tanner, praying. Suddenly a vision came to him.

Let down from heaven in a great sheet "were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air" (verse 12). Then came the voice: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat" (verse 13).

What was Peter's response? Notice carefully: "No, Lord; for

I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean" (verse 14, RSV). This is exactly opposite to what most people think.

It was already about 10 years after the crucifixion when this vision occurred. Yet Peter during this entire period had not once tasted unclean meats. And here he is, Christ's chief apostle, responding to the Christ, "'No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.' And the voice came to him again a second time, 'What God has cleansed, you must not call common.' This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven" (verses 15-16, RSV).

Why do you suppose the voice spoke *three* times to Peter? Let us read on:

"Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him . . ." (verses 17-19).

Notice, "Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant." Jesus' chief apostle did not jump to hasty conclusions.

He must have considered the scriptures that animals were clean and unclean before the Flood in the days of Noah (Genesis 7:8).

He remembered that more than eight centuries later God explained to Moses the differences between the clean and unclean creatures (Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14).

And that Isaiah prophesied about the time of judgment after the Millennium: "The Lord will judge by fire, with fire he will test all living men, and many will be slain by the Lord; those who hallow and purify themselves in garden-rites, one after another in a magic ring, those who eat the flesh of pigs and rats and all vile vermin, shall meet their end, one

and all, says the Lord, for I know their deeds and their thoughts" (Isaiah 66:16-18, NEB).

What did it mean?

That prophecy left no doubt in Peter's mind! The vision he experienced was not about eating unclean animals and insects and birds of prey. Then what could it mean?

At this point the Spirit gave Peter the answer! "Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them" (Acts 10:19-20).

Peter quickly understood the meaning of the vision. He went to the gate to meet the three men and took them in as guests that night. Next day he set out, accompanied by several brethren, with his three guests for Caesarea. When Peter entered the home of Cornelius he found many persons gathered to hear him.

The first words of Peter to the assembled group make clear Peter's understanding of the vision:

"You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit any one of another nation; but God has shown me that I should not call any *man* common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection" (verses 28-29, RSV).

There is God's answer to Peter! "God has shown me that I should not call any *man* common or unclean." The vision is about people — gentiles — who were considered by the Jews as unclean, not about eating unclean foods.

First-century environment

In the days of the apostles social intercourse with gentiles — Cornelius and the three men sent to Peter were gentiles — rendered a Jew ceremonially unclean, according to the tradition of the elders. Even entering a gentile house (John 18:28) or handling articles belonging to gentiles did so. Bread, milk or olive oil coming from gentile farms and marketplaces could not be eaten by an observant Jew.

Flesh offered in sacrifice to

idols and that in any case contained blood was forbidden. To sit down and eat with a gentile was unthinkable.

In this environment in Palestine in the first century the apostles lived and worked. No wonder Jesus needed to instruct Peter about social contact with uncircumcised gentiles whom God was calling to eternal life!

While Peter was explaining the forgiveness of sins through the name of Jesus Christ to Cornelius and these assembled with him, “the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit

had been poured out on the Gentiles also” (verses 44-45).

Notice it — for upwards of 10 years after the crucifixion the apostles had gone only to Jews and the circumcised Samaritans. No uncircumcised gentile had been called until the moment God called Cornelius. And the Jewish Christians who accompanied Peter north from Joppa to Caesarea were astounded that it was even possible for a gentile to be converted.

No wonder Peter had to have a vision, in which a voice from heaven spoke *three* times, to know what to do when the *three* gentiles knocked at the gate of the home where Peter was.

This event was the most signif-

icant turning point in the history of the Church of God.

The meaning is clear

The account continues in Acts 11: “Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter went up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, ‘You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!’” (verses 1-3).

Peter told about the vision he had seen and described what had happened with Cornelius and Cornelius’ household. Then Peter concluded, “‘If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?’ When they [the critics] heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life’” (Acts 11:17-18).

The meaning of the vision is clear. It meant that gentiles who were uncircumcised were not to be counted as socially impure. God is able to clean up their hearts and purify them as He is also able to clean up and purify the hearts of circumcised Jews.

The New Testament Church took years to make this a living principle. It was not finally settled once and for all until in assembled council, nearly 10 years later, Peter declared that gentiles do not have to be circumcised to receive the gift of eternal life (Acts 15).

The question of eating unclean meats was not the issue in Peter’s vision. If it had been, then God made a great mistake by not including “sea life” in the sheet sent to Peter in vision on that housetop. It is not lions and vultures and snakes that most, who say they are Christians, clamor for. It is sea creatures — oyster, shrimp, turtle, lobster, eel, octopus, catfish — that they crave. And these are the very creatures *not included in the vision!* Read it for yourself — Acts 10:12 and 11:6. □

What Did Jesus Mean — ‘Purging All Meats’?

Sin is spiritual. That fact is emphasized throughout the New Testament. The Bible definition of sin is this: “Sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4, Authorized Version).

The penalty for violation of God’s spiritual law is death — not the first death, which will be followed by a resurrection, but the second or eternal death in the “lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14).

Now the accidental eating of forbidden or unclean food is not a transgression of this spiritual law. It becomes sin if one lusts for food that is unclean and forbidden! Nevertheless, to violate the revealed law of clean and unclean meats does bring the penalty of disease, pain, sickness and sometimes the *first* death.

That is what Jesus made plain, as

recorded in Mark 7:14-23. Note especially verses 18-20 from the Authorized Version:

“And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats [Greek: *broma*, “food”]? And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.”

Here Jesus was speaking of *spiritual* defilement, not physical health. Not that which enters into a person’s mouth, but the evil that comes out of his heart, defiles the person spiritually. What defiles the person — and he is speaking of defiling the person spiritually, not injuring the body — is transgression of the Ten Commandments — evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, blasphemy (verses 21-22).

Jesus was making a point concerning spiritual defilements, not physical health. However, on the physical level, He was referring (verse 19) to particles of dirt that might get on the food from unwashed hands — particles that simply pass through the alimentary system undigested and without harm to the person. That is, the body naturally eliminates — “purges” — any dirt that may not have been washed off food. Jesus was *not* here speaking of clean or unclean flesh foods at all. □

WHY

the Confusion Over Law and Grace



Why shouldn't this world be filled with love, joy, hope and peace?

"Let *all* that you do be done with *love*," wrote the apostle Paul in his first letter to the young Corinthian church (I Corinthians 16:14).

Then why, for the last 1,900 years, has Paul's advice been so neglected?

Just what is "love"?

"God is love" (I John 4:8), reveals your Bible — the ultimate source of spiritual definitions! Yet, many who read this don't comprehend what it means.

God is much more than mere feeling — much more than a warm, fuzzy idea. He has lived forever (Psalm 93:2), is all-powerful (Psalm 147:5), has the greatest mind (Isaiah 55:8, I Corinthians 2:16) and loves mankind (John 3:16). Your mind can't grasp how great He is!

The problem for humans — your problem — is that man has acquired a natural hostility to God! From the very first human in the Garden of Eden to the billions alive today, *not a single one* naturally desires to surrender his or her life to the God of love.

God wants you and me to be happy, to have a zestful, fulfilling life and to be able to share it with others — that's love (John 10:10, III John 2).

To direct us toward this way that leads to happiness, God de-

*Millions deny
themselves abundant
lives because they
fail to realize the truth
about law and grace!
How about you?*

By Dexter H. Faulkner

finer love: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (I John 5:3).

When asked what the greatest of the Ten Commandments were, Jesus Christ boiled them down to their two basic essentials: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39).

Consider this: The first four commandments revealed in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 show you how to love God. The last six reveal the way you are to love your neighbor.

But how does the natural, un-

converted mind view this? "The mind that is set on the flesh [material, physical things] is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7-8, Revised Standard Version).

Man in his natural state wants little to do with God. And since God *is* love, man unwittingly rejects the true love that would bring happiness.

The importance of the commandments

God's way of life is expressed in 10 summary points called the Ten Commandments — a living force. When you break these points, there is a penalty. Physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, you and others suffer.

But man says: "I don't want to obey God's law. I reject it. I make my own rules!" So men and women by the millions suffer needlessly.

God, of course, does have the power to stop man from going the way of sin. But that is exactly what man doesn't want God to do!

And God, as part of an ongoing plan, has allowed man 6,000 years to make his own decisions, to experience firsthand the pain and suffering that result from following man's own imperfect way.

The penalty for not going God's way is not just physical suffering, but death. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

But how does this concern

you? Unless you obey God's law you are a walking dead person even as you read this article! You have no claim to eternal life. You may think you haven't broken any of the Ten Commandments, but you have. "For all [including you and me] have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

As a sinner — a transgressor of the law — you have come "under the law," that is, subject to its penalty: death. For breaking the Ten Commandments, you are now subject to what the Bible calls "the curse of the law" (Galatians 3:13). You have no hope of eternal life.

But there's good news. Someone has paid the penalty in your stead.

The sacrifice of Christ

Your very Creator, in your place, has paid the penalty of your transgressions of God's law. God created all things by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:9). As the Creator of the human race, Jesus Christ died to become the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

But you still have to seriously acknowledge this sacrifice. You cannot casually accept the body and blood of Christ as atonement for your past sins.

God wants, first, to see a change of attitude from hostility to submission in obedience! "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

To *repent* means to change your life. Instead of going your way (which is actually the way of Satan) you must begin to obey God — to love God by keeping His commandments (I John 5:3).

But you not only have to repent, you must *believe* God (Mark 1:15). You must believe what He says — and that means to believe the message He sent by Jesus Christ — the good news (*gospel* means "good news") of the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

This is followed by immersion in water (baptism), which is physical proof of your inward

faith in Jesus Christ. Upon baptism, you officially begin the way toward salvation.

Not grace alone

In accepting Jesus Christ as your Savior, you come under unmerited *grace*. Your previous record of sins is forgiven. Your past sins are totally covered by the blood of Christ's sacrifice (Hebrews 9:12, 14), forgotten forever.

Upon receipt of God's Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, Romans 8:9), you become an heir (not yet an inheritor) of the Kingdom of God. You are now a begotten son or daughter of God.

But does this mean God's laws are no longer in force? No! You are *saved from past sins* by grace (Ephesians 2:8) — something you cannot yourself earn. But you must now, in a repentant state of mind, begin to keep all the commandments, lest you again come under the death penalty!

