

MARCH-APRIL 1990

The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

RUTH

A
STORY
OF
COMMITMENT



**But WHY the
Passover Bread?**
See Page 9

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The Good News

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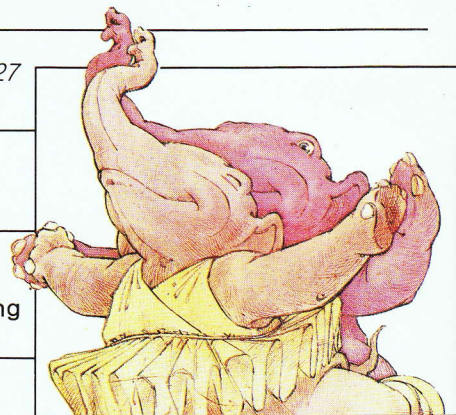
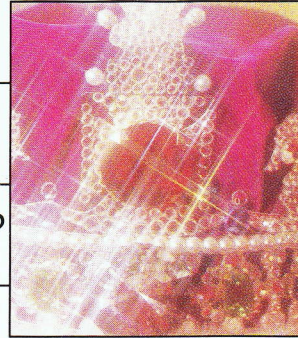
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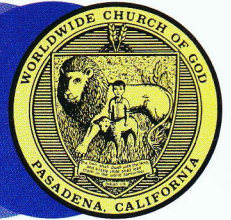
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COVER

Ruth, a young widow who lived in the 12th century B.C., set a sterling example for Christians today. See page 11. Photo: G.A. Belluche Jr.

GOOD NEWS PERSONAL



Become a New Person!

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,” Paul wrote (Philippians 2:5).

God calls the process of taking on the mind of Jesus Christ *conversion*. Paul described it as the death of the old person, and the beginning of the new person—a new life—a life in Christ. He and the other apostles described that life as a life that is fully *committed* and *devoted* to the way that Jesus himself lived and taught.

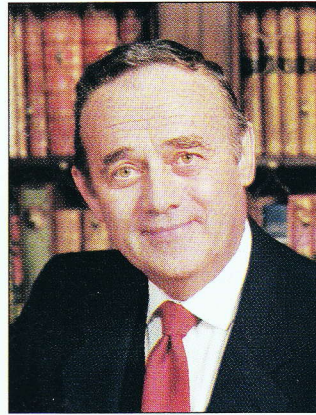
That way was the way of obedience to God’s commandments. But it was even more than that. It was the way of *love*. It was obedience to God with the same motivation as God—the motivation of love.

A true Christian will be striving to obey what God teaches in his Word to be his will. But in that, he will not be doing it for the purpose of *appearing* righteous, or to make others *think* he is righteous. He will be doing it because Jesus Christ lives in him, and he is following the lead of Christ through the Holy Spirit in him. That means he will be obeying God from the motivation of *love*, of true concern and feeling for the well-being of others.

Paul wrote in I Corinthians 13:3, “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.”

If love is not present, all the obedience in the world is of no lasting value! Yet let none think that love can be present in *disobedience!*

The instruction given by the apostle John in I John 4:12-13 contains the key to possessing the confidence that our obedience is not in vain. He says: “No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.” Yes, we can have confidence that our



service to God is not in vain if our obedience is rooted and grounded in love—the selfless love of God that is in true Christians through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Love is the identifying sign of a Christian. It cannot be seen on the

outside. It cannot be worn, eaten or administered. But in all true Christians, it is there—in their hearts and minds—and it is the source of their faithfulness to God. It is the motivation in all the Christian does, and though it can’t help but become apparent to others, it does so because it is true and real, not because the Christian is putting on a show.

The true Christian obeys God in love and in humility. He does not think of himself as spiritually superior to others. He is quick to forgive. He does not hold grudges and he does not possess a condemning, judgmental nature.

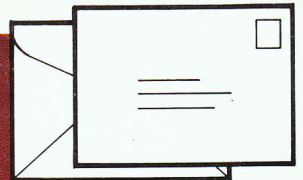
He is learning, as he is led by Christ, to make love his continuing and permanent *way of life*, not just an occasional act of kindness. He is learning to *think* like Jesus. He is becoming a *new person*, the old person having been buried at baptism. And that love of God in him motivates him to live by *every word* that proceeds from the mouth of God.

How much happier and more successful would be our marriage and family relationships, as well as our other personal relationships, if we more deeply understood and practiced these marvelous truths!

Joseph W. Teach

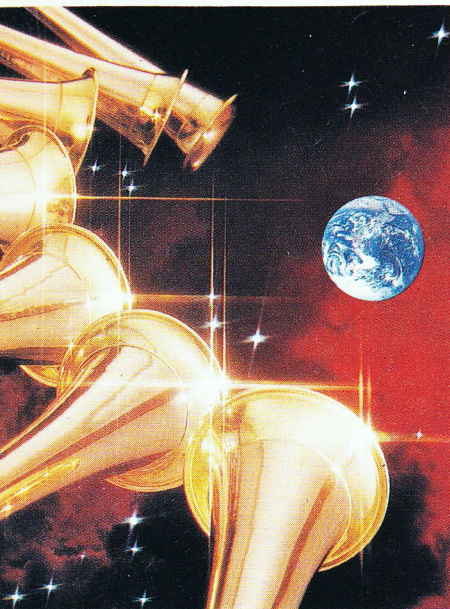
Pastor General
Worldwide Church of God

LETTERS



"I Shall Return"

What a meaningful cover photograph on the September-October *Good News* magazine. Truthfully the saying "a pic-



G.A. Belluche Jr.

ture is worth a thousand words" describes this photograph. This tiny beautiful planet with patches of white clouds, seemingly lost in this vast, limitless universe, has a unique and wonderful festival of the great God designed especially for and only for it as shown by the seven trumpets aimed toward it.

Thomas M. Henager
Katy, Texas

I must write and tell you what happened when I received the September-October *Good News*. I pulled off the wrapper with the reversed side facing me, put the wrapper in the wastepaper bin and turned the magazine over. I gasped as I looked at the cover—golden trumpets surrounding our earth. I could almost hear that great blast and for a moment I was filled with a great joy as I

saw before me a picture of that which we all hope and long for.

Pat Rowsell
London, England

Feast memories

Thank you so much for the [September-October] *Good News*! We have read, reread and read again the letters from those describing past Feasts of Tabernacles. Of course, our memories are stirred as well. We are so thankful that God's people are able to keep his Holy Days to learn to fear him and to do his will more perfectly. All the articles in the publications are very helpful to us, and we appreciate the time taken to prepare and send them to us.

Iva L. McIntosh
Paris, Tennessee

I just completed reading "Favorite Feast Memories." I was thrilled! The joy began bubbling up as soon as I started reading. It brought back so many memories to me. I could just about fill the pages you used with my own exciting, joyful experiences.

The article perked me up so much I had to let you know. We need such as this to remind us of our blessings and lift us out of the depressions that the heavy trials of today have brought on.

Eudele Athey
Springfield, West Virginia

Helping the world

I stayed away from you for a long time because everybody said you were a cult. Then finally I read an article in *The Good News* and it was wonderful! I wished I hadn't waited so long to find out for myself. I believe the Worldwide Church of God is giving the truth to people. I think it's beautiful what you are doing. Most people couldn't afford it. And I

know they'll be blessed. You're really helping this troubled world.

Dorothy Godby
Hesperia, California

Pardon me

I love your magazine *The Good News*, but reading "How to Make Your Job Work for You" I became just a wee bit incensed. I am tired of reading articles telling employees how to be "saints" on the job. I think if you were as diligent "correcting" employers, you would spend less time preaching to the people who are really carrying the weight of the corporation. Ease up already. Do you really believe Jesus was referring to the thieving corporation heads as "masters"? Pardon me.

Wyatts, Maryland

Sharing

My friend has shared with me her magazine *The Good News*. After reading it I got the feeling of lightness within me. I am being inspired and encouraged more in everything I do for the Lord.

Please include me as one of your free subscribers. With it, I know there will be more guidance for my daily life.

Estela C. Labado
Togbilaron City,
Philippines

I found out that your magazine is one of the most terrific-reading magazines that I've ever read. I saw it from one of your *Good News* readers and she gave me the address where I can write you.

Marissa P. Caliwara
Tarlac, Philippines

Suggestion from a young reader

Thank you for writing the article "Older People Need Love, Too!" in the September-

October issue. I am only 11 years old, but I have a suggestion for children who want to do something for the elderly. Visit nursing homes. Some elderly people in nursing homes never have visitors. Even if you don't know them, they will be glad you came.

Melissa Turner
Cincinnati, Ohio

The Good News welcomes your comments. Letters for this column should be addressed to "Letters to the Editor." The editor reserves the right to use letters so addressed in whole or in part, and to include your name and edit the letter for clarity or space. Send all communications to our address nearest you:

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What Have You Been Putting Off?

Deadlines help us get things done. The editor gave me a deadline for this article. I suggested the topic, he told me to write it and he told me when he wanted it.

The deadline gave me a sense of urgency about writing this article—especially when it came to the day before the deadline!

Spiritual priorities

Christ hasn't given us an exact deadline to tell us when this age will end and the world tomorrow will begin.

Actually, we do have a spiritual deadline—the return of Jesus Christ—but we don't know when it is.

Jesus' disciples asked him when he would come back (Matthew 24:3, Acts 1:6). Jesus did not tell them. Instead, he told them, "It is not for you to know" (Acts 1:7). "Of that day and hour no one knows," he said (Matthew 24:36).

"Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him" (verse 44).

The reason we need a sense of urgency is so we will be ready when Christ returns!

How to be ready

Jesus then told his disciples several parables (Matthew 24:45-51, 25:1-46). The parables don't tell us when the deadline is, but they tell us how we can be ready.

Take the parable of the faithful servant and the evil servant. The evil servant thought the deadline was far off, and he began to mistreat his fellow servants (Matthew 24:48-49). The faithful servant concentrated on the job, not the deadline, and he was found "so doing" (verses 45-46).

The parable of the wise and foolish virgins presents another aspect of being prepared. Ten

*None of us can
afford to delay our
spiritual responsibilities
any longer.*

By Michael Morrison

women were waiting to welcome a bridegroom. The five foolish women assumed they wouldn't have long to wait; the five wise women prepared for a long wait just in case (Matthew 25:1-4). The bridegroom took longer than expected, and only the wise women were ready to attend the wedding (verses 5-12).

We learn from these parables that it's foolish to assume Christ will return soon *or* that he will come later. *Christian behavior shouldn't depend on when the deadline is.*

So what are we supposed to be doing? We should be obeying the commission Jesus gave: "Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Our preparation, our readiness, our sense of urgency involves two major areas: 1) supporting the commission given to the Church, and 2) learning to observe all the things that Jesus has commanded us. We need a sense of urgency to continue doing our assigned work, both in the Church and in our own lives.

The apostle Paul compared the Christian life to a race: "Let us run with endurance the race that

is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). We run—we push ourselves—but we run with endurance, ready to keep up the pace for a long time. Christianity is a lifetime commitment, not a quick sprint to the finish line.

Of course, there is a time to sprint. If your Christian journey is like a lazy stroll, then you need to speed up the pace with some extra Bible study, prayer and meditation.

The Church as a whole, like each member, needs to work with endurance.

The Church is teaching thousands to straighten out their lives, giving them hope, sharing with them the exciting purpose of human life. Millions of others could benefit from the Church's message. They need it urgently—so we need a sense of urgency.

