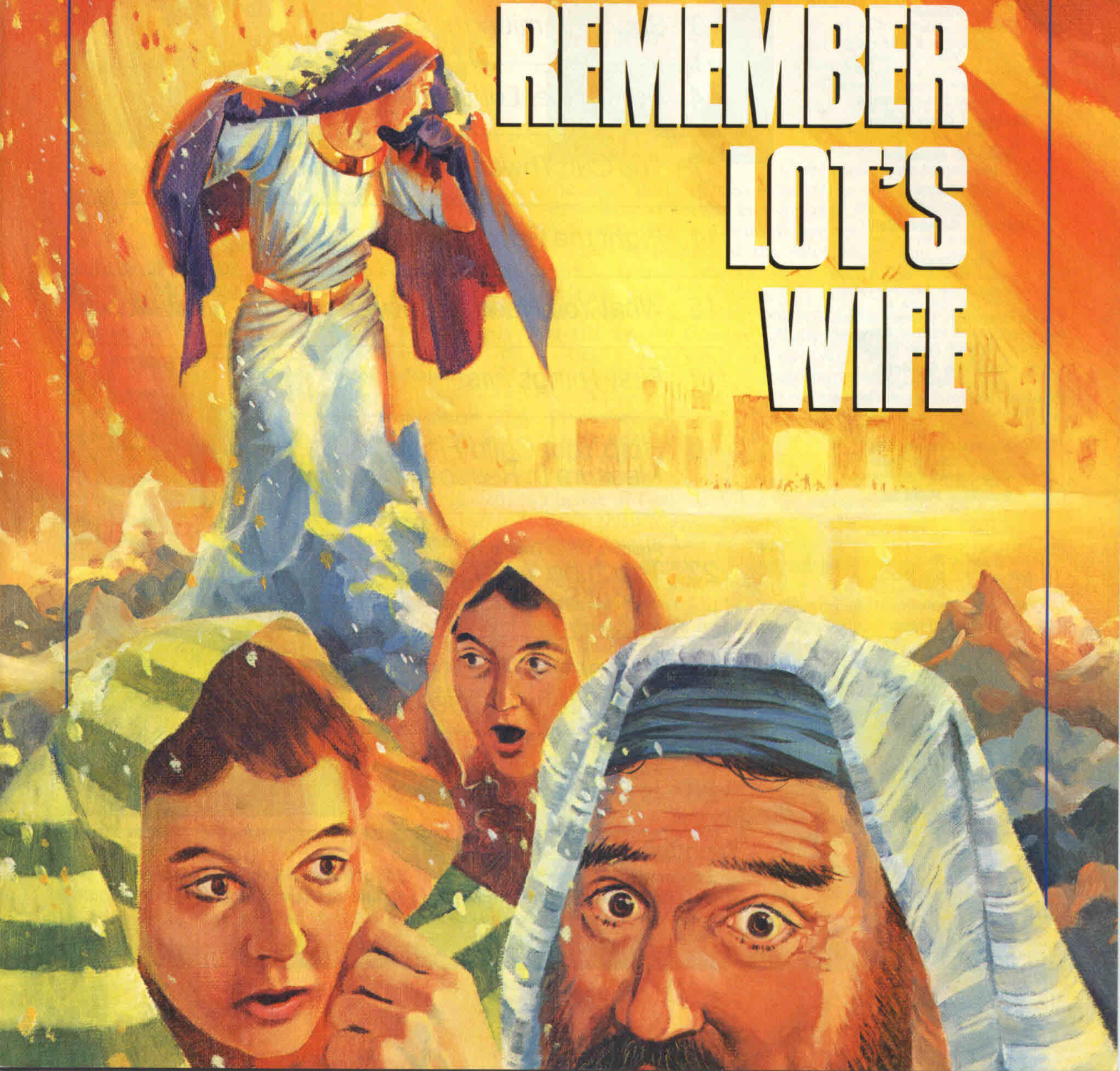


JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1989

The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

**REMEMBER
LOT'S
WIFE**



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The Good News

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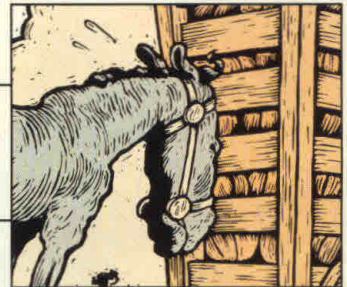
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COVER

Supernatural destruction of ancient Sodom, as envisioned by illustrator Ken Tunell. God warned righteous Lot and his family to flee the city, but Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. Be sure to read the article beginning on page 4.

GOOD NEWS PERSONAL



How YOU Can Help Change the World

Wouldn't you like to change the world?

Most people would. For the vast majority of human beings, the world is not very pleasant. Most would like to see it changed.

They would like to see a better world for their children and for their grandchildren. The scourges of war, of crime, of injustice, of prejudice, of hatred, of hunger, of disease and of pollution leave their miserable mark on every life.

Some people do more than just wish the world were different. They set out to change it. A few make some contribution, even if only small and temporary, toward bettering the world. Others, motivated by frustration, despair and often hatred, seek to bring about change by violent or destructive means, becoming part of the problem themselves.

But when all is said and done, the problems facing humanity today are not diminishing. Rather, they are growing ominously *more* dangerous.

How about you? Do you want to change the world? There *is* something you can do, you know—if you have the good sense to realize there is a Creator God who intervenes in human affairs.

God tells those who desire to follow Him to change *themselves* first. He wants to know who will *believe* that He knows the way to happiness and well-being and will *follow* that way. Jesus asked in Luke 6:46, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"

How about it? Are you willing to change yourself?

If you consider yourself a Christian, how about making your calling and election *sure*? How about



changing your own little corner of the world, bringing *yourself* under the perfect government of God by obeying Him? James exhorted, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22).

This world is not a very pleasant place. But it *is* going to be changed. It will be changed by *force* at the time Jesus Christ returns to do battle with those who will resist His coming. At that time He will take rulership over all nations.

You can be part of the solution, or you can be part of the problem. Are you willing to have Christ *rule* you now, by obeying His law? Or will you be one whose knee will not bow until He *makes* it bow at His Second Coming (Philippians 2:10)?

God is *love*. He is faithful. And His way is the *cause* of peace and human happiness. But most people, for now, have *rejected* that way of life. What about you? Will you reject it, too? Or do you *really* want to live God's perfect way?

He will give you all the help you honestly want. He'll forgive you as often as you truly want to change. If God has called you to follow Him, you've been given a great treasure. Don't throw it away. Don't lose it. Use it. Appreciate it.

It is only natural that humans would like to change the world. Many have tried. But the day is coming when it will be done! And all Christians are promised a part in helping it come about.

The beginning of a new year on the Roman calendar turns our minds toward the way we'd like to see things be. Why not begin this year by taking *seriously* the great calling our merciful God has given us? Start changing the world—today!

Joseph W. Teach

Pastor General
Worldwide Church of God

LETTERS

"Overcoming Isn't Easy!"

On Friday, I was taking care of my 14-month-old granddaughter and the magazine arrived in the mail. I could hardly wait to read the magazine. The article "Overcoming Isn't Easy!" (September-October) was the medicine I needed. Working and serving under adverse circumstances, I felt I couldn't take another step. I unplugged the telephone Friday and Saturday, read and prayed. I thanked God. It really helped.

Norma Clemans
London, Ohio

"Reflections of a Wayward Son"

Every topic I read is so uplifting, but the one that touched me the most was in the September-October issue, "Reflections of a Wayward Son." Well, I'm not wayward. Also, I am a lady, but I don't visit my mother like I should and it made me do a lot of thinking. My mother never told me anything wrong. She helped me raise my children, not money-wise, but always keeping us updated with God's commandments.

She's still living, thank God, so I can tell her I love her and do most of the good things she raised me to do. I have four children. I asked all four of them to read that topic. They read it and things with them seemed to change for the best.

Ann Faulkner Evans
Baltimore, Md.

More points on family growth

Re: "Checklist for Family Growth" (May-June), points to add:

- 1) Spiritually: Go out to work (or

whatever you do) every day as if you are already in the world tomorrow, working with Christ. Do your best. Let your thoughts and actions glorify God.

- 2) Mentally: Concentrate on what others have to say, listen carefully and, if necessary, take action to help them.

- 3) Emotionally: Invite all the family to a meal. Share their sorrows and joys by visiting them when things happen to them.

- 4) Physically: Help out at your local community center. Give a present to a family member or friend or neighbor now and then.

Patricia MacLain
Nottingham, England

Bible translation errors

I noticed something that concerned me in two issues. Both the March-April issue, on page 22, and the May-June issue, on page 9, quote Galatians 2:20 from the New King James Version. I have heard this verse specifically addressed as being incorrect in modern versions, but correct in the King James Version, which states, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." The difference in emphasis is very significant, which should be brought to the attention of *Good News* readers.

Also, the May-June issue, on page 5, refers to the spirit of Christ as "He," when the KJV uses "it," which is apparently correct from the context.

I like the NKJV, but it still needs to be used circumspectly.

Dave Delamater
Pasadena, Calif.

Right. While the New King James seems more readable to modern readers and corrects some of the errors of the King James, it sometimes introduces other mistakes.

The King James correctly states that we live by the very faith of Christ Himself in us, and not by our own human faith in Him. The change in preposition totally alters the meaning and could spell the difference between spiritual life and death for anyone who fails to realize how the phrase should be translated!

And the holy spirit, which is the power and mind of God and not a separate person, is properly referred to as "it" and not as "He."

Smart Bible students check several translations and put together everything the Bible says on any subject to make points clear, rather than relying exclu-

sively on any one version or any one verse for all their understanding.

Interesting and informative

Many thanks for an interesting and informative magazine. Indeed it is aptly named, for we all need good news in these trying times.

May your work continue and prosper in spreading the good news of the Bible and of the coming of God's Kingdom.

Bill Drew
Birmingham, England

My parents became members of God's Church when I was 7 years old. I have loved the life of God's way. I have never in all my 31 years ever written into the Church of God to say how much I appreciate the blessing of having the knowledge of God so freely given to us. I was reading the letters to *The Good News* and was shocked to hear people want to cancel their subscription so freely. What a shame.

A Thankful Member
Medford, Ore.

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Hal Finch

Stay Committed!

*As a new Roman year begins,
how serious are you about remaining
faithful to the calling
God has given you?*

By Joseph W. Tkach

New year's resolutions have become something of a tradition for many people.

Something about the ending of one year and the beginning of another seems to create an opportunity for an individual to close one chapter of life and open another. There is a subtle element of hope that *somehow* next year will bring a better me.

But life doesn't seem to work that way. Most people find their earnestly made commitments to improve their habits fall by the wayside after only a few weeks or even days.

The beginning of a Christian life is also a sort of closing of one chapter of life and opening of another. But unlike a typical new year's resolution, the Christian cannot afford to allow his commitment to be carelessly neglected and soon forgotten.

The Christian life must instead be one of vigilance to never forget the deep meaning and value of the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God calls Christians to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22). James says that those who are only hearers *deceive* themselves.

True Christianity is a lifelong process. It is a *way of life*. Obe-

dience to God reaches into *all* areas of the Christian's life. As James asked, "Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?" (James 3:11). We cannot be Christians on the Sabbath and then go out and live as we please during the rest of the week. Christians are to be overcomers.

The Christian commitment

At baptism, a Christian makes a commitment to obey God, to live a new life according to His Word. That commitment involves repentance—a total *change* of mind and direction of life. The Christian *turns* from the self-centered way of vanity, greed, selfishness, envy and hostility toward authority to the God-centered way of love toward Him and toward other people.

God then grants His holy spirit, making the new Christian a partaker of a portion of His divine *nature* (II Peter 1:4). The Christian then has fellowship with God, having been reconciled to Him through Jesus' shed blood in payment for the penalty of sin. He begins to abide in Christ and, as a true Christian, to walk with Christ.

But that is only the beginning. Ahead still lies a whole lifetime of *continuing* that walk with Christ. He must *continue* to turn from the actions, attitudes and

thoughts that are contrary to God's way. God is merciful. *He is willing to forgive as often as we are willing to repent.* But a Christian's repentance and his commitment to God and God's way of life must be *real*. He needs to *understand* just how much *better* God's ways are than his own, and to *believe* in God's law and way just as Jesus did!