Notice: "Being justified [that is, forgiven of past sins] freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus . . . because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed" (Romans 3:24-25).

You cannot earn forgiveness. That comes from grace — free, unmerited pardon — from God. Grace covers your past sins. You are justified by faith (verse 28). But the law that defines sin — that makes plain right from wrong — retains its power of life and death over you!

Consider: "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we *establish* [Greek: continue] the law" (verse 31).

The law defines sin. It cannot forgive sins. Only Christ can do that. But once you are forgiven of sin — forgiven of having broken the law — you are expected to quit sinning, to begin keeping the law. "For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the *doers* of the law will be justified" (Romans 2:13).

So now it all fits into place. After we have been converted

and have accepted Christ's sacrifice, our past sins are forgiven and we no longer are cut off from God (Romans 5:10). Receiving His Holy Spirit, our minds are renewed and we begin to become more like Him (Ephesians 4:23), imbued with the spirit of love, joy, patience, peace.

Yet we occasionally stumble and break God's law. As we see the sin in us (James 1:23-25), we are to immediately repent and ask that Christ's sacrifice be applied to us.

Upon repentance and prayer for forgiveness (Matthew 6:12), our sins are forgiven. Remember, grace is no license to freely break God's law (Romans 6:15).

The capstone

As a bona fide Christian keeping God's law, you grow in spiritual maturity. Understand, though, this is not of your own strength alone, but Jesus Christ living in you through the Holy Spirit — imbuing you with power to fulfill His law.

As Paul aptly stated, "I have been crucified with Christ [that is, in baptism]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

As you grow by following the holy and spiritual law of God (Romans 7:12, 14), your hostile nature is gradually replaced by the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). You find yourself filled with divine love — concerned about your fellowman, wanting the best for others, striving to serve, filled with proper humility.

It doesn't happen all at once. It is a lifelong process of moving from a carnal beginning to a goal of complete conversion. The Ten Commandments guide us to the very righteousness of God that is in Jesus Christ (Psalm 119:172).

If you'd like more information on the application of the "perfect law of liberty" and the real Christian life, write for our free booklets *The Ten Commandments* and *Just What Do You Mean . . . Conversion?* Just mail the literature request envelope in this issue or write to our address nearest you. □

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Would you explain Romans 10:4? What does it mean when it says "Christ is the end of the law?"

Those who attempt to do away with God's law often turn to this verse.

In verse 3, Paul explains how the Pharisees were going about trying to establish their own righteousness apart from God's righteousness. They ignored the sacrifice of Christ and thought that mere commandment keeping would be enough for anyone.

But, as Paul points out in verse 4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes." What does "the end of the law" mean? It means the aim, the purpose, the fullness or outcome of the law. Christ in us gives us the power to keep God's holy, perfect law, which by ourselves we lack the spiritual strength to do (Romans 8:4).

Apart from Christ, no one can manage to keep God's law in the spirit. By his very nature, man falls far short. But through Christ, we can obey (Philippians 4:13). The aim or end of the law is to enable us to become like Christ.

The word *end*, used in Romans 10:4, is also found in James 5:11: "Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the *end* intended by the Lord — that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful."

Now, did James mean that Christ's end had come? Of course not. Rather, James explains it himself. They had seen the purpose or aim of the Lord — "that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful."

Romans 7:4 says we have become "dead to the law." Does this mean the law is no longer in force?

Notice carefully what Paul says: "You also have become dead." He does not say, "The law is dead." The law of God did not

perish. But the *people* became dead to the law by the body of Christ.

Verse 5 helps explain: "For when we were in the flesh" — that is, before Paul and his readers were converted, and while they were living according to the pulls of the flesh — "the passions of sins which were aroused [revealed for what they were] by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death."

While we are sinners, we are worthy of death in God's sight, having transgressed His holy law.

"But now," Paul continues further, "we have been delivered from the law [from the death penalty incurred by transgressions], having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (verse 6).

Christ paid the death penalty in our stead. After we are called and converted, the law of God no longer claims our lives. So far as the law is concerned, the penalty is paid — we are dead, in Christ — and there is no further date with death for us, if we continue to live in Christ.

This verse in no way says the law is done away. It merely shows that Christ paid the penalty of the law for us. He died for us. We are dead with Him (Romans 6:3). No longer does condemnation await us (Romans 8:1), because we are made spiritually alive with Him through His resurrection (Romans 6:4-5, 11).

Does Luke 16:16 mean that God's law has been done away since the time of John?

No, that is not what Jesus meant here at all!

Jesus Himself explains in the very next verse: "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail" (verse 17).

Have the starry heavens or the planet earth passed away? No. Jesus said it would be easier for

them to perish or be destroyed than for even one tiny part of God's law to pass away!

What, then, did Jesus mean by the statement, "The law and the prophets were until John"?

When Jesus spoke of the "law and the prophets," He was referring to the Old Testament. The first five books of the Bible, written by Moses, are known as the "law." The books of Joshua through Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the 12 minor prophets are the "prophets." The third major section of the Old Testament, comprised of the remaining books, was known as the "writings" or "psalms."

Notice Luke 24:27, 44. Jesus meant that, until the coming of John the Baptist, the Old Testament scriptures were all that was available. The New Testament had not yet been written.

John came as the "voice of one crying in the wilderness," preparing the way before Christ (Mark 1:3). He thundered to the people of his day, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2). John began to proclaim the Gospel.

And what Gospel — good news — did Christ preach? "Now after John was put in prison, 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 1:14-15).

Christ preached the same Gospel as John. This is why He said that from the time of John the Baptist, the Gospel or good news of God's coming Kingdom is proclaimed.

Our booklet *The Ten Commandments* shows that God's law is still in force today, and how this law applies to our lives. For a free copy of this booklet, mail the literature request envelope in this issue or write to our address nearest you. □

You and I have weaknesses — and we have strengths. If we are serious about having a part in the soon-coming Kingdom of God, we are working on our weaknesses. But what about our strengths?

As you overcome the defects, faults and blemishes in your character, has it occurred to you that your strong points, talents and abilities might need some attention, too?

In II Corinthians 10:5 the apostle Paul tells us to bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” Not only wrong thoughts, but right, good and creative thoughts, as well.

God expects you to bring every aspect of your life under His control and authority, not just those aspects of your character that you acknowledge as “faults.”

The trouble is, a converted person will readily accept correction and direction so he or she can make progress in overcoming faults, but may respond quite differently when it comes to “strong points.”

God has called us to action

When God allows you to understand His truth, He does not do so as a personal favor, or because you are some kind of a special pet. He is giving you a

head start on salvation only because He has something for you to do in His Work on earth today.

In the parable of the talents, Jesus explained, by analogy, how He gives each one of His servants a responsibility *now*, even as each prepares for the big job ahead in the Kingdom of God: “And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability” (Matthew 25:15).

Notice that the responsibilities are handed out according to the individual’s abilities or strengths.

What are *your* abilities? Can you speak? Can you organize? Are you a natural sportsman, a carpenter, a cook? Can you sew,

play the piano or sing? And if so, can God use your special talent? It is sad how, sometimes, truly gifted and creative people are unwilling to bring their great strengths and talents “into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

Paul says, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (I Corinthians 10:31). This is particularly important when we use our strong points in the Work — and thus to the glory — of God. But often talented people insist on using their gifts for their *own* glory.

God cannot use that spirit of vanity. Paul understood that nothing should be done “through selfish ambition or conceit”



Build on Your Strengths!

*You ask God to help you
with your weaknesses
— but how about the
things you are good at?*

By John Halford

(Philippians 2:3). Rather, he said, "in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."

A person with talent should seek ways not to glorify self, but to serve others. If he or she does, something exciting can happen: God can enhance that talent and make it even better!

Making good better

Look what happened to Bezaleel, who helped build the Tabernacle in the wilderness more than 3,000 years ago.

God told Moses: "See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship" (Exodus 31:2-5).

Bezaleel didn't just wake up one day and find he could do these things. He was obviously already a qualified and gifted workman. But when he was called to work on the Tabernacle, God enhanced those talents, abilities and strong points to make him even more skillful.

Bezaleel wasn't the only one. God said, "And I have put wisdom in the hearts of all who are gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you" (verse 6).

In those days, the building of the Tabernacle was the focus of the Work of God. Today, the Work is different. But God is the same yesterday, today and forever, and His Work in all its many aspects must be done well.

God is ready and willing to give spiritual gifts to us to enhance our natural talents, providing we are humble and willing to overcome the vanity, pride and prima donna behavior that so often comes along with unusual ability.

Do you now see why, while working hard to overcome your weaknesses, you must also con-

centrate on making sure your strong points are also brought under control?

God cannot use you if you insist on "doing your own thing." And if He does use you, He won't use you again if you take the credit for what He has done through you. It is human nature to want to take the credit when God has permitted you to do something particularly well.

But that is what overcoming is all about, isn't it?

Let God use your talent

The late Herbert W. Armstrong, founder of this magazine, had a natural ability to communicate. As a young man he found that his talents could be used most effectively in advertising, and he quickly made a name for himself. He could have become one of the most successful advertising men of this century, but God changed the direction of his life in 1927.

Mr. Armstrong, however, continued to use his brilliant ability to communicate — in the service of God. Over the years God enhanced his natural talent.

But when people would compliment Mr. Armstrong on the quality of his work, he would always say, "I have done nothing." Then he would give a simple analogy.

"Look," he would say, "when you hear a great musician play a Beethoven sonata on a piano, you are deeply impressed. But would it make any sense, after the performance, to go up and thank the piano?"

The piano is only an instrument in the pianist's hands. We should strive to be instruments in the hands of Jesus Christ so that He can use us in whatever way He wants to accomplish His purpose on earth.

How about your strong points, then? Do you use them to *give* to others, rather than to *get* glory and acclaim for yourself?

Are your strong points under control? Have they really been given to God? Even if you have a natural talent, it probably has been trained and fashioned ac-

ording to the standards and methods of this world. Is it the way God wants it? Can he use it?

Are you willing to receive correction, criticism and direction on your strong point until it is something that God can use?

If God does use your strong points, will you give Him the credit?

Jesus Christ was a superbly talented person. His wisdom, His knowledge, His understanding and His miracles kept people in constant amazement.

People loved Him and looked up to Him, but Jesus never took the credit for Himself. Time after time He would say, "Of myself I can do nothing." Jesus always give the credit to His Father in heaven, acknowledging that it was God's strength and God's ability, working through Jesus, that was doing the work.