Joseph W. Tkach, our editor-in-chief and pastor general of the Worldwide Church of God, wants *The Good News* to convey a sense of urgency to all our readers. The good news of the kingdom of God is needed *now*. God's way of life is needed *now*.

The unexpected deadline

Christ's return isn't the only deadline we face. Each Christian may have to face a personal deadline, too—the end of his or her life *before* Christ returns.

In the case of those who die in the faith, God sees that their job is done, that they are ready. They have "fought the good fight . . . finished the race . . . kept the faith." A crown of righteousness is laid up for them and for all who prepared for that day (II Timothy 4:7-8).

None of us knows how much time we have, whether we will live until Christ's return or come upon a personal deadline much sooner. But it doesn't matter. The point is this: We don't know when the deadline is, and we should therefore be ready. Always. Every day counts. □

JUST WHAT IS A 'SAINT'?

By Clayton Steep

What does the Bible mean when it talks about God's "saints"?

“Well, I'm no saint, but . . .” Have you ever heard anyone say that?

The words are usually meant to justify a weakness or a misdeed of some kind. It is implied that to be a saint is an unrealistic, even unreachable, objective.

Many people have a vague notion that only a person who is no longer alive can be considered a saint. Again, the idea is that the average person in this life can never be good enough to be characterized as a saint.

Most people would be hard put to even define what a saint is.

Stop to think how often the word *saint* appears in everyday language. It is in the names of streets, cities, nations, diseases, buildings, hospitals, dogs, weather phenomena, holidays, rivers, mountain ranges and, of course, persons mythical and real.

How strange that a word so often used is so little understood!

Saints—alive!

What exactly is a saint? For the answer we will look in the Bible, since the word is actually a biblical term.

First, let's notice that one does not have to be dead to be a saint. Writing to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul addressed his letter “to the saints who are in Ephesus” (Ephesians 1:1). There were likewise “poor saints” living in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26).

Scattered throughout the Old and New Testaments are references to certain living humans called “saints” of God.

But what made them saints? Our English word *saint* is derived from Latin and basically means “sacred or holy one.” It is used to translate biblical Hebrew and Greek words meaning “sacred or holy one.” A saint, according to the Bible, is simply a holy person. Fine, but what does *holy* mean? This is another word people use frequently—even in profanity!—without comprehending its meaning.

Yet comprehend it we must. The Bible instructs, “As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (I Peter 1:15-16).

How can a person obey that important charge from God without knowing what “holy” means?

What is “holy”?

No one synonym adequately

expresses all that is signified by the word *holy*. We see in Revelation 22:11 that *holy* is the opposite of *filthy*, and from I Corinthians 7:14 that it is the opposite of *unclean*—the opposite, of course, being *clean*. Holy also means being “without blame” (Ephesians 1:4), “irreproachable” (Colossians 1:22), “without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27).

Clean, pure, without blame or blemish—you might wonder how it is possible for any human to be holy.

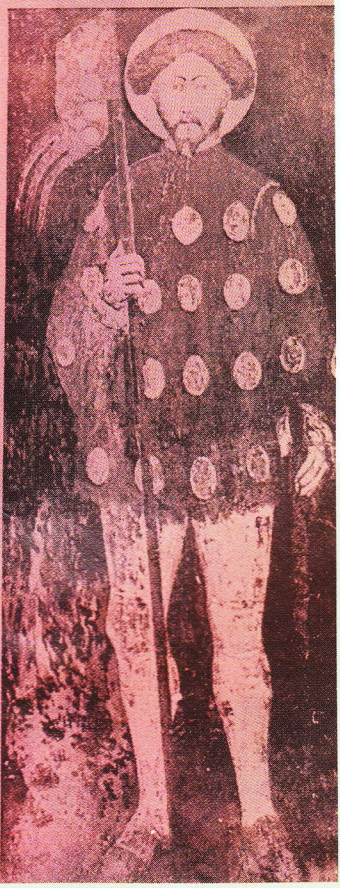
But it is possible! Living Christians were referred to in Hebrews 3:1 and I Thessalonians 5:27 as “holy brethren.”

We can be sure they were not perfect, though, just as Christians today are not perfect. The Christians at Colosse, for example, were “elect of God, *holy* and beloved” (Colossians 3:12). Still, they needed to be admonished to rectify and improve their lives in many respects.

They were not yet perfect. But they were holy.

What made them—what makes any true Christian—holy? It is the result both of becoming a Christian and of becoming a better Christian by growth.

When one becomes a Christian



Top left: Painting on wood of Saint Valentine, known by the Christian world as a martyr. Top right: Woodcut of Ireland's Saint Patrick holding a shamrock leaf, symbol of the Trinity. Clovers are part of St. Patrick's Day observance. Bottom: Sixteenth-century engraving of Saint Christopher. In modern times he is invoked as the patron of motorists.



one is, according to the Bible, "sanctified." The word *sanctify* to most people is no more than a religious sounding word. In reality, though, it means "to make holy." It includes the idea of setting apart, consecrating, for a special purpose.

When God "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (Genesis 2:3) he made it special, different from the other days of the week. It became holy.

Jesus Christ gave himself for his Church, composed of individual believers, "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy" (Ephesians 5:26-27).

Notice how the terms *sanctifying*, *cleansing* and *being made holy* are used together.

To be clean is to be set apart from filthiness. Christians are holy ones because they have been sanctified, set apart for a special purpose.

A Christian—a saint—a holy one—is set apart from the sinful ways of the world. He or she has taken heed to the warning in Isaiah 52:11:

"Depart! Depart! Go out from

there, touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her, be clean, you who bear the vessels of [i.e., serve] the Lord.”

Christians are holy because God’s Holy Spirit takes up residence and dwells in them. All who become Christians are “sanctified [set apart, made holy]

“Perfecting holiness” is a process. It requires effort. Every day we confront situations where we could become defiled by unrighteous deeds of the flesh or of the mind. What wrong actions do we allow ourselves to do? What foolish or evil thoughts do we allow to pollute our minds?

We are engaged in a lifelong struggle to perfect holiness. It is not easy. God knows our best efforts are often flawed. He made provision for such eventualities. We see that reflected in the Old Covenant ceremonial laws. They

set apart, made holy and kept that way through God’s grace and power.

Right now we live in a world of competition and greed. There is much talk of peace, but war is this world’s way of life. The weapons are poised to produce the horrendous “sudden destruction” (I Thessalonians 5:3) that is surely to come.

Meanwhile, lives are wasted by drugs, disease and unhappiness. This world, according to the Bible, is unholy. But the world to come will be different.

As God’s coming government takes hold, there will be an increase in what is holy—cleansed, purified, having God’s presence, set apart for his service.

Have you had the misfortune of seeing bumper stickers, T-shirts or graffiti expressing glorification of foolishness or, worse, just plain profanity and filth? That’s symptomatic of this world.

By contrast, we read of the world to come in Zechariah 14:20-21: “In that day ‘Holiness to the Lord’ shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the Lord’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts.”

Notice what *The New Bible Commentary: Revised* has to say about this scripture:

“Everything will have become holy because it will be dedicated to a holy purpose. The instruments of war, looked upon with such disfavour by the prophets, will be converted to better use (cf. Mi. 4:3, 4). They are even to bear the same inscription as the mitre on the head of the high priest (cf. Ex. 28:38). *Pots* are mentioned as the commonest of vessels, and like everything else they will be transformed by their consecration to the Lord.”

In tomorrow’s world, everyone will be taught to appreciate and exalt all the word *holy* stands for.

All will then know what God’s converted people know now: There is no greater calling than to be a saint and to partake of God’s holiness! □

“Perfecting holiness” is a process. It requires effort. Every day we confront situations where we could become defiled by wrong deeds of the flesh or of the mind.

by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:16). If you are a Christian, you are, in fact, a holy temple. “Do you not know that you are the temple of God . . . ? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (I Corinthians 3:16-17).

A cleansing process

Being a saint is also the result of an ongoing cleansing process. We of ourselves are not clean and pure. God makes us so. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (I John 1:7). God creates in us a “clean heart” (Psalm 51:10).

We also have our part to do. We have to continually ask that any sins we commit after conversion be washed away by the blood of Christ. We have to actively put sin out of our lives. We must “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Corinthians 7:1).

foreshadowed the spiritual relationship we under the New Covenant have with God through Jesus Christ.

The offerings the children of Israel made were holy. But they were not perfect. So God compensated for the imperfections. He provided atonement for “the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts” (Exodus 28:38).

Aaron, the human high priest, of himself was not holy. He had to be made holy. He was given holy garments to put on (verses 2-4). He was given a golden plate engraved with the words “Holiness to the Lord” (verse 36).

When the most holy God looked down on Aaron as Aaron came into his presence, he did not see imperfections. He saw holiness—holiness that was given to Aaron—just as God gives us his holiness.

Holiness exalted

Saints are cleansed, purified,

Next Time, God Will Take 'Egypt' Out of Israel

*God desires to replace our carnal minds with his perfect thinking.
Here's how you can succeed where ancient Israel failed.*

By Paul Kroll

More than 34 centuries ago, God saved Israel from oppression in Egypt.

This remarkable Exodus stunned the world. It is the stuff of films: More than one movie director has tried to recreate the event.

Ancient Egypt typified the sinful and idolatrous life. Oh, Egypt's accomplishments were astounding—pyramids, advanced learning and sophisticated culture. But God was not pleased with the nation's life-style. "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment," said the Creator (Exodus 12:12).

Missed opportunities

God had a purpose in rescuing Israel from ancient Egypt's misguided way of life. He wanted to create a model society based on his wise laws. If the nation had followed God's direction, its citizens would have enjoyed the truly abundant life.

What God asked in return was quite

straightforward. He called on Israel to love him (Deuteronomy 10:12) and fellow humans (Leviticus 19:18).

Yet the nation failed on both counts. Israel returned to the slavery represented by Egypt—to the worship of false gods and harmful values.

The reason for Israel's failure was simple: God took Israel out of Egypt, but he didn't take "Egypt" out of Israel!

Unless our thinking changes, we carry old and hurtful ways with us wherever we go. That's what Israel did. Without the changing power of God's Holy

Spirit in their lives, it was impossible for the Israelites to obey and serve God.

Ever hear the story about a drifter looking for a new place to live? He came to a certain village and accosted a passerby on the main street to ask him about the villagers.

"What kind of people live in this town?" he asked.

The villager answered with a question: "What kind of people lived in the town you came from?"

The drifter said: "They were mean. Wouldn't help me at all. Terribly unfriendly. Bad people."

The townsman replied, "Then that is the same kind of people you will find in this village."

The problem with ancient Israel was similar. The nation dragged "Egypt attitudes" with them like



More than one motion-picture director has tried to recreate Israel's remarkable Exodus from ancient Egypt more than 34 centuries ago (at left, a Paramount Pictures still). The Israelites left physically, but carried Egypt's mind set with them.

excess baggage across the Red Sea. The suitcases of sin they carried in their arms blocked their view of God.

Paul says Israel of old was instructed about God and the gospel—the good news about our purpose of life. “But the word which they heard,” wrote Paul, “did not profit them, not being mixed with faith” (Hebrews 4:2).

Faith allows us to understand who God is and what his loving purpose for us involves (Hebrews 11:6). It gives us the motivation to cast out sin from our minds.

