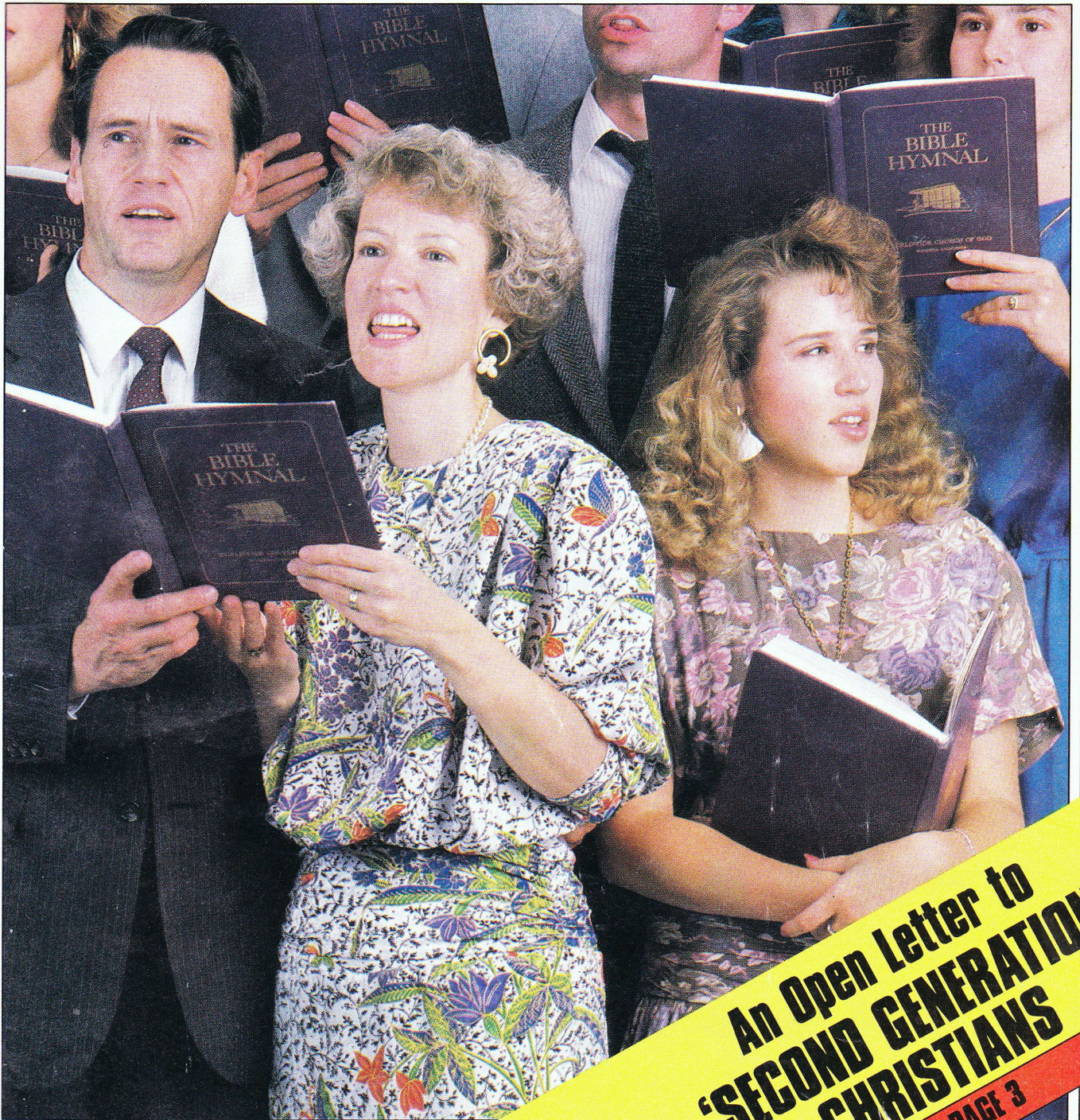


The Good News

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1990

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW



**An Open Letter to
'SECOND GENERATION'
CHRISTIANS**

SEE PAGE 3

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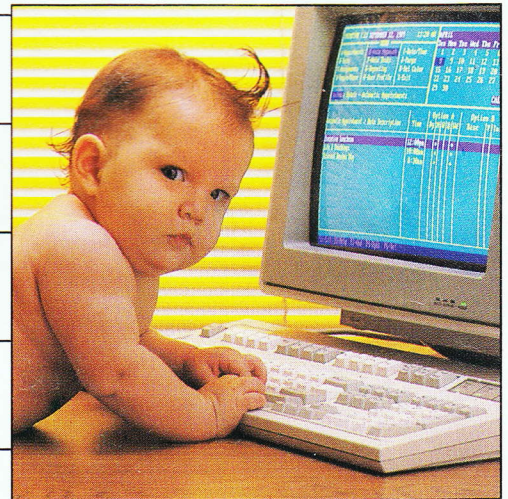
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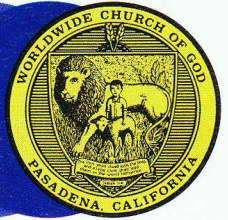
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COVER

How can the children of Christians know whether they, too, are called and are repentant? The open letter from the editor, which begins on page 3, provides the answers. Photo: Hal Finch.

GOOD NEWS PERSONAL



What's the Catch?

“Do not fear, little flock,” said Jesus, “for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

Those are encouraging words, to say the least. But many Christians have a difficult time understanding or believing them. It’s as if they feel there must be some kind of catch.

On one hand, some think they must earn the kingdom by keeping the commandments. On the other, some feel God’s gift to them demands no responsibility on their part at all beyond just verbally “accepting Christ.”

As human beings, we cannot, of ourselves, meet the standards of God, no matter how hard we might try. We have all sinned, and none, not even those who are converted, lives a sinless life now. Death awaits us all, and no matter what we may do or how well we may keep the commandments, of our own power we cannot deliver ourselves from that death. Unless something greater than ourselves can revive us from death, we have no hope beyond the grave. Then what hope do we have?

That’s where God’s grace, and our Savior, Jesus Christ, come in. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.... For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:14, 17).

Jesus made grace possible. The English term *grace* comes from the Greek word *charis*, meaning gift or favor. And it is by God’s grace, his gift or favor, that we are able to be delivered from death. God’s grace is indeed the *ultimate* grace. His plan of salvation is so merciful and undeserved that no unmerited gift could ever be greater than this one.

As recipients of such magnificent grace, it behooves us to walk in the footsteps of the author and finisher of our salvation, Jesus Christ. We must “walk worthy of the calling” which we’ve been



given (Ephesians 4:1). Our minds have been renewed if indeed Christ lives in us, and we will not be conformed to this world. Rather, we’ll be transformed into a kind of new creation, a creation that is devoted to pleasing our all-powerful, merciful Father who has freely given us everything that pertains to life and godli-

ness (Romans 12:1-2, II Peter 1:3-4).

The incredible inheritance he has reserved for us, totally undeserved on our parts, is permanent and eternally secure (I Peter 1:3-5). Our indebtedness to God for his indescribable grace should motivate us to strive to show ourselves eternally grateful, to devote ourselves to pleasing him, to following him, to living by every word he speaks.

In fact, our conduct, and even more, our very thinking and motivation, will reflect the life and mind of Jesus Christ if we are under God’s grace.

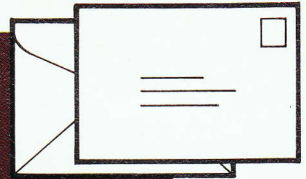
Our lives will no longer be conformed to our former selfish lusts and incentives, but to the generous will of God. We have been redeemed by Christ’s own blood from our own former ways and attitudes of certain death. How grateful we should be for all God has given us!

Indeed, it is our Father’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom!

Joseph W. Tkach

Pastor General
Worldwide Church of God

LETTERS



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wide Church of God is available on cassette tape in English for those who are visually handicapped. For more information on this service, please write to our address nearest you. See the list on this page.

Feast issue appreciated

I just received the beautiful "Feast" issue of *The Good News*. God is surely inspiring you and all his faithful ministers. It seems as if we are almost being bombarded day by day with spiritual "meat" and deeper understanding. I pray that we will (all of us in God's family) be digesting and assimilating it and allowing God to perfect our natures, so we will be prepared to rule with Christ. How all this world needs God's government daily as all conditions grow worse.

Elsie Turkovsky
The Dalles, Oregon

First impressions

I have been reading both of your magazines, *The Plain Truth* and *The Good News*, for many years, as well as your various booklets that are available and your television program.

I must admit my first encounter with your television program I watched captured my attention—actually I got angry, because everything I had been taught to believe in was challenged. However, by the same token, many of the things you said made sense and filled a lot of the "gray" areas I had always questioned with a new light. The more I read and watched the more excited I became.

Cheryl C. Tobiaski
Inverness, Illinois

Illuminating and penetrating

Your magazines, booklets and television broadcasts have truly shed much light on hu-

manity, religion, faith and God's way of life. I am 16 and I feel I am all alone without other people who believe the same way I do. It's hard trying to keep my morals always in focus. There are many times in the day when I question the things I say and do. Your literature has always brought me back to my senses.

Vineland, New Jersey

My subscription to the *Good News* magazine has taken me to such new heights of biblical understanding. Besides its sister magazines, I have not yet found any magazine that penetrates and enhances the importance of my life. Such life-giving and astonishing reading material is *The Good News*.

Victorino S. Apostol Jr.
Pangasinan, Philippines

Thank you so much for the inspiring magazine *The Good News*. I really learned many things from the different articles that I have read. Every time I receive the magazine I feel inspired for the whole day. If music is the language of the soul, then for me, the messages of the different articles are food of the spirit.

Rizza Maghari
Cotabatu City, Philippines

Changing the world

In response to your article "How You Can Help Change the World," I would like to point out that I was allowed to come back from being clinically dead, which left me paralyzed, voiceless, partially blind and only able to move my right toe. This was caused by a brain aneurism which required seven brain operations.

Christ has restored me from being a "vegetable" to full and vibrant health and to fulfill my goal of eliminating illiteracy not only in our nation but in

other countries of the world... Although I have been nominated for an Academy Award for my music in the film *The Seventh Parallel* I am putting aside my musical career to help the 75 million Americans who "cannot read a want ad."

Silvio Estrada
Lake Worth, Florida

Career change

"How to Make Your Job Work for You" really made me sit up and write back and appreciate Richard Walther and Norman Shoaf that night after I read it. Because I am just about to quit my job. This article not only helped me to change my decision about my job, it also helped me to set my goal directly toward my career. Your article made me realize how worthwhile the Bible really is.

Again, thank you for every word written.

Paul P. Chindavong
Columbus, Ohio

Tapes for blind

I would like to express my deep appreciation for the cassette tapes that you send me now. I enjoy listening to *The Plain Truth*, *The Good News* and the Correspondence Course. I received your magazines for more than 25 years and read every article—most of them more than once. I am now 90 years old and can no longer see to read. What a blessing the cassettes are to those of us who cannot read the magazine yet hunger and thirst for the gospel. God surely does provide for our needs. Thank you again for this wonderful service.

Judith Stenberg
Kenosha, Wisconsin

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Open Letter to 'Second Generation' Christians

By Dexter H. Faulkner

Dear friends,
Does being *second generation* mean you are *second rate*?

If you grew up in God's Church and you wonder if you're being called, you're not alone.

I received two letters from young adults. I would like to share these letters with you.

Lee Anne is puzzled: "I want to be baptized, but how do I know if I have really repented? Mom and Dad are in the Church. It is the only way of life I have ever known. I have always gone this way. But if repentance means turning around and going the *other way*, what do I do?"

Bill's problem is slightly different: "I still feel that I have not been completely 'broken' yet, and I am still waiting for the day when I am going to be crushed. Maybe it would be a relief to me, because then I would know that I am normal."

You probably have asked yourself, just like Lee Anne and Bill, if your beliefs are your own or just a reflection of your parents'. Maybe you've wondered if you are truly repentant.

Some of you have even thought: Perhaps it would have been better if I had gotten in-



Hal Finch

"I want to be baptized, but how do I know if I have really repented? Mom and Dad are in the Church. It is the only way of life I have ever known. I have always gone this way. But if repentance means turning around and going the other way, what do I do?"

volved with the world—then I would *know* I am repentant.

You may even think you have missed out by not experiencing certain aspects of this world.

You may also be concerned with what you feel is a lack of zeal for the Work of God. Many first-generation Christians talk about how excited they were when they first heard about God's truth. They talk about "first love" and their zeal for God's way of life. You may not have had those feelings.

How can you know if you are being called and are truly repentant? Is a second-generation Christian second-rate because he or she didn't have to make great personal sacrifices to be in God's Church?

God will call you!