If Christ did that, how much more should we?

David, another talented person, prayed this way: "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me" (Psalm 19:12-13).

One of David's great talents was his ability to meditate deeply and then put his thoughts into words of great and lasting meaning. It was a wonderful ability, and he wanted to be sure God could use it. And so he prayed, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer" (verse 14).

In some ways, it is easy to see your faults and be motivated to work on them, because it is your weak points that get you into obvious trouble.

But your strong points can get you into another kind of trouble. They can make you vain, self-satisfied and less effective as a tool in God's hands.

So as you pray for strength in overcoming your weaknesses, ask God to help you bring your strong points under subjection, as well. □

“I’m not worth anything,” laments the distraught housewife as she hangs another load of laundry to dry. “All I do is clean, clean, clean, and I’ve never accomplished anything worthwhile in my life!”

Have you ever felt this way? If you have, you aren’t alone.

Sometimes wives, mothers and homemakers feel that their work cannot compare to the “exciting” life led by wage-earning women. Their stay-at-home life seems unrewarding and unchallenging in comparison.

Those of us who manage a home want to feel worthwhile, as though we have something to offer. We forget that there is an art to managing a home. Perhaps we don’t feel stimulated, and the only place we find *creativity* is in the dictionary between *cleaning* and *dusting*.

But remember, it does take talent and effort to keep things running smoothly in a home. And there are ways to feel more productive and vital.

What we need to do is to develop our talents. Why? One good reason is because we can make things for ourselves and our families to enjoy. Another reason is the sense of satisfaction that comes from beginning a project and seeing it to completion.

So, if you’re ready for a

You DO Have Talent!

*Think you don't have any talent?
Everyone has talents just waiting to be uncovered.
Here's how to get started.*

By Cheryl Ebeling

change, maybe now is the time to develop some of your hidden talents and creative abilities.

Try something new

Don’t be discouraged if you feel you have no talent. In your daily activities you probably use many talents you don’t think about, because they are just a part of your daily routine. Often we don’t realize our talents until we try something new.

Is there something you’ve always longed to try? Maybe you want to capture a beautiful sunset on canvas, embroider a tablecloth or tailor a suit. Think of some activities you enjoy doing in your spare time.

“What spare time?” some of

you are asking. With all your household chores, you may think you have no spare time at all.

If so, maybe the first talent you can develop is time management: getting the routine, mundane tasks done as quickly as you can each day so you’ll have time left for other activities.

You can start by scheduling certain jobs for certain days. A good way to keep track is by using a list and sticking to it, crossing off items as they are completed.

Often, vocational schools, high schools and town recreation departments offer evening courses for adults in any number of subjects from drawing to home decorating. These courses are usually



available at an affordable price. Or perhaps there is a knitting club or ceramics class you could join. You could ask a friend who belongs to such a club.

If you can't find an organized group involved in a particular hobby, why not put an ad in your newspaper saying you'd like to join a particular club? Maybe you wouldn't mind holding the meetings in your own home. You may motivate someone who already has those skills to be the instructor.

Perhaps you'd like to improve your ability to sew, not only because you know it would be a financial help to the family, but also for personal satisfaction. Often fabric stores offer courses in sewing, tailoring and furniture reupholstering, either free of charge or at an affordable rate.

Calligraphy, or creative lettering, is another popular craft, one that helps develop patience. The only tools necessary are pen, ink and a steady hand.

If you have access to a table at a flea market or consignment shop, you could even sell your handcrafted items. There is usually a good market for handmade goods.

Have you wished you could play a musical instrument or master the art of quilting? To purchase the instrument or the quilting frame is expensive, but perhaps someone has a used one for sale.

What's holding you back? Is it

the lack of a driver's license or transportation? Most cities and towns have public transportation, or maybe you could encourage a family member or neighbor to get involved, too. In this way you could carpool, which also saves on expense.

If you need a little prod to get yourself going, having someone join with you may be just the motivation you need.

Make it happen

To develop a particular talent — in painting, for instance — you need not be a Michelangelo. In most cases all you need to get results are a few tools, an interest and a desire to learn. Most creative and artistic talents like this are learned, not inherited.

When you set goals for yourself, set them high. Chances are you'll achieve good results. But if you should find you've bitten off too big a bite, revise your goals and continue on your quest. Only don't limit yourself. Learning to do something you've always wanted to do can rejuvenate and encourage you. It can lift your spirits tremendously.

If you've not attempted something like this before, your husband may be a bit skeptical. Of course, before you forge ahead on some project that may cut into your time with him and the family, you should talk to him about it. Let him know how he and the family will benefit. There might be some aspect of your project he

would like to get involved in as well!

Children benefit, too

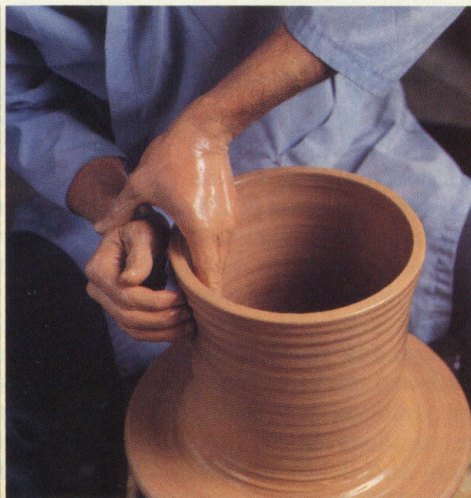
As you begin to expand your skills and talents, you will find yourself getting more and more excited. This excitement will carry over to the rest of your family, especially your children. You will be showing your children the value of setting and pursuing goals. They will also learn persistence and sticking with a project to completion. If your

*Don't limit yourself.
Learning to do something
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can lift your spirits
tremendously!*

children see that you aren't afraid to tackle a new challenge, they will be more inclined to accept challenges themselves.

Being a homemaker can be both challenging and rewarding if you approach it with enthusiasm. There are numerous skills we can all develop, skills that will give us many hours of pleasure if we will just get started.

Set a goal today to develop *your* hidden talents. You'll be glad you did! □



Photos: Hal Finch, Warren Watson, G.A. Belluche Jr., Good News

Are You Bearing the

It's crucial to your personal happiness now — and to your future potential in the Kingdom of God!

By George M. Kackos



Jesus declared: “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:8).

Think about that! To be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, you must bear fruit. You cannot be barren.

The apostle Paul said, “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God” (Romans 7:4).

So what about it? Are you bearing fruit that God expects of you? What is this fruit? What purpose does it serve? How do you bear it?

In short, is there any way to assess your level of spiritual growth?

How spiritual fruits are produced

In Galatians 5:22-23, God describes the fruits He wants to see you bear in your life. Among them are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These fruits are in direct

contrast with the “works of the flesh” listed in verses 19-21.

Together the fruits of the Spirit form the character of Jesus Christ. Developing the fruits of God’s Spirit — becoming like Jesus Christ — is the purpose of every Christian (Ephesians 4:13).

But how are these fruits produced? What is needed to fill your spiritual tree with these traits?

The answer lies with an understanding of God’s Holy Spirit, which was first given to the New Testament Church of God on Pentecost in A.D. 31. This dynamic power makes the production of spiritual fruit possible.

Through the Holy Spirit working in us, we can fulfill the meaning of the day of Pentecost, which is to develop in us the character of Jesus Christ. Then, at Christ’s Second Coming, we can be born into the very Family of God!

Without the Holy Spirit, we remain cut off from God, unable to please Him (Romans 8:7-11, 14-17). This is why you must receive and use God’s Spirit.

After preaching on Pentecost about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which makes possible our participation in this great plan of God, Peter said: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

Now, millions of people think they have done this! But millions are deceived! The sad fact is that most of professing Christianity does not understand the ordinance of water baptism. Newer readers will want to write for our free booklet *All About Water Baptism* for more information.

When you truly repent and turn your life over to God for His use, the next step is baptism, picturing the death of Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for your sins,

and the death of your old, sinful way of life. With the laying on of hands of one of God’s ministers, you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit of God imparted to your mind.

After you receive God’s Spirit, you face an even greater challenge — making proper use of it.

Avoid counterfeit fruit

Did you know that human effort can counterfeit the fruits of God’s Spirit? Does this surprise you?

Realize this: Satan the devil is the god of this age (II Corinthians 4:4). It was Satan who told Adam and Eve, the first humans, that they didn’t need God. Satan said, in effect, that humans could “be good” without God.

Take the fruit of love: Can you, apart from God’s Spirit, show love? Yes. You can show a type of human love. But it is not godly love. Even the highest form of human love still is concerned, foremost, with the self. It is not totally outgoing, totally concerned with the good of others.

But through God’s Spirit you can love the way God loves: “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which was given to us” (Romans 5:5).

Knowing this should help you avoid accepting mere human kindness, or human affection, or human sentimentality, in place of God’s love and God’s character.

God commands us to examine ourselves to see if we really have His character (II Corinthians 13:5). The test is to see if God’s Spirit is really producing fruits in us. What we produce through human effort is not good enough. Our own human righteousness is nothing more than filthy rags to God (Isaiah 64:6)!

But how does God’s Spirit work? Does it possess your mind

Fruits of God's Spirit?



like a computer that automatically runs a machine? No! God's Spirit *leads*, and you must follow: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

Now, how are you led? By thoughts triggered by the Spirit. These include thoughts of understanding (seeing how God's law applies to everyday life), associa-

tion (fitting the different parts of God's plan together), conviction (realizing what you must do), rejection (realizing what you must not do) and outlook (taking God's own attitude about everything). See I Corinthians 2:11-13. As the Spirit inspires your thinking, the challenge is to act on what God leads you to think.

Longtime readers of *The Good*

News understand that the Holy Spirit is not a living being. The Holy Spirit is the power and mind of God. For more information write for our free reprint "Just What Is the Holy Spirit?"

To better understand how the Spirit works, consider this analogy: Before God works with you, you are like a car without a radio. You can function in other ways as a car, but you can't transform radio waves into sound. But once a radio is installed, you can.

In a similar way, it takes the presence of God's Spirit in your mind to receive God's thoughts. You can function as a physical being without God's Spirit, but to be in tune with God's thinking — to live God's perfect way — you need the Spirit:

"For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God" (I Corinthians 2:11-12).