But that kind of faith—the faith required for salvation!—only comes to us as a gift from

God calls
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just as Israel
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We must extract
spiritual Egypt
from our
minds.

God as a fruit of his Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:8, Galatians 5:22). Except for a few individuals with whom God specially worked, Israel did not have this faith!

Slouching toward Egypt

The Israelites did not have God's faith within them. The people lacked the quality of trust that comes through God's Spirit. Their minds were filled with the things Egyptians thought important (Exodus 16:3, Numbers 11:4-6).

“If only we had died in the land of Egypt!” the Israelites lamented (Numbers 14:2). They accused God of dragging them into the wilderness to kill them. “Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?” they asked

(verse 3). They voted God *out* and the Promised Land *down*. “Let us select a leader and return to Egypt” was their rallying cry (verse 4).

Israel's legs were able to carry the nation out of Egypt, but Egypt wouldn't dislodge its hold on Israel's mind. “How long will these people reject Me?” God asked Moses (verse 11).

During many centuries in the Promised Land, Israel bobbed up and down in a sea of immorality. The nation turned into a spiritual disaster area that couldn't be repaired. Finally, all 12 tribes went into captivity. Most of those tribes became “lost” in history.

God will remedy Israel's spiritual weakness—its lack of faith. He will rescue Israel in a second exodus. Isaiah, the Hebrew prophet, said that God will “set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people” (Isaiah 11:11).

This time they will come “from the four corners of the earth” (verse 12). Israel will at last come out of this ungodly society—this “Egypt” world—physically *and* spiritually to re-enter its Promised Land.

This time an exodus of the mind will be part of God's rescue operation. He will take “Egypt” out of Israel as well. Israel will finally shed its Egyptian skin. “All Israel will be saved,” Paul wrote of that time (Romans 11:26).

The power that liberates

The mechanism of Israel's coming liberty from spiritual Egypt is a new way of thinking. Jeremiah expressed God's promise to Israel: “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

Ezekiel echoed this guarantee: “I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them” (Ezekiel 11:19).

God will not limit redemption to Israel, however. All nations will come to trust, love and obey God (Isaiah 2:2, 11:9-10).

What does Israel's experience

tell us? Their past failure points the way to our success. Paul tells us the events surrounding Israel's coming out of Egypt “were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (I Corinthians 10:11).

God calls on us to renounce our past heritage of sin just as Israel should have. We must come out of spiritual Egypt and extract its thinking from our minds as well.

Chips off the old block?

Israel's failure to come out of sin ought to give us pause. The complainers, murmurers and idolaters in the wilderness were no different from us. We are their spiritual descendants.

Had we been in their place, we also would have failed to trust God. We, too, might have yearned for the fleshpots of Egypt, accused God unjustly, tempted the Lord or gone back to idolatry and sexual immorality (I Corinthians 10:6-10).

We cannot reach into our minds and pull Egypt out without God's help. Only one quality separates the ancient Israelites from the spiritual children of God. That is the gift of his Holy Spirit.

If God had given Israel the gift of faith, the Old Testament record would have been different. The Israelites could have patiently borne the temptations and problems they faced. They would have demonstrated trust in and obedience to God.

Has God taken Egypt out of your mind through his Holy Spirit? If so, you should be motivated to serve and please him. That's because God has given us “exceedingly great and precious promises” (II Peter 1:4). We are, said Peter, “partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world.”

If we are numbered among the people of God, we have access to his Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9, 14). This divine nature within us can drive the Egypt of sin out of our minds. We can become “chips off the Creator's block” and as Galatians 6:16 says, citizens of the true “Israel of God.” □

But WHY the Passover Bread?

At the Passover, on that night of nights, Jesus broke bread and gave it to his disciples to eat. That bread has tremendous meaning!

By Earl H. Williams

Do you understand what Jesus meant when he said of the unleavened bread, "Take, eat; this is My body" (Matthew 26:26)?

Jesus' disciples partook of that bread 1,959 years ago. We eat it today as we observe the New Testament Passover service each year.

But what does eating this bread picture?

The apostle Paul wrote this of



Barry Stahl

the bread: "When we bless 'the cup of blessing,' is it not a means of sharing in the blood of Christ? When we break the *bread*, is it not a means of *sharing* in the *body* of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, many as we are, are one body; for it is one loaf of which we all partake" (I Corinthians 10:16-17, New English Bible).

When you partake of the Passover bread, you are saying that you have thoroughly discerned the Body of Christ, the Church, and that you are recon-

ciled to God and to each member of the Body of Christ.

If you have not taken these steps, then God will judge you! You are making a commitment to become one with your brethren just as the bread is one.

After Jesus gave his disciples the Passover bread, he prayed "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:21).

Since Christ committed his life to make us one, shouldn't we

commit our lives to become one? The apostle Peter tells us we should indeed follow the example of Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:21).

When you partake of the Passover bread, you are, in part,

**If we allow
the leaven of
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Body of Christ,
we will be
divided and
fall apart.**

making a commitment to make the Church one unified Body.

The bread and the Church

Why did Christ use bread to symbolize the Church? Why not meat? After all, his physical body was flesh. What about broccoli? Everybody knows that vegetables are good for you. What is so unique about bread—specifically, unleavened bread?

Bread starts with grain, and so does God's plan of salvation.

The Holy Days of the Bible, which outline God's master plan for man, are connected to the harvests in Palestine as explained in Leviticus 23.

God compares Christians to grain. James explains, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18).

Grain pictures the hope of all Christians—the resurrection of the dead. Listen as Paul describes the analogy: "Someone will say,

'How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?' Foolish one . . . what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption" (I Corinthians 15:35-38, 42).

The flour for bread comes from grain. Grain has three main parts—bran, endosperm and germ. It takes all three to make healthful bread.

The same is true for God's Church. It takes many types of people to make up the one Body of Christ. God has called people from many parts of the world and from different races.

But the many parts of God's flour (God's people) are not divided, "For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (I Corinthians 10:17).

Making bread

What can we learn from the process of making bread that will help make us one bread?

First, let's understand that God wants us to be an unleavened loaf.

Leaven is a type of sin, and sin divides. Ever notice the holes in leavened bread? Those pockets of air separate the different parts of the bread. The same can happen in the Body of Christ if we allow the leaven of pride and vanity to creep in. We will be divided and fall apart.

Notice how close the particles of flour are in unleavened bread. Nothing divides them. That's how Christ wants his Church, his Body, his Bread to be: "There should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another" (I Corinthians 12:25).

But just because people congregate together does not mean they are tied together. What tie binds true Christians together?

Water causes particles of flour to cling to one another, producing

one lump. In the Bible, water is a type of God's Spirit (John 7:37-39).

It is God's Spirit that soaks through each Christian and makes him stick to his brother. It is the water of God's Spirit that binds and ties many into one.

I Corinthians 12:13 tells us, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."

We need another ingredient to make our bread smooth. We also need something to make our relationships in the Body of Christ smooth. And there is nothing smoother than oil.

In the Scriptures, oil also represents the Holy Spirit. What is the main fruit of God's Spirit? It is love—caring for and giving to one another. Love perfectly binds us together. This is why Paul tells us, "But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (Colossians 3:14).

The water of the Spirit sticks us together, but the oil of the Spirit (love) keeps us together affectionately. When you care, give and serve your brother, you become one bread with him.

There's just one more thing you need in your bread, and that's some *zest*. What gives food zest? What gives the Body of Christ zeal? Salt!

Salt symbolizes the zest and purpose of the Body and bread of Christ. Jesus said it best: "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men" (Matthew 5:13).

In a world torn with division and hatred, God's Church is the salt of the earth. The Church—God's unleavened bread—flavors the earth with the salt of God's way of love and unity.

During the Passover season let's learn this valuable lesson: The Passover bread pictures the Body of Christ, the Church. Though we be many, we are one unified body through God's Spirit! □

RUTH

A Story of Commitment

*In the
12th century B.C.,
a young Moabite widow
traveled to the land
of Judah and lived
among the people there.
She set a sterling
example that still
shines for us in
the 20th century.*

By Teresa Mastin

During the 12th century B.C., famine crippled the kingdom of Judah.

When enough rain fell in the lands west of what we now call the Dead Sea, fields of wheat and barley, vineyards and olive and fig groves provided a bountiful harvest.

But when the rains failed, famine prevailed. People were forced to uproot and move to areas with adequate rainfall.

During one such famine, a Bethlehemite named Elimelech, with his wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, traveled to the eastern borders of the Dead Sea to the kingdom of Moab in search of fertile land. The biblical book of Ruth records what happened.

Moab was only 30 to 40 miles from their native Bethlehem, but travel was difficult. Not only did travelers have to contend with the rugged terrain, but bandits often dotted the roads. Also, the transi-



Photos: G.A. Belluche Jr.

Ruth set an outstanding example for each of us. God deeply desires for all humanity to reap the benefits of living his way of life.

tion to Moab was difficult in a spiritual way.

In Bethlehem almost everyone worshiped the God of Israel. But in Moab the people worshiped a god called Chemosh. God warned the Israelites many years earlier not to get involved with the rituals of the Moabites.

Moabite women had seduced and enticed Israelite warriors and led them to sacrifice to Chemosh. This angered God, who killed the idolaters with a plague and again reminded the Israelites not to become involved with Moabite religious practices.

However, years later, despite the tense relationship between the two peoples, Chilion and Mahlon married Moabite women. Within 10 years, Elimelech and his sons died, leaving behind three widows with no means of support.

Elimelech's widow, Naomi, now an older woman, longed for

her native home in Judah. As a woman, she could not directly inherit property, but could hold property in a type of trust for a future husband or another male relative. A woman without such an arrangement was at the mercy of charity.

Uncertain future

Naomi expressed her desire to return to Judah. Both her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, began the trip with her. Perhaps as they traveled across the rugged terrain, the women discussed what lay ahead for them.

One fact could not be ignored: The young Moabite women would almost certainly meet an unfavorable reception from those living in Bethlehem.

Naomi strongly recommended that her daughters-in-law return to their people and their gods.

Based on these facts, Orpah tearfully kissed her mother-in-

law and returned to Moab. But Ruth clung to her mother-in-law and uttered words that serve as a timeless memorial:

“Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God” (Ruth 1:16).

A way of life

The depth of the commitment Ruth made deserves close examination. Honoring and providing for her mother-in-law was only part of what Ruth set herself to do.

Ruth’s primary commitment was to a way of life—the way of life of the God of Israel.

Ruth had lived with the Israelite family for about a decade before her husband’s death. As she practiced God’s way of life, she realized that it worked, that it produced happiness and peace of mind.

Ruth realized her responsibility to live God’s way of life no matter what the circumstances—even if it included relocating to a hostile foreign land. Her understanding of God’s way of life gave her the strength to accompany her mother-in-law to Judah.

With all her might

Their arrival in Bethlehem coincided with the spring grain harvest, a seven-week period lasting from about mid-April to early June. Ruth followed the reapers and gathered grain to provide food for herself and Naomi.

Gathering grain required much courage on Ruth’s part. Early summer temperatures made the hard work uncomfortable, but there was more for Ruth to contend with: Because of her nationality, she was subject to ridicule from the workmen.

But Ruth’s reputation preceded her. Boaz, a wealthy farmer and kinsman, knew about her kindness to her mother-in-law and about her willingness to come to a foreign land.