Submit to God in mind and heart

Jesus kept His Father's commandments. He did not just "go along with" His Father. He wholeheartedly submitted Himself to His Father. In like manner, the true follower of Christ must submit to God in mind and heart (John 15:9-10).

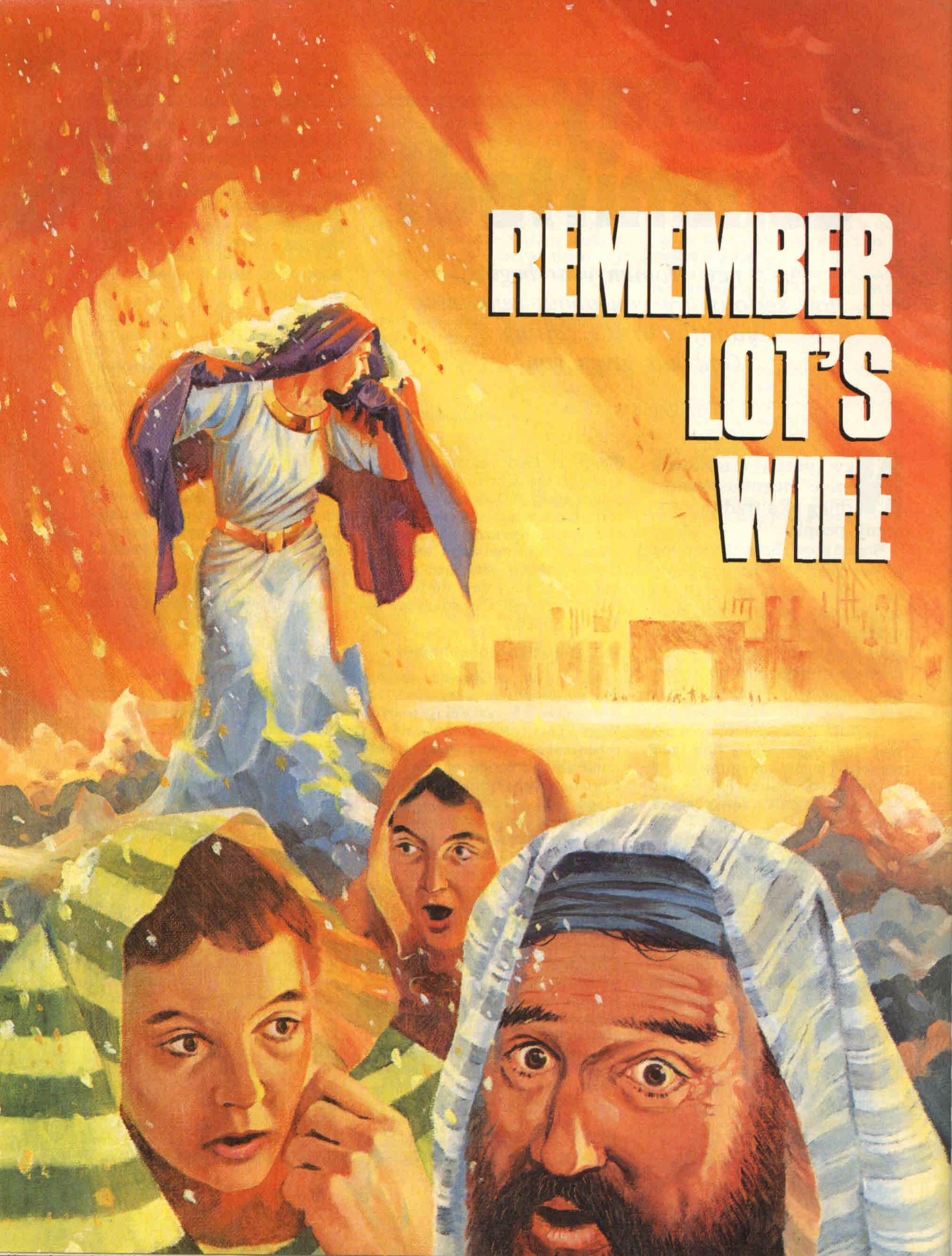
Jesus makes clear in Matthew 5:17-48 and elsewhere that the keeping of God's commandments must be *more* than just the physical actions of keeping them. It must be in the heart. It must be a way of life—not only a way of *doing*, but also a way of *thinking*, "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," as the apostle Paul put it (II Corinthians 10:5).

Conditions in this God-rejecting world are growing steadily worse. The Bible prophesies that the crisis that will usher in the Great Tribulation and the end of this age will burst upon the world *suddenly!* When it comes, it will *shock the nations*.

Don't let yourself become caught up in the cares of this world and be taken by surprise. Jesus called His true servants "the light of the world." Their way of life is *different* from the way of the world around them—just as Jesus' way of life was different from the way of the world around Him.

Peter admonished, "Be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure" (II Peter 1:10). Let *your* commitment to live by "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4) be far more than a mere "new year's resolution." Let it be the *permanent*, lifetime calling God intended! □

REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE



*As this evil age hurtles to a close,
could you fall victim to the same temptation
that destroyed Lot's wife?*

By Mario Seiglie

But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt" (Genesis 19:26).

So ends a colorful biblical account that has held the attention of readers throughout the ages. Yet most people find little use for such stories, with the exception, perhaps, of entertaining their children at bedtime.

Unfortunately, the vital message behind the narrative is seldom grasped, and the true reason for its inspiration is thereby lost!

Almost 2,000 years later, Jesus Christ drew from this account an important lesson for those who would be alive during what the Bible calls "the end of the age." Jesus admonished His followers who would live just before His return to "remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32).

It is vital for us now to understand the lesson of Lot's wife!

The judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah

The account begins in Genesis 18 with the arrival of three men, later identified as the Word (who later became Jesus Christ) and two angels, to the home of Abraham (verses 1-2). The intent of their visit was to investigate evil reports about the nearby cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (verses 20-21). The men explained to Abraham the frightful consequences that would befall the two cities if the accounts were verified.

Astounded by the potential annihilation of some of his acquaintances, including his nephew Lot and family, Abraham convinced God to spare the cities if even 10 righteous men could be found in them (verses 23-33).

Genesis 19 records the events that led up to the destruction of

Sodom and Gomorrah. As the two angels approached the cities, Lot went out to greet them and to warn them of the wickedness inside (verses 1-3).

II Peter 2:7-8 praises Lot, "who was oppressed with the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)."

Upon Lot's insistence, the angels spent the night in his home. But news of the strangers traveled fast and soon the men of Sodom were at Lot's doorstep, intending to initiate the travelers to their perverted ways (Genesis 19:4-5).

Amazingly, Lot attempted to protect the travelers by offering his two daughters to the mob! But this only brought more sneers and howls from the crowd.

If the angels had not blinded the populace and pulled Lot back into the house, Lot himself would have fallen prey to the vile designs of the mob (verses 6-11).

The angels had seen enough to confirm the reports of the complete corruption of the inhabitants. They urged Lot to gather what family and friends he could and flee immediately. But Lot's sons-in-law only scoffed at the warnings. Morning dawned and Lot still could not convince them of the impending danger (verses 12-15).

The angels could not wait any longer. Yet Lot "lingered" and finally had to be forcefully taken outside of the city, along with his wife and daughters (verse 16).

Lot's wife turned to salt

Through Lot's persistence, the angels spared a nearby village called Zoar where Lot could later reside. The family, sensing the urgency of the moment, fled as

fast as their feet could take them (verses 17-23).

Then, in one awesome and terrifying moment, a thunderous roar of fire and brimstone poured down upon Sodom and Gomorrah, leaving a smoldering mass of rubble and ashes. It was at that instant that Lot's wife hesitated, recalling the society she had left—the home, the possessions, the friends and relatives.

Defying God's clear command, Lot's wife looked back. As she glimpsed the devastation of her city, she was crystallized into a pillar of salt, a fate not unlike that of her fellow inhabitants, who were burned along with the cities (verses 24-26).

Lesson of Lot's wife

Now notice what Christ said about Lot's wife:

"Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:28-32).

From this passage, we can now see the profound lesson of Lot's wife. Just as Sodom has come to represent the wickedness of Satan's society, so Lot's wife has come to typify those God calls out of this world but who eventually return to it.

Once a person commits himself to follow the ways of God and serve God's special purposes, he cannot, along the road, decide to change paths without incurring eternally fatal consequences!

God is not pleased with backsliders

Just as God intervened to free righteous Lot and his family from certain destruction, He is, through the atoning sacrifice of

His Son, delivering those He is now calling from the frightful punishment reserved for this degenerate society.

Paul said those who would turn back from their commitment to follow God "crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:6).

Peter warned: "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. . . . But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire'" (II Peter 2:20, 22).

Given the seriousness of spiritually drawing back from God, the fate of Lot's wife does not appear as terrible, since it was purely physical. She will have her first real chance in the second resurrection.

But how much more serious is the fate of those who spiritually turn their faces away from God, who have "tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Hebrews 6:5)!

How to avoid following Lot's wife

This corrupting end-time society exerts enormous pressures on those who are following Christ, just as the Sodomites attempted to pervert Lot. But Christ revealed to His disciples two vital keys that would fend off the entanglements of the evil world surrounding them and thereby allow them to "endure to the end":

1) *Be good stewards of the Gospel.*

The first key is found directly after Christ's description of end-time circumstances: "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master,

when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods" (Matthew 24:44-47).

A marvelous reward awaits those who faithfully serve Christ. But what comprises our stewardship? Which goods has God entrusted to us?

Christ commanded: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

The "goods" God has entrusted to us include the Gospel or good news of His coming Kingdom and the knowledge of His way of life.

Those who back the efforts to carry the true Gospel throughout the earth and to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17) will be so busy and thrilled in preaching God's truth that they will neither have the time nor the desire to contemplate the ways of society, much less to return to its vain manner of living.

2) *Be spiritually in condition.*

After covering the need to be good stewards of the Gospel, Christ went on to explain the second element essential to remaining faithful to the end.

Matthew 25 gives the account of the 10 virgins who are to wed Christ. Five were described as "foolish," or spiritually unprepared to participate in the wedding feast. They were left outside the ceremony.

These five virgins were found without sufficient oil (representative of the holy spirit) in their lamps as they waited for the bridegroom to arrive. They were not prepared spiritually for the wedding. When the announcement of the bridegroom was heard, they hurriedly left to replenish their exhausted supply of oil. By the time they returned to the scene, the door was closed and they were left to face the encroaching wicked world.

Along with being deeply involved in God's Work as a loyal

steward, one also has to be spiritually in condition so the wait will not drain his spiritual strength and cause him to flounder. Lot's wife gave in just before reaching freedom!

As in physical sports, to keep in good shape spiritually, one must exercise frequently, which Paul described as renewing the inward man day by day (II Corinthians 4:16).

Our spiritual exercise consists of vigorous prayer, dedicated Bible study, regular fasting and uplifting meditation. Trained by these methods, one can face the onslaughts of the world with renewed spiritual strength and remain faithful to God.

Will you look back?

Now the clear meaning of Christ's admonition to "Remember Lot's wife" can be understood in its end-time context.

All of us are occupied with daily chores during these final days. When called to leave immediately because God's intervention is imminent, are we to glance anxiously back to our business, home and finances? Or, if we are asleep when the final call to action goes out, are we to "linger" as Lot did?

Emphatically no!

This will be the period, similar to what happened in Sodom, when the followers of God are taken and the rest are left behind. Even more sad will be the case of those who knew the truth but who stopped being the stewards of the Gospel and who let their spiritual lamps go out. These will be left to experience the final convulsions of a dying world.

When that last trump sounds, will you be found faithfully involved in God's Work? In what spiritual condition will you be?

Will you be among the eagles gathered around the Body (the Church), as Christ so vividly described (Luke 17:37)? Or will you follow the example of Lot's wife and turn your back on God's mercy, only to face the fearful consequences?

You don't have to, if you "Remember Lot's wife"! □

You Can Thwart Satan's Battle Plan

Do you know how real Satan and his demons are? Do you understand his strategy and know how to resist the greatest deceiver in the universe?