Through the presence of the Holy Spirit, God can direct thoughts into your mind. Then you have the opportunity to respond to them. Through this process, godly character can be built.

Growing spiritually

As you respond to God's Spirit, you'll think and act the way God does. You'll "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18). God will give you more of His Spirit as you obey Him more perfectly (Acts 5:32).

On the other hand, if you ignore the promptings of God's Spirit, your thoughts and actions will not be based on the mind of God. The Spirit of God constantly must be stirred up (II

Good News photo

Timothy 1:6)! It is actually possible to quench the Holy Spirit by neglecting to follow where God leads you (I Thessalonians 5:19)! After God imparts His Spirit to your mind, you face eternal judgment if you sin willfully (Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-27).

So you must respond to God's Spirit when it leads you to pray, study your Bible, fast, meditate on God's way of life, obey His commandments, express God's love and bear the other fruits of His Spirit. You must reject any thought that opposes God's way of life (II Corinthians 10:5).

When you do, God will lead you to further understand and apply His truth. Then you will grow in the fruits of God's Spirit. You will become more and more like Christ, because the Holy Spirit will direct more of your thoughts, words and actions.

Think about what this means! You will not be driven by self-

will, self-pity or anything else that is produced by selfishness. Instead, you will bear the good fruits of godly desires, godly confidence and everything else that is of God. Your life will be a lot happier, and so will the lives of those around you.

Become a firstfruit

In time this process — the process of conversion — will lead you to become "a perfect [mature] man." You will reflect "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

This is the very purpose of your life — to bear the fruit needed to become one of the firstfruits of God's Kingdom — one of the first to be literally born into His Family.

James 1:18 says, "He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."

And Romans 8:11 tells us:

"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit which dwells in you."

With so much to look forward to, and with so much to enjoy now, it is vitally important to use God's Spirit! Most people in this age are denied this chance.

But if God is calling you, you can actually begin to live on the God-plane level in your thoughts and actions. If God is working with you, you can prepare now for a position of rulership and eternal life in God's soon-coming Kingdom!

The result? Your life will be filled with an abundance of deeply satisfying fruit that will be pleasing to your heavenly Father: "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples" (John 15:8). □

'But the Fruit of the Spirit Is...'



Picture a beautiful vine covered with lush foliage and delicious fruit — each fruit with a different flavor and taste.

Now consider this: When God gives us His Holy Spirit and we begin to follow where God leads us, we begin to bear spiritual fruit. Jesus Christ is the spiritual vine that produces fruit in us (John 15:5).

After listing the negative "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21), which we are to avoid, Paul, in verses 22-23, lists the fruits of God's Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."

Let's look at each of these fruits we are to bear.

● **Love.** This choice fruit is the basis of God's character (I John 4:8). It is not merely a physical feeling or emotion, but something far greater. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (I John 5:3). The Spirit of God helps us keep God's com-

mandments. Love expresses itself in right attitudes (I Corinthians 13:1-8, 13), right words (Ephesians 4:15) and right actions (I John 3:16-18).

● **Joy.** For most people, joy is what they feel after getting something for themselves. But God's joy transcends selfishness. It comes instead from giving to others and seeing others blessed. This is the joy that Jesus felt when He gave Himself as our Savior (Hebrews 12:2).

● **Peace.** Obedience to God's law produces great peace (Psalm 119:165). It brings you into harmony with God, your neighbor and yourself. It helps you peacefully resolve conflicts (Romans 12:18-21, Matthew 5:23-24).

● **Longsuffering.** When people are inconsiderate, when trials threaten to overwhelm you, this trait sustains you. It helps you endure trouble, extend mercy and wait patiently for God, the judge of us all, to act (Colossians 3:13).

● **Kindness.** This is sensitivity to the needs of others. It is a soft and delicate fruit that leaves people feeling secure and confident (Psalm 18:35). Paul wrote the Thessalonians, "But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing

mother cherishes her own children" (I Thessalonians 2:7).

● **Goodness.** Generosity is another word for goodness. It means to give freely and cheerfully. This is what God does, and what we must do (I John 3:16, II Corinthians 9:7).

● **Faithfulness.** Dependability, loyalty, faith — these words describe faithfulness. Without this fruit, relationships wither and die. With it, they prosper and grow (Hebrews 11:6, Proverbs 25:19).

● **Gentleness.** This does not mean weakness. Rather, gentleness is a powerful quality that produces humility and destroys pride. Through it, we can esteem others better than ourselves and control ourselves in time of stress (Philippians 2:3).

● **Self-control.** This is the last fruit in the list. It affects the taste and growth of all the other fruits and is needed in all that we do (I Corinthians 9:25).

Together, these fruits constitute the perfect character of God — the character He wants you to build. With the help of His Spirit, you can do that — you can become like God Himself. □

LETTERS

Readers comment

This is a long overdue letter I have been trying to write for some time. It is to thank everyone so very much for all the booklets, the magazines, the Bible Correspondence Course, the *World Tomorrow* television broadcasts . . .

I believe without a doubt that this must be the true Church. It has to be! It is the only organization that has actually taught me something worthwhile. I feel like I'm being re-educated, and I can't get enough of it.

Nora D. Harcourt
Carmichael, Calif.

Thank you very much for the booklets you have sent to me. You have shown me that you quote the Bible correctly. In this time and age, where false teachings are becoming increasingly prevalent, I am very happy to have come across your true and sincere organization, the Church of God.

A.L.
Bern, Switzerland

How good that there is such a magazine as *The Plain Truth* in which world conditions are being looked at from a different angle (the Bible). *The Good News*, also, I think, is a fantastic magazine. I have only received two issues so far, but I learned a great deal already . . .

How wonderful that there are people who see to it that these things are without any cost. . . Thank you very much for everything and my best wishes for you and your fantastic organization.

Mrs. J. Veenstra
Kloosterburen, Netherlands

We've been subscribers of *The Good News* for quite some time now. To say that we find the articles refreshingly different is an understatement since they are also captivating.

Peter O. Allanah
Nnewi, Nigeria

"Woman . . . Wife . . . Widow"

I just had to write to thank you for the article "Woman . . . Wife . . . Widow" (February). Only a woman who has gone through this trial could have written an article such as this one. It seemed you looked inside of me and wrote down what I have been going through for the past 16 years. It took me four tries to finish this article, but through the tears I finally read it. I was left with five children

to raise — three girls and two boys. It wasn't easy, but I prayed for strength and received that much-needed strength.

I hope this helps a lot of people who will face this in the future, or right now if someone is going through this terrible time. I know that even after all these years it has helped me to know there is someone out there who understands my pain of so long and the loneliness of today.

I, too, look forward to that resurrection to see my husband.

Emma E. Smith
Marion, Ohio

I am writing this short note to say thank you for one of the most touching articles I have ever read on a subject that as a wife and mother it is hard to think about.

I could not make it through this article without tears and a much deeper appreciation and love for my husband and what he truly does mean to me. It is so easy to take someone who is so fine for granted. He truly does try to obey God and lead us as his family in the right way.

God has blessed me with a wonderful man and your article helped me to realize it even more.

I only hope more of the wives . . . will read this article and even if they are having "troubles" will take the time to look at the good qualities of the man they promised to love through thick and thin. Maybe some of the trials won't seem so bad.

Cheryl Jahns
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

"It's Something You Do!"

I just finished reading the article "It's Something You Do!" (January). When I got my January copy of *The Good News*, I was very down about everything that has been going wrong in my family. I thought I was going the right way. But after reading the article, I came to see that I have not been obeying God.

The spiritual knowledge I have been learning, I have not been doing anything with it.

I have to quit playing around. I don't care how weird that people think I am or my family. I must obey my Lord. Thanks for the article. It was God-sent.

Karen S. Gray
Wheeling, W.Va.

The cause of sickness

I was reading your "Questions & An-

swers" column and became very disturbed and annoyed to read your response to the question "Why are so many people sick today despite medical knowledge?" . . .

How could you declare to people who are extremely ill that the Lord condemned them to that certain kind of illness because they disobeyed God's law? I have known a great deal of people who have been good and faithful to God's law and have been sick with serious illnesses. You cannot tell me God has stricken them . . . Your answer will make a person who becomes ill not only ill, but guilty of what he did to deserve the sickness.

M. Radesco
Smithtown, N.Y.

Illness results when people fail to follow the principles of physical health. We did not mean to imply, however, that the sick always suffer as a direct result of their own actions. We live in a world that as a whole has rejected God's law, and even if we ourselves strive to obey God, we often suffer as a result of what others do. For example, polluted air, water and food affect us. The mistakes of our ancestors can cause us to be born with birth defects. Violent crimes committed by others can cause us physical injury or mental trauma. In the wonderful world tomorrow, when God's law is enforced worldwide, illness will be eliminated.

Bimonthly issues

It is with regret that the two publications, *The Good News* and *Youth 87*, are to be cut back . . . I do look forward to the coming of *The Good News* each month with a great deal of eager anticipation because of the soul-searching articles that are presented . . . I will miss *The Good News* every other month but also recognize the need for the change.

Cliff Homstad
Hallock, Minn.

Am thankful Mr. Tkach is sending out less *Good News* a year to us because I am a slow reader and it is hard for me to keep up with all the things to read and do the Bible Correspondence Course, which I enjoy so very much. Am very thankful that I have been called and know the truth. Thank God for Mr. Tkach.

Muriel J. Amidon
Big Sandy, Tex.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Dating

The Lost Art of Dating

For most people, there is very little "art" to dating. As our series of articles continues, we focus on the practical, how-to aspects of dating.

By Richard Rice

Has dating become a lost art? From all appearances it would certainly seem so! The vast majority of people are confused about the purpose of dating. Many do not even know exactly what a date is!

To some, dating is merely a means of finding a mate. Dating does indeed lay an important foundation toward marriage, but that is not its sole purpose.

To others, a date is merely a "one-night stand." Movies and television shows would have you believe the glitter and glamour of dating lie in what you can *get* from the other person. Scenes of pickups in bars or illicit sex in a motel room give a distorted and corrupted view of something that should be wonderful and beautiful.

What Hollywood does not normally show you, however, are the adverse consequences of this life-style: Unhappy, unfulfilled people. Broken hearts and shattered lives. Sexually transmissible diseases and unwanted pregnancies. All of these are the legacy of the "swinging singles" scene.

But what, then, is proper dating? Although, tragically, dating has become a lost art, the purposes and benefits of dating can be regained through the knowledge and understanding of God's way of life.