Boaz noticed Ruth gleaning in his field one day and inquired about her. The workmen explained who she was and added

that she had worked with little rest since early morning. Her work ethic gave her favor in Boaz’ sight, and he asked her to glean only in his field, staying close to the other women. He made sure she went home with ample grain.

God blessed Ruth for her willingness to accept and live his way of life. Boaz said to Ruth, “The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge” (Ruth 2:12).

Even though Ruth was not an Israelite, God accepted her because she embraced his calling and way of life.

The people in Bethlehem noticed and acknowledged her commitment to God’s way of life. No one in the community doubted her sincerity.

Boaz did not hesitate to link his name with Ruth’s when she approached him concerning a Hebrew custom known as “levirate.” The custom was instituted to insure the security of a widow who might be left destitute and friendless.

According to the custom, when a man died, his brother was to marry his widow. If there were no brother, it was up to the next closest kinsman to honor the custom. The person who married the widow became her *go’el* or protector. The firstborn son in the marriage was counted as a child of the dead husband and inherited his property.

Boaz knew Ruth would make an outstanding wife and mother. Boaz didn’t waste any time settling the matter with a kinsman who was closer to the family than he. He knew Ruth would bring honor to his household.

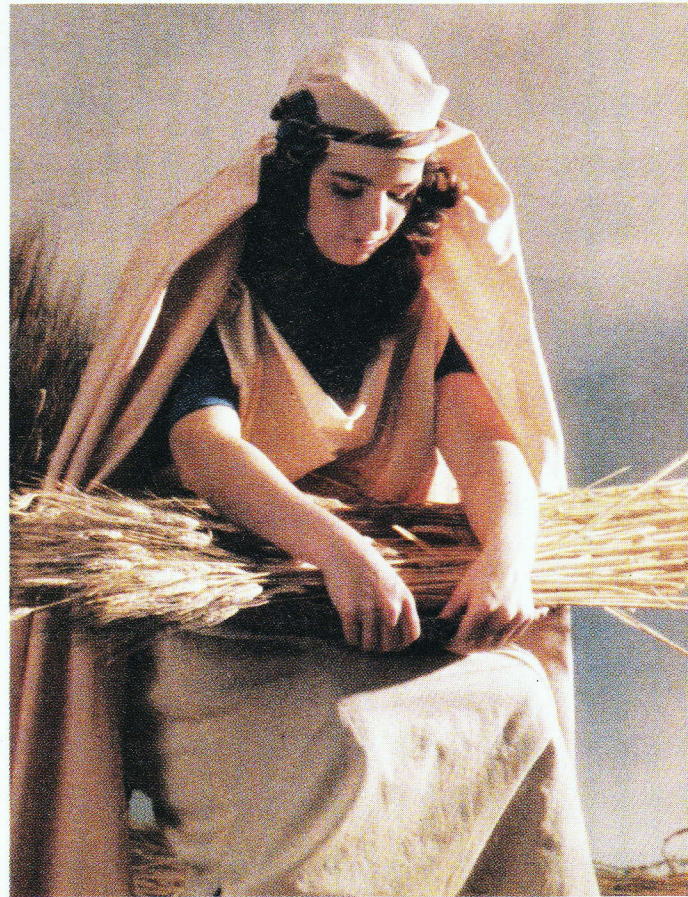
Indeed, Ruth became a leading lady of the family. Many genera-

tions later, Jesus Christ was born into this family line!

Commitment brought blessings

Ruth set an outstanding example for each of us. She willingly left a familiar homeland and journeyed to a potentially unfriendly land so that she could embrace God’s way of life.

Because Ruth understood God’s commandments, she respected and loved her mother-in-law. But the book of the Bible that bears her name conveys



much more than a romantic story or an example of outstanding family relations.

The book of Ruth serves to remind us of God’s deep desire for all humanity to reap the benefits of living his way of life.

God calls on us to leave our familiar way of life—sometimes leaving behind everything we’ve known—to embrace his way. If we commit ourselves to God, we, too, will be blessed. □



Animals Animals © 1989/Leonard Lee Rue III

WHY
ARE
YOU
?

Christ tells us that at his return, he will separate the “sheep” from the “goats.”

The sheep will inherit the kingdom of God; the goats will ultimately depart “into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:31-41).

You and I will one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ, says Romans 14:10. We will answer for all aspects of our lives (II Corinthians 5:10).

In this supremely important

parable, Christ explains the basis for his judgment. So let’s see why Christ separates sheep from goats.

Look similar—behave differently

“In most Western countries, the problem of dividing sheep from goats . . . would never arise, for flocks are unlikely to mix and the two species are not easily confused. This is not so, however, in many lands around Palestine, where they often run together and native breeds may be alike in size, color, and shape” (“Goat,” *Zondervan Encyclopedia of the*

Bible, page 741). Goats and sheep can be considered cousins. They are, so to speak, members of the same “tribe.”

“There is a difference of only six in the number of chromosomes between domestic sheep and goats. If you think goats have

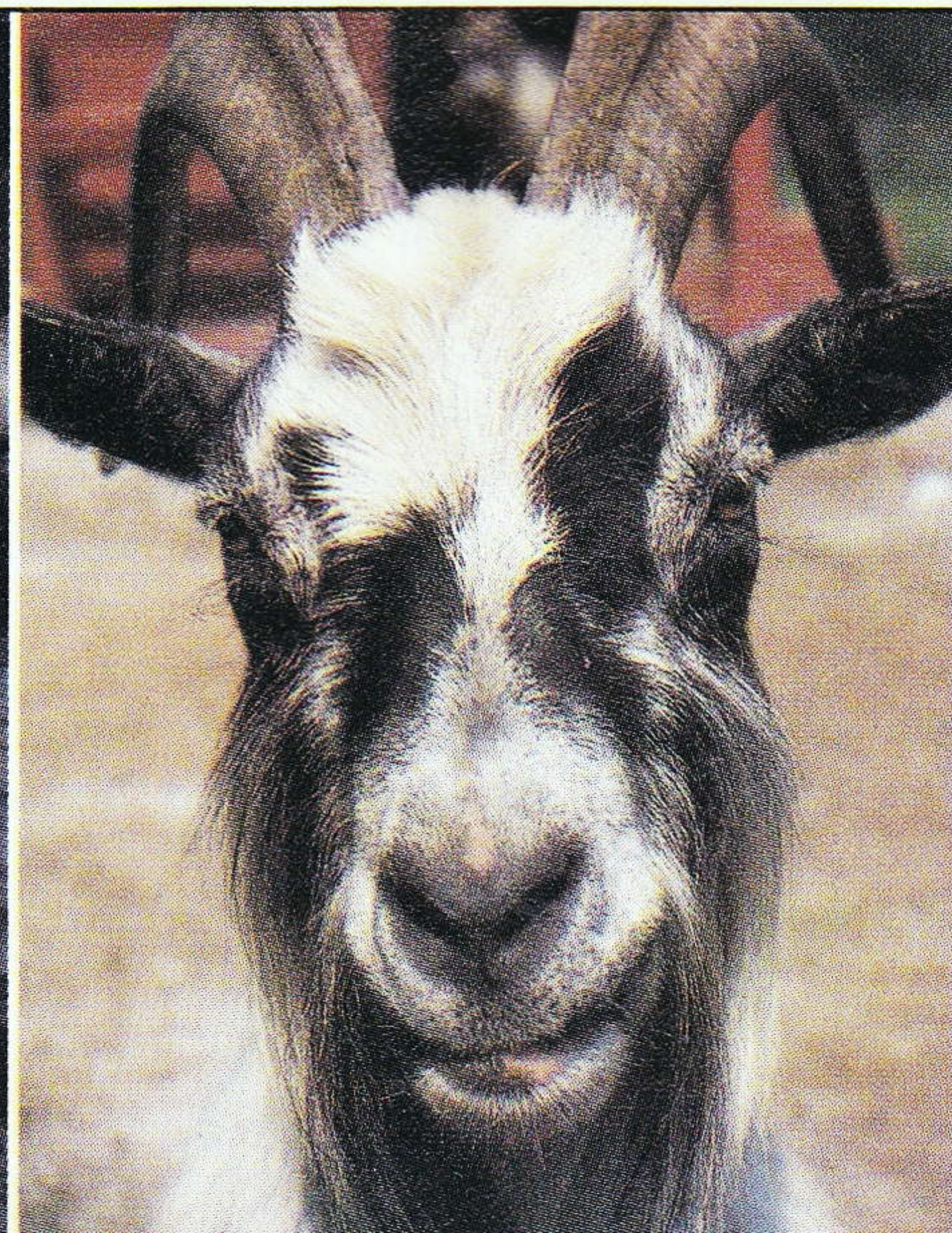
**Why does Christ
separate the righteous as sheep, and
the unrighteous as goats?
Which best describes you?**

By David F.

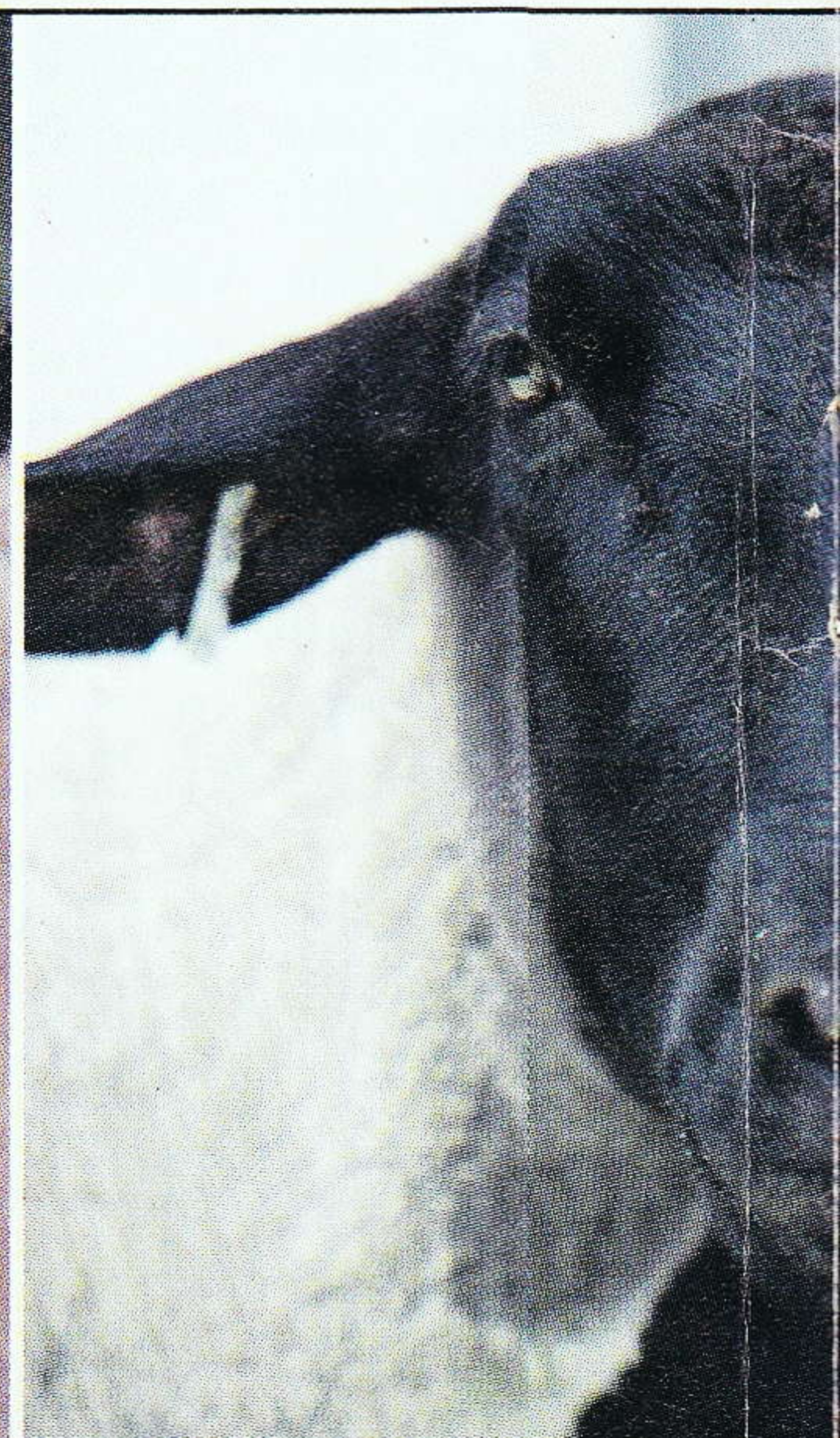
Craig Clark



Animals Animals © 1989/Z. Leszynski



Barry Stahl



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Good News

Can you tell the difference? The photo at far left shows a Rocky Mountain goat; at left is a bighorn sheep. Below, from left, sheep, goat, sheep, goat, sheep. Christ clearly differentiated between spiritual sheep, who will inherit his coming kingdom, and spiritual goats, who face eternal death in the lake of fire!