By Roderick C. Meredith

We are now entering an awesome period in human history—the time when Satan and his army of evil spirits will wage their supreme battle to overthrow God's people and His true Church—just before the end of this age on earth.

Jesus foretold this period vividly: "For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24).

Note that even the elect will be deceived if there is any way Satan can do so!

Where does that leave you?

It simply means that you, personally, need to know and understand Satan's battle plan—the deceptive tactics and machinations employed by the author of lies. Then you must devise ways to counter those satanic strategies.

What is Satan really like? How does he operate? You need to know.

Understand Satan's background

Notice Satan's origin. He was created as a super archangel—a cherub—and at one time was assigned to cover and protect the very throne of God (Ezekiel

28:13-14). He was named Lucifer, meaning shining star of the dawn—a brilliant, powerful spirit being. Later, he was assigned jurisdiction over this earth and the large angel population here.

But he lusted. He thought God was unfair. He felt his glory and responsibility over this earth wasn't good enough.

He said: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14).

Satan was the first one to try to get to heaven. He wanted to take over the throne and authority of God because he did not respect God as supreme Creator and Ruler of the universe. He did not appreciate what God had done and what God is. Satan had vanity and selfish ambition—and he has schemed and lusted and lied ever since to try to get his own way!

Now, Satan is the god of this world and its human society (II Corinthians 4:4). He is the invisible "prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). Satan is busy schem-

ing and influencing men's minds. He does this through direct spiritual influence—broadcasting, in a sense, his attitude of vanity, greed, hate and rebellion against authority. And he effectively imparts these attitudes through the media of his society—television, radio, movies and magazines, which are filled with violence, sexual suggestiveness and a constant appeal to vanity.

Therefore, a person who is constantly in touch with this world through these media is incessantly bombarded by Satan's approach and attitude.

How Satan operates

Satan got to our first parents in the Garden of Eden. God had put Adam and Eve in this beautiful paradise and given them everything they needed. Their Creator had told them they could eat of every tree except one—the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17).

However, Satan immediately put questions into Eve's mind about God's instructions: "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" (Genesis 3:1).

The implication was that God

was unfair, that He was holding back something good from them, that man ought to be free to decide for himself what is right and wrong and not have God telling him what to do!

Eve reminded Satan that God said she and Adam would die if they ate the forbidden fruit. Again, Satan challenged God and implied that He had wrong motives in wanting to restrain Adam and Eve from sin—that the forbidden tree was actually the key to unlocking spiritual mysteries: “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (verse 5).

Satan’s approach makes God seem unjust and appeals to intellectual and spiritual vanity. So our first parents succumbed, and mankind has been under the influence of Satan ever since.

The next major assault against humanity was Satan’s attempt to overthrow and prevent Jesus from being our Savior and the One to replace Satan as ruler over this world.

Jesus’ temptation

Note that Jesus prepared Himself for this temptation by fasting. He was weak physically, but He was spiritually yielded and close to God (Matthew 4).

Satan first enticed Christ through His strongest pull at that moment—hunger. Most of us have never known the kind of hunger that builds up after not eating for weeks! So Satan, knowing Jesus’ craving for food, said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread” (verse 3).

“If!”

Of course Jesus was the Son of God. But Satan’s challenge was dual—both an appeal to Christ to satisfy His hunger and at the same time answer this questioning of His office.

But, truly humble and contemplative through much fasting and prayer, Jesus saw through this trap immediately and resisted it. He replied, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every

word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (verse 4).

Then Satan took a different approach, quoting scripture to gain Jesus’ acquiescence: “Then the devil took Him . . . set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge concerning you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone’” (verses 5-6).

But again, Jesus knew that we are to do our part to preserve life—even when it is hard—and quoted another scripture to rebut Satan’s lure: “Jesus said to him, ‘It is written again, “You shall

not tempt the Lord your God” ’” (verse 7).

The supreme test

Then Satan showed Jesus the magnificence and glory of all the kingdoms of the world. Christ knew He would not be in a position to inherit rulership of the earth until after He remained absolutely perfect in character for another three and a half long years. He was to be beaten, cursed, spat upon and tortured, and then, to top it off, be publicly crucified and left to writhe in agony for what would seem like an eternity—one of the most humiliating and painful methods of execution ever devised.

And here was this tremendous, almost overpowering spirit saying: “Come on! Just throw in your lot with me and you can have all this now. You don’t need to wait and suffer and bleed and die. Just yield to me and I’ll give it to you right now.”

Many in the “now” generation would easily have been overcome by this. But Jesus had character. He had true wisdom. He rebuked Satan and totally rejected Him. Otherwise, you and I would not have a Savior: “Then said Jesus

to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve” ’” (verse 10).

However, Satan continues to work on our vanities, our desires to get rid of responsibility for our actions, our wishes to get what we want *right now* without properly preparing or paying the price. And Satan and his ministers will also pervert scriptures—as the devil did with Jesus—to make their case appear plausible to any who do not really know and understand the Bible.

Parable of the sower

Some of the specific methods Satan uses on us are described in the parable of the sower and the seed found in Mark 4:1-20. Jesus interprets the story in verses 14 through 20. When the “word” is sown, Satan immediately comes and takes it away (verse 15). How? Think about it.

How quickly can Satan literally jerk your mind off what you have read in the Bible or *The Good News*, or heard in a good sermon, by causing you to turn on the television?

That’s right! Immediately your attention is taken from reality to exciting make-believe. Perhaps a battle is raging, or a murder is taking place in front of your very eyes—it doesn’t matter. What matters to Satan is the worldly TV or radio program or other physical distraction literally snatches from your mind the intense interest and sense of urgency you felt only moments earlier when drinking in the Word of God.

Again, God’s truth often falls on “stony ground” (verses 16-17) because Satan’s society has conditioned us to be shallow, to take things for granted, to shift our allegiances quickly and casually.

And the “thorns” (verses 18-19) of Satan choke the Word through all our worldly pursuits. People easily get involved in the “cares of this world”—job, money, society, prestige—and pretty soon they push God into some dark, nearly forgotten cor-

ner and bring him out only on Sunday mornings, or when they are so deeply in trouble that the outcome looks hopeless.

This parable shows that Satan can easily overthrow us if we are shallow Christians, if we are not willing to worship and obey the great Creator of the universe and put Him totally ahead of everything else. Jesus warned, "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:16).

A battle you can't avoid

People don't like to strive

and struggle. They just want to be left alone—to stay on the sidelines, as it were.

But resisting and fighting Satan is one battle we are all commanded to wage. Paul wrote, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). Then the apostle says that we are not fighting mere flesh and blood, but wicked spirits in high places (verse 12).

Next, Paul describes the "spiritual armor" that we are to put on in order to withstand Satan (verses 13-17). You can't avoid the devil. He is going about "like a roaring lion" trying to upset and devour God's true servants (I Peter 5:8).

Satan is described as "the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10).

Satan is constantly trying to destroy God's people. He will color, magnify, pervert and distort anything he can to upset or overthrow real Christians. He is a murderer, and was "from the beginning," and he is a liar. "When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar

and the father of it" (John 8:44). Satan's attitude is one of resentment and hatred and of getting even. His goal is to destroy all human beings. Pretending that the devil doesn't exist or that he will somehow go away if we just ignore him is no way to overcome this warped, twisted, foul spirit being with which we must do battle.

We must face up to the reality of the spirit world and take certain key steps to ensure our spir-



Satan's goal is to destroy all human beings. We must face up to the reality of the spirit world and take steps to ensure our spiritual survival.

itual survival. Here are three strategies to employ in your own spiritual battle plan.

God is in charge

One: Know that God is good and in charge of everything. If you don't have this one key to all true spirituality straight, nothing else matters. You must know, and know that you know, that God is, that He is the Creator and active ruler of the Universe, and that He is God.

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

James tell us: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from

above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17). So God is the giver of good things and His character *never varies*. Although He tries and tests, and rebukes and chastens every son He loves, He never tricks us or hurts us—for even His chastening is done in love and only for our good.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7). We must learn to view everything from the realization that God is there, He is in charge, He is good and His way is right. The fear of God, the awe and reverence and obedience to our Creator—making Him the central fact of our

existence—is the first key to resisting and overcoming Satan. Without it we will fail miserably.

So we must take time for personal and fervent contact with

God through intensive Bible study, personal prayer and meditation. We must walk with God and direct our every thought, word and action in accordance to His will to the best of our ability.

Resist your enemy

Two: Know your enemy and resist him. We have already discussed a great deal about Satan's lying, hateful character. You must consciously be aware of this and spiritually and mentally *resist* the wrong pulls of Satan. James states, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

In Ephesians 6, note the details of the spiritual armor we need to fight Satan.

First, gird your waist with

truth (verse 14). Even when tempted by physical passions, never kid yourself about what is right and wrong. Learn to keep God's truth firmly in mind. And, protecting your heart and emotions, put on the "breastplate of righteousness."

Then, keep busy doing your part to carry the Gospel to the world (verse 15). Remember that Satan will do everything he can to distract you from what is vital. If he can get you hooked on television, movies, magazines, hanging out at bars or whatever, you are wasting your human potential, you are not growing spiritually and you are not busy getting the message about God's government and His way of life to a sick and dying world.

So keep busy helping to accomplish one of the main tasks God has given His faithful servants in this age—getting *His message* to this world with con-

viction and power! Then, learn to exercise *living faith* as a shield to guard your mind from the lies, the gossip, the doubts and discordant ideas that Satan pours out upon God's people (verse 16).

Satan constantly will bombard your mind with doubts, temptations and discouragements. You must learn to guard the door of your mind against this ravaging evil spirit.

"And take the helmet of salvation"—use the strength of God's spirit in your mind to positively direct your thoughts and actions God's way (verse 17). That seed of God's character is stronger than any temptation Satan can muster (I Corinthians 10:13). *Never forget that.*

The tool of fasting

Three: Fasting and humility. Mark recounts one case when the disciples were unable to cast out a demon. Finally, after Jesus cast out this foul spirit, the disciples asked Him privately: "Why could we not cast him out?" (Mark 9:28).

Jesus' answer?

"This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting" (verse 29).

If a Christian is truly humble and serving God with all of his being, there is no way the devil can overthrow him! In the context of this instruction to "resist the devil," James tells us, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6-7). Again, "*Humble yourselves* in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (verse 10).

Throughout the Bible, our Creator shows us that one of the primary ways to humble ourselves is through the practice of fasting. We all need to exercise the tool of fasting a great deal more.

If, while fasting, you are truly

repenting of self and seeking God's will and not your own, then a genuine humility and a right sense of perspective will be given you. As your physical body weakens, you will be able to see spiritual things more clearly. Learning to appreciate just a bite of food, the next breath, the gift of life—all this makes it more difficult for you to be easily offended and embittered against God or His way.

"Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble" (Psalm 119:165).

This attitude is absolutely *vital* to overcoming Satan. For the devil will encourage us to think that something is wrong with God or His Church if we don't always get our own way. Instead of trusting in God or in the living Christ to solve all the problems and right every wrong, too many become self-willed. They say: "I can't take it any more. I want my

way right now." These attitudes of hurt feelings and resentment lead to one of the horrible and pernicious traps of Satan—bitterness. "Looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled" (Hebrews 12:15).

If you allow it, a root of bitterness will grow into a hardened mind and heart that will be im-

possible to reach. You will then not listen to sound reason. Your seething bitterness will totally blind you from admitting your part in any sin or misunderstanding. And you will therefore be unable to repent, change and grow in God's character. Satan will have taken control of you!

Guard your mind and heart against this soul-destroying attitude of bitterness. Fast, pray, humble the self and get a better perspective. Be patient and wait on our loving God to make all things right.

Have your own battle plan to overcome Satan. Resist him with all of your being. Fight him like your very life depended on it.

For it truly does. □

Fight the Good Fight!

*Imagine
yourself as
a soldier.
Farfetched?
Not according
to the Bible!*

By Clayton D. Steep

Hastings. Waterloo. Gettysburg. Iwo Jima. Great battlefields once alive with the shouts of combat, the clashing of swords or the thunder of artillery.