Give vs. get

The Bible simplifies life into two contrasting

overall philosophies: the way of *give* vs. the way of *get*.

The way of *get* is totally self-oriented. In the end, this way of life is unfulfilling. People caught in the *get* way always need more and more to satisfy their wants.

By contrast, the way of *give* is the only true path to happiness and fulfillment. Giving is an outgoing concern that seeks to serve others rather than the self. Instead of being caught in the syndrome of "the more you *get*, the more you want," you find fulfillment in giving.

But what does this have to do with dating? Everything, as a matter of fact! Dating to *give* to the other person is truly the lost art we have been discussing.

If both parties do their utmost to give to the other in the ways we shall now explore, a date cannot fail to be enriching and successful.

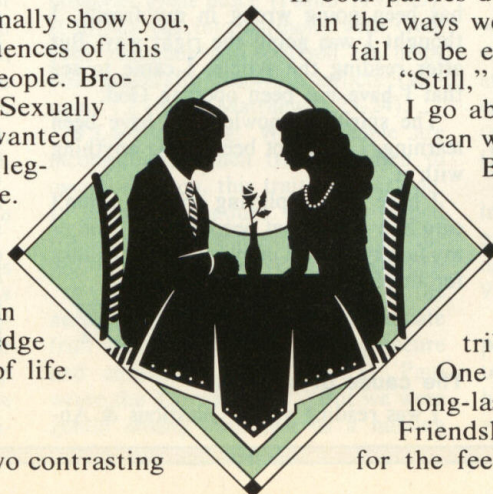
"Still," you may ask, "just exactly how do I go about dating in this manner? What can we do? What should a date entail?"

Before we discuss the specifics, let's consider some broad, general principles that apply to dating.

Date to build friendships

True, meaningful friendships contribute to a happy, abundant life. One purpose of dating is to help build long-lasting relationships.

Friendship grows when we show concern for the feelings and interests of others. The



Bible tells us, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly" (Proverbs 18:24). So, in your dating, concentrate on building friendships.

Listen to what the other person has to say, rather than consistently dominating the conversation. Go to places the other person would like to go, rather than always insisting on doing what you want. Take time to find out the interests, dreams and goals of the individual you are dating.

Don't limit yourself. Date a wide variety of people. This gives you broader experience in dealing with others. Soon you'll find yourself able to converse with just about anyone. As the apostle Paul said, we must become "all things to all men" (I Corinthians 9:22).

By all means, avoid becoming too emotionally involved too soon. Many single people today face loneliness and frustration. It is all too easy to find false comfort and security in a premature romance. But getting carried away and letting emotions run rampant only leads to pain and disappointment in the long run.

If you concentrate on dating to build friendships, not romances, you will build strong bonds of brotherly and sisterly love that will endure. With a foundation such as this, if a romance blossoms in its proper time, it will be built on true love and respect and friendship — not on temporary infatuation.

Understanding the opposite sex

What makes men "tick"? Why do women act the way they do? Men and women have unique differences. The way they view life — their feelings, reactions, attitudes and ways of doing things — are in some instances almost opposite.

Some like to see these differences as a "battle between the sexes." But the plain truth is that men and women continually misread each other.

Dating is a means of clearing up these misunderstandings. A date is the perfect opportunity to discover how the opposite sex thinks, what makes him or her unique.

Men often accuse women of being over-emotional and irrational. Women frequently complain that men are demanding and insensitive. When we begin to recognize the differences in emotional makeup, these problems can be defused and overcome.

A true gentleman will respect a woman's feelings. He will seek to understand her point of view, and he will be sensitive to her moods and emotions. He will support her in both her ups and her downs. He will do everything within his power to put her at ease. He will realize the value of a sincere compliment at the right time to encourage her.

Likewise, women should recognize how fragile the male ego sometimes is. When a gentleman asks a lady out, he is putting himself on the line — risking rejection and hurt feelings. By using charm and grace, a lady can promote a man's self-esteem in a right way, even if she has to turn a date down.

There is nothing more gracious or endearing than a truly feminine lady. Likewise, nothing is more

inspiring or noble than a man who has learned how to take the lead as a real gentleman.

Believe it or not, chivalry is really not dead. Although many current ideologies would have us believe that even courtesy and good manners are old-fashioned, nothing could be further from the truth.

Women appreciate men who take the lead in the proper manner. Not on some macho kick, but truly showing thoughtfulness and consideration. Pulling out a chair, helping with her coat, opening the car door — these are but a few of the characteristics that make a man stand tall in a woman's eyes.

In the same way, men genuinely admire and appreciate a true lady — one who will respond and do her best to make the occasion he has planned for her successful.

Confidence in re-

lating to others,



along with friendli- ness and outgoing concern, are vital ingre- dents in a balanced personality. Confidence involves poise, self-assurance, ease in dealing with people and skill in handling different situations. Dating is one of the most effective means of developing these positive attributes.

If you feel ill at ease on a date, don't let this stop you from trying! The more you date, the more relaxed you will become in interacting with others. With surprising swiftness, nervousness will subside and confidence will grow.

At times, try dating in groups. People often feel more at ease in a group than in a one-on-one situation. Conversation is easier with more people to participate, and much of the anxiety and tension will disappear.

As you have more and more successful dates your

Illustration by Wendy Lagerström.
photo by Hal Finch

confidence will increase, and you will find yourself becoming a well-balanced, sociable person.

Two central aspects

Where you go and what you do on a date will vary depending on many factors. Weather conditions, activities available and how much money you have budgeted to spend are some of the considerations that will dictate what you can do.

There are two aspects, however, that should be part of every date you go on. Without these fundamental requirements, it is impossible to have a successful date.

The art of communication

Communication is another lost art of this day and age. People have simply forgotten how to openly converse with each other.

Having been hurt by those who are out to get, many have built protective walls around themselves. These barriers often become prisons. Some do not allow others to get in. Neither do they reach out and try to make friends.

Consequently, even though there are more people alive on earth today than ever before, psychological defenses have made many people very lonely and insecure.

Dating is one of the most effective tools in breaking through these barriers. This necessitates communication on both sides. Without meaningful conversation, a date cannot be successful.

Communication is not just talking at or to someone. It's sharing thoughts and ideas. Try to see the other person's point of view. Don't just voice your own opinions. Some may find it hard to get a conversation started. There are steps you can take to overcome this obstacle.

Before asking for a date, do your homework. Take the time and effort to find out what the other person's interests are. Don't be nosy or rude. Simply ask the person a few casual questions when you talk over the phone, at the office, school, church or wherever. This will give you ample information to use with your date.

Always be broadening your store of knowledge so that you can converse on a myriad of subjects. Strive to become a good listener. Draw people out and give them the opportunity and encouragement to express themselves. To become a good conversationalist takes time and work, but it is well worth the effort.

There is nothing more disarming than a congenial, friendly person who is not afraid to let others know what he or she is really like. People can spot insincerity. Therefore, be open about yourself, and others will be comfortable in opening up to you.

One word of caution: Use discretion and tact in your efforts at communication. To ask probing and personal questions can be embarrassing and make your date feel uncomfortable, thus ruining the date. By the same token, divulging your innermost faults or secret sins is unwise.

In addition to communication, there is another

major aspect of dating. This involves what one can do and places where one can go on a date. The point is that you should . . .

Have fun!

The possibilities for having good, clean fun on a date are endless. The only limitation is your own imagination. Be creative! Explore the possibilities in your area. Take advantage of opportunities.

The responsibility for selecting and planning activities normally rests on the man. He should not view it as a burden, however, but as a unique and profitable opportunity to develop leadership, and have fun at the same time.

A thoughtful leader will try to plan dates around what the woman would like to do. On occasion, have two or three ideas in mind, and ask her which one she would prefer. This allows the man to do the planning and preparation while giving the woman input.

It is important to plan well in advance. Spontaneous dates can be enjoyable, but for many types of dates, it is only common courtesy to ask a woman several days ahead of time so she can prepare. Let your date know exactly what you will be doing and where you will be going so she can plan and dress appropriately.

As far as what to do, that may vary depending on your budget, location or other considerations. Following is a list of some of the many activities you can choose:

- Take advantage of natural beauty in your area. Plan a hike in the mountains, swimming, sailing, snow or water skiing, horseback riding or a pleasant walk through a national or city park. All of these activities are not only fun and uplifting, but they also provide a scenic backdrop for conversation and getting to know each other.

- Museums, libraries or recreational facilities are available almost everywhere. They are often inexpensive and can be educationally profitable.

- When you can afford it, a dinner at a nice restaurant is always pleasurable and provides the perfect atmosphere for easy discussion.

- On occasion, a movie, play or symphony can be delightful. Be careful not to overdo dates like this, as they tend to leave little time for conversation. You might wish to go for a walk or drive afterward so you can talk.

- Sports activities such as volleyball and tennis help keep you physically fit while enabling you to become acquainted with a variety of people.

- Inviting a friend to visit the elderly can encourage and inspire those who are lonely and shut in.

- Outdoor barbecues, sing-alongs, house-painting parties and bike rides offer inexpensive social opportunities. The list is virtually endless.

Getting to know the opposite sex and enjoying wholesome fun — that's what dating is all about! Master the art of dating, and you will also find one of the secrets to a happy, well-adjusted and meaningful life. □

I am crazy about this really cute guy (or girl), but he (she) doesn't seem to know I exist. How can I get him (her) to notice me and like me?

We receive this question from teens more often than any other. And the answer is that you *can't*. That's right, you can't *get* someone of the opposite sex to like you.

Don't misunderstand. This doesn't mean you are helpless to find friends of the opposite sex, or that you are doomed to a life of loneliness. There is much you can and should do if you want to have friends and someday find the husband or wife of your dreams.

But it's not a matter of what you can *get*. It's a matter of what you can *give*.

Many teens try to *get* others to like them. For girls, this means dressing in the latest and most expensive styles, being a cheerleader or member of a sports team or being on the student council. For many girls, it means dressing seductively and flirting. And to keep the attention of the guys these actions seem to get, these girls do things such as necking or petting, or more, on dates.

For guys, the *get* approach means being considered a "hunk" or a "jock," owning a racy car or having lots of money. It means taking the right girls to the right places and making "the right moves" on dates — even if you really feel wrong about doing so.