short hair, and sheep have long fleece, then the Angora goats, which produce mohair, and the hair sheep, which have no wool, are bound to confuse you.... While the size and skeletal structure of these cousins often appear to be similar, their behavior could

hardly be more unlike" ("The Exemplary, Admirable Goat," *Smithsonian*, December 1982, page 115).

The Bible mentions sheep many times. The sheep represents gentleness and loyalty (II Samuel 12:3), patience (Psalm 44:22) and meekness (Isaiah 53:7).

Sheep and shepherd enjoy a close and intimate relationship of trust, dependence and submission. Notice how Christ describes the special relationship between sheep and shepherd in John 10:3-4: "And the sheep hear his [the shepherd's] voice; and he calls his

own sheep by name and leads them out... and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice."

Now let's look at the goats.

Jeremiah describes the behavior of the he-goats in the flock in his prophecy regarding the nation of Judah coming out of Babylonian captivity:

"Flee out of Babylon... and be like the goats that lead the flock" (Jeremiah 50:8, New International Version).

Goats don't follow. They push their way to the front of the flock as they are being led out to graze.

There are advantages in being at the head of the flock. You get

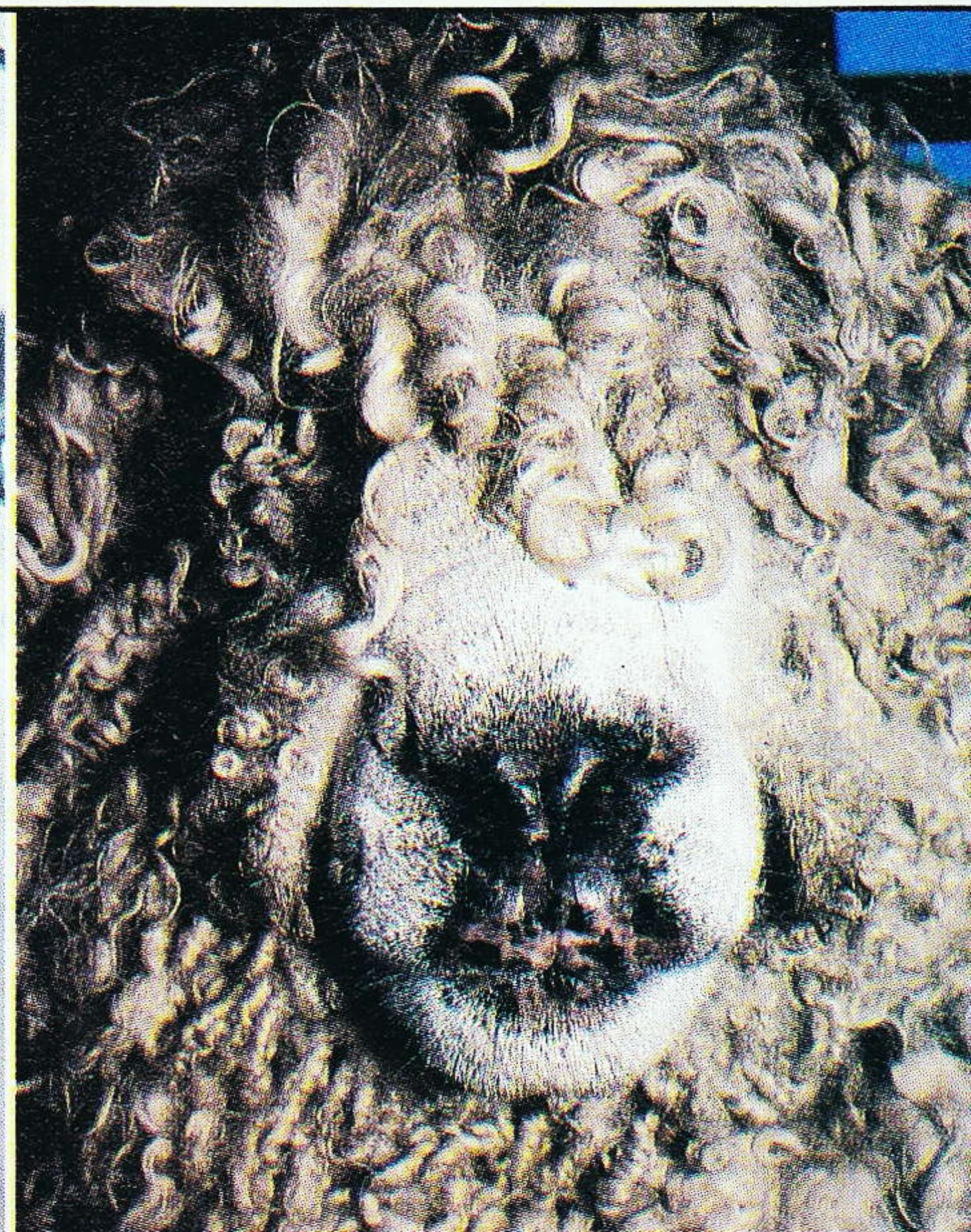
**ist describe
the unrighteous as goats?
scribes you?**

Fraser

Nathan Faulkner



Craig Clark



to the best pasture first! Ezekiel pictures the goats' behavior once they're out in the pasture: "As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? . . . Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet? . . . You shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away" (Ezekiel 34:17-21, NIV).

The "goats" take the best for themselves, ignoring the needs of the weaker members of the flock. Down through history selfish people have done this, using strength or cunning or other advantages to get the best of the less fortunate, and justifying



Good News

their behavior because they feel they are "better." They "deserve" it.

"Goats" in the synagogue

In Christ's time, some people who claimed to be part of God's flock displayed behavior similar to that of the goats mentioned back in Ezekiel 34. These were the Pharisees.

They considered themselves better than others (Luke 18:9). Therefore they thought they de-

served "better" treatment than others. They loved money (Luke 16:14) and even evicted widows for financial gain (Matthew 23:14). They used their position to get the most comfortable seats in the synagogue and the best food at banquets (verse 6).

They also observed the Sabbath, tithed, prayed in public, gave alms and followed biblical dietary laws! But these actions, while some were good and right in and of themselves, did not proceed from a love of God (John 5:42). The Pharisees' works were done merely to be "seen by men" (Matthew 6:1-2, 5, 16).

Theirs was a self-serving, "goat-like" religion—a vehicle to material wealth, gain and personal prestige.

"They have their reward," Christ said (verses 2, 5, 16).

And Christ told his disciples, "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the

Kathryn Myers



Gene Hogberg

scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

Serving— or self-serving?

Christ shows that his sheep follow a different path—a path of selfless serving and giving.

"When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you

will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:12-14, NIV).

If we give only to be rewarded now, we will not be rewarded in the kingdom of God. If our motives for religious service are the same as those of the Pharisees, we will not be in the kingdom of God.

True Christians serve God and neighbor with no thought of personal gain in this life. Paul was even willing to give up eternal life if that would have benefited others (Romans 9:1-3).

Notice what Christ says about his sheep in Matthew 25:35-36, 40 (NIV): "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. . . . Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

And to the goats: "Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me" (verse 45, NIV).

Then the goats will say, "We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets" (Luke 13:26).

They heard the message. They may have conformed to certain external religious requirements, but there was no inner change, no godly character. They lived only for themselves.

Christ's answer to them will be, "I do not know you, where you are from" (verse 27).

Sobering words indeed!

But to those who have learned to "follow the Lamb" (Revelation 14:4) and to serve without seeking gain, Christ will say, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). □

Teens Say: “I Wish My Parents Would...”

What do teenagers today really want from their parents?

By Kathy Johnson

“My mom and I get in quite a few arguments. It seems like she just doesn’t understand me anymore. The part that hurts is that I love her so much. I want to get along. How can we get along better?”

“My problem is communicating with my dad. I don’t feel comfortable talking to him. I’m sure he gets hurt because I don’t talk about my problems with him. I get hurt because I don’t know how to express my thoughts. I need advice and a lot of encouragement.”

They can be short or tall, rebellious or obedient, smart, funny, talented, unpredictable or a little of all these things.

They are teenagers.

Teenagers in this society must pass through a mine field as they move from childhood to adulthood—and the resulting explosions affect the whole family.

If you have teenagers, or children about to enter their teens, wouldn’t you like to know more about how they think and what they need from you? Any loving parent would.

As an associate editor of *Youth 90*, the Worldwide Church of God’s magazine for young people, I read many heartwarming—and heartbreaking—letters from teens each month. Two are quoted above. From the research

we’ve done to understand and help teenagers, I’ve come up with the following “wish list” of some things teens want most from their parents.

I wish . . .

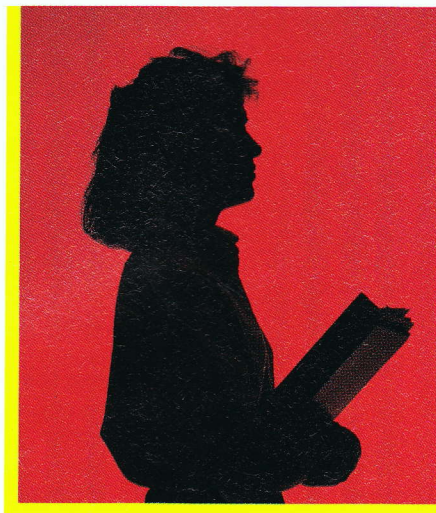
● *“I wish my parents would listen to me.”*

“My problem is that many times I try to sit down and talk to my mother about how I feel, but

movie so I don’t know when to break in,” said Martin, a teen quoted in the book *Teenagers Themselves: Voices of Hope*.

Jobs, household chores, community and church activities eat away our time. We must be careful that less important activities and responsibilities don’t take precedence over our children.