All our lives have been affected by the outcome of such crucial military contests, often in ways we cannot know.

What if Napoleon had won at Waterloo? Or what if the Spanish Armada had prevailed, or the South had won America's Civil War? How would today's world be different? We can only guess.

There is one conflict, however, where the consequences of winning or losing are clearly revealed long before the fighting is over. For you personally, if you are a Christian, it is the most important war in history. It is the warfare raging in your mind and character.

This war is not fought for physical territory, resources or possessions. It will not leave behind a scarred landscape littered with the corpses of men and spent weapons.

No, we are talking about the *spiritual* warfare that involves your destiny. At stake is eternal life. Win a clear victory and the prize is yours. Lose or stalemate in this war and you lose everything—forever!

Jesus promised to reward those who “overcome” (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 3:5, 12, 21, 21:7). The word translated “overcome” means “conquer,” “prevail,” “get the victory.” This means combat. Make no mistake about it. If you are a Christian, you are engaged in a struggle—real warfare.

The dominion of darkness

But when did it all begin? Who fired the first shot?

Each of us was born with a neutral nature or spirit—neither bad nor good. But shortly after our birth, Satan—the great arch-enemy of God and the ruler of this present world—began to instill his selfish, carnal nature into

us. Most of what we often call “human nature” is not really human at all. It is devilish in every sense of the word. That evil nature that dominates the affairs of mankind is the source of all the suffering and misery that has plagued humanity for nearly 6,000 years.

That is the nature we grew up with. We were victims caught in “the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (II Timothy 2:26).

We were Satan's captives. We were subjugated before we even knew what was happening. We were taken without a fight. Adam and Eve lost that round for us, and all humanity has been in bondage ever since.

This, then, is the situation we



Iwo Jima Memorial commemorates raising of U.S. flag during World War II. Four by Five photo.

found ourselves in when God called us into His truth. We were comparable to people living in a country that had been overrun and occupied by an enemy. As long as such people do the will of the occupying forces, there is no conflict, no warfare.

Conflict begins, however, when a person becomes part of the “resistance” movement

The Battle of Waterloo, as rendered by Scottish painter Sir William Allan. Courtesy of the Wellington Museum.

and tries to throw off the yoke of servitude. In the world such events have happened time and again throughout history.

Spiritual resistance

“Resist the devil,” the apostle James exhorted (James 4:7). True Christians make up, in the spiritual sense, the “resistance.” Not physically. Not politically. In fact, as far as human politics are concerned, we are to be subject to the governments under which we live. But as far as Satan and his demons are concerned, it’s a different story, “for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).

It is when a person becomes a Christian that his spiritual war begins. And it is one of the most difficult kinds of conflict be-



cause, remember, it is not a question of two forces meeting to do battle for territory neither side possesses. One side—the enemy—has control of the territory and must be repulsed.

Upon conversion a Christian belongs to God, no longer to Satan (Ephesians 2:2-3). But human nature, one of Satan’s allies, still occupies us and has to be driven back.

It doesn’t happen all at once. It is accomplished slowly, painstakingly. But rid that territory of the enemy’s influence we must, bit by bit. Frankly, we could never

do it without outside help. God gives us that help. “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory.” How? “Through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 15:57).

Jesus fights for us

Jesus is a seasoned veteran of the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged. True, He was never a captive of Satan and Satan’s evil nature, as we once were. But He nevertheless had to do battle with the same foes we face. The most significant confrontation of all time—between Jesus and the prince of darkness, for the ruler-

Put on the Armor of God

By Gerald Waterhouse

Ephesians 6:13-18 shows that the Christian soldier should put on the whole armor of God before entering into spiritual battle.

The word *armor* refers to any body covering designed for protection in combat. In this case, it is protection for our spiritual lives! But Satan, through his subtle influence, can convince us to take God’s armor off, a piece at a time, until we are completely unprotected.

For the sake of those who are in danger of believing it is easier to fight with less of the spiritual weight of God’s armor, consider the following scenario:

The devil is like a military gen-

eral, eagerly plotting the demise of his enemy—in this case, you and me. He deals in subtleties, launching surprise attacks here and there until we’re caught off guard.

His plan begins by inspiring discouragement and doubt among God’s troops about the Church, about its leaders and about our calling, hoping eventually to convince us that we can no longer have faith even in Christ’s leadership and protection.

Once that happens, it is so easy for us to unfasten the support of truth that God has fastened to our loins (verse 14), thereby becoming a little more vulnerable to attack.

Later in the battle, without that girdle of truth to protect our vital organs, it becomes more natural to agree that the weight of our armor

is quite heavy. Perhaps we should water down God’s commandments just a bit or change Church government, we think. That is when the weary soldier takes off another piece of equipment, the breastplate of righteousness (verse 14).

Only partially protected now, the soldier searches more desperately for an effective battle plan, listening to any “smooth saying” (Isaiah 30:10), but is led ever closer toward the inevitable ambush.

Removing his boots for speed, he runs to and fro in the midst of battle with feet that are no longer shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace (verse 15). He loses sight of the Church’s commission to preach the Gospel and to prepare a people for the Lord.

Satan’s attack nears its apex. Af-

ship of the whole world—is described in Matthew 4 and Luke 4.

Jesus faced a far more critical situation than we face. Unlike us, He had to remain absolutely invincible. He couldn't lose a single round. He couldn't cede the minutest portion of territory to the enemy. Ever! For if He lost just one battle—if He gave in to the power of evil and sinned just once—He no longer would have been the sinless Lamb of God. He would have lost the whole war.

We, on the other hand, alas, do lose some of the battles. We shouldn't. But we do (Romans 7:14-25). Thanks to the mercy and forgiveness of God, though, losing a battle now and then does not have to mean we lose the entire war.

Jesus, the undefeated Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10), knows how to fight and win this life-and-death struggle. When it comes to situations beyond our control, such as opposition or per-

secution from other humans, God fights our battles for us. But we ourselves must get into the thick of it and fight as though it all depends on us. God makes up the difference, strengthening us and doing what we are not able to do.

More than just defense

Any military campaign needs to have an objective. The overall objective of a Christian's struggle is to win victory over sin (the transgression of God's laws) and resulting penalties, thus preparing to enter God's Kingdom. That's the ultimate goal.

The immediate objectives are, one, to defend and to hold on to the territory you now occupy—that is to say, the progress you have already made in defeating sin in your life; and two, to conquer and secure more territory—to vanquish and root out more sin, always advancing and never retreating.

The Christian calling, you see, is not a matter of just being on the defensive. That will never gain the victory in spiritual warfare! Defense is important, of course. Ephesians 6:13-17 lists

the pieces of armor that make up a total defense for a Christian. But there is more to it than that. A Christian also has weapons. Not weak weapons either, but weapons "mighty in God" (II Corinthians 10:4). For what reason? For "pulling down strongholds"!

This is not defensive action. It is going on the offensive. It is attacking and conquering!

Two of our mighty weapons are mentioned in Ephesians 6:17-18. They are the Scriptures, our knowledge of which we need to have ever sharpened and ready for use, and prayer. Another weapon for vanquishing evil, and one that is often neglected, is fasting (Matthew 17:21). Still another is purposeful meditation—filling one's mind with what is pure, virtuous and praiseworthy so that evil thoughts are simply crowded out (Philippians 4:8, Romans 8:5).

Bible study, prayer, fasting, meditation. It always seems to come back to those four, doesn't it?

And for good reason! They really are indispensable tools—weapons—a Christian must use to overcome and grow in righteous character.

A war of many fronts

The Bible makes clear that our enemies are actually three, all of them under the direct sway of Satan the devil: the carnal self (Romans 7:23), the world (John 16:33) and the great adversary, Satan himself (I Peter 5:8-9). They attack us and seek to drive us back on a multitude of fronts. And the many pulls and weaknesses of the flesh are all soft spots that invite attack.

Sometimes we actually work against ourselves by compromising with the enemy, seeking a "truce" or "cease-fire" at any cost. We try to coexist with sin.

The physical Israelites made this serious error when they invaded and occupied land given to them by God. God had instructed them to totally drive out the idolatrous, heathen inhabitants

Hal Finch



other casualty is recorded in the great conflict.

After the Christian is down, his blood poured out over the field, Satan's henchmen remove his helmet of salvation (verse 17), the last gesture that seals his fate.

Don't let this come true in your life. Don't be misled by subtle rationalizations from those "angels of light" (II Corinthians 11:14) who fight against God's Church. This Work has been raised up to "restore all things" in preparation for the return of Jesus Christ (Matthew 17:11). It is no wonder, then, that Satan is fighting us now with great zeal and passion.

Before it is too late, make sure the armor of God is fastened tightly around you. And through your constant "prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18), God will grant you living faith, so that you may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear" (Hebrews 13:6). □

ter a barrage of manipulation and disorientation, the Christian lays aside His shield of faith. Now he or she can no longer quench the fiery darts of the wicked (verse 16). An-

(Numbers 33:51-52). It seemed to the Israelites, however, that that would be a bit extreme. They thought they could compromise and coexist with sin in their midst. They thought they could control the situation. It amounted to them thinking they knew better than God, their commander-in-chief.

How wrong they were!

The heathen who were allowed to remain in the land led many Israelites into idolatrous practices and were a constant source of trouble (verses 55-56).

The obvious lesson? We must root sin out of our lives completely. Be ruthless against sin. Whether you have a problem with smoking, drinking, illicit sexual desires—whatever—don't allow yourself to get into situations where you are tempted. Don't be a traitor to your cause.

As Paul exhorted, we should "make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:14).

Another front in this great war is the struggle for control of our time. Satan has this society rigged and booby-trapped to fill our time with unprofitable, futile pursuits. If he can't get us to throw down our weapons, he tries to occupy our time, to keep us too busy to use them.

Satan throws anything at us—even things that in themselves are not wrong—to keep us too busy, too preoccupied to tend to the important things in life: growing closer to God and learning His ways more perfectly.

Do you need to get tougher on yourself? Do you need to apply some military-like discipline in your personal life, giving *your* interests, involvements, desires and amusements less importance or emphasis?

It is not always easy, but "you therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier" (II Timothy 2:3-4).

War is serious business. No soldier can afford to be entangled

in affairs that hinder the ability to fight.

Still another front in this war is the battle over our minds and what kind of thoughts occupy them. We have already seen that purposeful meditation on right thoughts is a powerful weapon to banish the wrong thoughts. Not all thoughts, however, are immediately identifiable as wrong. We must be on guard. "Watch," the apostle Paul urged, "stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong" (I Corinthians 16:13).

Scrutinize whatever you allow to come into your mind. Bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:5). Be especially careful when you allow into your mind ideas or suggestions from television or other media of the world. Our enemy is an expert in camouflage. Be on the alert!

And don't just concentrate on putting out the wrong thoughts; think right thoughts. "Seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2).

Marching orders

As you can see, we have our hands full tending to the war being waged over our own persons. But our responsibility is much greater than just that.

When we were called into God's Church, we were, in a sense, drafted. God pointed His finger at each of us and said, "I want you!" He has chosen us to help in His Work of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom in all the world and of preparing a people for God. We not only have to drive Satan's influence out of our own lives, we must actually invade his homeland, his realm.

"Go into all the world," Jesus commanded His followers, "and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15). Those are marching orders and that's Satan's territory, for he is the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4)!

All humanity is living in servitude and bondage to sin. Humans have been in that condition so

long most of them don't even realize how badly they need to be spiritually liberated.

God's Work liberates—spiritually, not politically—those who are called to a knowledge of the truth now, and also prepares the way for the great liberation that will take place at Christ's Second Coming.

As Christians we must use the weapon of prayer to create openings for God's Work to proclaim the truth (Ephesians 6:18-19). We must let our lights shine so people can see God's ways in action. We must do whatever else we can to help the Church accomplish its mission.

Besiege the gates of death

Death is Satan's ultimate wish for all of his captives. He knows sin produces death. That's why he does whatever he can to get people to sin.

But thanks to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Church has the message of salvation—forgiveness of sins, making possible a resurrection to eternal life—victory over death and the grave (I Corinthians 15:54-57).