These aspects of the *get* approach may seem to work for a while, but the people you attract by these methods, frankly, won't be very nice people, and the relationships that develop won't last.

So what should you do? Instead of *getting*, concentrate on *giving*.

First, realize that the best way to gain the attention of members of the opposite sex is not to latch onto a "steady." Instead, it is best to meet and learn to enjoy the company of many different types of people.

Next, realize that the most important thing you can do during your teen years is to develop emotionally, intellectually and academically into a pleasant, balanced person. Put another way, you should become a person of quality who is a real prize for someone else of quality. Then you won't need to "catch" them — they will want to catch you!

Jesus Christ taught this principle when He said: "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you"

Dating

The Questions Teens Ask Most

By Larry Van Landuyt

(Luke 6:38). This means that if you become an attractive, kind, friendly, warm, talented person — if you have nice qualities to *give* — others who have these same qualities will be attracted to you. It takes time and effort to become this kind of person. But that's fine, because "cheap popularity" is just that — cheap. It has little value and it doesn't last.

I think I'm in love. Is there a way to know for sure?

What is true love, and how do you know when you're in it? Do you "fall" in love? Does your heart "skip a beat" and your mind begin to swirl?

First, let's consider what true love is *not*. It is not the surge of warmth one feels when near the person he or she "loves." It is not the physical excitement, the rising pulse rate, the blushing, the

nervousness. It is not day-dreaming about the person when he or she is gone, nor staring at the person when he or she is near. It is not the loss of appetite or fitful sleep of a girl or guy who can't stop thinking about a

certain person.

These are merely physical and emotional responses. They are triggered by our body chemistry when we're in the presence of an appealing person of the opposite sex. They are only feelings — happy, exciting, powerful feelings, certainly, but just feelings — not love!

True love is much more than emotions. Oh, it includes emotions and sensations, but it goes much deeper. And this is where many go astray. They confuse the feelings and emotions of *romance* with *love*. This is a tragic mistake.

Here are four qualities of true love:

First, *real love must be selfless*. When you love someone, you want the best for the other person. Your object is not to get from him or her. Real love isn't concerned with getting affection, gifts, attention or anything else from the person. Love means trying to do what is really best for the one loved.

Second, *real love survives trouble*. The type of love that vanishes with the first misunderstanding or hardship is not true love. It is just a passing, selfish, romantic interest.

Third, *real love remains steady over time*. Right here is where many people who are planning to be married should stop and think. A courtship that has lasted only a month or two may not be based on love, because it has not yet had time to prove itself. Love takes time to grow strong enough to last.

Fourth, although it is accompanied by romantic feelings, *real love does not die when the first excitement of romance decreases*. Instead, it takes root and grows as the months and years pass.

True love is not blind. It sees the other person as he or she really is, with faults as well as good points. Only in this way can you see the character of the person, and decide whether he or she is the one with whom you want to share the rest of your life. True love is based upon thinking as well as feeling, and the thinking must come first.

All the other kids my age are dating, but my dad and mom say I can't because I'm too young. When is a person old enough to go out on dates?

Parents and teens often disagree on this point. Have you noticed how some teens view dating simply as a chance to have fun at some activity



Photos by Nathan Faulkner



with someone of the opposite sex? Caring parents, however, see dating as a complex relationship accompanied by emotions and physical pulls that require maturity to be handled wisely.

Being alone with a teen of the opposite sex on a date is not a situation to be taken lightly. The ability to properly channel newfound emotions of sexual awareness does not come automatically with those emotions. Wisdom and character take time to develop and mature.

So when should a young person date? This question should be answered for each teen by parents who use good judgment based on God's Word. The age will vary slightly for different individuals. Often, teens who have not yet graduated from high school may profit more from group activities and social events than by pairing off on unsupervised dates.

I'll be graduating from high school in a couple of months and am interested in a guy who is 24. He wants to date me, but my mom says I cannot date him because he is too old for me. What difference does age make as long as we like each other?

When two people are out of their teens and are mature adults, an age difference of a few years isn't too important. But the teenage years are a time of major changes in a person's life. There is a far greater difference between a 17-year-old and a 24-year-old than between a 27-year-old and a 34-year-old, even though the years between them are equal.

Although you are more mature than a younger teen, you still have not reached full adulthood. Your adult friend has already faced more of life than the few years between you might seem to indicate. This means the two of you cannot help but be mismatched in terms of mental maturity and experience.

The fact is that often, an adult man who dates a girl in her teens does so only to selfishly take advantage of her naiveté and immaturity.

We believe you would be wise to follow your mother's direction. What you see as an exciting new adventure, she

recognizes as a situation that is almost certain to bring you much hurt and grief. She is trying to protect you from the heartache and pain that may await you.

My parents don't like the guy I'm dating and are trying to split us up. Why don't they want me to have fun and be happy?

If your parents disapprove of your friend, be cautious! Your parents really want you to be happy. They have probably seen similar situations — perhaps in their own experience! — where someone has been deeply hurt, and they don't want that to happen to you.

Realize that your parents know you better in many ways than you know yourself. Also realize that they were once teens themselves. They've seen more of the trap doors of life than you have.

Consider their advice seriously. Talk to them calmly when both you and they have the time. Ask them to explain why they do not care for your friend.

If you will hear them out, you can learn a bit more about yourself, and about your friend. And you can avoid the heartaches many have reaped because they ignore the best source of dating advice available — parents!

So many guys today seem to think dating and sexual intercourse automatically go together. I haven't given in to my boyfriend yet, but I'm feeling the pressure and I don't want to lose him. Can you help me?

God's law forbids premarital sex (Exodus 20:14, I Corinthians 6:18). Having sex before marriage is a grave mistake you're sure to regret later in life. Look at this letter, for example:

"I always thought of myself as a nice girl because I wouldn't go 'all the way.' With every new boyfriend, necking became just the thing to do. But also with each it became less exciting . . .

"About four years ago after losing my virginity I met the man who would become my husband. I cannot put into words how much I love this man. However, there is a major problem. Because of my previous sexual experience, my senses are deadened. Now I wish I could go back and erase all the relationships I had with other men. What a true blessing it must be to have a wonderful sexual life with your mate!"

The young woman who wrote the letter above points out just one sad result of premarital sexual experimentation. There are many others, including unwanted pregnancy, abortion and a vast array of sexually transmissible diseases.

If the young man you are dating doesn't respect you enough not to engage in premarital sex, how much do you think he really cares about you?

You will have to decide what you

value more — the temporary (and it will be just that) attention of a guy or your personal happiness for many years to come. Men will have to decide whether to indulge in temporary physical pleasure now or to buck the crowd and wait to enjoy sex with that one special girl in a loving marriage, as God intended.

Choose God's way of life and you will never regret it!

My parents say it's not good to go out with the same guy (girl) too often. Most of my friends are now going steady. Is there anything wrong with going steady?

The idea of steadily dating one person to the exclusion of others when you are too young to seriously consider marriage is not good for several reasons.

Humans naturally seem to want to possess things — or even people! — exclusively. But in friendships with the opposite sex, this approach limits social development. It hinders meeting and getting to know a wide range of people since it tends to announce that you are special friends with only one guy or girl, and hence off limits to others. It's actually a selfish point of view.

Going steady is essentially lazy. Boys are spared the bother and embarrassment of asking new girls for dates. Girls feel a sense of security, knowing they will be assured of regular dates.

Familiarity is another matter to be considered. The familiarity created by steady dating makes it easier for the boy to make ever-bolder romantic advances on subsequent dates — while it becomes more difficult for the girl to say no.

Stated plainly, dating only one person multiplies the pressure to have sex. After scores or hundreds of hours alone with one another, it is difficult to maintain godly moral standards.

Teens should be friends with everybody and not go with any one person exclusively until they are old enough to have dated many different people and to be considering serious dating in direct preparation for marriage. □



The Extended Family

There was a time when a person grew up not far from grandparents. And uncles and aunts and cousins. That's not usually the case nowadays.

The hectic, mobile age in which we live has separated families, especially in the Western world.

In the United States, for example, the average family moves every four or five years. This can be very disruptive for children.

Many times, moving takes people hundreds or thousands of miles from previous homes, friends and extended-family members. Children grow up with little or no contact with grandparents and cousins.

How sad that can be. At just the time in life when grandparents can be most helpful and influential, they are cut off.

It's important to maintain family contact. Children need to know who they are and understand their roots.

This was brought forcefully home to our family when my wife's father had a serious accident. For five weeks he lay in a coma. His wife and children rushed to be with him. But he did not recover. His death was sobering to all of us.

Even though he was past 75 years of age, the finality of death of a loved one is not easy. But his six children, their husbands and wives and the 19 grandchildren he loved so dearly will fondly remember the profound impact he had in all our lives. His funeral brought all that extended family, as well as hundreds of friends and loved ones, together. After the

funeral, the family selected the tombstone and the words to be inscribed on it — words that would best summarize the life of a man who influenced so many: "A loving husband, father and grandfather. A very special man."

Those few days helped me real-

ize even more what I have come to know and appreciate: How important family is!

Time to get together

Even though we all live in many different areas, over the years we have tried to find the time to get together. All 19 of



Illustration by Kim Passey

the cousins are a close-knit group who have laughed and cried together over the ups and downs of jam-packed lives. But they have always been family.

I also realize not everyone has enjoyed that kind of warm family life. My own early years are quite a contrast to those of my wife.

I was an only child. My father died when I was quite young. To support her growing child, my mother had to move away from her remaining family. I have 12 aunts and uncles. There must be more than 30 cousins. But I only know one of them well, and haven't seen him for many years. Some of my aunts and uncles I have not met.

My grandmother lived to age

it as our children grew up that they spent a week or a month or more of the summer with their grandparents.

I know of no better way for children to experience their "roots" than to spend time with Grandpa and Grandma. Looking through old photograph albums. Listening to stories of what it was like when Grandpa was a boy. And those special stories Grandma tells of when Mom and Dad were teenagers. They are priceless moments that should be captured in the mind of every child.

At Grandpa's funeral, there was, of course, that sadness of losing a loved one. But I couldn't help but notice a calm kind of joy

so, keep up the good work. But for the many others of you who have let some of those experiences pass you by, I hope you will make an effort to recapture the spirit of the extended family.

Maybe it's time, as one of the phone-company ads says, to "reach out and touch someone."

If your parents or grandparents are still living, whether across town or in a distant city, wouldn't it be a good time to plan a visit?