First, God intends for children of Church members to become members themselves. If you are a child of believing parents, you are sanctified, or set apart (I Corinthians 7:14). God has called a chosen few. When he calls them, he opens the way for their chil-

dren to develop a personal relationship with him, too.

The second-generation Christian's calling is different from the first-generation's. Often, the first-generation's calling is dramatic or unexpected. The second-generation's is expected and gradual.

God's truth seeps into your mind slowly. As you grew older, you probably began to appreciate a way of life you had taken for granted.

Before you ask to be baptized, you should carefully consider your reasons. Do you want to be baptized because your parents or friends want you to? Or do you deeply believe in what the Church teaches? Make sure you are ready for the commitment of baptism—the greatest commitment of your life.

What repentance means

One second-generation Christian said: "My mother has been attending services since I was 2 years old. . . . Since that time I have come to Church, kept the Holy Days, prayed, tithed and, in

short, done *everything* my mother has done except take the Passover and be baptized.

"I am convicted that this is the true Church. I want to be in God's kingdom and be used by him to help others. I have on occasion been very sorry for my thoughts and actions and have asked God to help me change, but it's hard to see a lot I have to repent of because I haven't had the chance to *do* much."

For her and for second-generation Christians like her, conversion may involve *making a firm commitment* more than *changing a life-style*, because they are already striving to live God's way.

Second-generation Christians have the task of looking beyond their "sinless" lives (of course, nobody is sinless—see Romans 3:23!) and repenting of the sins of the heart. It's harder to see sins of the heart than to see sins of action. For example, it's harder to see lust in the heart than to see a physical act of adultery.

Don't be discouraged. Since God has called you, he will help you with repentance. After all, it

Repent of What?

Several thousand years ago a young man from Israel's tribe of Judah made his mark on history. He was more than a second-generation Christian. David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz and Ruth, came from a long line of God-fearing people. His family had known about and followed God and God's commandments for many generations.

David loved God and God's ways. He prayed regularly, meditated for hours on each of God's commandments and composed songs of praise to God.

As David grew to manhood, he developed such strong faith in God that God could use him as king to lead Israel. Giants literally fell before him. So did thousands of Philistines, Israel's enemies.

David was a man of God from his youth.

But like many young people who grow up in the faith, David had a serious problem. Satan knew this, of course. So did God. But David did not.

David's problem was that he did not fully understand what he had to repent of. He had always kept the Sabbath and the other commandments. God was with him, protecting him, encouraging him, building a relationship with him. God backed his decisions, exalting him in the eyes of Israel and Israel's enemies.

But like Job, David did not comprehend the carnality of his own mind. He did not understand what his mind was capable of doing to him and to others. Therefore, he did not guard his mind and his thoughts as closely as he should have.

If anyone had told David that he would do what he did, David wouldn't have believed it. Yet here

was a woman whose attention and affection he had no right to. She was already married to someone else, a courageous and dedicated officer in David's army. She was off limits according to God's law.

But David had a problem. And even after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and killed her husband, Uriah, he still was blind to what he had done. God had to point it out to him through Nathan the prophet before David could finally see himself as he really was.

David now understood what repentance was all about. He had to repent not only of what he had done, but of the thoughts, attitudes and motivations that made him capable of going contrary to God's ways.

If you don't know what you have to repent of, you do not understand who and what you are. Like King David, you do not understand your own mind. You are not guarding it as you should. You have a problem. Read the story of David in II Samuel 11 and 12 and his psalm of repentance in Psalm 51. Don't learn this lesson the hard way! □

is the goodness of God that leads Christians to repentance (Romans 2:4). Your repentance is just as real to God as that of a first-generation Christian.

As a second-generation Christian, you may not have to *change* direction much, for you have not been going the wrong way in general. But you need to firmly commit yourself to keep going the right way!

You probably have been obeying the letter of God's laws; now you need to work on understand-

You have
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to work on
understanding
and fulfilling
the spirit of
those laws.

ing and fulfilling the spirit of those laws.

Realize this: It is not going to be easy. Although you want to do what is right, you will come to see that your human nature will keep pulling you down (Romans 7:23). You will come to understand that you need a new mind and a new heart if you are to succeed in obeying God.

With only your human power, you can never succeed, no matter how hard you try (Romans 8:7). And so you will come to repent not only of what you have *done*, but of *what you think*—your attitudes and motivations that are contrary to God. You will come to see that you are carnal—unable, by yourself, to do what is right (verse 8). For the first time

you will see yourself as God sees you. There is only one thing to do—get help quickly. Get rid of the old mind—start afresh with a mind and spirit that are tuned to God's ways and laws. Armed with these, you will have the power to overcome the downward pulls.

Your battle with sin

By the time you become an adult, you realize that you have no immunity from sin or Satan. It is just as hard for you as for anyone else.

When it comes to the spirit of the law, you are no better than anyone else. You have the same potential for evil as any other human.

No one is good except God.

God doesn't grade sin. True, some sins and life-styles leave a bigger mark on society and personal character than others. But all unrighteousness is sin (I John 5:17), and the wages of *all* sin is death (Romans 6:23).

Don't let yourself fall into the trap of self-righteousness. People who have lived what they consider "good" lives often do.

Carefully read Christ's parables in Luke 7:40-50 and Luke 18:9-14.

As you counsel with your minister, tell him how you feel. He will help you to understand and deal with your questions and doubts.

Powerful examples

Second-generation Christians enjoy a lot of benefits. You probably grew up with high standards in a strong family. I certainly hope this is the way the majority of second-generation Christians were reared.

Unfortunately, some come from broken homes. Some have watched a parent leave the Church. But you were able to learn about the doctrines of the Church and God's plan for mankind while you were young and your mind was most impressionable. Those lessons stay with you. You won't forget them.

Knowing God's way from your youth is a great advantage. If

your body is not impaired because you have never smoked, been on drugs or eaten unclean food, if your mind has never been seared with bad language, stealing or fornication—thank God.

But don't feel at a disadvantage. You missed out on *nothing* but penalties, guilt and regret. You are in a strong position and have been spared a lot of misery and frustration and emotional turmoil.

The Church needs your example of faithfulness as a young woman or man!

Your friend in Christ,

Dexter H. Faulkner

P.S. This has been a difficult letter to write. In preparation, my staff and I talked to many second-generation Christians, both baptized and unbaptized.

We were surprised that so many were worried by these three questions:

1) "Am I called?"

2) "How do I know when I am repentant?"

3) "Have I missed out by not being *really* carnal?"

We have tried to answer these questions—at least in part. We hope that if you still need help that you will get counsel from God's ministers. Your minister might be a second-generation Christian, too! But even if he isn't, he can help. He does understand your situation.

We know that many of you are sitting on the proverbial fence. We don't want to push you. Pastor General Joseph W. Tkach has made it quite clear that the Church should never become a "baptism mill." So when it comes to repentance and baptism, you are on your own.

But we hope that we have encouraged you, because being brought up in God's true Church can and should result in baptism.

All ministers and members are pulling for you. We want to see you succeed. We want you to share the challenge, excitement and satisfaction of growing with God's begotten Family toward the kingdom of God.

Over to you. □

Are You Committed?

What does it mean to be a truly committed Christian?

By Bill Butler

Still panting from the long run to the departure gate, I sank into my seat on the huge jumbo jet and buckled my seat belt.

Because of a delay in leaving home, rain-slick streets and heavy traffic, I had nearly missed my flight.

The plane slowly backed away from the gate, and a few minutes later the pilot announced that we were next in line for takeoff. I settled back, closed my eyes and relaxed.

The tension from the morning started to fade. I could feel my seat vibrate as the giant airplane began to move down the runway.

Having flown many times, I paid little attention as we gained speed. But after a few seconds, something seemed wrong. Was it only my imagination, or was it really taking longer than usual to get off the ground? I opened my eyes and looked out the window. The white stripe along the runway was whizzing by.

Why was it taking so long?

Another breathless few seconds passed, and the airplane still wasn't getting into the air! Then, without warning, the plane shuddered, throwing me forward against my seat belt. I could hear the scream of the engines as the pilot threw them into full reverse. He was trying to stop!

I felt a jarring bump. We had just left the end of the runway! I braced myself for the inevitable

crash! Suddenly, I sat bolt upright in bed. Beads of sweat covered my forehead and my heart was pounding. What a relief! It was all just a dream—a nightmare!

Point of no return

Over the years that large airliners have been flying, more than one pilot has faced this nightmare in grim reality. Some have tried to stop their planes

ing takeoff and the commitment we should have made after receiving God's truth and becoming Christians.

What is it that a Christian commits himself or herself to? When does he or she make this commitment?

People asked the apostle Peter what they could do to please God and become followers of Jesus Christ. Peter told them, "Repent, and . . . be baptized" (Acts 2:38).



only to find there was not enough room left on the runway.

Pilots of large, heavily loaded, passenger aircraft know that on most runways there is a point of no return during takeoff—a point at which they must be committed to lift off. There can be no stopping after that.

No turning back in a Christian's life

A striking parallel exists between a pilot's commitment dur-

To repent means to turn from our old ways of thinking and acting and to begin living a new way.

But which ways are we to change? The ways of sin! And what is sin? It is the transgression of God's laws (I John 3:4).

It is by doing what Peter said that we commit ourselves to the Christian way of life. Notice, though, that baptism alone is not enough. We are also told to repent of breaking God's law,

which means we are to begin keeping it.

A young man asked Christ, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Christ responded, "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:16-17). Christ went on to point out which commandments he meant by listing several of the Ten Commandments, found in Exodus 20.

We read in I Peter 2:21, "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps."

At baptism, God's minister asks, "Have you repented of your sins and accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?"

After you answer "Yes," he goes on to state, "As a result of your repentance of your sins, which is the transgression of God's holy, righteous and perfect law, I now baptize you."

Then follows the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-6), and God begets you as his own child. At this

ready to depart from the end of an 11,000-foot runway.

The pilot obtains permission to take off. He pushes the throttles all the way forward, and the four huge engines roar into action, each producing nearly 50,000 pounds of thrust. The giant aircraft begins to move slowly down the runway. It picks up speed to 70 miles an hour, then 80—faster and faster. When it has reached 180 miles an hour and traveled about 9,000 feet down the runway, it is ready to lift off.

At this point, the pilot has come to a critical moment in the takeoff procedure: He has totally committed the aircraft to take off, no matter what!

Nothing can stop that 375 tons of equipment, passengers, baggage and fuel, now moving more than 180 miles an hour. The speed is too great. There is too little runway remaining to stop safely. A pilot who attempts to abort takeoff after this point will plunge off the end of the runway and crash.

At baptism, Christians face

(II Corinthians 4:3-4). He is the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). He uses every means possible to distract us from fulfilling our calling to prepare for God's coming kingdom.

Satan entices us with wrong forms of entertainment, excessive television watching, overuse of alcohol, sexual temptations and coveting (the desire to get as many physical possessions as possible), just to name a few.

But Satan will flee from us if we steadfastly resist him and draw near to God (James 4:7-8).

• *Succumbing to the cares of this world.* Because of the pressures to earn a living, get through school or just please our family and friends, we sometimes lose sight of the most important thing in life—our commitment to our Creator. For example, we can begin to compromise by cheating on tithing or working a little on God's Sabbath.

In the parable of the sower, those who were likened to seed sown among thorns become unfruitful because "the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word" (Mark 4:19).

By contrast, we are told to cast all our care upon Christ, because he cares for us (I Peter 5:7).

• *Drifting into laxity.* We must put forth maximum effort to succeed. God expects nothing less. He tells us to do with our might everything we set our hands to (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

How do we do this? We must pray daily for God's help and guidance in overcoming our sins. We must diligently study his Word, the Bible. We should regularly meditate on what we are learning. We should occasionally fast to grow close to our God.

It takes hard work to make our "calling and election sure" (II Peter 1:10), but if we put forth the effort, we cannot fail. If we rely on God we can claim the promise of Psalm 37:4-5: "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him,

Nothing can stop that 375 tons of equipment, passengers, baggage and fuel. The speed is too great. A pilot who attempts to abort takeoff after this point will crash.

point you are committed. There is no turning back.

In Luke 9:62 Jesus said, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Hebrews 10:38-39 says, "Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."

The critical moment

Fully loaded for a long flight, a Boeing 747 weighs about 375 tons. Picture such an aircraft

this same kind of total commitment. Trying to stop after this point means spiritual disaster for us. Our eternal life is at stake!

Avoid crashing spiritually

What could cause a Christian to crash spiritually?

• *Loving this world more than God.* In I John 2:15 we read: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Satan is the god of this world

and He shall bring it to pass.”

● *Becoming discouraged.* Sicknesses or other problems can discourage us. Yet Acts 14:22 tells us, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” God never forsakes us, yet neither does he promise us a life free from all troubles.