Jesus referred to that victory in Matthew 16:18. He said, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades [the grave] shall not prevail against it." It is not the gates of the grave that are doing the attacking here. Gates don't attack. The gates of the grave are being attacked by the Church. And the Church shall be victorious, for those gates "shall not prevail against it."

Are you doing your part as a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ?

When you are in the heat of battle, don't become weary. Fight on! One day soon, the war will be over. And when it is, commendations and awards for valor will be handed out (Revelation 22:12). You will never regret any of the effort you put into the battle now.

We all, more than ever before, need to heed the combat orders God gave through Paul: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (I Timothy 6:12). □

What You Need to Know About the SPIRIT WORLD

Misconceptions abound on this important subject. Here is help and counsel from God's Word.

By K. Neil Earle

The spirit world!

It's a subject many people would rather avoid, and perhaps for good reason.

Among true Christians there are two common reactions when this subject is mentioned—fear and ignorance. Both extremes are wrong.

The apostle Paul counseled the Church about this subject "lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (II Corinthians 2:11).

Not knowing how Satan works can render us more vulnerable to his devices. So ignorance is not bliss on this subject.

And fear? While we should have a healthy respect for the power Satan and his demon hosts

are allowed to wield, there is no need to personally dread the spirit world at all. Scripture clearly reveals that God has put a hedge between His people and the more dramatic manifestations of Satan and his cohorts.

The hedge of protection

When God challenged the devil about the good reputation of Job, one of the most righteous men who ever lived, Satan sarcastically jeered: "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side?" (Job 1:9-10).

Job 1 and 2 clearly show Satan having to be very careful about how he treated God's servant Job. The devil can only do what God specifically allows.

God's ministers today meet people who before conversion became pawns of the spirit world by meddling with astrology, addictive drugs, sexual perversion or chronic anger and negativism.

Jesus Christ had to cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene before her conversion (Mark 16:9). She became one of Christ's most devoted followers, showing that there is no need for undue alarm or panic on this subject.

God has placed a hedge around His people. *Our job is not to remove the hedge*, as we'll see.

Possession vs. deception

One doesn't read very far in the gospels before the spirit world is encountered in matter-of-fact fashion. That is because people in Christ's time knew such forces existed (Luke 9:37-42).

In our "sophisticated," supposedly enlightened age, many people do not have as full an understanding of the human mind as they think. God reveals that there

is a spirit in the human brain that accounts for man's stupendous intellectual output over the animals (Job 32:8). But that spirit can be reached by both sides of the invisible spirit world around us (I Samuel 16:14).

Now let us note an important point: It is vital to distinguish between demon possession and influence and being deceived or misled by Satan.

Because Satan is able to implant thoughts and suggestions in human minds by broadcasting to our human spirit (Ephesians 2:2), biblical case histories reveal that he is able to deceive or distort the

judgment of God's servants on occasion. Especially if they are not vigilantly watching the doors to their minds.

Notice I Chronicles 21:1: "Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel." Why did David feel the need to take a military census? Was he getting overly ambitious and attempting to carve

out more territory in a macho burst of glory before he died?

We can only speculate. But Satan found a weak chink in David's armor and moved in with devastating effect. Similarly, minds focused on negative and depressing thoughts are more susceptible to darts flung at us from the world of evil spirits.

We need to heed Peter's sage advice: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8).

Even Peter lost a bout with Satan. Remember?

Matthew 16:21-23 shows how Jesus Christ dealt him a famous rebuke: "Get behind Me, Satan!" In totally misguided sincerity, Peter was being used by the devil to propose ungodly tactics that



Roy Morsch, Stock Market

might appeal to Jesus Christ. What triggered Peter's failure?

Christ had praised Peter earlier. Did Peter let himself get puffed up with vanity? Perhaps. Scripture warns we are most vulnerable when we think we are doing fine (I Corinthians 10:12).

But both David and Peter were men of God. They bounced back. Satan used their fleshly vanity to get to them, but they repented. There is a vast difference between Satan giving our wrong thoughts and attitudes a further push in the wrong way, and out-and-out demon possession.

Cases of demon possession

Note this account in Mark 5:2-15:

"There met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit . . . And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.

"But when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. [Don't be fooled. There are "religious" demons. See Acts 16:16-18.] And he cried out with a loud voice and said, 'What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? [How vain it is just to 'believe on' Christ!] I implore You by God that You do not torment me.'"

Demons love to play "mind games" with God's servants. Here they posed as underdogs, to subtly make Jesus feel like a bully. Demons love trying to catch people off balance.

"For He said to him, 'Come out of the man, unclean spirit!' . . . Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed . . . sitting and clothed and in his right mind."

This is classic demon possession *and* the cure!

In some cases people not totally possessed on a permanent basis have so weakened their minds that they are strongly susceptible to demon influence and are bothered by spirits.

Certain deceptive spirits were working through Ananias and Sapphira—two highly respected members of the Jerusalem

church—perhaps for years (Acts 5:1-11). Their ambition put them on the wrong wavelength. Only Peter could discern the root problem: "Why has Satan filled your heart?" (verse 3).

Years before, Judas Iscariot had slowly built an attitude of resentment toward Jesus Christ. Satan tracked Judas for years and then, when the time was right, moved into Judas' mind and used him to betray Christ (John 13:27).

This is serious.

Just how does a person open up his mind to spirit influence? Are there ways to prevent it? Yes, of course.

Guard your mind

The most obvious way to damage the hedge between you and the spirit world is to *play with the devil*. Avoid psychic fairs, hypnotism, parapsychology, horror movies (even the "funny" kind) and the astrological paganism associated with the New Age movement. Satan loves to package black magic under the guise of new truths.

Avoid curiosities like Ouija boards, haunted houses, "channeling," certain forms of yoga, water-witching and heavy rock music. Avoid unbalanced lifestyles like over-stringent dieting, fasting too much, subliminal self-help techniques and constantly missing sleep.

Don't get involved in foolish religious practices like "testing for demons." Avoid pornography and lust, music centered around violence and anything else that puts your mind on the wrong track.

A second way to open your mind up is in the form of *chronic moodiness, negativism and deep emotional disturbances*. This got King Saul in trouble (I Samuel 16:14-23). Misery loves company. Extreme depression and dejection can put you in the same mood as the defeated, hopeless spirits who love to lurk in the darkness (Ephesians 6:12).

Seek positive emotions. Get help with your problems. Don't stay in a gloomy mood. Beware

seething with rage and frustration. Exercise. Walk. Talk to a friend. Rule your spirit.

Another favorite wile of the devil is *bitterness and resentment*. No one is more bitter, hostile and hate-filled than the devil.

Bitterness is a dangerous spiritual drug. Don't get hooked on it. Settle arguments before the sun goes down (Ephesians 4:26). Use the phone and ask a friend for forgiveness if necessary (Matthew 5:23-24).

A last cluster of attitudes that weaken our resistance to the spirit world falls under the general category of *pride and complacency*. Pride is Satan's speciality. He invented it (I Timothy 3:6). Pride, complacency and familiarity blocked the flow of God's spirit in Christ's hometown (Mark 6:1-6).

If we become complacent and impervious to the precious fruits of God's spirit, then God may have to allow the spirit world to shake us up. Read it in I Corinthians 5:5.

Resist the devil

By now you should be able to see that active, growing Christians are able to resist Satan at every turn (James 4:7). So be totally involved in God's Work with your whole heart. Stay away from the fringes of God's Church. Start practicing pure religion (James 1:27). Serve God's people, especially the widows, seniors and single parents, who appreciate having spiritual family members around for friendship and human contact.

And accentuate the positive in your life-style and in your personal Bible study. Get to know Bible passages by heart.

Work closely with God's servants. Humble yourself. Cooperate. Let this promise from Jesus Christ be your guide: "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19).

With this understanding, there is no need to dread the spirit world! □

First Things First

Could you be like Esau, who sold his birthright for a bowl of soup?
What kind of spiritual trade-offs are you willing to make?

Incredible as it may sound, a woman once bought a 20-year-old stove for \$3,000!

She made the deal in less than 30 seconds and gladly paid for the stove in cash.

Actually, the deal was a bit more reasonable than it sounds at first. She was negotiating to buy a man's house and then quickly agreed to pay his full asking price, \$3,000 more than her original offer, when the man said he would add the stove to the deal.

This woman paid thousands of dollars for a 20-year-old stove not worth more than a few dollars!

Strange, isn't it, what some people think is important?

But, be careful! You or I could do the same thing. We could be spending our *time* as foolishly as this woman spent her money. And we could be spending it on things far less important than an old stove.

What is No. 1?

Most of us would agree that a person should give priority attention and time to the most important things in life, then attend to the lesser things later.

But it can be surprising what some people think is important.

How about it? What do *you* spend your time on? Could you be wasting the best hours of the day on hobbies, personal projects or overtime on your job, while ignoring your wife and children? Neglecting your spiritual life and the need to pray and study your Bible?

Unfortunately, unless you are unusual indeed, you probably from time to time put relatively unimportant things like hobbies and career ahead of God, your

By Bernard W. Schnippert

spouse, your children and your spiritual growth.

But such spendthriftery makes no spiritual sense! If you don't force yourself to put first things first, then you will have to pay the price of spiritual bankruptcy that such time stealing is sure to bring.

Bad deals

Having upside-down priorities is no doubt a symptom of the hectic age in which we live. Yet history shows mankind has never considered God's priorities to be really important.

In Genesis 25, we read the story of Esau, who sold his birthright for one meal of pottage. His birthright was the immeasurable blessings God has bestowed upon the United States and other modern descendants of ancient Israel! (Write for a free copy of our booklet *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*.)

Esau's deal was so incredibly

bad that it makes the old stove the woman bought for \$3,000 look like a real bargain!

But why did Esau do it? Simply because his priorities were wrong. He thought that a little physical nourishment was more important than God's bountiful blessings.

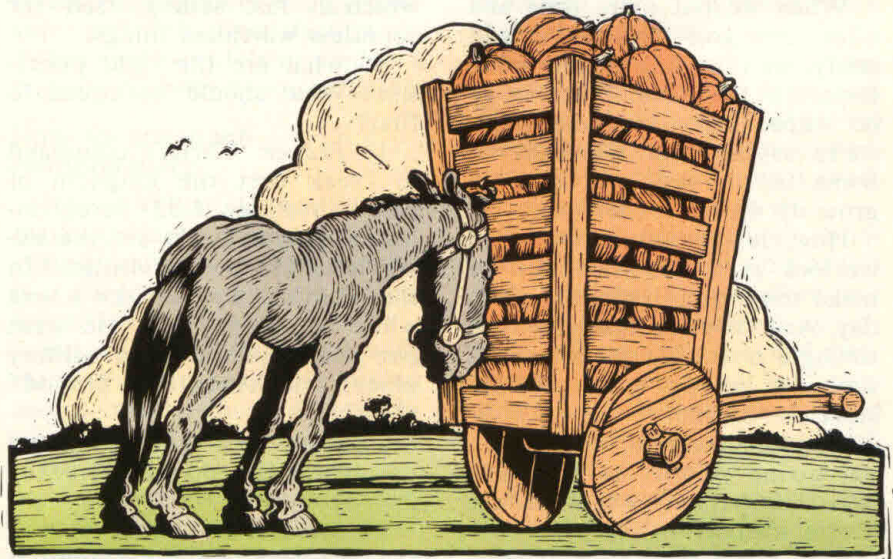
But not even Esau holds the record for the all-time bad spiritual deal. Adam and Eve traded the tree of life—and the eternal life it symbolized—for a piece of fruit!

We couldn't make so bad a spiritual deal in this godless age, could we?

We not only could, but many *are* making such disastrous deals by spending their precious time on inferior merchandise!

Do you work eight or more hours a day and then ignore your prayer life, or relegate it to a "catch-as-catch-can" position? Or, if you do pray, perhaps only for short periods and with little fervency, do you ignore Bible study?

Or what about your career?



Dan Andreasen

Does it appear more important, at least measured by the amount of time and effort you give it, than your own mate or your children? If you do, then you're only giving lip service to God and your family. You're deceiving yourself.

Out of order

Job or career is only one false priority before God or family. Other people put their social lives before God, and others put their hobbies before their families. Still others put sheer relaxation before everything else.