And what about those cousins you haven't seen for years? A long letter bringing them up to date on your life and asking how they are might be just the pick-me-up they need.

Recapture family life

It's unfortunate how family life has fallen by the wayside in such a large part of this modern society. The decline and collapse of the family is one of the great tragedies of our time.

It's been like a runaway freight train. Unhappiness. Divorce. Abuse. These evils have come to be accepted as normal in this hectic world.

But unhappy families are not normal. That's not the way it's supposed to be. The *Good News* magazine is dedicated to the preservation and promotion of happy family life.

That's why we will keep on writing about marriage, children and families so much.

After all, no society can be any stronger than the individual families that make up that society. We may not change the world right now. But we can sure try to help each of you grasp the importance of strong families.

Even though a sad event brought our family together, we all were comforted by the strength of family love that made our grief much easier to bear.

I hope and pray each of you can capture or, if need be, recapture the joy of a visit to Grandpa and Grandma. Or a call to that long-lost cousin.

That's just one more way to share. Your family can only be better for it. □

It's unfortunate how family life has fallen by the wayside in this modern society. Unhappiness, divorce and abuse are accepted as normal. But unhappy families are not normal. That's not how it's supposed to be.

97. But I only saw her three or four times. The last time, she was 96 and too feeble to know who I was or to become acquainted with her great-grandchildren.

I did not really think much about that while growing up. But in college, as I began to date my future wife, I saw another side of family life than what I was accustomed to.

Maybe that's why I write so much about family life. I am happy to say my mother and I have been integrated into the much larger family of my wife. And we have made it a special point for our children to stay in touch with their extended families.

Like many families, we have had to move several times. Even now we live some 1,500 miles away from most of our relatives. But we have experienced the joy of family reunions and visits to each of the relatives. We saw to

Grandma experienced those few days she watched her 19 grandchildren — ages 2 to 25 — sit around and tell stories of those happy days with Grandpa and Grandma on the little family farm. Or the time he paid for summer camp. Or when they took the dog and went bird hunting. Or when he taught them to milk the cow. Or the time the fox got in the chicken coop.

We cried some. But there was also the hugging and the laughter over the years of joy we have shared together.

Think of your family

The mantle of grandparenting will soon pass on to the next generation in our family. Funny how your way of thinking changes so much when you get a little older.

Think of your own extended families. Many of you have warm and close families with whom you have shared similar memories. If

Help Your Child



to Read

Words! All day we are surrounded by them — whether spoken or written. Our thoughts are constructed from them. And during the night they enter our dreams.

How important words are to us!

As a baby babbles during the first year of life, it is said that he or she makes the sounds of all the world's languages. Certain of these sounds are enforced by culture; others are not.

Here is where parents' accurate pronunciation and the child's environment begin to shape language and knowledge. Here is where we will begin.

But first, ask yourself this simple question: Do you spend more time listening and speaking — or reading and writing?

Most people speak more than they write. The telephone is used more than the stationery in the desk drawer. School tests ask more "fill-in-the-blank" questions than essay questions. Often, writing out lessons is not required. On the job, too, listening and speaking often are the rule.

Though it was once stressed in school, good penmanship is not emphasized as much anymore. Poor handwriting throughout society is the result. We sometimes

A child who writes well usually reads well, also. Here is how to promote your child's writing skills.

By Joan C. Bogdanchik

joke about it, but poor, illegible writing causes business and industry sizable financial loss. Letters, too, end up in dead-letter piles because their addresses cannot be read. Some letters sent to God's Church are hard to respond to properly because they are difficult to read.

Good, legible handwriting is important. After all, writing should be for reading! Our writing represents us.

The importance of writing

Writing is a powerful means of communication. It is more carefully studied — and cherished — than the spoken word.

Our history is written in vol-

umes on library shelves. How many people carefully preserve letters, notes and cards from days of youth, courtship or friendship, storing them away in drawers or attics? These are kept to remember times and loves long past.

Yes, the written word is often more powerful, long-lasting and sweetly sentimental than what is only spoken!

Yet speaking, reading and writing go together. Reading aloud to your child is important. When you do, your child learns the rhythm of language, the sequence of words and how the letters of the alphabet form words.

Early, your child discovers that words have meaning. How he or she enjoys being read to!

Soon your child will attempt to write. Your view of writing — how much you value it and how much you do of it — greatly affects the child.

The importance of organization in the home cannot be stressed too much. Organization in the environment helps the child *think* in an organized way. And organized thinking is vital to good writing. Written and spoken language, after all, are *organized* series of sounds, symbols and meanings. The writer must plan and organize his thoughts.

Create a writing environment

Within your family, create for your children an environment

Illustration by Kirk Botero

that promotes writing. Let your child see you read. This shows the importance you place upon the written word.

Shortly after the birth of your child is the time to begin making him a writer! You start the process by reading to him.

Then, around age 1, he or she could have his or her own low table upon which paper is placed to draw and scribble upon. The table should fit the child. Be sure that his or her feet touch the floor.

Your child may also benefit from having a chalkboard in his or her room, with large, soft chalk to use. Wide sheets of paper on the floor are good, too. How these activities can encourage writing and reading!

Make available a good supply of materials. All kinds, shapes and textures of paper can be used for different purposes. Have plenty of scrap paper on hand.

Start with large crayons and mini-markers. Use thinner ones as your child gains experience. Children enjoy variety. It encourages creativity and growth.

Give your child much more exposure to doing his own writing and drawing than to being entertained by coloring books.

Show your child how to mix paint on a plastic lid to get other shades and hues. Here is another marvelous opportunity to teach organization of materials.

When you work with paper for various activities, have your child tear the paper at first, rather than cut. This will help strengthen fingers. Small-muscle development is important to your child's writing skills.

Be sure to give him or her much practice with scissors after you see improvement in tearing. Don't push this too soon, but your child should have a great deal of exposure to cutting before the first day of school.

Scribbling

Scribbling is vital in your child's development. Don't make the mistake of minimizing or ridiculing it.

Scribbling begins randomly,

then becomes controlled. Soon your young writer will want you to label, or name, it. When this happens, you'll see real progress! Mock letters are next. To the parent's utter delight, true writing will follow.

Controlled scribbling is an expression of creativity. It is like the spoken babbling that flutters parents' hearts. Later, geometric shapes will appear. The difference between drawing and writing becomes apparent now.

Not only will your child scribble on paper, but in sand, which is good; in dirt, if the opportunity arises; and certainly on windows when they are fogged. These all display a desire to write. Cultivate that desire well.

As the child plays at writing, he or she will become more aware of letters. Children drill themselves by repetition. At first it doesn't matter how he or she holds the writing tool. The posi-

Build an environment that promotes writing. Your view of writing — how much you value it and how much you do of it — greatly affects your children.

tion will change when it comes time to write.

Don't try to rush the process. The developmental steps are necessary. Just let your child scribble and doodle on! Praise his or her work. Show that you are impressed with the lovely lines. Scribbling gives your child practice in making circles and straight and slanted lines — the basic handwriting forms.

Don't be overly concerned about right- or left-handedness. Observe your child when he or she plays and eats. Which hand

does he or she favor? Give your child opportunities to use both, but do not push. He or she will choose which he or she prefers.

Your child will become aware of letters in the environment — on trips to the supermarket, when passing street signs and, of course, from television. Children love to discover letters. They often think letters look like shapes of familiar items.

When letters appear in your child's scribbles, he or she may try to form them correctly. Your child will carefully watch and listen as you form each one and say its name and the sound it makes. Your child will become aware that words can be divided into letter parts.

Learning letters

Except for the first letters of names and sentences, keep your instruction in lowercase writing. Why? Because your child will meet lowercase steadily in reading material. Start this way to give familiarity and confidence.

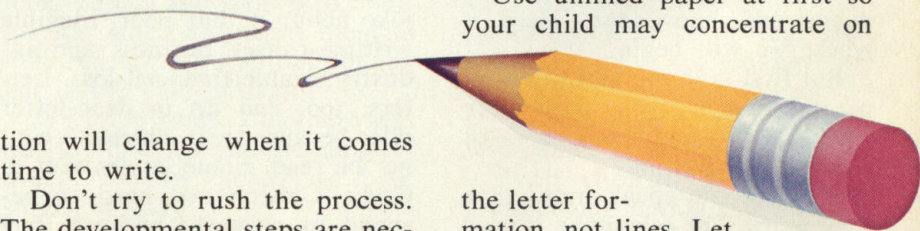
You will notice that the letters your child makes will often still be large though they are lowercase. Children can learn to use uppercase and lowercase properly early in their writing.

It will help to visit the school your child will be attending to find out what handwriting system they use. Habits learned early are hard to change later.

Use unlined paper at first so your child may concentrate on

the letter formation, not lines. Let him or her copy rather than trace letters, so he or she has to think more carefully about the formation of each letter.

Say the letter *sound* for your child — *a* for *apple*, for example, or *s* for *sun* — as you write it. Have him or her "write" it in the air using the whole arm, and repeat its sound. He or she then could write it on his or her palm, or in sand, then paper. He or she



can read it back. Sensory channels to the mind are wide open. Learning takes place, and mental discipline develops.

Your child will begin to label. He or she will practice by playing. Many notes and messages will appear for Daddy and Mommy. Appreciate and praise them, but don't be critical of the spelling. Let him or her write creatively, and all he or she wants. Place high value on this communication.

What a love for writing you are cultivating in your child!

For years controversy has raged among educators over whether children should learn words by the "look-say" method, or break them down into letter-sound components phonetically.

During years of teaching in public and private schools in the United States and England, I have found that children use both approaches. But if they know only the "look-say" method, they are often quite perplexed as to how to attack new words. This is especially so if there are not contextual clues to help.

Somewhere in their educational experiences, good readers and spellers usually learn the phonetic makeup of words. Of course, once they know a word, there is no need to "sound it out" each time it is encountered.

The English language is said to be more than 90 percent phonetic, and there are definite rules for correct spelling. A good phonics book will give you the sounds of the vowels and consonants and their blends. The consonants are easily mastered. Vowels can take longer, but they have many consistent underpinnings. Irregular words simply must be learned by practice.

Your part in teaching

Whether your child grows to love writing — or, unfortunately, to hate it — depends in large part upon you and your efforts! Do not leave it up to the school alone. Don't waste the many opportunities for learning outside of classes.