I Peter 4:12-13 encourages: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”

God allows us to experience difficulties to help us build character and patience. Christ said, “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

We can actually rejoice in trials, because we know the good that will come out of them (James 1:2-4).

And I Corinthians 10:13 promises: “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

Serious consequences

What if my nightmare about the airplane had been real? Well, that airplane would have plunged off the end of the runway at more than 100 miles an hour. More than 300,000 pounds of flammable fuel could have engulfed the plane in an enormous fireball, killing everyone on board.

If we as Christians turn back or give up—if we fail to remain faithful to our spiritual commit-



Photos: Comstock Inc.

***Just as pilots
who don't
turn back on their
commitments
will take off, so
each Christian
who remains
committed to
his or her calling
will rise,
resurrected.***

ment—we’ll face similar fiery consequences. Notice what Paul says in Hebrews 10:26-27: “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.”

This is a serious warning to all Christians. Surely none of us wants this fiery end!

We must continue to move for-

ward, overcoming our sins, growing “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Peter 3:18). We must endure to the end to be saved (Matthew 24:13).

Rising in the resurrection

Just as pilots who don’t turn back on their commitments will take off, so each Christian who remains committed to his or her calling will rise, resurrected, to meet Jesus Christ at his second coming:

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus shall we always be with the Lord.”

I Corinthians 15:51-53 tells us we will be raised incorruptible. We will be changed to immortal spirit composition!

None of us has any reason to turn back from our commitment to follow God’s way. No person or circumstance can force us to.

Paul wrote: “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

And there is no need to worry about God’s commitment to us. Paul said we can be “confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

When we are baptized, we make an irreversible commitment to God. We must carry through until the end if we intend to rise—take off!—and meet Christ in the air at his return! □

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Q&A

What are the “seven Spirits of God” mentioned in Revelation 5:6?

In this verse these spirits are described as being the “seven eyes” of the “Lamb.” They are seven angelic beings who serve as observers for Jesus Christ. In Revelation 1:4 we read that these seven angels have access to the throne of God in heaven.

II Chronicles 16:9 describes the function of these seven angels: “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth.” Zechariah 4:10 repeats this description, noting that the “eyes of the Lord” are seven in number.

These seven angels have a specific and important responsibility. They continually go throughout the entire earth to observe conditions and report them to Jesus Christ in heaven.

Do you consider comic books educational? Is it wise for my children to read them?

Comic characters have burst the confines of daily newspaper strips and comic books and now thrive on television and even in major motion pictures. Comics are big business. Many comic books are even published for adults now; these often contain dark, nihilistic themes and sexually oriented, violent story lines.

Comic books frequently deal with juveniles “putting it over” on their parents. Children are depicted as involved in every clandestine situation imaginable—from the little girl who has lived through countless murders, frauds, muggings, thefts and hijackings to the little boy who defies all adult authority at every turn and is loved by the public for his rebellion.

Many comic strips show as a typical family scene a husband

relegated to the position of mere figurehead of the family, the butt of every joke and insult, while the wife and children enjoy loud guffaws at his expense.

Scenes such as this encourage children to mock their parents, to disrespect the police, to flaunt disgust of authority.

Comic books and cartoons often present an unrealistic approach to violence. Horrifying specters of interplanetary conquest and ghastly scenes of sadistic brutality are paraded before the eyes. Animals are the victims of disastrous explosions, only to appear as good as new in the next scene. All this blurs the horrible consequences of violent acts in young, impressionable minds.

A “comic” book *could* be a valuable method of instructing children in useful topics such as history and nature. God’s Work occasionally uses comic-type illustrations in its publications for positive teaching purposes. But with most comics, such is generally not the case.

Consequently, parents should carefully supervise their children’s reading material. Some few comics may be truly educational or entertaining in the right way. But many, dealing with the detrimental subjects mentioned earlier, are harmful.

Why not ask your children what they think about comic books, comic strips and cartoons? It might make for an interesting family discussion!

What does the phrase *spirit of the law* mean?

The “spirit of the law” is the intent or purpose of God’s law. This is in contrast to the “letter of the law,” or the words that specify certain actions.

For example, the command against adultery in Exodus 20:14

goes no further than prohibiting this wrong action. That is the *letter* of the law. It does not cover the wrong attitudes that precede the act of adultery, such as lust. These attitudes and thoughts *are* included in the *spirit* or intent of God’s law. Christ referred to several of these points of the law in what is known as his “Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew 5 through 7.

Jesus not only said murder is wrong, but that even if one is “angry with his brother without a cause [he] shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matthew 5:21-22). This is an expansion of the letter of God’s law against murder (Exodus 20:13).

Thus, the spirit of the law sees beyond a person’s exterior actions to the innermost thoughts and feelings of the mind and heart (Hebrews 4:12). It is the spirit of God’s law that one must live by, with God’s help, to be a true Christian!

A recent question in your “Questions & Answers” section asked about the people of Central and South America. The answer said the Spanish can be traced back to Japheth. But what of the Portuguese? Where did they come from?

The early history of Portugal is closely tied with that of Spain.

One of the earliest ancestors of the Portuguese people was Dodanim, grandson of Japheth (Genesis 10:2, 4). Among the later inhabitants were the Celts, the Visigoths and the Romans, with small Moorish (Arab) and Jewish elements.

You can read material relating to the history of Portugal in sources such as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and *Funk & Wagnall’s Encyclopedia*. □

CHAPTER ONE

'FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN'

T

BY
MONTE
WOLVERTON

he old priest rubbed his eyes. Maybe it was the smoke from the incense he had just lit. He looked again. A man was standing in front of him beside the incense altar!

He noticed the man's clothing. It seemed to glow. And the man's face was glowing, too!

"Don't be afraid, Zacharias,"

said the being. "Your prayers have been heard. Your wife, Elizabeth, is going to have a son. You'll name him John.

"You'll both be very happy, and so will a lot of others when the boy is born. Because of his special commission, he will drink no wine. Instead, he'll be full of the Holy Spirit from birth.

"He'll be responsible for turning many Israelites to God. In the same way Elijah did, he'll turn the hearts of fathers to their children. Many who are disobedient will become righteous. A people will be made ready for God."

"But . . . but my wife and I are too old to have a child," stammered Zacharias. "How do I know this will really happen?"

"I am Gabriel, who stands before God!" the being spoke emphatically. "God sent me to tell you this good news, and you don't believe it. So from now until these things happen—and they WILL happen—you won't be able to talk."

Outside, the crowd was growing uneasy as they waited for Zacharias to emerge from the holy place.

Finally he appeared, ashen-faced, and steadied himself against one of the pillars. Zacharias' mouth was moving but no sound was coming out.

"He's lost his voice," someone whispered.

Now Zacharias was excitedly motioning toward the holy place. "What is it?" a younger priest asked.

He looked closely at Zacharias, whose eyes were

wide with fear. "What did you see in there?"

"A vision! He's seen a vision!" someone in the crowd shouted.

But Zacharias didn't answer. He had stopped motioning now, and was sitting on the steps, staring into space.

Elizabeth, after two months, knew for sure. She could feel changes taking place in her body. White-haired Elizabeth, who had gone through her long life without knowing the joys of motherhood, was pregnant.

Mary, the daughter of Heli, sat in the courtyard of her father's home in Nazareth,



Zacharias the priest and his wife Elizabeth, through a miracle from God, became parents in their old age. Zacharias, led by God, predicted that their new son, John, would one day be a great prophet.

grinding barley. In a few months, she thought, I'll be doing this same thing, only in the home of Joseph. Mary's parents had arranged for her marriage to Joseph several years earlier, and she found herself looking forward to it.

As she worked, she saw out of the corner of her eye that a man was quietly standing in the courtyard. She didn't recognize him, but thought he might be one of her father's business acquaintances.

"Congratulations!" said the man. "You have been selected! God is with you!"

Mary stared at the stranger. What was he talking about? Suddenly she felt very uneasy.

"Don't be afraid, Mary. God has chosen you to give birth to a child, whom you'll name Jesus. God will give him the throne of his ancestor David, and he'll be the King of Israel forever."

"But I'm not even married yet. I don't understand."

"The Holy Spirit—the power of God—will give you this child, who will actually be the Son of God. And if this seems incredible, your cousin Elizabeth is six months pregnant, just as I told Zacharias. No word from God is powerless."

Now Mary understood. This was Gabriel, the angel who had spoken to Zacharias.

"Whatever you say," answered Mary. "I'm ready to serve God in whatever way he wants."

A smile spread over Gabriel's face, and suddenly he was gone.

Mary wasted no time in traveling to Judea to see Zacharias and Elizabeth. Immediately, Elizabeth understood what had happened to Mary, and they both thanked God for what he was doing through them. Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months.

When Elizabeth gave birth to a son, the relatives wanted to name him Zacharias, after his father. But Elizabeth wanted to name him John.

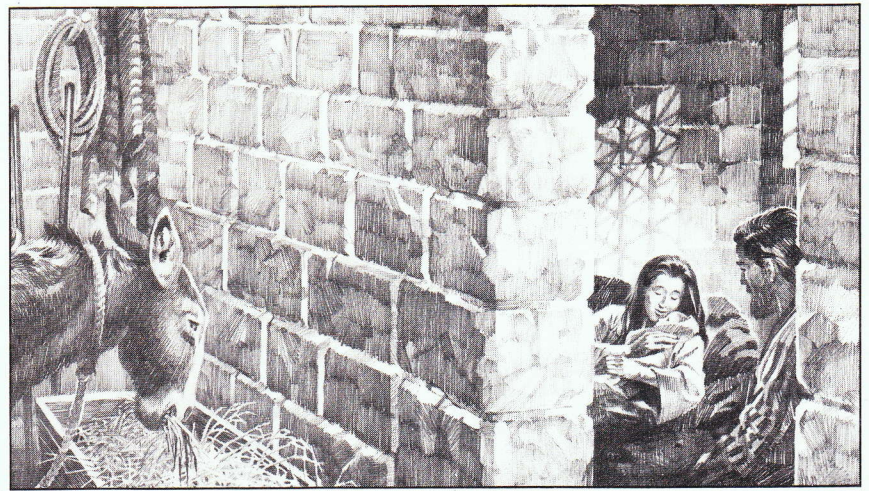
"No one in this family has ever been named John," protested one of Elizabeth's nephews. "Zacharias, what would you like the name to be?"

Zacharias, still mute, could only write. The relatives crowded around. "His name is John," wrote Zacharias. And then Zacharias opened his mouth and spoke for the first time in more than nine months, thanking God for his new son.

News of these events spread rapidly through that part of the country. Before long, a lot of people were wondering exactly what John was destined to

be. Zacharias answered that John would be a prophet who would prepare people for the arrival of God, an event that was shortly to occur.

Joseph lay on his bed and stared at the ceiling. He couldn't understand it. He had known Mary for years, and she had always been a person of the



Because the guest room where they intended to stay in Bethlehem was occupied with other visitors, Joseph and Mary were put in a room next to the courtyard. There Mary gave birth to a son and, for a cradle, laid him in a feeding trough.

highest moral standards. And now, with their wedding so near, she was pregnant!

Was there a part of her character she had kept hidden from him all this time? In any case, he didn't want this to become a big scandal. He would dissolve their engagement as quietly as possible.

With this thought, Joseph fell asleep.

"Joseph!" came a deep voice. "Descendant of David!"

Joseph sat up. A man was standing at the foot of his bed. The man's skin and clothing seemed to radiate light, even with no other light in the room.

"Don't be afraid to wed Mary. The baby she's carrying was put there by the Holy Spirit. When he's born, you'll name him Jesus, or 'savior,' because he'll save his people from sin. God predicted this through the prophet Isaiah, who said that a virgin would give birth to a child named Immanuel, or 'God with us.'"

Joseph looked around. No one else was in the room. Was it a dream? One way or the other, Joseph decided it must have been from God. He would go ahead with his marriage.

The Roman emperor, Augustus Caesar, had ordered a census and taxation throughout the empire. In Judea, every family was required to return to the city of their ancestry. Joseph, a descendant of David, would have to return to Bethle-



King Herod was very interested in the wise men's search for the newborn king. Herod told the wise men he intended to pay his respects to the new king as soon as the men found him.

hem, about 75 miles by way of the Jordan Valley. The early autumn trip took Joseph and Mary about a week, going slowly because of Mary's pregnancy. When they arrived in Bethlehem, where Joseph had arranged to stay, the place was crowded with other visitors.

The small, upstairs guest room was full, so Joseph and Mary were put in a room next to the central courtyard. Such courtyards were common in Middle Eastern houses of that time.

Several days later, Mary gave birth to a son. The other women helped her wrap the baby in a blanket. For a makeshift cradle, they took a small feeding trough used for the domestic animals in the courtyard, cleaned it, packed it with fresh straw and covered it with a piece of cloth.