Such a mix-up of priorities is more than a disgrace. Christ soundly condemned it in Matthew 6:33, where He commanded, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

"His righteousness" includes seeking the things the Bible stresses, such as the right relationship with your mate and children. Yet in spite of these direct words, even sincere Christians sometimes find themselves seeking first their own priorities.

Of course, we humans are quite able to rationalize our actions and offer excuses for why we do the wrong things we do. One common excuse for missing prayer and Bible study, or neglecting the family, is "I'd like to, but I don't have the time."

We seem to have time to ski or become the No. 1 salesman in the territory, but we don't have time for eternal life.

When we put more time and effort into golf than prayer and study, we're saying golf is more important than God. When we go on unnecessary business trips, we're saying that the baby at home in the crib will have to grow up on his or her own.

How ridiculous it seems when we look at it this way! But we make these time trade-offs every day. And they are no better than selling a birthright for a bowl of soup or buying a 20-year-old stove for \$3,000.

Another common excuse for not giving priority to the most important pursuits is that we "are not interested."

A man can have great interest

in a woman when he dates her, but after they get married, somehow he loses his interest.

Parents seem interested in their children when they're born, but not when they're growing up.

Why these tragedies? Because the same human nature that prompted Esau to sell his birthright for a meal is still around. It can prompt you to sell a happy marriage for a promotion at the office, or trade happy children for a weekend of golf.

One can even be well-meaning, intending to pray and study every day and spend time with the family. But emergencies always seem to come up. Every minute of every day can be an emergency.

These problems come from poor planning. It's not that such people don't put first things first, it's just that they don't put anything second! As they run from one "important" duty to another, God and family are left behind.

By now it must be obvious that the root cause of having wrong priorities comes from having wrong values. If we're honest with ourselves, we must admit that wrong values, and hence improper priorities, come from selfishness. When *me* is the first priority, you wind up with a bad deal in the end, just like Esau.

Right priorities

When we become Christians, we profess to learn a better way than the ways of this world, which is fast selling itself for countless worthless things.

So what are the right priorities? What should we attend to first?

1) *Prayer*. Christ's command to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33) surely includes prayer. Jesus set the example in His own priorities: "In the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35).

Jesus put first things first, and prayer was His top priority of the day.

2) *Bible study*. After prayer, the next priority is Bible study. It

is also part of seeking God and His righteousness first. Regular fasting and frequent meditation should accompany prayer and study.

3) *Family*. After our spiritual requirements, our family comes next. Paul said husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the Church (Ephesians 5:25). This means husbands should put their wives ahead of their jobs.

4) *Health*. Health is one of the most overlooked priorities—while we have it, that is. Take care of yourself, lest you trade your health for sickness and medical bills!

5) *Work*. Our work will probably involve more hours than we spend in prayer and study, or maybe even with family. But this does not mean work is a higher priority than God or the family.

Some people don't work at all—they constantly find new ways to accomplish nothing (such as continually "relaxing"). But Paul said those who can work but don't shouldn't eat (II Thessalonians 3:10).

6) *Recreation*. Somehow our hobbies and pursuits seem to find time for themselves without much effort. The challenge is to do first things first, and then spend time on recreation. On the other hand, if you are a workaholic or chronic worrier who never spends time on enjoyable pursuits for yourself and with your family, you need to give more attention to this priority.

The payoffs

The rewards of self-discipline, and of putting our spiritual priorities first, are astounding. For when we seek God and His righteousness first, our reward now can be a strong marriage and warm ties with our children, and, later, eternal life.

We don't have to delude ourselves into thinking that the trade-offs and "deals" we make every day with our time are wise, when they are merely no better than buying a bowl of soup or an old stove.

Learn to put first things first! □

Help Your Child Find Pleasure in Responsibility



Photos: Hal Finch

With this issue, our series on early childhood education concludes by tying all the articles together into a basic guide.

By Joan C. Bogdanchik

Just what is *responsibility*? Where does it come from? Is it something you're born with—or is it something that has to be taught?

It is almost certain that you recognize and appreciate responsibility in others.

How our parents and grandparents valued this word left its mark upon us. The rest of its meaning we fill in ourselves.

Responsibility usually conjures up images of *work*—hard work! This makes some people see responsibility as something to be avoided. But properly understood, responsibility brings pleasure, and with it satisfaction.

With responsibility, you're a winner. Without it, you're losing.

How to approach responsibility

Responsibility outwardly displays our inner character.

Responsibility means keeping our word and carrying out what we said we would do.

Responsibility means following through on instructions without having to be checked on constantly or reminded.

Responsibility is reliability, making your "yes" mean *yes* and your "no" mean *no*.

Responsibility includes re-

membering what you brought with you and not adding to the collection at Lost-and-Found.

Responsibility is accountability. It increases one's self-esteem. But another "self" is needed—*self-discipline*—to carry out these obligations.

Self-discipline is at the core of responsibility. But where does that come from?

I have worked with children for decades. It's been a wonderful vantage point. I have observed that from their earliest years children find pleasure in responsibility. This is so if they are being taught right principles, moral codes and the work ethic.

I see children who thoroughly enjoy the work they are given—their responsibility.

Sad to say, though, I also see others who seemingly do not. They are slow to get started, are easily distracted from their work and rarely finish on time, if at all, if not steadily checked on.

Responsibility—doing what you are expected to do—begins with parents. Even before our parents began to instruct us verbally, we carefully watched their actions. We observed how they did things. We watched them start, progress through and finish tasks.

As we grew we watched Father's approach to his job, how he went to work each day and didn't

think to look for excuses to stay home or do something else. He was responsible to his employer, his company. We never heard him tear his boss down.

We watched how Mother cleaned and organized the house, and how consistently both Mother and Daddy did yard work. We watched Daddy's pride in his landscaping, his neatness in the garage and how he cared for his tools. We saw how each job was completed—how each pile of leaves was cleared away, how the paint brushes were cleaned and put away, how the car was kept clean and in good repair, how the grass was mowed and the garden weeded.

As produce grew in our gar-

weren't working, because we were.

Where would we have learned to do it any other way? Parents who place a high priority on education invariably have children who do, also.

So let's look at how *you* can have children who are dependable and responsible, who take care of possessions, who finish tasks (even less desirable tasks) and who come through with purpose.

Teachers are overjoyed with such students. Later, employers look for such employees. Those who are reliable stand out. They are sought for and promoted to higher opportunities.

But this kind of success, like all successes, has humble, small beginnings.

Initial action

After observing his parents' ways of doing things, the child begins to do the same.

Start small. Give your child opportunities to pick up his toys and put them in the proper storage places as soon as he's able. Already he is learning a simple but foundational responsibility.

Then, as he grows, let him continue putting away all toys, blocks and books he has been using, and begin to empty the wastepaper basket into your larger trash receptacle in the home. Let him learn to pull his sheet and blanket over his bed (a first step in bed-making).

Have him keep his room in order as he grows. Let there be a place for everything and show him how to keep things in their places. A sense of order and responsibility will develop.

Praise him with hugs and kisses and kind words upon his initial successes. Remind him frequently of the pleasure you have in his performance.

Your child will soon be helping you wipe pots and pans and put items away. Let him know how you appreciate his help and how everyone in the family does his part to keep the home running smoothly. Don't present it as drudgery, but as a necessity for the smooth functioning of the

home and family. Do it all in a spirit of warmth and fun.

Habits of orderliness and cleanliness will begin to form. Show the advantages of order: how quickly things can be found when you need them, and how lovely things look.

Teach your child that orderliness reflects God. God learns a lot about us by how we order our lives.

Even though initially it will be much quicker for you to do things yourself, resist the thought and have your child learn. Then, when he can do things for himself, don't do them for him, as a general rule. He will grow in responsibility. You are sowing the seeds for an abundant lifetime if you train your child consistently.

Do the same with all tasks you give him. See that he brings each job to conclusion, even if it gives him minor difficulties. Show him how to master it, especially at first, but be sure it's completed. (Be sure yourself that it's within his realm of ability. Use wisdom and common sense.)

But remember, too, he should be growing, learning and stretching his abilities. Be watchful. Know your child. Spend time with him. Success cannot come with only occasional interaction.

Your child needs attention

If you speak to your child only in occasional, quick conversa-

Teach your child that being neat and orderly reflects God. God learns a lot about us by how we order our lives.



den, we began to help pick it systematically. After the family's work was done, we all got to play. There were trips to beaches, amusement parks, fairs, parades, museums, playgrounds and ever so many places.

No wonder we incorporated these traits and ways in our lives. We knew no other way. Besides, it all worked so well!

It was no surprise, then—in fact, it was expected—that we'd go to school and pay attention, do our tasks, take care of our pencils and other supplies, do the best we could, keep our desks organized and play well at recess.

Parents wouldn't have to be called to school to see why we

tions, you limit his listening and concentration skills because you're not having him think for longer, extended periods. He will not be accustomed to listening and interacting for more than a few seconds or minutes.

Keep conversation, thoughts and ideas flowing between you and your child. Besides lengthening his attention span, you will build ties of love and loyalty.

When you are playing a game, finish it (even if you have to remove some pieces). Teach your child how to lose gracefully. Explain that he will not always win. Show him how to behave and respond when he wins or loses.

Later, when he's in school, explain that he will make mistakes and how to learn from them. Do not expect your child never to make errors. It's unrealistic. Parents who expect such create tense, rigid children who fear to be wrong because Daddy and Mommy will be displeased. School and learning then become a frightening undertaking. Don't make your child carry this needless burden.

Explain, though, that he is to do his best. He needs to pay attention and follow directions.

Handling schoolwork

Teach him to faithfully tell you what he has to do for homework, watch him do it (from a distance) and praise him for his good work. Show him how this is part of going to school, and what a wonderful privilege learning is. Of course, as he sees you reading and studying each day, he will accept it as part of life.

If you should discover he has not told you the truth about assignments, deal with it as you would with any other act of untruthfulness. Get to the bottom of it before it becomes an ingrained habit.

Also, do not be quick to accept the "I don't remember what to do" excuse. Step up your work on teaching listening skills. Speak to your child's teacher about homework assignments to see of what they consist, and let your child take it from there. Children often

use the "I forget" excuse to shirk responsibility, and frequently it is caused by casual parenting.

Be on top of things in your child's schooling. It should be a most pleasant experience. Children should be expected, in most situations, to understand what is to be done and to do it without prodding.

The school years should not be years of "pulling teeth" to get work done. Your child should be taught that school is his day's work just as Daddy goes to work each day. He should be learning to experience definite pleasure in his work.

Teaching the work ethic

As your child becomes self-disciplined, he will not need constant pulling and prodding. What a joy this will be! Experience has shown me that parents who stress the work ethic have children who carry out responsibilities almost automatically.

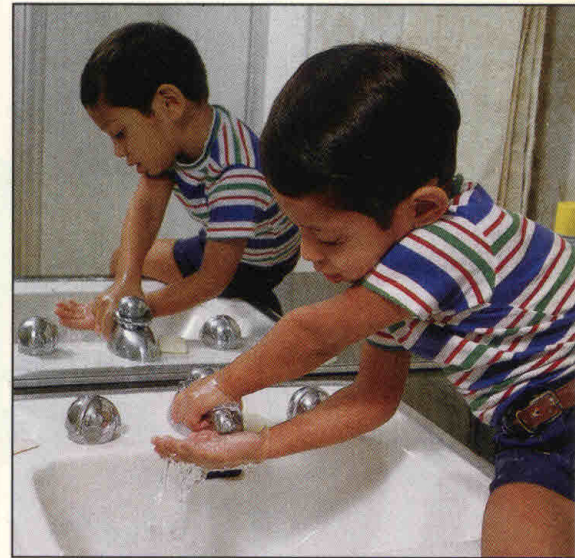
There is no need then to pay or reward for every good grade brought home. To do one's best is just part of life. The child is just doing what he has learned to do. (Remember, though, that some children can be doing their best and still not make the very highest grades. Know your child's ability. Ask only that he do his best.)

Those parents who must promise a certain toy or money to a child to induce good work must have not taught the concept of responsibility.