A child who writes well is al-

most always a good reader. But the reverse is not always so.

Writing makes one aware. The child must think carefully about what he or she is doing. Words must be in the right order. They must be understood.

The writer must think of the person to whom he or she is writ-

Whether your child grows to love writing — or, unfortunately, to hate it — depends mostly on your efforts. Don't leave it up to the school alone.

ing. What does he or she want to tell that person? He or she must think of that person and become sensitive to the person's needs. He or she becomes thoughtful of others.

Isn't this what you desire? Did you realize writing has a part in developing concern for others?

The writer also learns to make decisions. ("What should I write?") Writing helps self-discipline, as the writer sticks to the task started. He or she is actively involved.

In writing, your child gains self-esteem, as well. It is satisfying to see one's efforts on paper.

This is where parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and neighbors all play their part. When a child writes to you and you answer, you are helping to teach the joys of writing.

Leave notes around your home. Have a memo board in your kitchen or elsewhere on which all the family can leave messages, or tack up a thought or poem for the day.

Enclose notes in lunch boxes. Parents, if you could see the faces of your children light up at lunchtime when you do, I know

you would do this more often. These notes provide a warm touch of love at midday — and they tell your child that love can be shown through writing. Your notes to your children, and theirs to you, reinforce parent-child bonds.

Permit your child to participate in your correspondence. Let him or her enclose a letter to Grandma. By telling Grandma what's going on in his or her life, he or she begins to learn to write a journal. This will help when this assignment comes up in class. And how happy Grandma will be to receive such a letter!

Have your child send postcards while on trips, keep journals of summer activities, label pictures he or she has drawn.

Writing on calendars, keeping a diary, writing stories and poems and keeping a scrapbook are

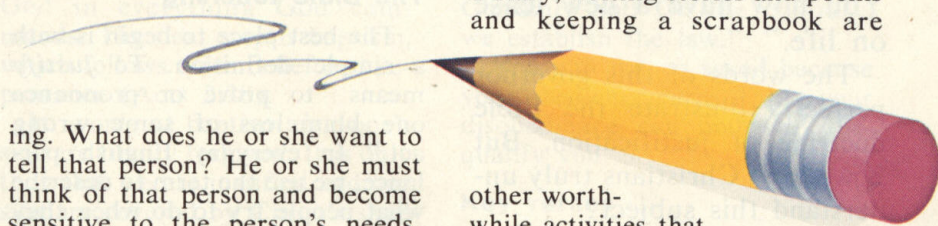
other worthwhile activities that help develop handwriting and creative writing skills. Thank-you notes and pen pals keep writing skills going and growing, as does notetaking.

As your child progresses through school, monitor writing progress. Is writing done slowly? He or she may be holding the pencil too tightly. Is it sloppy? This may signal an attitude problem. He or she may be rushing work to get on with other things. Teach your child to work neatly and take right pride in his or her work.

When your child nears the time to learn cursive writing, write notes in cursive so he or she learns to read it before writing it.

Businesses and schools tell us writing skills are declining. Illiteracy is a serious problem in society. But you can make sure your children receive a good education. They should be steadily growing in literacy.

Help your child learn to write. It is a vital part of learning to read! □



Justification — Your New Lease on Life

“I know that you are guilty of the crime,” stated the governor, “but I believe that you are truly sorry and will not do it again. Therefore, I hereby pardon you and release you to society on your honor. You now have a new lease on life.”

The words of this governor perfectly illustrate the Bible doctrine of justification. But how many Christians truly understand this subject?

What about you? Do you understand justification? You must, if you are to enter God’s Kingdom, for no one can be saved without being justified from sin!

The basic doctrine

Justification is the process by which God forgives a person’s sins by grace through faith. It implies not only forgiveness, but imputing to the person a positive state of righteousness in God’s eyes. It is not earned through obedience, but requires repentance and keeping God’s law.

The usual teachings of this world

Some people don’t have a clear idea in their minds about just what justification means because they confuse it with the related but separate subjects of faith, grace or law. Others believe that we are justified by works instead of faith. Some go to the opposite extreme and think that justification means that the law is done

away. Some feel we are justified when we do nothing more than “profess Christ” or “believe on His name” in some public or private profession of belief. They may feel we don’t need to be baptized or even repent in the true sense of the word.

What, then, is the truth?

The Bible teaching

The best place to begin is with a simple definition. To *justify* means “to prove or pronounce one blameless of some wrong act.” In everyday English parlance, we use the term to describe what people try to do when they are indeed guilty but wish to talk their way out of some trouble by denying their guilt.

But in the Bible, justification is not what a person says about himself or herself, but what God Himself does for the person!

To be justified, in Bible usage, means to be pronounced not guilty — not because one has not done wrong, but because one has been forgiven by God for the wrong done.

For proof, read Romans 3:21-31, which shows that justification

is the forgiveness of sin. See also Romans 5:9, which shows that justification is made possible by the shed blood of Christ.

After our total spiritual cleansing by God, God views us as being righteous! As Romans 3:21-22 shows, this righteousness is not something we earn; rather, it is imputed to us when we are justified by faith. God forgives us totally and gives us His own Spirit of righteousness.

Romans 4:1-8 says God imputed — that is, credited — Abraham with righteousness because of Abraham’s faith, which resulted in his justification. Abraham had not earned such favor. But God imputed righteousness to him after forgiving his sins, because Abraham had faith.

But forgiveness of sin coupled with a pronouncement of righteousness — justification — does not come automatically. It has conditions. And here is where many jump the track.

For one thing, man cannot justify himself. It is something God must do. Jesus upbraided the Pharisees because they sought to justify themselves before others (Luke 16:15).

Certainly, people cannot justify themselves with verbal pronouncements of righteousness or innocence, for they are not innocent. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” says Romans 3:23.

The Pharisee in the parable of the publican and the Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14) tried this approach. He listed all the good he had done, in the hope that God would see his righteousness. But



Christ said that the publican, not the Pharisee, went down to his house justified. The publican truly repented of his sins, and God imputed His own righteousness to him.

Romans 4:1-8 states that Abraham was not justified by works but by faith. Romans 3:20 proclaims that "by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight." Verse 28 says "a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law." Galatians 3:11 confirms "no one is justified by the law," and Galatians 2:16 repeats that "a man is not justified by the works of the law."

But do not misunderstand! These verses do not mean that we need not keep the law. More on this later. For now, however, notice plainly that one cannot earn justification by anything he or she alone says or does.

How, then, can we be justified? How can we find forgiveness and have God's righteousness imputed to us?

First, we must realize that it all happens by God's grace. We are, as Romans 3:24 says, "justified freely by His grace." Grace is simply unmerited favor. To be justified by grace therefore means that justification is a gift that God gives — not something we earn. It is given because of God's goodness, not ours.

Second, justification is through faith. Acts 13:39 says those who "believe" — those who have faith — are justified. Romans 3:26 concurs that God is the justifier of "one who has faith in Jesus." See also Galatians 3:8, 24.

Faith is belief that God exists and that He will do what He says He will (Hebrews 11:6). When God calls a person and grants the person the gift of repentance (Romans 2:4), He extends forgiveness to the person when he or she turns from sin and begins to obey God.

Hence justification involves grace and faith. As Ephesians 2:8

says, it is by grace through faith. It is because of God's favor and not our own goodness, but faith is a necessary condition.

But even this faith is not something the person alone supplies. True faith is a gift from God. It is not found naturally in any person (Galatians 5:22). Yet it requires a person's cooperation.

Here is how it works: When God decides to call a person, that person at first responds to God with only human belief. But it is belief backed by action. As James 2:26 says, "Faith without works is dead."

The first action is repentance — the act of ceasing to sin and changing one's whole life to obey God in everything God commands. The next step is baptism, which follows after belief and repentance (Acts 2:38).

It is only at baptism that one's sins are finally forgiven. It is only then that we are justified and our sins are covered by Christ's shed blood and death (Romans 5:9).

As a result of baptism and the laying on of hands by one of God's ministers, we receive God's Spirit and are filled with true faith. Thus the process starts with human belief but leads to Christ's own faith being placed in us.

But why does God justify only those with faith — belief that causes them to *act*? The answer is that one who truly believes God — that is, one who has faith — will strive to obey God totally.

Today, of course, all of us sin sometimes. But one who believes God only disobeys out of weakness of the flesh and the pulls of Satan. He does not intend to disobey. He constantly strives to obey God, with God's help. He lives under God's grace, and God continues to justify him and impute righteousness to him.

A person without faith thinks he knows better than God. He wants to follow his own way. He intends to and will disobey God.

Faith is the difference! There-

fore God requires faith — trust in Him — to justify us.

But one final piece must be put into the justification puzzle at this point. Many believe that once you are justified, you need not keep God's law. But to say that we are not justified by the law (which is true) is something totally different from saying that we don't need to keep the law (which is false).

Romans 2:13 makes this truth plain: "For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified."

What could be plainer? And Romans 3:31 adds, "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law."

You will not be saved because your obedience earns it, but your disobedience can and will disqualify you.

Key verses

It is helpful to remember some basic scriptures about this topic: Romans 3:21-31 — all have sinned and need to be justified; justification includes the forgiveness of sin. Romans 4:3 — justification also includes the imputing of righteousness. Romans 5:9 — justification is made possible by Christ's sacrifice. Luke 16:15 — we cannot justify ourselves. Romans 4:1-8, Galatians 2:16, 3:11 — we are not justified by the law or works. Ephesians 2:8 — we are justified by God's grace through faith. Romans 2:13, 3:31, James 2:14-26 — works and law keeping are both necessary, although they don't justify us.

God's forgiveness of our sins and imputing of righteousness to us is a wonderful blessing, made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And once justified by God, we, just like a criminal pardoned for his crime, can begin again with a brand-new lease on life. □

COMING IN THE GOOD NEWS

◆ Dead . . . and Gone?

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◆ How Many Apostles Were There?

What does the Bible reveal about the office of apostle in the Church of God? Exactly what is an apostle? Can there be no apostles except for the original 12?

◆ The Singles Scene

What's behind the dramatic increase in the number of men and women who are choosing the single "life-style" over marriage and family? We continue with our series of articles on what everyone should know about dating.

◆ Humility — The Neglected Virtue

This world places great stock in self-reliance, winning by intimidation and interpersonal manipulation. But what does God say about this approach?

◆ If You Are Losing Faith . . .

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