Joseph and Mary thanked God that their baby seemed perfectly healthy and normal. They remembered their encounters with the angels many months before.

Out in the countryside, not far from Bethlehem, a group of shepherds were camping. Their flocks had gone to sleep for the night, and their campfire was beginning to die out. Two shepherds were keeping the others awake with a political discussion.

"And Herod is just a Roman puppet. I don't see

any end to Roman control in this country."

"But you're forgetting the prophecies about the Messiah, who will free us from the Romans. If ever there were a time when we needed him, it's now."

Suddenly they were aware of light coming from somewhere. They looked at the fire. The flames had died out, yet things were getting brighter all around.

Someone gasped. A man was standing behind them, and his clothes and skin were glowing. The shepherds began to shake with fright.

"Don't be afraid!" the stranger said. "I've got some great news, which will make everyone very happy! Today in David's city someone was born who will rescue you—the Messiah. Look for this: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a feeding trough."

As he finished talking, the hill behind him lit up with thousands of people, who shouted in unison: "Glory to God in heaven! And peace to men on earth who please God!"

Then, as the shepherds stared in astonishment, the whole group of what were apparently angels rose up into the night sky and disappeared.

No one said anything for a while. Then the first shepherd cleared his throat.

"Well, I suppose there could be something to this Messiah stuff after all."

Mary and the baby were resting peacefully. Joseph and other visitors were about to snuff out the lamps for the evening when there came a loud knocking on the courtyard gate.

"Who could that be this late at night?" asked Joseph, as he removed the bar from the gate.

The gate was opened to reveal a small group of men eagerly peering into the courtyard.

"Can we help you?" Joseph asked.

"They told us up the street that there had been a birth here. Can we see the baby?" asked one of the men.

Another man began to point excitedly. "I see him! There he is!"

"Hey! What's this all about?" demanded Joseph. The group quieted down. Then one of the shepherds began to explain what they'd seen and heard earlier that night. Joseph and Mary simply looked at each other, and then at the baby.

On the eighth day the baby was circumcised. At that time his parents officially named him Jesus, as the angel had told them to.

Forty days later, Joseph and Mary made the six-mile trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to present the child to God at the Temple, since Jesus was a firstborn boy (Exodus 13:2, 15, Leviticus 12).

As they approached the east gate of the Temple

court, where the priest would receive their offering, they noticed an old man was smiling at them. But his main interest seemed to be in their son.

"Thank God!" he said happily, and took the child in his arms.

Then the man looked into the sky. "Now you can let me die peacefully, Lord. I've seen the Savior you've prepared for everyone—a light for the Gentiles, and the glory of your people, Israel!"

Joseph and Mary were startled at this. Then the old man gently handed back the baby to Mary and looked at her with a more serious expression.

"Many Israelites will rise and many will fall because of your son. He will become the very focus of controversy, and you'll feel anguish like a sword piercing you. But the deepest motives of many people will be brought out in the open."

They would find out this man's name was Simeon, and that God had promised him he would see the Messiah before he died. God's Spirit had guided Simeon to the Temple that day to see Jesus.

While Joseph and Mary were wondering what Simeon meant by all those things, a very old woman approached them. "Thank God for this child!" she said loudly. Then she announced, "This child has been sent to rescue Israel!"

"Who is this woman?" Joseph quietly asked a man standing next to him.

"She's Anna. A prophetess, some say. Her husband died 84 years ago. She was married to him for seven years, so that would put her well over a hundred. She spends all her time here at the Temple praying and fasting."

Though Joseph and Mary had been told how great their son was going to become, they were still amazed at these happenings.

A few hundred miles to the east of Jerusalem, beyond Persia, lay a vast area inhabited by, among others, the descendants of the northern 10 tribes of Israel, who had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians 700 years earlier. Sages from these tribes had read the Hebrew Scriptures, and understood that a great King was prophesied to rule over all of Israel, uniting all 12 tribes.

About the same time Christ was born, there appeared a new star in the night sky. Some of these wise men saw it in the east, and rightly concluded it was a sign from God that the great King of Israel

had been born. They set out on the long trip to Judea to pay their respects to the King.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, the men assumed everyone would know about the birth of their future King. As they asked around, an official of King Herod happened to overhear them.

"What do you mean?" the official asked. "Herod is king here. Is a new son born to Herod?"

"No," replied one of the wise men. "We are talking about the one you call the Messiah in the Hebrew language or, in Greek, the Christ. We've seen his star and we are certain he is born."

Word of this spread quickly throughout Jerusalem. Before long the city was rife with rumors that King Herod was about to be deposed by another monarch. Needless to say, this disturbed King Herod, an Idumean, or Edomite, whom the Romans had installed to govern the Jews.

From the priests and biblical scholars, Herod learned that the Messiah was prophesied to be born in Bethlehem. Then he sent for the wise men.

"This is indeed wonderful news!" Herod told the wise men. "When did you first see this star?"

"Several months ago," answered one of the men.

"Ah, then you will be looking for an infant. My scholars tell me you should look in Bethlehem. When you find him, send word, and I will come and pay my respects."

That evening the wise men headed down the road to Bethlehem. The star they had seen in the east was visible again. When they finally arrived in the city, the star, much to their astonishment, hovered

over one of the houses.

Joseph and Mary were surprised to see foreigners at the door, and even more surprised when they offered gifts to their son, and insisted he was to become a great king. The next day, the wise men began the journey back to their own country. But they didn't send word to Herod, because God had warned them in a dream against doing that.

The next night, Joseph also had a dream. At the foot of his bed stood the same angel who had spoken to him many months earlier.

"You must get up and leave right now!" ordered the angel. "You must go to Egypt and stay there until I tell you to return. Otherwise Herod will kill the child." □

An angel appeared in a dream and told Joseph he and his family must flee to Egypt. That same night, Joseph, Mary and their new baby began their trip.





ANG

**Lethal
'Work
of
the
Flesh'**

By Carn Catherwood

Anger, directed at others or at oneself, is one of the most devastating works of the flesh.

ER

Anger. You feel the hot tension in your body as your temper flares. Your face flushes and your stomach churns.

Or maybe your stomach doesn't churn—maybe you feel only bitterness against someone.

Or maybe you have a hard time forgiving people. Or you hold grudges.

Anger manifests itself in many forms. Sometimes you can recognize it. But sometimes you can't.

It is important to understand what anger is, whatever form it takes. If you don't control it—if you don't repent of the "work of the flesh" Galatians 5:20 calls "outbursts of wrath"—anger will keep you out of God's kingdom!

A prevalent problem

There are a lot of angry people

in this world. Just look at people's faces as they drive, especially on crowded highways, or walk down the street.

And there are angry people in God's Church. In my years as a minister I've had to plow through a lot of long, drawn-out counseling sessions with people who had serious problems in their relationships with others. When I dig down deep, about 90 percent of the time I find a layer of anger.

Sometimes anger is hidden and smoldering; some people don't express it openly. On the surface, things look calm. But under the surface, these people are boiling. Their anger is *implosive*.

Others do blow up. They lose their temper and you see churning anger in their eyes. Their anger is *explosive*.

Neither type of anger is healthy. High blood pressure, migraine headaches and nervousness are all connected with anger.

Uncontrolled anger also causes spiritual problems, especially lack of inner peace and joy. God's Holy Spirit is impeded when anger rules.

Whether anger is up front and explosive or hidden and implosive, it is among the most devastating "works of the flesh."

Can you recognize it?

Several years ago I received a call in the middle of the night from a woman who said she wanted to talk to a minister. She said she was depressed and was contemplating suicide.

This woman was a Church member in her early 30s. She had children and a converted husband. But she was grappling with heavy depression.

After talking with her briefly, I said, "I sense you're angry."

She said: "No, I'm not. I'm depressed." I told her that depressed people who become suicidal usually feel a lot of inner anger.

"Why are you saying I'm angry?" she yelled. I had to hold the phone away from my ear!

Then she calmed down and softly said she was sorry. She admitted she was angry. We

learned that she was angry at her father, her brothers and pretty well everybody else.

A sad story began to spill out about a miserable childhood. Her stepfather and brothers had molested her. Her cold, coercive mother had showed no concern, but instead had allowed a vulnerable, frightened little girl to be abused for years.

As this woman talked about her childhood, her voice varied from softness to hurt to explosive anger. At times she almost screamed over the telephone. She wanted to commit suicide to punish those who had hurt her.

We had to deal first with all the inner anger she felt toward her parents and brothers. Then we could deal with the other problems that sat on the surface, masking the anger underneath.

Anger can be lethal

Years of pent-up anger and hostility can become a time bomb. It can explode or it can implode. When it does, it destroys. Angry people tear at their mates, at their children and even at the Church.

The Bible warns us to guard against this lethal sin of anger: "Be angry, and do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26).

The verse indicates some anger is acceptable. There is such a thing as righteous indignation over the evils of this world. But there is a qualifier: "Do not sin."

Anger and sin frequently come close together. Anger often leads to sin. It can generate sin.

This verse even adds another qualifier about being angry: "Do not let the sun go down on your wrath." That is a pretty tough request! Whether your anger is righteous or not, God says that when the day is over and the sun is set, you shouldn't hold your anger in or bottle it up. You shouldn't add new layers of hostility day after day.

Why does God command you to get the anger out of your life right away? Look at verse 27: "Nor give place to the devil."

Don't give Satan room to work in you. Satan identifies with an

When the sun goes down on your anger and you are filled with hostility and bad attitudes, you are blocking the work of the Spirit of God. You simply cannot grow spiritually. God will not allow an angry mind to be placed within a glorified spiritual body in his kingdom.

angry spirit. He can begin to manipulate you and stir up your anger. When he does, God's love cannot grow in you. The Holy Spirit will be impeded.

The source of anger

Anger is at the core of Satan's personality. He became angry millions of years ago when he felt he was so beautiful and talented that God should use him more.

But it wasn't Satan's time to be promoted. So he became angry with God. His anger led to an outburst of hostility and rebellion in which he tried to overthrow the throne of God!

(For more information, write for a free copy of our booklet *Did God Create a Devil?*)

Satan tries to pump anger into our minds because he wants us to think like he does. With anger a catalyst, Satan can destroy God's character in us. We become less like God and more like Satan.

Notice verse 30: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." When the sun goes down on your anger and you are filled with hostility and bad attitudes, you are grieving—blocking and impeding—the work of the Spirit of God. You simply cannot grow spiritually.

God will not allow an angry mind to be placed within a glorified spiritual body in his coming kingdom. Anger can destroy you spiritually.

Jesus said: "Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever

says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matthew 5:22).

Righteous indignation

There is a time to be indignant. Jesus Christ forcefully drove out the money changers who were defiling the temple (Matthew 21:12). He became angry at the Pharisees for the hardness of their hearts (Mark 3:1-5).

Christ directed his anger toward sin, not toward people. He controlled himself at all times by the power of the Spirit of God. He was "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath," as James 1:19 tells us to be. Jesus displayed righteous indignation.

But, sad to say, most of our anger isn't righteous. James adds, "The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (verse 20).

Why do you get angry?

Let's understand the process of anger. Anger grows in three ways:

1) *We choose to feel and express anger by assuming Satan's own spirit of disobedience.*

Ephesians 2:2 tells us, "You once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience."

Satan plants thoughts of anger and hostility in our minds. He injects anger because he is always angry. We subsequently choose to think and act as Satan himself does, instead of thinking and acting the way God does!

You're not born with anger. It's a spiritual problem. Anger

comes into your mind from Satan from the day you're born. He starts impressing thoughts and attitudes into your mind as if your mind were wet cement. Your nature becomes like Satan's as you choose to act on those thoughts and attitudes.

Until we repent of following Satan's way and let God build his character in us, we are "by nature children of wrath" (verse 3).

2) *The environment in which we live influences us.* A child is impressionable. He acquires traits through the modeling and identification process as he grows up. His environment affects him.

If he has an angry parent, he will learn to be angry. If his mother is hostile toward his father, or if his father has an explosive temper, he will acquire an angry outlook on life. It will build up in layers. Satan will first pump anger into the child's mind. Then the child will acquire more and more anger through the modeling process.

Parents, then, have the responsibility to counteract Satan's influence in their children's minds, and set the example of peace in the home. Anger promotes rebellion. Anger promotes disobedience. Anger makes it easier to become offended and to leave the Church of God.

3) *Incomplete and inappropriate parenting produces anger.* A child needs to feel loved and wanted. He needs structure, discipline, affection and support from his family. If parenting is incomplete in these areas, anger will build in a child.

A lot of angry teens are just trying to get even with their parents or with the world. Teenage delinquency stems from insufficient parenting.