Of course, payments will have to be bigger as the child grows (are you prepared?), and the child who initially may work eagerly for a reward may soon do no more than is required. The reward of learning and the inherent joy of accomplishment are lost. Often such children don't experience the inward joy of mastering work—a treasure much greater than a soon-to-be-broken or forgotten, rusted toy!

Teaching children right work habits from the preschool years—teaching responsibility and its pleasures—will give *you* pleasure of all kinds! It may be more work

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initially (though, really, even this is pleasure!), but your family will be well ahead in the long run.

Children's success will be rewarded by parents' praise, pleasure and happiness. Special dinners, surprise gifts and other blessings will flow. No good parent withholds good gifts from his children, but he knows when and how to present them. They are never used as bribery.

A bribed or paid child may only work until the reward is in hand. Then the former approach returns. The process starts again—no rest in sight.

But the child with good work habits will often do more than is required, for he grows to love the

feeling of accomplishment and success. He is learning to find pleasure in his work.

Such children know their parents love *them*, not just the grade on the report card. They know they are loved and they also know the importance of education and knowledge.

What a winning combination!

Success at school

At times children will find themselves in classes with less capable or disinterested teachers. It happens.

But a responsible child, with your help, will rise above this temporary challenge. It's good training for life itself. Learn lessons from this type of situation



Teaching children is best done by parents who are in love and who have God at the helm of their union.

and master, with your child, the character traits of patience and personal initiative.

Ask your children what they did at school. Be really interested. This is a wonderful way to show the importance of what they're learning.

Be sure they're putting their own books into their school bags once they know how. Don't allow them to place blame on others when they forget needed items.

Expect your child to follow the rules he knows—all of them. Sometimes parents let children fall short. It is astounding to many what standards can really be reached!

If homework runs over the usual time, let your child finish it. This teaches valuable lessons in responsibility and not shirking duties.

Let him, too, experience the consequences of unfinished assignments if he lets that take place. He needs to feel the uncomfortable results and be motivated not to let it happen again.

How not to go wrong

Teaching children how to be self-disciplined and responsible is best done by parents who are in love with each other and who have God at the helm of their union.

Because of this love, they complement and respect each other. They build together. Their home is stable and strong before children arrive. They know a warm, loving environment lends itself to learning and creativity.

The children then come as a special gift of love to husband and wife. These children, conceived in love, should have no difficulty being educated with love. They are loving extensions of the love and stability that permeates the home.

Parents following God's commandments, which are love, and all the child-rearing principles interspersed generously throughout the Scriptures, should not go wrong. Their children have the greatest opportunity to grow in finding pleasure in responsibility.

Following is a summary of the

other articles that have appeared in this *Good News* series on early childhood education.

Other articles in this series

"Educating With Love" (January, 1985) showed that true education begins with one word—*love*—and covered early teaching in communication and listening skills.

"The Delightful Literature of Childhood" (February, 1985) developed further the theme of widening the child's acquaintance with the world and introducing him to children's literature.

In "Proper Speech Begins at Home!" (June-July, 1985), we learned how parents are the child's first language teachers and how they can help to develop the marvel of speech.

The importance of a coordinated body and its effect on a child's success in school and life were covered in "Building Coordination in Your Children" (March, 1986).

The value of the wonderful world of music in a child's development was covered in "Your Child's Musical Heritage" (August, 1986).

"Create With Your Child!" (December, 1986) showed how vital creativity is to a child's success and happiness.

"Help Your Child Write to Read" (June-July, 1987) covered the interrelationship of writing and reading, and how valuable the ability to write well is.

"Widen Your Child's World" (January-February, 1988) showed how to teach attitudes and provide experiences that allow a child to grow in positive ways.

"Me? Teach My Child Science?" (March-April, 1988) dealt with acquainting the young child with the marvelous creation and laws with which God has surrounded us. How to get a child involved in mathematics was also explained.

"Such a Pleasant Child!" (July-August, 1988) looked at the role etiquette plays in a child's lifelong relationships and success. □

Teaching Your Children About Sex

BY DEXTER H. FAULKNER

PART SEVEN

Are you the parent of a toddler, pre-school child or teenager? Your child has been learning—and is learning—about sexual matters throughout his or her life. What part of that knowledge has come through you?

What your children know (or don't know) about sex, including their attitudes and values about this subject, will be shaped by the world around them in addition to the knowledge they get from you. One thing is certain: Your children *will learn* about sex. The only question is: Who will be their most effective teacher?

Will they get most of their information (or *misinformation*) from friends and peers? From television, movies and the other media, which are more interested in ratings and profits than morals and happy families? Will sexual instruction come from your child's casual acquaintances, or even from total strangers? It



shouldn't. God holds parents responsible for teaching their children, especially about morals and values (see one example in Exodus 13:8, 14-16). Certainly one of the most important areas of instruction would include matters pertaining to sex.

When to begin teaching

Your baby began learning about his or her world immediately. The time to begin impart-

ing right knowledge to your baby about sex is at the moment of birth. Of course, you may already be the parent of a 2-, 6-, 10- or 15-year-old. Perhaps you haven't thought about how properly to teach your children about sex. However, it's never too late to begin.

Ideally, parents should learn what to teach their child about sex *before* he or she is born. Studying the subject can actually be a great learning experience for parents. For some, it may even prove to be a great discovery process! They may not have thought much about the subject of sex from a teaching perspective before.

Your library will have many books and instructional materials to help you with the technical answers to questions your children might ask.

A visit to the research librarian's desk should be a part of your own instruction.

This article deals mainly with teaching preteenage children about sex. In principle, though, it doesn't neglect the teenage years.

When your children reach puberty and their teens, different sorts of questions about sex be-

come important. Questions about dating, menstruation, pregnancy and marriage take center stage.

Let's begin with some basics. The most important thing is to develop a healthy pattern of interaction between you and the growing child—beginning at birth.

If a bridge of communication is established early, by the time your children reach the teen years, they will have formed a bond of confidence and trust in you. Then, when they ask serious questions about sex, you will have built a solid relationship from which to guide them.

Your marriage as a model

One of the most important aspects of teaching about sex goes beyond biological information. It has to do with making your marriage a model for the growing infant. If you and your husband or wife show affection, tenderness and true spiritual love, then your growing child will absorb the workings of that model almost unconsciously.

The Bible points out (and married people know) that marriage is an earthly relationship. The husband and wife eat together, sleep together, embrace, talk together, dress together and work together.

In the broadest sense, all these activities are sexual. The entire relationship between the wife and the husband depends on the sexual differences between the two genders as God created them. Sexual differences make marriage and the family possible.

Preparing ahead of time to present a godly marriage before your growing child is one of the most important things, if not *the* most important thing, you can do. The Bible shows that a loving marriage has both earthly and spiritual beauty and meaning (Ephesians 5:22-33).

What's your attitude?

Parents should carefully consider their own attitudes before

teaching children about sexual matters.

Does the thought of answering your child's questions about sex worry, embarrass or even repulse you?

For example, do the words for sex organs trouble you? Could you use the appropriate terms with ease to explain questions your child might have about sex?

Suppose your infant touches his genitals? Would that upset you? Would you want to punish the infant? If so, you may harbor wrong attitudes about sex.

What's the right attitude? First, realize that God created sex as a wonderful gift to mankind. There is nothing shameful about sex, unless it's used in a way not intended by God.

We read that Adam and Eve



Illustrations: Dan Andreassen

“were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25). The Creator’s “grown-up infants,” Adam and Eve, were naked while talking with God.

This isn't a call for nudist colonies. God clothed Adam and Eve before other humans were born. Humans do have private parts, but they are not evil.

When a tot touches his genitals, he's not evil. The tot has simply found something God created. Naturally, he or she must

be properly taught not to “play” with him- or herself. But that's a matter of instruction.

Once parents have the proper attitude about sex—that it's a wonderful gift from God—they can be frank and open when instructing their children. They no longer have to sputter with embarrassment.

What if your young child brings home a vulgar word? Parents with a healthy attitude toward sex won't go berserk and immediately punish their child. They know he or she probably has no idea what the word means. Perhaps some schoolmate used the term and the child picked it up.

Parents with healthy attitudes about sex take the child aside at an appropriate time and ask, “Do you know what that word means?” The parents can then proceed to properly explain.

The parents can instruct the child that sexual activity is meant only for marriage. Using vulgar language in jest or anger isn't good because sex is such a wonderful thing when used as God intended. The parents can then explain why they don't want their child using profanity.

Parents should use such occasions as opportunities for instruction. And the word *instruction* connotes more than just a lecture. It involves lifelong example, answering the child's questions as they come up and using opportunities as they occur.

Teaching opportunities

This brings us to another important point: Parents should always be on the lookout for situations that call for instruction in sexual matters. They should always be aware when such teaching opportunities arise.

One author who wrote on the subject of teaching children about sex was at a roller-skating

party with his young children. They passed an area where sexual graffiti was splattered on a wall. He made it a point to stop for lunch with the children opposite the wall.

During lunch (with the wall virtually staring them in the face), he casually asked the children if they knew what the terms meant. They didn't. So he proceeded to explain. It turned into a chance to explain about sexual matters.

There's one caution on this: Some parents, realizing their responsibility in this area of life, can unwisely force instruction on their children. This shouldn't be done.

Answer the child's questions

Certain situations present themselves as opportunities, as the above-mentioned case did. However, parents should generally follow this important principle: Answer questions *as they come up*. And they will come up.

Children have a natural curiosity, and this includes sexual matters. The answers to all their questions, as well as the example they see, will provide them with all the knowledge and understanding of sex they need.

There's also another principle to follow: It's usually good to answer *only* the question the child asks, without launching into a prolonged everything-the-child-ought-to-know-about-sex lecture.

A second-grader whose family had just moved went to her new school for the first time. When she came home that afternoon, she asked her mother, "What's sex?"

Mom had been expecting this question for a long time. She seized upon this chance to instruct her young daughter about sex. For the next half hour or so, Mom proceeded to explain about

the "birds and bees." Finally, Mom asked her little daughter, "Do you understand what I've been telling you?"

"Yes, I think so," answered her daughter.

Then the little girl held up the registration card she had received at school and asked, "But how am I going to get all you said into this little square?"

The moral of the story is to not lecture, but *teach*. Find out what your child is really asking and answer that question specifically.

Obviously, some questions cannot be answered in one sentence. There is a time for sitting down and giving in-depth explanations, perhaps going through a book with diagrams especially geared to children.

Watch your child as you answer his or her question. If the

Once parents have the proper attitude about sex—that it's a wonderful gift from God—they can be frank and open when instructing their children. They no longer have to sputter with embarrassment.

child's mind begins to wander or there are other indications of loss of interest, you know you've gone about as far as necessary at this time.

Don't "put down" a question

Don't put off your child. A child's question should be answered in some form at the time he or she asks it. Don't tell your child: "You wouldn't understand. Wait till you're older." If the child knows enough to ask the question, he or she is old enough

to understand some kind of answer.

The trick is to answer the question at the child's level of understanding. For example, suppose your young child asked you, "What's sexual intercourse?" Parents who are afraid to teach or who have wrong attitudes about sex might put off the child.

But telling a child he or she can't understand is really a put-down. It leaves the child in ignorance and also creates a question mark about his or her self-worth.

There's nothing that complicated about intercourse. With the aid of a good diagram, the child can certainly understand intercourse biologically. Of course, it should also be explained to the child that intercourse was created by God. It's something only mommies and daddies who are married should engage in. That's no mystery beyond the understanding of even the youngest child.

Teach values, too

Here's an important point: When possible and the situation is right, teach more than just the facts of biology, even to very young children.

Teach about sex in the context of godly character and true values. The child needs to learn that sex is not just something everyone does because it is biologically possible. The child needs to learn the true values that govern sex. Point out that God created sex to be enjoyed only in marriage.

Instruction in sex, then, should begin at birth and continue by word and example throughout the years as the child grows to adulthood. There is no hard rule on what to teach your child or when to do so. Every situation and child are different. But as the child grows, he or she should learn about sex in the context of God's purposes for creating it.

Next issue, we'll look at more specific questions and situations you may face in teaching your children about sex. □

REMEMBER This Key to Spiritual Knowledge

*God's Church has been growing in knowledge
for more than 60 years. Why?*

By John Ross Schroeder

Do you know why the true Church of God has been able, for more than six decades, to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18)?