“I wish my parents knew how much it hurts not to be listened

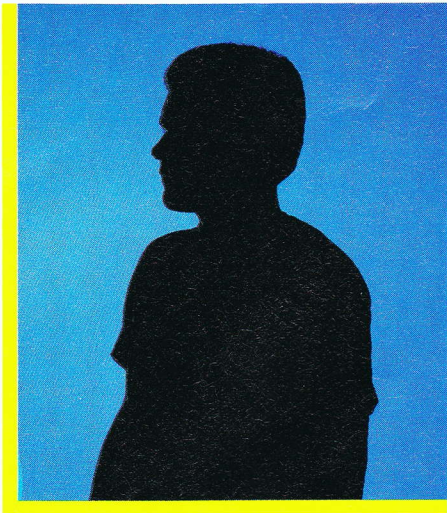


she never has time for me,” one of our readers wrote.

Teenagers desperately need to be listened to. They want their *parents* to listen to them. But they often go to their friends because their parents don’t seem to have time for them.

“When my father comes home from work, I try to find a time to talk to him. But he reads the newspaper, eats and watches a

“I wish my parents knew how much it hurts not to be listened to and how degrading it is never to be given their complete attention,” said one frustrated teenager.



to and how degrading it is never to be given their complete attention," said one frustrated teenager in *Teens Speak Out: What I Wish My Parents Knew About My Sexuality*.

Another teen wrote to us: "Every time I . . . ask for some advice my dad gives me a long speech. He gets off the subject most of the time. . . . What can I do to tell him I want advice and guidance but not in such long speeches?"

Hear your children out. Don't interrupt them with advice or stories about when you were young. Let your children tell you all that's on their minds.

You may not always agree with your children's opinions. *After* you hear them out, you can give any needed advice or show why you've come to a different conclusion. They'll be more likely to hear you out if you've done the same for them. Discussions like these can help your teen learn how to make sound decisions.

Listen with your eyes and your ears. Make an effort to understand their world. What music do they listen to? What do they read? Who are their friends? What are their frustrations? What makes them laugh?

• "I wish my parents would encourage me and tell me they care about me instead of always criticizing me."

"My parents seem to look on the negative side of me so much now. . . . I try to do things the

"My problem is no matter what I do my parents aren't satisfied. If I make one little mistake they jump all over me and even when I don't do anything wrong they will yell at me. Why is my only question."

way that would please them but they always find some way where what I have done is wrong," a reader wrote to *Youth 90*.

"My problem is no matter what I do my parents aren't satisfied. If I make one little mistake they jump all over me and even when I don't do anything wrong they will yell at me. *Why* is my only question—*why*?" another reader wants to know.

Most teens genuinely love their parents and try to please them. It can be frustrating to them to have their efforts go unrecognized. They need your love and encouragement.

"This was my first year in . . . basketball and track. It was really fun, but it was hard for me to enjoy it. See, when I was out on the court or on the field, I would look up in the bleachers and see all of my friends' parents and our ministers, but never my father and only sometimes my mother.

"My father works all the time so we will have lots and lots of

money. My mom really wants to come and watch me, but my dad keeps her working a lot so she only comes once in a while. . . . How can I make him understand that I would rather have us be the poorest family in the world and have him come and give me support than have us be the richest and nonsupporting family?"

It's been said that the opposite of love is not hate, but indifference. Indifference translates to rejection and can cause teens to hide accomplishments and problems from parents.

Love your teens by spending time with them, supporting and encouraging their activities. Let your love show in your words and actions. A hug, kiss or pat on the back shows your teenager you love him or her.

Perhaps your child will echo the words of this teenager: "You gave me everything I ever wanted: your love and your time."

• "I wish my parents would let me grow up."

"My parents are really over-protective. They tell me what to do and where to go if I want to or not. I try talking to them but they don't understand my feelings. I know they're doing it because they care and love me, but I want to grow up a little and do things on my own," said a *Youth 90* reader.

Teenagers do need rules and guidance to feel secure.

But when children become teenagers, many parents tighten their authority instead of loosening it. Teenagers need to be given new responsibilities and freedoms as they demonstrate their readiness for them.

• "I wish my parents would talk to me about things like sex and drugs because those are the problems that face teens today. They need to realize that times have changed and help me understand today's confusing world."

One *Youth 90* reader wrote: "I am 17 years old and . . . I have seen things that make me have nightmares every night. . . . After a long day at school I am so

uptight and exhausted that I feel like screaming! My parents don't realize what it's really like in this world. They are still living in the times of when they were young. What they don't realize is it's a lot different.

"Please, I'm writing for the sake of all teenagers. Our parents need to open their eyes and look around. We need our parents behind us to support us, not condemn us. If we don't have this support, what could we do to keep our sanity?"

Another reader told us: "In our family nobody wants to talk about sex and death. I am obviously curious about these two things."

Another asked: "Why [are] parents of this age afraid to teach their children about sex education? Is it that they don't know either?"

A poll of 1,000 teens revealed that 88 percent felt they needed more information about sex than they received from their parents. A 1987 Gallup study of American youths reported that teenagers feel the top five problems they face are drug abuse, alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, peer pressure and AIDS.

Teens need to know you are aware of and can deal with real problems like these. They need to know where you stand and why you feel the way you do.

Take natural opportunities to discuss such issues. Discuss things that happen at school, what you see on television and what you read in the paper.

• "I wish my parents would let me make a mistake without making me feel worse than I do already."

"I have just received my report card . . . and found out that I have received straight As. When my parents saw it, they were very proud and of course I was proud, too. But at the same time I felt very worried about the next report card.

"How can I convince my par-



ents that I'll always do my best, but cannot guarantee that I'll always get all As?"

This teen is already worried about her parents' reaction to a problem that hasn't come up yet!

"I've made many mistakes in the past but now [when] I want to go somewhere or do something . . . my parents don't let me and they bring up my past mistakes as the reason. . . . Is there any way I can make them trust me now?" asked one of our *Youth 90* readers.

Teenagers will make mistakes. No one is perfect! A teen isn't a converted Christian and will not act like one. Don't let one failure cancel out all the times your teen has succeeded. Forgive from the heart and take care that any necessary punishment fits the crime. Take into account the teen's attitude. Is he or she rebellious or repentant?

• "I wish my parents would admit it when they're wrong."

According to Jay Kesler in his book *Ten Mistakes Parents Make With Teenagers*, "Parents don't need to be perfect; they



Photos: Photo Edit

need to be honest and humble." He goes on to say that teenagers who never hear "I was wrong" will never learn to say it.

You should try to live a life of consistency—in other words, practice what you preach. But when you do fail, you should be willing to say: "I'm sorry. I was wrong."

Teenagers have a strong sense of right and wrong. A parent who does not admit to being wrong when the teen can plainly see that he or she *is* wrong is setting an example of dishonesty and is teaching hypocrisy.

• "I wish my parents would take me, my problems, goals and opinions, seriously."

"I have many dreams," one concerned *Youth 90* reader told us, "and my parents think I am crazy . . . because I 'have too big dreams for such a little girl' as they put it."

Treat your children's dreams and goals with seriousness and concern. Phrases like "You dream too much" and "You don't know what you want" can hurt deeply.

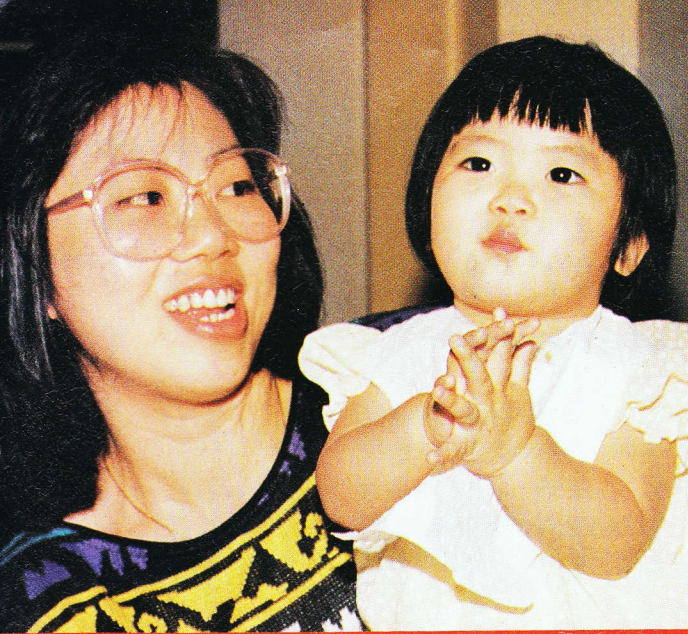
Likewise, teens' problems may not seem to be as serious as your problems. Teens' problems are proportionately just as large as yours because they have less experience than you have.

What do your teens wish?

The teen years don't have to be as difficult for your family as they are often portrayed. Polls have shown that many teens feel their relationships with their parents are good.

"I feel so blessed by God that he made you my parents. You have been the two best role models in parenting, in marriage and most of all, in Christianity. May I be able to pass on what you have taught me," expressed one teen.

Ask your teenagers what they want most from you. You may surprise each other. □



How to Radiate JOY

Even in this evil world, you can be truly joyful!

By Dibar Apartian

Can you be truly happy and joyful in a world of confusion, sadness and corruption? Can you be so without false pretention?

Yes! You can and you should, if you are a Christian.

Joy is one of God's own attributes. It is a "fruit of the Spirit"—the second fruit after love, followed by "peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Christ set the example

Christ suffered more than any other person on earth. He was misunderstood, mistreated, persecuted and crucified. Yet, he was a man of joy!

But how could he have been?

Because he knew why he was born. He was aware of his mission. His eyes were constantly on the goal, beyond the troubles and sufferings of the present!

Notice the instructions Christ gave his disciples just before his crucifixion:

"You now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. And in that day you will ask Me nothing.

Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:22-24).

Joy is a by-product of faith. If you trust God, if you know that all things work together for your good because you love him and are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28), then you can't help but be joyful in all circumstances.

Do you realize that love itself, the first fruit of God's Spirit, cannot be full unless it works hand in hand with joy? True love is giving, and Christ said it is "more blessed [cause for joy] to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

When you seriously examine these points, you will understand why the apostle James tells us to "count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4).

Was Paul a man of joy?

Consider the apostle Paul. What trials he faced in preaching the gospel! He wrote: "From the Jews five times I received forty

stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often . . . in cold and nakedness (II Corinthians 11:24-27).

How would you have reacted in Paul's place? Would you have been depressed and discouraged? Would you have lost faith in God?

Paul didn't. Throughout his epistles, he exhorts us to be always happy, courageous and joyful. He tells us to look forward to what is ahead. He commands us to have a positive attitude, to see the good in people, to count our blessings, to have implicit faith in God.

And Paul even tells us how to achieve this:

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate

on these things" (Philippians 4:8). Could Paul, on his own, have overcome all his problems and difficulties? No. No human can. *You* can't! God's Spirit worked through Paul. It gave him all the help he needed to remain on the right track and to be joyful.

God is a God of joy. When you receive his Spirit you also receive his nature of joy. The Spirit of God, which filled Paul with courage, patience and faith, will also help you, provided you do your part.

The question is: Are you willing to submit to God as Paul did? Do you live to serve and to encourage others? Do you allow "the fruit of the Spirit" of God to shine constantly in your life, in all of your activities, so that others might see it and glorify God?