But God says if children honor and obey their parents, life will go well for them (Ephesians 6:1-3). They'll grow up into solid, stable adults and "live long on the earth."

God further instructs, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath" (verse 4). Parents can create angry children.

How can you avoid provoking

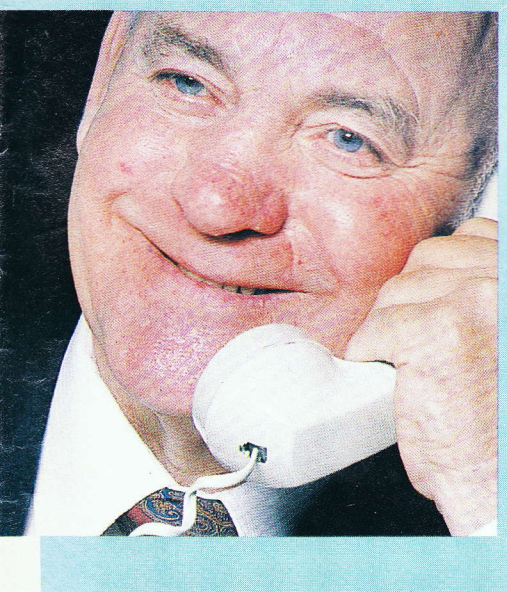
wrath? By bringing them up “in the training and admonition of the Lord.” This means lots of loving, lots of instruction in God’s ways and firm discipline.

Colossians 3:21 sheds more light on proper parenting: “Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” This doesn’t mean a one-time bout with discouragement. It’s a permanent problem.

Wrong ways to deal with anger

Many people try to control anger because it is socially expected that we do. But without God’s help, many deal with anger in wrong ways like these.

• *Burying it.* Denying anger and stuffing it in the back of your mind is not the right way. I’ve



had people tell me, “I’m not angry,” but anger is written all over their faces. The sharp look in their eyes could drill holes in you.

These people sit there and try to smile and act in control. Then they jump in their car and burn half the rubber off their tires as they careen down the road—not angry, mind you!—with two tons of metal under their power. People bury anger because they don’t want to admit they have it.

• *Bottling it up.* This is similar to burying anger, but differs in that you realize you’re angry but don’t deal with it properly. You

hold it in and put a plug on it. It’s a form of implosion, which is the opposite of explosion. Anger stays in, and it builds up.

There are people who say: “You know, before conversion I had this terrible temper. Boy, I used to want to knock everybody’s block off. But now I control it. I don’t let it out. I don’t! I control it!” But the veins on their necks are sticking out even as they say this!

The problem is, the anger ultimately will implode on the inside and create all kinds of havoc in the body. Many physical problems come from bottled-up anger.

• *Ventilation.* Ventilation means letting the anger pour out. Some psychologists say: “Anger will hurt you if it doesn’t come out, so verbalize it. Build a room in your house, pad it so nobody can hear you and then go into the room once a day and stand there for 10 minutes and scream. Then you’ll feel fine!”

But you won’t. Anger feeds upon itself.

Or how about the advice to buy a punching bag and pretend it’s someone you’re mad at? The result is that you’ll probably like the person even less!

Letting your anger out in little dribbles isn’t the right way, either. Little barbs and nasty remarks may make you *feel* better, but you won’t *be* better. Such behavior does nothing to promote peace and harmony between people. In fact, it leads to conflict.

What is the solution?

There *is* a biblical solution to anger. These three points can apply to anger or almost any other sin you want to overcome:

1) Face most anger as sin. Unrighteous anger—and, as we’ve seen, that includes most anger—is a work of the flesh that must be overcome (Galatians 5:20).

2) Repent of anger. Go to God and specifically confess the anger. David did. He talked about what was wrong with him in vivid terms.

Psalms 32:3-5 is a good exam-

ple: “When I kept silent [that is, when he didn’t commit it to God, when he pretended he wasn’t angry], my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long [he finally had to admit it!]. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me [God brings us to repentance] . . . I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”

Acknowledge to God the anger in your life openly and humbly, and God will forgive you.

3) Ask God for help. Now you need to ask God for the power of the Holy Spirit to supernaturally remove anger, wrath and malice from your nature. Satan’s spirit of disobedience, the environment around you and perhaps inadequate parenting created anger in you. God’s Spirit can take it out of you.

Just containing anger is not the final solution. If you’re at a stage where that’s all you can do, that’s OK. But it’s better to get rid of anger completely. Ephesians 4:31 says to put anger away.

This point is interesting: There are certain problems of the flesh that we do control. There are certain other problems that God says he can take away completely.

Sexual impulses, for example, are meant to be there. God created our sex drive. He didn’t design it to be removed. He’ll give you the power to control it in obedience to his law. So we don’t ask God to take away our sex drive. We control it.

There do seem to be certain attitudes, though, that God says, with time, and if we stay close to him, he will remove from our minds. Vanity, anger and pride must be put away if we are to be in God’s kingdom.

Through the working of the Spirit of God, we can control and ultimately remove unrighteous anger from our lives. Remember: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God . . . let *all* [not part] bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you” (Ephesians 4:30-31). □

I stared at the empty chair by the coffee table.

It was a comfortable chair. The oversized, red-felt cushion was worn from hours of sitting. As I gazed at it, I was assaulted with memories.

Daddy had sat in that chair every morning, drinking coffee with Mom. He had watched television and read the Perry Mason novels he liked so much while sitting in that chair. I could remember playing checkers with Daddy, as he sat in that chair by the coffee table.

But now the chair was empty. And Daddy was gone.

Sudden, hot tears came to my eyes and I couldn't look at the chair anymore. But turning away did no good. Everywhere I looked, the house was filled with memories of him.

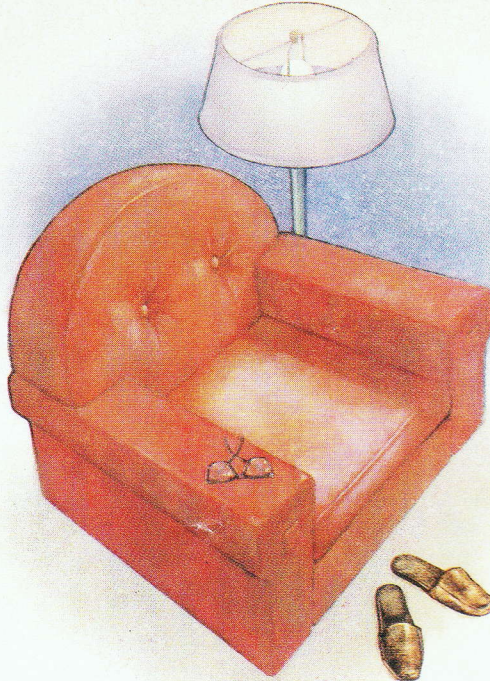
The old, down-filled jacket he always wore hung on a rack by the door. His binoculars, the ones he used to watch ships sail past down by the waterfront, were sitting on the hearth by the fireplace. His piano stood in silence by the window, as if waiting for the familiar caress of his sensitive fingers. And there, lying on the coffee table, was a dog-eared Perry Mason novel.

That morning Daddy had died.

The next few days went by in a blur. I went through the motions as if I were somehow detached from everything. None of what was happening seemed real. It was all so strange, as if I were on the wrong side of a Hollywood camera. The funeral came and went. People sent flowers and cards. Relatives visited.

And then, quite suddenly, it was all over. Silence asserted itself in our home. It was an awful silence, actually a stillness, which served to make the memories more audible.

Mom and I tried to comfort each other, but neither of us seemed strong enough to support



Daddy's Gone

Your friend has just suffered a severe loss. How can you help?

By Deborah Armstrong

the other. We didn't talk about it much. It was painful for Mom, and I was still too numb to know how I was feeling.

My friends, who had been by my side during the initial few days of the tragedy, called less and less. When they did call, it was usually to see if I wanted to "get away," go to a movie or out for a bite to eat. I began to feel as if they had forgotten that my dad had just died. I felt as if they just wanted to have fun like we always had before, and didn't care how I was feeling.

Feeling loss

No one seemed to understand me. I felt like a foreigner in my own life. And what was worse, I felt alone. Painfully alone. In re-

lection, I now realize that my friends didn't mean to hurt me through their actions. Some were afraid they would "say the wrong thing." Others didn't know what to say or do. They simply didn't understand what I was feeling, and they didn't know how to help me.

When they didn't ask how I was feeling, or if I wanted to talk, I thought my friends didn't have time for my pain. As the weeks wore on, I found myself suppressing the powerful emotions welling inside of me. Why couldn't I just "get over it" and get on with my life?

But at that time, life didn't seem to hold any enjoyment for me. I became disillusioned, and found it hard to be excited over things I had once enjoyed.

The emotions I tried to deny hadn't disappeared. They were deeply embedded in my heart, where no one else could see them. But they still affected me. I found myself seeking escape from my private tribulation.

I would do anything to escape being alone.

I found that if I was funny, my friends would want to be with me. I needed them desperately. I developed a sarcastic, even cynical, sense of humor to keep them laughing and keep their company.

But the shallow companionship I clung to did nothing to fill the empty pit inside of me, which only grew deeper and blacker.

Being there

Perhaps someone you know has recently suffered a major trial. Do you feel as if your hands are tied? Do you find you can't relate to your friend's loss, and consequently don't know how to help him or her?

You *can* help!

Your friend needs you right now, more than he or she has ever needed you before. Your "being there" at this critical time can give your friend the strength to go on.

A part of your friend's life has just died, leaving behind only a hollow emptiness punctuated by

Dan Andreasen

scattered memories. Nothing is there to fill that empty void—chances are, your friend feels more alone than ever before.

It is unhealthy for anyone to be alone in life, especially during a time of severe stress. Depression and disillusionment will set in, perhaps even suicidal thoughts.

“But what can I do?” you implore in frustration.

You may be surprised to learn that there is very little you have to do. Your friend does not need profound utterances of condolence or expensive cards or flowers nearly so much as he or she needs you. You, simply, in flesh and blood. Your friend needs your genuine concern, not a superficial escape from reality.

Emotions must be addressed

You may think it's a good idea to take your friend to a movie or otherwise help the person to get away from the problem. But your friend cannot cheer up until he or she gets rid of the emotions pulling him or her down.

It's always a risk to let someone know you care. But it can also be most rewarding.

If you only ask about your friend's feelings, and then listen—really listen—to what is being said, your friend will be able to release some of the harmful emotions being held inside.

If you were experiencing the trial, who would you remember? The one who took you to a movie, or the one who was there by your side?

Being there is the most important thing you can do to help

your friend. You can express your concern through the amount of time you sacrifice to be with him or her. Don't worry about “saying the right thing.” Listen instead.

It is important that you don't try to moralize about what the person is saying. It is imperative that the person feel free to say how he or she is feeling. If your friend hides these feelings from you for fear you will disagree, the feelings will gnaw inside.

But if the person feels that you are listening and trying to understand, the person will open up to you. You will have earned your friend's trust. Once the person feels understood, the negative feelings will begin to occur less and less often, and will not be so harmful for the individual.

Keep in mind that the person is experiencing normal reactions to a severe trial. Never tell the individual to “stop feeling that way,” or to “forget about it.” It is natural to feel pain after a major trial, and those feelings must be accepted if they are ever to be dealt with.

My father died when I was 19. He'd battled cancer for 10 years before he succumbed to it, but I still wasn't prepared for the shock I felt when he died.

As I saw him getting weaker every day, I denied what was happening. I kept hoping that somehow the nightmare would end and Daddy would be all right again.

I found myself thinking irrational thoughts like, He could get better if he really wanted to. Consequently, I even felt anger toward him for getting sick and leaving me. The day he died, I was angry at him for leaving me, and angry with myself for feeling the way I did. The guilt I felt all but strangled me.

The right time to help

In the days following my father's death, I felt excruciatingly alone, surrounded by so many memories of him, memories that only emphasized his absence. I yearned to have someone to talk to, someone to tell how I was

feeling. Frankly, I longed to have a shoulder to cry on. A phone call would have meant everything to me, even if the caller had been just an acquaintance.

The time to “be there” is during the trial. You may feel that you are intruding, or that the person wants to be alone. But you don't have to force yourself on the person. Call often and show you are there and willing to listen if your friend needs to talk. Often the “little things” mean much more than anything else you could do.

It's always a risk to let someone know you care. Calling just to say “I'm here” may be one of the most difficult things you've ever done. But if your motive is truly one of concern, it will probably be one of the most rewarding things you've ever done.

When friends mourn

When people are in mourning, they mourn less for the dead than for themselves. The dead are at peace, no longer suffering the pain. But the survivors have to live with their loss. It is vital that they not be left alone with their loss at this time.