It's because we have remembered a basic key that has been almost universally ignored by others!

That key is God's Sabbath.

The Sabbath is the first of the Ten Commandments mentioned in the Bible. Genesis 2:1-3 tells us:

"Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested

from all His work which God had created and made."

You might even say the Sabbath is the first of the major doctrines stated in Genesis. The Sabbath was a major factor in the very creation itself.

This was no accident.

Come forward in time nearly 6,000 years. The Sabbath was the first major doctrine to confront Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986), founder of this magazine. The Sabbath was pivotal to his conversion in 1927.

Again, this was no accident.

Learning about the Sabbath

Beginning in the autumn of 1926, Mr. Armstrong spent six months trying to prove that the Sabbath falls on Sunday. It proved to be a vain quest. Failure led Mr. Armstrong to surrender to God in real repentance. He accepted the seventh-day, Saturday Sabbath.

This opened up a broad spec-

trum of spiritual knowledge! Mr. Armstrong studied Darwinism and the subject of divine creation at the same time he studied the Sabbath-Sunday question. He found the Sabbath is a memorial to God's creative acts, as Exodus 20:11 explains. The Sabbath is one key proof of the existence of God. Mr. Armstrong proved God exists while studying the Sabbath question.

The only two complete Bible lists of the Ten Commandments differ slightly in explaining the Fourth Commandment. The Exodus account emphasizes the memorial to creation (Exodus 20:8-11), while Deuteronomy emphasizes liberation from slavery (Deuteronomy 5:11-15). Why? What are we to learn from this difference of emphasis?

Primarily that the Sabbath has many important meanings. It is a veritable key to spiritual knowledge. It cannot be limited!

For instance, in addition to commemorating creation and liberation from slavery, the Sabbath rest is a type of the millennial rest that awaits humankind. The Sabbath is also a special sign between God and His true people (Exodus 31:13).

And, as a point of God's law, keeping the Sabbath is indispensable to understanding the rest of God's spiritual plan: "A good understanding have all those who do His commandments" (Psalm 111:10).

The annual festivals revealed

Nonbelievers sometimes use Colossians 2:16-17 to try to disprove the weekly Sabbath. This scripture soon confronted Mr. Armstrong. He studied it thoroughly and came to see that the weekly Sabbath and the seven annual Sabbaths commanded in Leviticus 23 stand or fall together. He realized that Paul's letter to the Colossians supported both.

So the weekly Sabbath led to the knowledge of God's annual festivals and Holy Days. And observing these yearly occasions eventually opened up the entire



Ken Tunell

panorama of God's plan for mankind.

In 60 years of service to the eternal God, Herbert W. Armstrong discovered (sometimes with the help of others—especially after Ambassador College was founded in 1947) one vital Bible doctrine after another.

Finally, the ultimate purpose of man was revealed to him. He was shocked! So astonishing was man's incredible potential that at first he hesitated to publish his findings. He may have wondered whether anyone would accept this greatest of all biblical doctrines.

But Mr. Armstrong never withheld his biblical discoveries very long. In 1957 he published the booklet *Why Were You Born?* It encapsulated the basic purpose and plan for humankind. Additional details accumulated for well over a decade, and a revised version of the booklet appeared in 1972.

Then, in the mid 1970s, many more facets of this basic truth gradually came to light. These points were published serially in *The Plain Truth*. The title of the series was "The Incredible Human Potential." Then, in 1978, these serial installments were collected together in a book by the same title (now out of print).

Finally, toward life's end, Mr. Armstrong put together the whole foundational picture of God's plan. He summarized not only our incredible human potential, but all of the supporting doctrines in a book titled *Mystery of the Ages* (1985)—the culmination of his life's teachings.

Mr. Armstrong died in January, 1986, now three years ago.

Of course, God's Church continues to grow. Further truths have been revealed to Joseph W. Tkach, Mr. Armstrong's successor, with those who assist him in getting the Gospel to the world and caring for God's Church.

The Church's spiritual knowledge is readily available in our many periodicals, lessons, brochures, booklets and reprint articles. These are a virtual gold mine of incredible information. Of course, you yourself have to

dig the truth out, with God helping you to understand it. No one can learn the truth in your stead. But we do offer every help.

And it takes time and experience to learn God's way of life. You don't get it all at once. Patience is essential.

God's truth revealed through the Sabbath

But remember: It all started with the Sabbath! The Sabbath is a super-important key.

You cannot afford not to understand the Sabbath. You need this essential key to unlock the doors of spiritual knowledge. So the Worldwide Church of God has published a special booklet about this topic. It contains all the basic teachings of the Bible

on the subject. This booklet, titled *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*, asks and answers the most important questions about the seventh day. Find out how the Sabbath impacts your personal life. Request *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*

It's free!

Finally, don't turn your back on the Sabbath. The "Lost Ten Tribes" of Israel did, and they wound up losing their very identity. Most of their modern descendants neither know who they are or where they came from—and all because their forefathers rejected the Sabbath.

But God's way is opening up for you—if you are interested. Request that free booklet. You won't regret it. □

Has TIME Been Lost?

At creation, God blessed the seventh day of the week, or Sabbath. He made it holy time and commanded us to keep it. But how can we know, today, which day God set apart? Our free booklet presents irrefutable proofs! For your copy write to our address nearest you (see page 2 for a list).



Fruits of the Spirit

If you are a Christian, you have made a lifetime commitment to God and Jesus Christ. You want to be faithful to that commitment.

But how can you be sure you will?

No one has to fail

The Bible is an encouraging book. It gives us God's promise that He will not forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). If we cooperate with Him, He will complete the work He has begun in us (Philippians 1:6). No power can force us to fail, but we know that *it is possible to fail*.

Jesus warned us, in the parable of the sower, that some people receive God's word with joy, but quit when trials come. Others receive the word, but "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word," and they become unfruitful (Matthew 13:20-22).

Faithfulness is important to God, and it should be important to us.

The apostle Paul's example

The apostle Paul told us how he worked to remain faithful: "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (I Corinthians 9:27).

T*o remain faithful, we must be willing to give up all things for Christ. This is part of the cost we must consider before baptism.*

Is God's Faith In You?

*How can you
make sure you will
continue being faithful
to God?*

By Michael Morrison

Paul—an apostle who was used by God to bring salvation to the gentile world, who was full of zeal for spreading the Gospel—did not assume that his own salvation was sure. Neither can we.

Let's notice what Paul did:

"I also count all things loss . . . and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ . . . if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on . . . I do not count myself to have apprehended; but . . . I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God" (Philippians 3:8, 11-14).

We, too, to remain faithful, must be willing to give up all things for Christ. This is part of the cost we must consider before baptism.

To remain faithful to that commitment, we must remain aware of it. No matter how wealthy (or poor) we might become, we must remember that the riches of this world are rubbish compared to being in God's Kingdom.

Paul, near the end of his life, no longer had any doubts: "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:6-7). He had endured all his trials, exercising and developing more faith right to the end of his life.

Faith and faithfulness

Faithfulness is part of the fruit of God's spirit, Paul wrote (Galatians 5:22-23). The King James Version says *faith*, but the Greek word also means *faithfulness*. Modern translations have chosen *faithfulness* because it more closely matches the other items in this list.

Of course, we must have faith to be faithful. The men and women of faith listed in Hebrews 11 were noted not just for mental trust and belief, but also for what they *did*. They, in action, were faithful and reliable.

Faith is a trust and confidence in God's reliability. He is faithful. We must be like Him. Let's notice an important reason:

God promises eternal life to all who in this age are faithful. Not just eternal life, but eternal *spirit*

life, with the powers of a spirit being. God has faith and confidence in us that we will never misuse any of that power.

How can God be so sure? He can be sure if, in this life, in tests, trials and time, we have demonstrated a pattern of faithfulness.

God's Church today has many men and women of faith. They have been faithful even though their faith has been tested. Those who have been members for a long time are often described as "faithful." It is a notable quality because we know others have not been faithful.

Faithfulness day to day

New members can be faithful, too. God gives us a simple principle. He has confidence that it will work: "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10).

To be faithful to God and Christ, we must be faithful in the small matters of life: faithful to our promises, faithful to our mates, faithful to our duties. Day to day, we should be faithfully obeying God's laws about how we should worship Him, how we should treat others, how we should live.

Faithfulness is much more than simply "sticking with it." It requires effort. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," Paul encourages

(Philippians 2:12). The path to life is difficult, said Jesus (Matthew 7:14).

Nevertheless, "Let us not grow weary while doing good," Paul tells us (Galatians 6:9). Although some do grow weary, we do not need to. The book of Hebrews, after listing the heroes of faith, tells us how we can be like them:

"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith . . . for consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged" (Hebrews 12:1-3).

Jesus, although He faced far greater trials than we will ever have, did not get tired of doing good. He, working in us, can complete our faith and help us be faithful.

The kind of faith required for salvation, in fact, is actually Christ's own faith in us as He lives His life over in us (Galatians 2:20). That faith by which we are saved is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8)!

Peter's guarantee

Peter gives us a sure formula for faithfulness: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue . . . knowledge . . . self-control . . . perseverance . . . godliness . . . brotherly kindness . . . love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful" (II Peter 1:5-8).

And Peter guarantees that this formula will work: "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble" (verse 10).

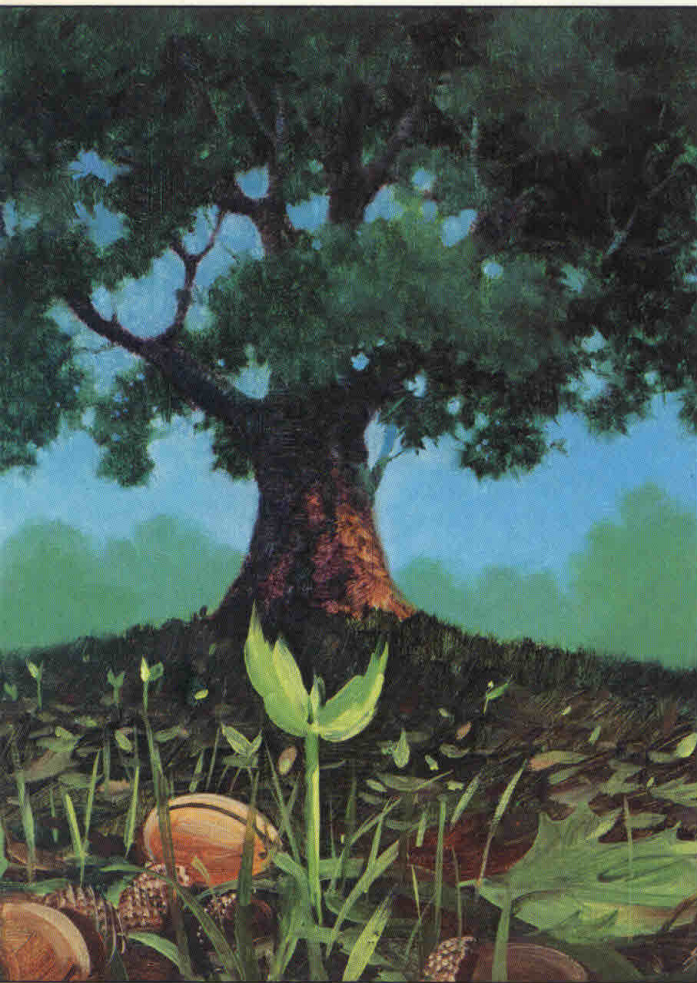
Faithfulness, Peter wrote, requires diligence and growth. We must add to our faith. We must continue growing in grace and knowledge (II Peter 3:18). Growth is part of the commitment we make at baptism, and our Christian success depends on it.

As God's Church moves forward, those who stand still will be left behind.

True Christians want to hear the words that Jesus used in the parable of the talents: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things" (Matthew 25:21).

In the parable, the faithful servants had increased their talents; they had grown. Christian growth and faithfulness are inseparable; one leads to the other.

To remain faithful, renew your commitment to diligence and growth. Renew your commitment to allow God's spirit to produce in you the fruit of faithfulness! □



Ken Tunell

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