If so, then Paul's exhortation of joy will echo in your heart: "Rejoice in the Lord always.

expresses his joy in keeping God's commandments; he rejoices in the goodness, mercy and justice of the Lord. No wonder David was a man after God's heart!

Have you ever used this remedy in time of need? You should! When praises are continuously on your lips and in your heart, you cannot be sorrowful.

Notice how Isaiah described the coming wonderful world tomorrow: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying" (Isaiah 65:17-19).

Did you see how many times God speaks of joy and of rejoicing in these few verses, as he describes the world tomorrow?

Remember Christ's parable of talents in Matthew 25? The man who traveled "to a far country" is Christ himself. He gave his servants, according to their abilities, whatever talents they needed to bring forth fruit.

Notice the way Christ defined the kingdom of God. Upon his return, he told two of his servants who had multiplied the talents he had given them: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:21, 23).

Read it again! Christ said, "Enter into the *joy* of your lord." Doesn't this prove that to enter the kingdom of God is to *enter into his joy*?

Once you grasp the depth of this statement, you can't help but leap with joy!

God calls his people out of this world and forgives their sins. He begets us with his Spirit, which allows us to bear all the beautiful fruits listed in Galatians 5:22-23. If we continue, throughout our lives, to develop God's own char-

acter, then we, too, will hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joy of your lord"!

A message of good news

The gospel of Christ is a message of good news—happy, thrilling and joyful news. Do we sometimes forget this? Do we overlook God's promises? Isn't the chance to enter God's Family as his own children a good enough reason to make us overlook our problems, set our eyes on the goal and jump for joy?

Paul wrote: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

Doesn't this fill your mind with joy? Imagine! The whole creation is waiting eagerly for you to become a spiritual child of God (verses 22-23). Can't you be joyful when you realize that Christ hears you and makes intercession for you when you pray to God (verse 26)?

Do you have the right to complain when you know that all things work together for your good (verse 28)? God tells you that nothing can separate you from his love for you (verses 38-39). Why, then, do you sometimes let depression or discouragement pull you down?

This doesn't mean there isn't an appropriate time to mourn. We should at times feel sorrow—over our own sins, for example, or over the sufferings of this world. Psalms 38, 42, 44 and others express mourning in a right way. But we never should complain. In general, we should be joyful.

Whatever your problems or trials, they are only temporary. What really counts is what's ahead—and what's ahead surpasses by far all of your hopes and expectations!

We are members of God's Family in the making. We have his nature, his Spirit, his joy—here and now.

That's why we don't have the right to be unhappy! We must radiate joy! □

The gospel of Christ is a message of good news—happy, thrilling and joyful news. Do we sometimes forget this?

Again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4).

The kingdom of joy

The book of Psalms contains many praises to God, songs of comfort and expressions of thanksgiving and joy. The Psalms unveil God's magnificent plan for mankind, his love and deep concern for us.

How often do you read the Psalms with these truths in mind? Time and again, David not only praises the Lord, but he also

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Q&A

Does God hear the prayers of sinners?

All have sinned (Romans 3:23) and cut themselves off from God. Isaiah 59:2 tells us, "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."

God does not hear sinners (John 9:31). He hears only those who worship him and do his will (same verse).

But if everyone has sinned, then there must be a way for sinners to come to God. How can sinners seek God?

The prophet Isaiah tells us the way sinners come to God: "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." But how do we call on God? How do we seek him? "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6-7).

The sinner must repent of transgressing God's law and accept Jesus Christ as Savior from the death penalty for sin. You must be willing to forsake your ways and thoughts and go the way of God. Then he will hear you because you "keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (I John 3:22)

What good do my prayers do for others or the Work of God? Won't God's will be done whether I pray or not?

Many people fail to realize the importance of personal prayers—for others, for themselves and for the Work of God.

In Numbers 14:11-16 God gives us a living example of how effective one person's prayers can

be. Notice: Israel had rebelled. God was righteously angry. God was going to destroy Israel—the whole nation!

God asked Moses: "How long will these people reject Me? . . . I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."

This was God speaking. God had the power to bring about what he said, and he said he was going to destroy Israel—all of it.

But what happened?

Moses—just one person—prayed for Israel. He pleaded for them (verses 13-19). He presented the whole situation before God and asked God to have mercy.

Moses was one person. But notice what God did because of this one person's prayers:

"Then the Lord said: 'I have pardoned, according to your word'" (verse 20).

God heard and answered Moses' prayer for Israel. Yet if Moses hadn't prayed, Israel would have been destroyed. That one prayer was important.

For another example notice James 5:17: "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours." Elijah was a weak human being—weak of himself, as you and I are—but did he use that as an excuse for not praying? Did he say: "I'm just a weak human being. What good could my prayers do? I guess I'll just not pray"? No!

Notice, "He prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain."

God heard and answered this one person's prayer. How important that prayer was to God! God acted on it. He intervened because of it.

Your prayers are just that important. God will hear and re-

spect your prayers. He will intervene if you pray. He will bless you, your loved ones and this great Work.

Your personal prayers are needed!

My husband complains that I spend too much time praying and studying the Bible, and that I don't spend enough time with him. Is it possible to pray and study the Bible too much?

One of life's most important lessons is the proper use of time.

Husbands are to provide for their families (I Timothy 5:8) and are to love their wives (Ephesians 5:25). Wives are to submit themselves to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22) and watch over their households (Proverbs 31:27).

All these things require time. Solomon said, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

There is a time to pray and to study.

But we must find the *right* time. We should find time to pray and study when other members of the family are away or preoccupied.

When they are home, that time can be used to show our love to them, to be an example of good Christian living. If we neglect the members of our family, especially non-Church members, by spending excessive time in prayer and study while they are home, we will only succeed in driving them further from God.

Do spend the time you need in fervent prayer. Prayer and Bible study are needed to draw close to God and to grow in faith. But pray when members of your family won't constantly notice it. □

YOU WERE BORN TO RULE!

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

By Roderick C. Meredith

Humans have been experimenting and theorizing with solutions to world problems for nearly 6,000 years.

The war-torn, hate-filled, divided world you see around you is the result of human endeavors apart from God!

The greatest prophet who ever lived described our day: "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37).

In the account of those days before the Flood, we read, "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11).

Yes, just like today!

What is God's solution?

Jesus Christ promised: "He who overcomes, and keeps My

works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—"He shall rule them with a rod of iron'" (Revelation 2:26-27).

Again, he said: "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne" (Revelation 3:21). Sharing his throne, of course, would denote sharing in the ruling.

The man or woman who overcomes, then, who yields to God and masters the temptations and pulls of the flesh—this person will be given the tremendous opportunity of ruling the nations of this earth under the personal direction of Jesus Christ!

This is the true gospel—the good news of the coming world-ruling government of Jesus Christ and his spirit-born saints.

The apostle Paul told the brethren at Corinth: "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" (I Corinthians 6:2-3).

Revelation 5:10 pictures the true saints rejoicing that Christ has redeemed them, "and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

The goal of the true Christian is not to roll around heaven all day! It is not to strum idly on a harp and watch the fleecy clouds go by. It is to rule with Christ on this earth, making it a beautiful, happy, productive and peaceful place for the millions who will live in the world tomorrow!

Every thinking person should begin getting ready to attain that goal. We should ask our Creator to help make us fit to join the saints in ruling this world under Jesus Christ.

God has set his true ministers to help his people attain the goal. They are to teach and inspire God's people to grow spiritually more like Christ in every way, "till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of

the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

But how do we become like Christ? Where do we begin? Are there definite areas we should concentrate on?

Develop your mind

Certainly! One of the major areas to develop is your own mind. If you are preparing to be a king in the world tomorrow, then you should build the mind of a king.

You need to learn to think like a king—to make fair, righteous and wise decisions. For if you are an overcomer your future kingship will soon be a reality, and you will have to face the prob-



lems of governing cities or entire nations.

Besides the *total surrender* of the human mind and will to God, one of the most important mental qualities needed by a great ruler is *vision*. Wise King Solomon wrote, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Proverbs 29:18, King James Version).

Used in this sense, *vision* means

the capacity to see ahead, that keenness of foresight needed to plan ahead for great projects and to anticipate and head off future calamities.

Vision also involves bigmindedness—the ability to see each individual action or situation in relation to the whole, and to the great purpose of life.

Obviously, to gain this kind of vision we should read widely, learn to think of the whole world and the related problems of all nations. We should truly study God's Word

with an eye to gaining his world view, his perspective, his vision of things. Then we can



Replica of Britain's Imperial State Crown, far left (photo: G.A. Belluche Jr.). Queen Elizabeth II (left) was crowned in 1953 (painting: Pietro Annigoni). Below, Prince Charles (Elizabeth's heir), Princess Diana and Prince William (Charles' heir) (photo: Sygma/Tim Graham).



apply that perspective to the problems of this life.

Later, with much experience and with God's supernatural guidance and help, we will be able to use this vision and bigmindedness in ruling over one or more cities in Christ's government on earth (Luke 19:16-19).

Winston Churchill's example

The lad who was to become the "man of the century" did not do very well in his early schooling. But as he matured and his desire for leadership increased, Winston Churchill began a systematic program of reading to broaden his mind. William Manchester's book *The Last Lion* records: "In the winter of 1896, as he approached his 22nd birthday, he 'resolved to read history, philosophy, economics, and things like that; and I wrote to my mother asking for such books as I had heard of on these topics.' "

Later, Manchester described Churchill's continuing program of preparing himself for leadership in the British Parliament:

"The scope of his explorations was broadening—"I read three or four books at a time to avoid tedium"—and he was poring over Schopenhauer, Malthus, Darwin, Aristotle (on politics only), Henry Fawcett's *Political Economy*, William Lecky's *European Morals and Rise and Influence of Rationalism*, Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*, Laing's *Modern Science and Modern Thought*, Victor-Henri Rochefort's *Memoirs*, the memoirs of the Duc de Saint Simon, and Henry Hallam's *Constitutional History*.

"Incredibly, he asked his mother to send him all 100 volumes of the *Annual Register*, the record of British public events founded by Burke. He explained that he wanted to know 'the detailed Parliamentary history (Debates, Divisions, Parties,

cliques & caves) of the last 100 years.' "

This conscientious building and molding of the mind no doubt helped Churchill immensely in the years to come when he became First Lord of the Admiralty, Chancellor of the Exchequer and, finally, prime minister of Great Britain in her darkest hour.

Build wisdom

In addition to vision, a future king needs *wisdom*—the capacity to make the right decisions a ruler must make to succeed.

In his Word, God tells us: "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed" (Proverbs 13:20).

We need to "walk" with the wise by cultivating the companionship of wise and successful men and women and learning from them. In addition, in this day of mass publishing and videotapes we can share the ideas and, to a degree, experience the personalities of the great leaders and thinkers of the world by means of books, articles, videotapes and documentary-type television programs and recorded interviews.

Most important of all, we should deeply study and meditate on the thoughts of God as revealed in his Word.

Jesus Christ said, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in Him" (John 6:56). And later: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (verse 63).

So we must eat and drink of Jesus Christ by saturating our minds with his Word and learning to think as he thinks.

As future kings, we should pay special attention to God's law, as it will be the very basis of Christ's government (Isaiah 2:3).

God himself instructed the kings of Israel: "It shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his

life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes" (Deuteronomy 17:18-19).

True wisdom involves spiritual insight

Wisdom is the ability not only to get all the facts and understand the immediate situation, it is also the ability to follow through and make right decisions. It involves an insight into human nature and behavior and the ability to see how this nature may affect a given situation.