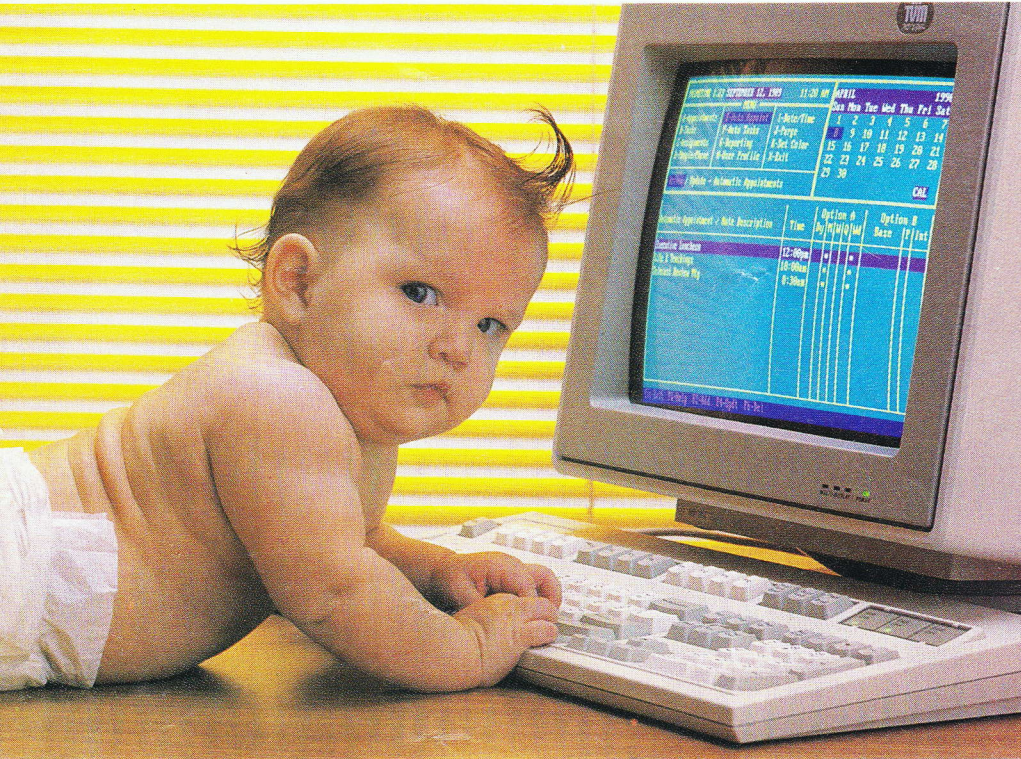
The time to visit the afflicted is “in their affliction,” not after their affliction when they've gotten over it.

The truth is that a person never “gets over it.” It's been several years since my father died, and I still have memories that bring tears to my eyes. It takes time to get over a trial. The empty void inside the person is a bleeding wound that needs time to heal.

To help your friend make it through the most difficult times, it is important that you persevere, maintain your patience and remain by your friend's side all the way down the long road back. Giving of your time is giving of yourself, the best gift you can give.

Remember that what you give during your friend's darkest hour, even if it seems simple to you, will by far outweigh anything you could give after that time of need is over. □

What's the Rush?



Photos: G.A. Belluche Jr.

Driven to create “supertots,” many parents forget the simple fact that children need to be children.

By Joan C. Bogdanchik

It was the autumn of 1957. I was teaching in a lovely town in New England—a part of the United States known for its high standards in education.

It was in New England where the first American laws enacting public schools went into effect. Here, many of the theories and philosophies of public education developed.

Our town was a leader in education. Our schools were considered among the top. I felt privileged to teach there.

Then, in October, an amazing event jarred the thinking of the

nation's educators and of the populace in general.

After this event—the Russian launching of Sputnik—America began to ask: Is education too lax? Do we stress it enough? Are science and math central enough in the school curriculum?

“Accelerating” education

The attack on progressive education was already under way. In the following years, every aspect of the curriculum was scrutinized. No longer were people content with how things were.

Many felt the curriculum needed to be stepped up. Schools weren't satisfied to wait for “reading readiness.” They began

trying to develop it. Rapidly, this movement took hold of kindergartens.

Then more and more preschools sprang up. Not willing to have their children fall behind, zealous parents began to teach their children to read by age 3. Then by age 2. Next, age 1 seemed better for some.

Soon it was suggested that having a computer installed near the crib to greet the newborn was the way to go! “Why wait?” some asked. “Start immediately to cram knowledge into the baby's brain.”

Overanxious parents, earnestly desiring their child's success and happiness, were told that acceleration was the path to take. And since their friends were pushing their babies, could they risk being left behind—especially in the face of so much “evidence”?

Getting into the best schools became necessary for these parents, and even before birth was not too soon to prepare.

In this rush to ensure future success, as these parents saw it, a most important aspect has been forgotten: What about the ones who are asked to fulfill these new requirements—the children? How do they fare under such pressures?

We have already had several years to assess the results.

A different society

We live in a society very different from the society of a few decades ago.

I fondly remember seemingly endless summers of real fun and play in our yard. We built hideouts in the wooded areas adjoining my childhood home. We got scratched as we ran through fields dotted with blackberry briars. We spent long, lazy days at the beach. We collected shells and observed sea life. We learned about the tides.

The days were extended peri-

ods of discovery, creativity and exploration. We made up our activities over the long days. There was no hurried, stress-filled plan, no rushing frantically from one scheduled activity to another.

But then, too, family life was different. Most children lived in two-parent homes with mother at home during the day. Divorce and one-parent homes were unusual. Extended families were almost always near and came over for leisurely summer evenings on the porch.

Dress and fashion were not major concerns. Though outfits were neat and clean, brand labels or newness seemed unimportant. Not so today! High fashion is on the minds of parents and, starting even during the preschool years, becomes the child's way of thinking.

Makeup, not used then until into the teens at least, is today seen in the early grades! Five- and 6-year-olds are given makeup kits. Rush, rush to be adults!

The failure of modern approaches

Watching their preschoolers at play, parents today may playfully ask their daughter, "Is he your boyfriend?" They fail to realize that a subtle, grow-up-fast message is thus placed in the child's mind.

"Unfortunately, while we have yet to determine any real advantages to growing up too fast, there are many negative repercussions. The problem, however, is not necessarily a reflection on an individual parent or family; rather it's a complex matter of parenting styles, social circumstances, and cultural expectations... the subtle process of growing up can be thrown off balance by the pressure to grow up too quickly" (Alan Yellin and Penelope B. Grenoble, *When Your Child Grows Up Too Fast*).

Having their child grow up quickly, pushing him or her to act beyond his or her years, seems important to many parents. But as Yellin and Grenoble con-

tinue: "Because we've learned a great deal about children's physical and intellectual capacities, does not mean they should always be pushed... we must weigh the risks and benefits. There is a price to pay."

Child-growth experts notice a persistent pattern in children rushed through childhood. Parents' good intentions to "give their child everything" can produce an overindulged child in danger of not being able to grow up.

"He will end up short on imagination, needing to be stimulated, and burned out before he reaches his teens," say Yellin and Grenoble. "In his teens, the over-

Parents' good intentions to "give their child everything" can produce an overindulged child who can't grow up.

indulged child is in the greatest danger of getting into trouble with sex, alcohol, or drugs. Overindulgence is not necessarily the result of a child having too much. Sometimes he doesn't have enough."

How is this?

Parents overindulge their children, not always with merely physical possessions, but with *never a free moment!* Their days are carefully planned. They rush from one activity to the next.

The danger? These children may not develop their imaginations. Why should they? Everything is handed to them.

Later, they can't amuse them-

selves. They became bored easily. Nothing seems special to the overindulged child.

Parents often don't require their children to face their boredom. So then what do we find?

Teachers everywhere can tell you: A string of unfinished papers and projects—a lot of starts and few finishes. These children are not taught to stick to an assignment until the job is finished. They are always looking for new sources of amusement. (Parents often think this is a sign of superior intelligence.)

These children, too, become easily frustrated. They're accustomed to Mom or Dad solving their problems (even doing their homework for them). They don't know how to fight their own battles. Some parents, so afraid their child will fail, actually guarantee it by their actions!

Besides, frustration, temper tantrums and sleep problems may occur. Headaches and stomachaches appear. These are warnings! The child is saying: "I don't know how to cope in this adult world. I want to be a child."

Some children face another major problem: They don't receive *enough* attention. Time with parents—the great gift all children need—is most scarce in their lives.

They're not read to. The value of education is not discussed in the home. Often, the children are on their own to cope with whatever the day may bring forth. Parents aren't there when their children need them. Distrust builds. Children thus become *too* independent.

This kind of child is highly susceptible to peer pressure. Parents who both have jobs may not have time to look over their children's homework or go to open house at school. They spend little, if any, time in parent-child interaction. Often these children become cold and show little affection. How sad it is to see.

The importance of childhood

Parents should love, nurture and care for their children. They should train their children to be

internally motivated and to be accountable for their own actions.

Why are so many children, by the teen years or even sooner, turned off to their parents and to school? Why are so many burned out? Why do so many contemplate suicide?

Something is wrong—desper-

think about what was happening! As they broke up their marriages by divorce, they were so preoccupied with their own needs, they forgot to look at the children's. They didn't see their children cry and twist inside as they watched Daddy and Mommy date others. They were told to spend time with Daddy and his new wife one week, then Mommy and her new husband the next, and to adjust to major differences in their new parents' child-rearing practices (or lack of them) as if this were simple to do.

Studies on children of divorce now show, clearly, that the effects of divorce last far, far longer on children than was thought.

Or, parents didn't notice the stress it put on their children when the children had to unlock the front door, go

into an empty house and then be fearful when a stranger came to the door. Both parents *had* to work—the living expenses required two salaries. Television became the babysitter and teacher who further accelerated “growing up” activities.

But feelings and emotions cannot be hurried.

David Elkind reminds us in his book *The Hurried Child* (the first to take a hard look at children and stress): “Today's pressures on middle-class children to grow up fast begin in early childhood. Chief among them is the pressure for early intellectual attainment, deriving from a changed perception of precocity. Several decades ago precocity was looked upon with great suspicion. The child prodigy, it was thought, turned out to be a neurotic adult; thus the phrase ‘early ripe, early rot!’ Trying to accelerate children's acquisition of academic skills was seen as evidence of bad parenting.”

It takes *time* to develop. Parents should realize that children need time just to be children—to

romp, play, explore, create, develop their own ideas in periods of time without structure and adult planning.

An environment of love

Children need a rich environment of love and care. They need interested, loving parents who discipline them firmly, fairly and consistently.

They need to have their interests pursued with their parents. They need to be *read to* daily, but they should not be pressured *to read*. Schooltime is soon enough for most children to read.

Studies indicate that children who learn to read along normal developmental lines catch up with early readers before too long—and often enjoy reading more! Only a few children are early readers who seek out books by themselves.

Children need much *informal* exposure to many, many things. They need to observe the creation around them. They need to be exposed to good music and its spontaneous joy.

With Daddy's help, they can find on a map where that letter came from. They can recite some little poems. They can draw their own pictures, learn to use scissors and pretend to write.

Children can learn to do their chores and see that tasks are completed—even the unpopular ones.

They can be full of life and laugh a lot. They can run and play. They can attempt new things.

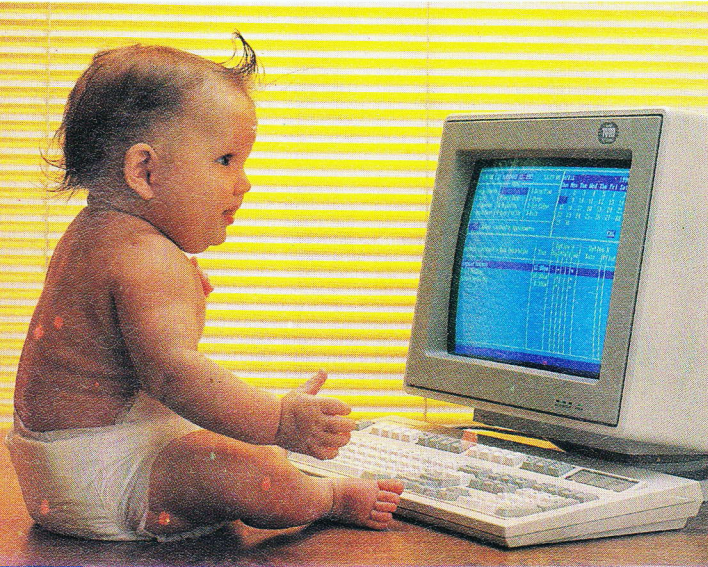
They can learn to share with their siblings and friends.

They can love being with their parents and learn how to honor and respect them. They can learn about God and how he made them and their family.

They can learn good manners and fine work habits. They can learn balance in life.

And when children are in school, they can use the character traits and good citizenship they have been learning to listen attentively and do their best.

Yes, they can be such delightful, *real* supertots! □



Children need time to romp, play, explore, create, develop their own ideas in periods of time without structure and planning.

ately wrong!

These tragedies had a starting place. Often, such children were robbed of the time God intended them to have—the time to be children, the time to have a proper childhood and nurturing.

They were rushed. They were pushed or ignored. They missed out on the spontaneous pleasures and joys of childhood. They were forced to act like little adults when they were so far from being so.

Often, parents didn't stop to

Do you cringe when you hear that Christians must go through trials?

Do you wait in dread for a trial to strike, wondering if you'll be able to make it through without being too badly battered?

Trials aren't designed to hurt or destroy God's children. They are part of the growth process toward eternal life. And not all trials are heavy and burdensome. Many are exciting, healthy challenges to our trust and faith in God.

The challenge

Our family enjoyed many enjoyable afternoons at a local pool. On one such occasion, my wife and I were teaching our two children, Lisa, 6, and Ryan, 4, how to swim. As they became more comfortable in the water, they wanted to jump off one of the diving boards.

I decided to tread water just beyond the edge of the diving board. From this position I could assist them as they surfaced after each jump.

Squinting their eyes and pinching their noses, the children leaped into the water. As they bobbed to the surface I helped them onto my back and we swam piggyback to the side of the pool.

After several of these daring episodes I decided to let my son jump into the water on his own.

Squatting on the edge of the board, he waited for me to get in the water and prepare to "rescue" him. Instead, I remained at the edge of the pool and told him, "Go ahead, jump!" He looked back and forth between me and the depths before him and promptly shook his head no.

"Go ahead. I'll catch you," I urged. Again he glanced over the edge of the board and shook his head.

"No, Daddy," he said, as though he couldn't believe I would ask him to do such a thing.

"You have to get in," I coaxed. From where he stood, he could

The Leap of Faith

A challenge to a child teaches grown-up lessons.

By Randi R. Bloom



Barry Stahl

see I was in no position to help him when he came gasping to the surface. So he thought.

Finally I looked him right in the eye and spoke in a calm, firm voice: "Ryan, you trust Dad, don't you?"

He nodded yes.

"You know I love you and wouldn't ask you to do something that would hurt you, don't you?"

Again he nodded.

"Then trust Dad and jump. I'll help you."

Once again he surveyed the situation. This time he took one last look at me, filled his lungs with air and jumped.

Immediately I followed him into the water and was in position to support him as he surfaced. Together we swam to safety. The grin on his face was priceless, and we hugged each other tightly. I told him how happy I was that he trusted and obeyed me, and I commended him for his bravery.

Love strengthened by obedience

The spiritual implications of the experience struck me at once: As God's children we find ourselves in many situations in which we need the assistance of our loving Father. However, we often find it difficult to act because we don't see how God will help us.

We know God loves us and wants the very best for us (John 10:10). But frequently we are like my son, Ryan, poised at the edge of a trial and faced with difficult decisions.

Often, we know what to do because God has told us in his Word. He has also taught us that he will not ask us to do anything we are not able to do (I Corinthians 10:13). He tells us he will come to our aid when the task seems beyond our human capabilities to perform.

But sometimes God seems too far away. He is not where we want him to be, or he does not do what we think he should do. We just don't see how he will intervene. There lies the problem! We want to see.

God instructs us to live by

faith (Romans 1:17). And faith is not seeing: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

We love God, but God tells us that love is expressed by obedience: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (I John 5:3).

The real test of our love is

without works" is doomed (James 2:26). We must believe God and then act on that belief.

Simply put, whom you love, you trust. Whom you trust, you believe. Whom you believe, you obey.

As we obey God and trust him to do his part, our relationship with him will become more rewarding. It won't be passive, full

dive had taught him a lesson in trust and confidence that strengthened him to go on to greater accomplishments. So it is with us.

When we trust and obey God, we build a record of confidence in God. This is how God strengthens us to go on to greater spiritual achievements. "With God all things are possible," said Jesus (Matthew 19:26).

If we follow God and trust him to do his part, there is no limit to what he can do for us and with us. God is "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

The trials and tests we face are nothing more than springboards to greater spiritual growth. "The testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:3-4).

As you grow in faith, you grow in other godly characteristics:

"Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful" (II Peter 1:5-8).

Trials endear us to our Father in heaven, just as a child is endeared to his parent when he demonstrates love and trust.

He'll never leave you

No matter what the trial, no matter how frightful the unknown may seem, God is there to rescue us. He will not fail. "For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5).

We should always remember Peter's encouragement: "Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator" (I Peter 4:19).

God has faith in you! Do you have faith in him? □

When we trust and obey God, we build confidence in God. If we trust him to do his part, there is no limit to what he can do for us and with us.

whether we obey God when we can't see what he is going to do.

* There is no doubt in my mind that my son loved me before I asked him to spring from that diving board. But when he faithfully obeyed my word and jumped, he showed more love for me than he could have expressed in a thousand words.

Our bond of love was strengthened by his "leap of faith" just as our love for God is also strengthened by our faithful obedience to his commands.

Growing closer to God

Obedience to God takes faith because we don't always know what the consequences will be. Obeying God may result in the loss of a job or the alienation of relatives and friends. But if we really love God, we will obey him. We will trust him to protect us and provide for us.

We may love God, but that love, that trust, will not grow until we step out in trusting obedience. Until we do step out, our relationship with God will be shallow and frustrating. "Faith

of empty words or "good feelings." It will be exciting, productive and personal.

It pleases God when we respond to his guidance: "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). We grow by our acts of faith.

Springboards for growth

Ryan was thrilled with his accomplishment. Soon he was ready for more challenges. Now he wanted to jump off the 12-foot-high board. As he climbed the ladder I swam into position. Slowly he walked to the end of the high dive and stood straight and confident.

After a few words of instruction and some encouraging words from the family he leaped into space. This time it took a little longer for him to surface, but he was fine. He glowed from the success. He had performed quite a feat for a 4-year-old!

The first experience on the low

Are YOU Like This?

By Norman L. Shoaf

How many of our *Good News* readers right now are in the same position I found myself in nearly 15 years ago?

I had heard the *World Tomorrow* broadcast. I had read *The Plain Truth* and *The Good News*. I had gone through several booklets from the Worldwide Church of God and had begun to study the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course.

And my eyes had been opened. I was learning amazing truths that no other organization taught or seemed to understand! Yet I saw those truths proven right there in my own Bible.

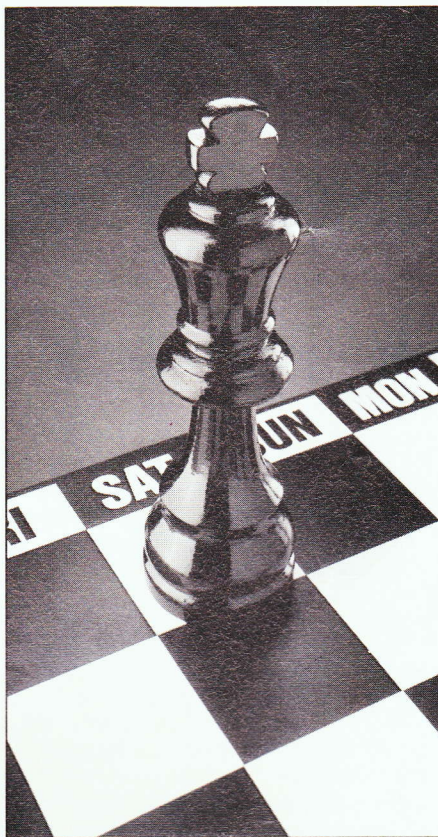
But somehow, the thought had not yet occurred to me that I really needed to *do* anything about it all.

Action required

Surprises constantly leaped out at me from the Bible—points that in most cases were opposite from what I had been taught or assumed all my life.

I'm afraid I was a little vain about what I was learning. It seemed to me that knowing what I now knew made me a little better than my friends and relatives who were uninterested in the Bible. I now knew that many of the basic beliefs they took for granted were in error. But, I complimented myself, *I* was no longer deceived.

But I didn't stop to think that I myself was still living the same way I had always lived, acting the same way I had always acted! I had done nothing to distance myself personally from those erroneous assumptions. The knowledge was in my head, but there was no outward evidence that



Photos: Barry Stahl

there was really anything different about me.

I had learned, for instance, that God's true Sabbath is on the seventh day of the week—Saturday. Jesus Christ kept it. The early Church kept it. The Sabbath is the sign that identifies the true people of God (Exodus 31:13).

I was glad I now saw all that. But I didn't see that I needed to *do* anything about it. Saturday to me was still a day to attend high school football games, to shop, to watch television for hours, to go to amusement parks—the same things other teenagers did.

Then God revealed more.

Then I read scriptures like James 4:17: "To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." That same James also wrote, "Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

There it was—the moral im-

perative. I knew Christians were to observe Saturday. But it had not occurred to me that the knowledge required active response on my part.

It's not just something you *know*. It's something you *do*.

But keeping the Sabbath as God commanded would have infringed on something *I* wanted to use Saturday for instead.

Check—and mate

My high school was the smallest of 10 public high schools in the Midwestern U.S. city where I grew up. Our sports teams were always humiliated at whatever game was in season—football, basketball, baseball, you name it. Our seasons lasted a long, long time.

But there was one competitive activity at which my high school had the most feared and respected team in the whole city. Now don't laugh: It was chess.

During the early 1970s the United States got on a chess craze, and somehow my school managed to "field" one of the top teams in every tournament.

Though I myself hadn't known how to play for very long, I was fortunate enough to be on that team alongside highly talented "veterans" who were responsible for the team's success. I immensely enjoyed being part of it.

All the tournaments we played in were two-day affairs on weekends, Saturday and Sunday. *Saturday* and Sunday. You had to be there for both days, or not play at all.

God had revealed to me that his Sabbath was holy time. It was a day of rest from normal activities, a day to draw closer to God through prayer and Bible study, a day to be taught by God's ministers and to fellowship with other Christians at church services.

And Sabbath keeping wasn't optional. It was—and still is—a

mandatory law of God, to be actively kept and obeyed by anyone who wants to fulfill the ultimate purpose of life!

I knew I had to do something about it. But, I agonized, I would lose my friends! I wouldn't be in the limelight as a member of the chess team!

I would be radically different, suddenly, from anyone else in my school, as far as I knew! No one

is—daily. That's what the process of conversion is all about.

So I wonder how many of our *Good News* readers right now "know to do good," as James wrote, but are hesitating.

Perhaps you've been listening to the *World Tomorrow* broadcast for years, reading *The Plain Truth* and *The Good News*, taking the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. If so, you no doubt have learned many exciting truths.

And perhaps God has now revealed to you, too, that he expects you to *act* on what he has revealed to you.

But a lot of people will react just like I did. Take the Sabbath, for instance. Think of all the objections:

"But I might lose my job!" Do you really think the almighty Creator God cannot find you another job?

"But I would lose friends!" Why would you want the kind of friends who would ostracize you because you act on a sincere belief in obeying God?

"But I would look weird!" So did Jesus Christ, hanging on a stake, dying a hideous death to pay the penalty for your sins.

Obedience brings blessings

After I began to try to obey God on the Sabbath command and on the other laws in the Bible, I learned another important point: Obedience to what

God has already revealed is the key to understanding still more.

"A good understanding have all those who *do* His commandments," reveals Psalm 111:10.

In other words, God will not lead you any further until you act on what you already know.

This is the stumbling block where thousands of our listeners and readers have been stopped! Only when you obey what you understand will God help you understand more.

And note this: Keeping God's laws is the way to every good, right, desirable result!

What are you afraid of giving up? I have never looked back—never regretted that God decided to work with me now in this age.

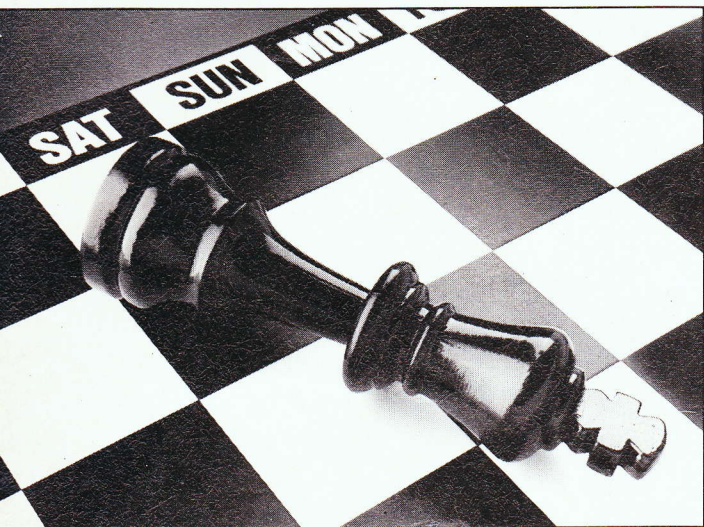
As Paul said of his past life: "But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

Jesus promised: "There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30).

That promise is guaranteed by God! Anyone in God's Church can verify it. I now have dozens of true, strong friendships—a beautiful wife and a wonderful baby daughter—creative opportunities for learning, travel and personal achievement—open contact with God—a chance to take part in the greatest Work in history—and, most important, the hope of being in God's kingdom!

God doesn't ask you to give-up anything that is good for you. On the contrary, he is the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). He wants you to enjoy the truly abundant life (John 10:10).

What is keeping you from *doing* what you know is right? □



else I knew kept God's true Sabbath day!

Stepping out

Deciding to quit playing around and *do* something with the knowledge God revealed to me through the Worldwide Church of God was the most difficult decision I ever made.

Taking decisive, right action, casting aside concern for what anyone else might think of me, was hard—life changing! It still

Deciding to quit playing around and do something with the knowledge God revealed to me was the most difficult decision I ever made.



Norman Shoaf

BIBLICAL WORKSHOP



A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

ARE YOU A FAITHFUL AMBASSADOR?

The apostle Paul challenges us to be ambassadors for Christ (II Corinthians 5:20). But what does an ambassador do?

Some time ago I attended a party at the invitation of the former press and cultural counselor of Finland, Jaako Bergquist. Through a number of encounters with him, I learned what an ambassador does.

Three dominant characteristics became etched in my mind:

1) *An ambassador represents another culture or way of*

life; he doesn't give his own opinions, but those of his country. An ambassador cannot let his personal feelings enter into a discussion.

Likewise, we ambassadors of the government of God need to be careful that what we say truly represents God. The precedent was set by our elder brother Jesus Christ, who said: "The words that I speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works" (John 14:10).

2) *An ambassador functions as a servant, faithfully representing his country.* As a servant, an ambassador practices hospitality, courtesy and graciousness.

The first thing that impressed me about Mr. Bergquist was his genuine humility and graciousness. I told

him about a classical music program on our Ambassador College radio station and he asked if he could send me some records. A week later I received a collection of records from him, including classical and contemporary Finnish music.

An ambassador realizes his vulnerability as a minority guest in a majority culture. He learns the art of hospitality and warmth. He makes available, but doesn't push, the culture of his country.

As ambassadors of Christ, we are to exude warmth and friendliness and be "given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13, I Timothy 3:2).

3) *An ambassador uses diplomacy and wisdom in dealing with strangers.* Mr. Bergquist always considered the consequences of what he said and was careful not to injure the feelings of others. And he strived to bring together people with common interests.

An ambassador skillfully shows how his country and another share interests. In negotiations, diplomats must turn agreements into mountains, disagreements into molehills.

The apostle Paul was a master diplomat. In I Corinthians 10:32-33, he explained his task when he met people from diverse cultures:

"Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the

church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

Our job is not to convert people. It's up to God to do that. But we are obliged as ambassadors to faithfully represent the government of God.—David Maas ■



G.A. Belluche Jr.

"COUPLE TIME"

Six p.m., leave work; 6:30, cook dinner; 8, put children to bed; 8:30, clean house, make next day's lunches . . ."

Does this schedule sound familiar? If so, you're not alone. Husbands and wives need to spend time alone together. But how can you fit that time into your busy life?

You have to work at it! Some couples actually sit down with their calendars once a week and *schedule* time to spend alone together.

Here are some steps



Wendy Lagerström

couples can take to increase their time together:

Combine exercise with togetherness. For example, take a walk around your neighborhood each night.

Meet for lunch. Eat out or, better yet, bring something special of your own. It's a real treat to see the one you love in the middle of the workday.

Relax. After the kids are in bed, you often have a choice to make. You can clean up the house or you can relax with your mate. Choose to relax sometimes. Take the phone off the hook for the evening.

Make a date. Go out to dinner or go on a picnic, or take in a good movie or play. Try to find a free weekend now and then for an out-of-town trip for just the two of you.

We hope these suggestions will get you started. Come up with more ways to find time for each other and reap the benefits of a closer, more loving relationship. It may take some effort and creativity, but it's definitely worth it. Write to us if you have more suggestions!

—Kathy Johnson ■

response to physical or emotional stress.

Physical stress on the body can come from overwork or from sitting, standing or lying down in an incorrect position. Muscles can also tighten because the body lacks proper nutrition. All these factors are in your control.

The hardest stress to deal with is emotional stress. When you worry, your muscles tighten. When you become angry, your muscles tighten.

The antidote to this kind of stress, of course, is to think and act positively.

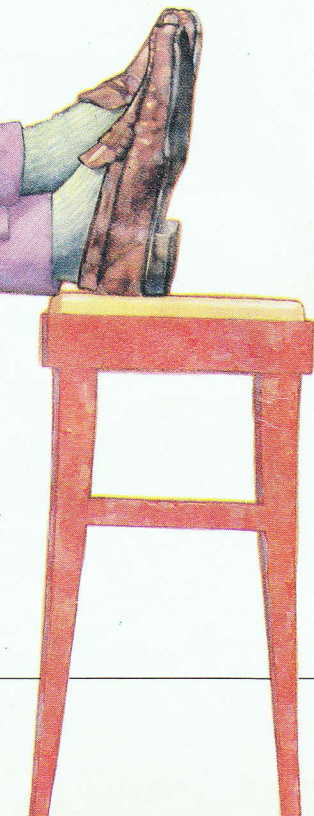
It's a constant war to properly deal with life's challenges. So we are given pieces of armor to put on. These include the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Keeping in the front of our minds the Church's commission—to announce God's coming kingdom and prepare ourselves to be the Bride of Christ—helps to counteract the negative forces in our lives. So we must keep our "shoes" on, and relax!

—Lana Walker ■

KEEP YOUR SHOES ON, AND RELAX

This is an age of tension, anxiety, being uptight. Many don't know how to relax. Our muscles tighten in



Ken Tunell

WHAT DO YOU MEAN—“A ROD OF IRON”?

After Jesus Christ returns to earth, he and his spirit-born brethren will rule the nations with a rod of iron (Revelation 2:27). Some think Christ and his followers will reign by beating people with that rod of iron. Some

may even look forward to using that rod on specific individuals!

But the Greek word for “rule” in this verse is *poimaino*, which is related to the words for *sheep* and *shepherd*. *Poimaino* is usually translated “feed” or “tend,” as it is in John 21:16, Acts 20:28, I Corinthians 9:7 and I Peter 5:2.

Christ, the good shepherd (John 10:14), will take care of the nations like a shepherd takes care of his flock. A shepherd uses his rod to protect and guide the sheep. The rod may be used to strike enemies such as wolves, but it is not used to strike the sheep. A rod of iron is strong and sure, reliable for both protection and guidance.

Christ will shatter all who fight against him (Revelation 19:15, 17-21). And he will indeed use his rod of iron to subdue those who oppose him (Psalm 2:9). But Christ will gently rule those who remain, protecting, feeding and guiding them during his 1,000-year reign.

—Michael Morrison ■

LET YOUR BROTHER GROW

When Paul and Barnabas started on their first journey they took with them a young man named John Mark. In the middle of the trip, Mark left the group and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Why is not certain, but Paul apparently saw Mark's act as desertion.

As a result, Paul balked at taking Mark on

another trip (Acts 15:36-40).

Barnabas responded differently. He was determined to give Mark another chance.

This determination proved fruitful. Mark did change and became useful to the Work. Paul himself saw the change. In II Timothy 4:11 he requested that Mark be brought to him, “for he is useful to me for ministry.”

Mark was finally an important part of Paul's ministry—and the very man who wrote the Gospel of Mark.

Have you ever been wronged by another

person—even a brother or sister in Christ? Do you know the past or secret sins of others? Do you allow them to change? Are you willing to give them another chance?

If Barnabas had held Mark's act against him—if he had not been willing to forgive and forget—we might not have the Gospel of Mark today.

It is discouraging to

try to grow when past mistakes are remembered and held against you. Not accepting change and not giving the benefit of the doubt can create a real stumbling block for those striving to grow in grace and knowledge (II Peter 3:18). We all need to be able to put our past behind us.

In Romans 14:13 God warns us not to prevent others from growing and

changing: "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way."

We can learn a valuable lesson from Barnabas. Give others the opportunity to grow and change.

After all, isn't that what we expect God to do for us?

—Rick Shallenberger ■

totally control your health is a dangerous one. Those who adopt this concept and try to apply it in their lives are burdened with guilt when they fail to cure themselves. They also suffer the deep, plaguing fear that any negative thought or trial in life may cause a new disease or even death. Observers who subscribe to this thinking often blame the sick for their illnesses and cease to be compassionate.

This kind of thinking is gaining popularity among individuals even in the medical community. Ill people who protest the concept are sometimes stopped cold when an advocate tells them their protests are just another manifestation of the stress that caused the illness!

FACING THE OUT-STRETCHED HAND

It's too late to cross the street. You have to walk by the man in the ragged clothes. You try to look the other way but the gaze from his grimy face is unwavering, magnetic.

"Hey buddy," he says, coming toward you with his hand out.

One must always be cautious dealing with beggars. But before you brush them away, here are a few points to think about:

- The fastest-growing segment of the homeless population is families with children. In today's economy, even a short period of unemployment can put a family on the street.

- It's not your responsibility how a person spends money you give. Wouldn't you want to be given the benefit of the doubt?

- Sometimes visitors in poor countries are shocked to find that begging thrives as a profession. We can think, "They're just acting. But no matter how good these 'actors' are, they still live hand-to-mouth. Begging is seldom their first career choice."

- The Bible says, "He who has mercy on the poor, happy is he" (Proverbs 14:21). And, "You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy" (Deuteronomy 15:11).

Remember your own safety when dealing with street people. But don't let caution ruin your compassion for those who really need help.

It's only spare change—or is it?

—Michael Warren ■

DO YOU MAKE YOURSELF SICK?

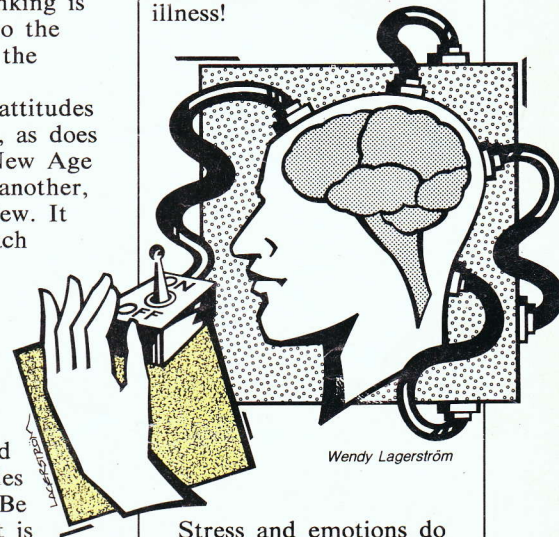
New Age thinking is creeping into the sickbeds of the Western world.

Emotions and attitudes do impact health, as does stress. But the New Age movement takes another, more extreme, view. It maintains that each person is responsible for everything that transpires in his or her life: You chose the family you were born into. You planned your own aptitudes and weaknesses. Be it good or evil, it is within your control.

This means, in New Age terms, that if you are ill, you created that illness in yourself. You are also responsible for healing yourself through changing attitudes and thought patterns.

New Age books go so far as to list symptoms and pair them with spiritual causes.

While each person should take personal responsibility in maintaining health, the idea that you alone can



Wendy Lagerström

Stress and emotions do impact health, but many other factors, such as genetics, environment, diet, age and simple time and chance also contribute.

"Blaming ourselves for environmentally caused illnesses is like blaming the fish in Lake Erie for dying," says author Dana Ullman.

More importantly, the idea that people somehow mentally cause every illness that might befall them just doesn't make sense.—Kerri Dowd ■



G.A. Belluche Jr.

COMING

IN THE GOOD NEWS

◇ You Were Born to Rule!

Christians are called to be kings in Christ's coming kingdom. Are you building the mind of a king?

◇ But WHY the Passover Bread?

At Passover in A.D. 31, Jesus broke unleavened bread and gave it to his disciples to eat. We eat unleavened bread today as we observe Passover. Just what does that bread symbolize?

◇ Ruth—A Story of Commitment

A young widow who lived in the 12th century B.C. set a sterling example for Christians today.

◇ Teens Say:

“I Wish My Parents Would...”

Do you know what your teens really want from you?

◇ Just What *Is* a “Saint”?

The word *saint* appears often in everyday language, but few people understand what it really means. What does the Bible mean when it talks about God's “saints”?