Remember what Solomon asked for when he was made king? He asked God: "Give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil.



For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" (I Kings 3:9).

And God replied: "Behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you (verse 12).

Note Solomon's remarkable application of this insight into human nature in the controversy over a baby each of two women claimed was her own (verses 16-28). Solomon thought deeply about what the reaction of the child's real mother would be. Then he made a wise decision that made all Israel hear and fear.

We need to read and reread these biblical examples often and ponder the wisdom in them. We need to study the examples of how Jesus handled so many situations and so often confounded his enemies merely by exercising wisdom.

We all need to saturate our minds with the book of Proverbs, which is filled with wisdom. Study this remarkable book in different translations of the Bible. Meditate

upon it. Talk over the examples of wisdom with your mate and with good friends. Make these principles of wisdom an active part of the way you think.

Finally, do as Solomon did when he was made king. Ask God for wisdom. For the book of James tells us, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him"



From left, Mswati III of Swaziland, world's youngest king (photo: Sygma/Francis von Sury); the Netherlands' Queen Beatrix (Good News photo); Japan's Emperor Akihito (photo courtesy Consulate General of Japan). Christians prepare for rulership in the kingdom of God by developing godly minds and character.



(James 1:5). Exercise wisdom in every situation as you remember your calling to be a king.

Humility, service and mercy

Finally, we should consider together three aspects of mind and character without which no leader can be truly great.

First, we must learn genuine *humility* even to be in God's coming government. God says, "On this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:2). Proverbs 22:4 tells us, "By

humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life."

The humility that comes from God will guide any leader to want to serve his people. And, after all, that is essentially what we are to do—be of service to a sick world that will desperately need our help, encouragement and leadership after the coming Great Tribulation, the seven last plagues and the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings.

Remember Jesus' instruction at his final Passover? After hearing the disciples argue over who was the "greatest," he told them: "He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves" (Luke 22:26).

So through Bible study, heartfelt prayer and practice, develop the mental attitude of *service*. Learn to give of your time, talents and energies to help and build up others around you. In all humility, remember that a true Christian is a servant to others.

And never forget the great need of everyone in any kind of authority to exercise *mercy*. If any of us should ever be a ruler trying to "catch" or convict our people in any error or mistake they might make, the results would be awful.

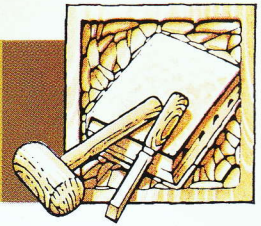
We are all human and subject to error. We need constant forgiveness and mercy from each other and

from God himself. Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

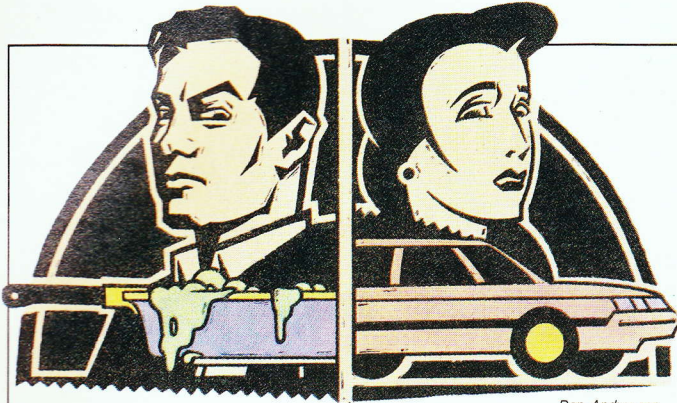
And, speaking directly of kings, the author of Proverbs states: "Mercy and truth preserve the king, and by lovingkindness he upholds his throne" (Proverbs 20:28).

So do everything you can to prepare for the reality of becoming a *king* under Christ in the soon-coming world tomorrow. To prepare yourself, use the specific steps given in this article to build the mind of a king. God willing, "See you in the kingdom!" □

BIBLICAL WORKSHOP



A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING



Dan Andreassen

BUT I DON'T WANT TO!

Marriage. Divorce. The death of a loved one. Buying a home or car. Graduation from high school or college. Moving away from home. Think of all the situations that create new responsibilities!

Being a single man or woman creates plenty of these situations. No law

says only men are adept at such tasks as buying cars, or only women are good cooks. Indeed, some of the world's best chefs are men, and research shows women have the biggest influence in selecting the cars sold in the United States.

But that doesn't stop some from balking at these responsibilities.

When I was faced with buying a car, I couldn't help thinking, This is something that I shouldn't have to do. A friend of mine had the same reaction when he was asked to make a

main dish for a party. Obviously, responsibility is not gender specific. If something needs to be done, nothing is gained by putting it off or wishing someone else was there to do it for you.

Refusing to confront it could leave you in a position not unlike that of the unfaithful servant in the biblical parable of the talents—sitting on a buried talent, instead of developing it.

Successfully tackling a new responsibility builds confidence and enhances the ability to take on further challenges.

Not only will the task likely not be as dreadful as you think, but you may uncover talents you did not know you had.

Being able to help others facing the same challenge is another benefit.

But how do you start this process? First, know what it is you need to accomplish. Pray about it. Developing confidence and responsibility doesn't mean leaving God out of the picture. Clearly, taking on additional responsibility calls for God's direction more than ever.

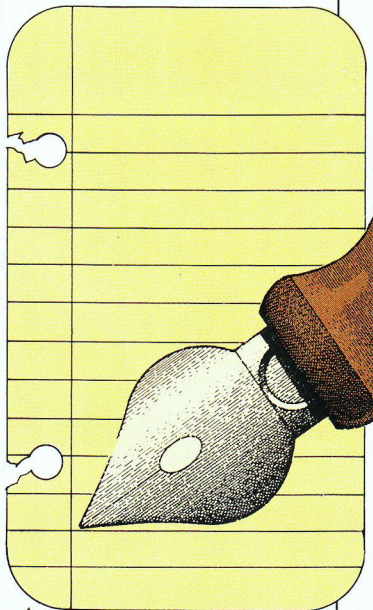
Next, do some research. Try to find out as much as possible about the task before beginning. Ask experienced, responsible people for advice.

Work to achieve your goal one step at a time. You may come up against some brick walls, but be persistent.

Some of these concepts will be familiar to you if you've read our free

booklet *The Seven Laws of Success* (if not, why not request it?).

New responsibilities can be frightening, but the rewards are decidedly worth taking them on.—*Kerri Dowd* ■



A WORKABLE PRAYER LIST

Do you have a hard time thinking of things to pray about? You start your prayers with good intentions, but after a couple minutes, you run out of things to say.

One solution is to use a prayer list. Prayer lists can help you organize your prayers and make the best use of your prayer time. While there

“A study was made of alumni 10 years out of Harvard to find out how many were achieving their goals. An astounding 83 percent had no goals at all. Fourteen percent had specific goals, but they were not written down. Their average earnings were three times what those in the 83 percent were earning. However, the 3 percent who had written goals were earning 10 times that of the 83 percent group.”

—Forrest H. Patton,
Force of Persuasion

are numerous ways to make a list, here is one many people find helpful.

The key to this prayer list is found in Matthew 6:9-13, where Jesus Christ showed us what to pray about.

To organize your prayer list, you might use a three-ring binder containing several sheets of paper.

On the top of the first sheet write "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name." Under this heading, write all the names or character traits of God, such as provider, protector, healer, teacher, lawgiver, creator, comforter and shepherd.

As you read through

the Psalms and other parts of the Bible, you'll be able to add more names and definitions.

On page 2 write the heading, "Your kingdom come." On this page you can list current events and why God's kingdom needs to come to this earth.

The heading for page 3 would read, "Your will be done." List aspects about the Work of God to pray for, such as opportunities to preach the gospel, Ambassador College, God's ministers and local congregations around the world. Be specific.

Page 4 will be headed, "Give us this day our

daily bread." This is more than praying for food. Here you can list the areas where you need to change and grow. List the problems you want to talk to God about.

This is also where you should keep a list of others who need your prayers.

The next heading will read, "Forgive us [me] our debts as we forgive our debtors." Here you can list sins you need to repent of. This is also the place to list those you want to improve relations with. Ask God for a forgiving attitude toward others.

"Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us

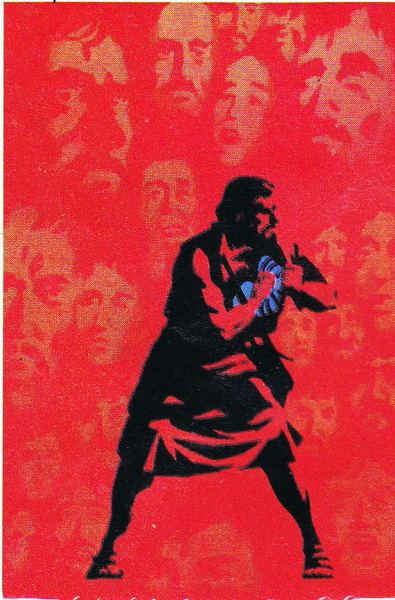
from the evil one" is the next heading. Ask God to help you fight temptation. Ask him for strength to overcome Satan and the wrong ways of the world.

The last page can be a reminder to end your prayers praising God. List reasons to praise God and thank him for all your blessings. This ends your prayers on a high note and with the right attitude toward God.

Update your prayer list regularly and use it as a guide to pray. You should never have trouble finding things to pray about.

—Rick Shallenberger ■

Ken Tunell



'SMALL SIN'—BIG LESSON

Most Bible students know about the story of Jericho and how God caused the city's walls to fall. But there's an interesting lesson about Jericho that many overlook. In ancient

times, when an army destroyed a city, the soldiers usually got to keep everything of value. Not so at Jericho. Notice, in Joshua 6:18-19, that the Israelites weren't supposed to take anything except metal items for the tabernacle.

However, a man named Achan took a few things (Joshua 7:1). Achan thought the theft would be harmless, but God called the items "the accursed things."

When the Israelites later tried to conquer a small city called Ai, the Israelites were defeated, and 36 of them were killed (verse 5). This defeat shocked Joshua. He "tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening" (verse 6).

Eventually, "The Lord said to Joshua: 'Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived'" (verses 10-11). Achan's

theft led to defeat and death. The Israelites eventually found out who had stolen the things, and Achan and his whole family were put to death (verses 24-25).

Achan's sin hurt many innocent people. Sin often does.

How destructive a "small sin" can be!

In the Church today, one person's sin hurts many other people, no matter how one tries to hide the problem. It hurts the whole Church.

Each Christian is an important part of the

Church. Paul compared the Church to a human body (I Corinthians 12:12-27). When one part of the body is diseased, the whole body is weakened. When one member—just one member—has a spiritual problem, the whole Church suffers. The Church is not as strong as it could be, and it cannot work as effectively as it could otherwise.

The lesson of Achan shows how important it is to put sin out of our lives!

—Michael Morrison ■

MORE THAN A FEELING

Empathy is that rare gift to participate in another person's feelings—to be sensitive to what another human is experiencing. You don't have to be a Christian to exercise empathy. But if you seek to show the kind of empathy God

himself shows, your relationships with people will be transformed.

Our High Priest, Jesus Christ, can show mercy to us because "He Himself has suffered, being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). He was "made like His brethren" (verse 17) and thus understands what we go through.

How can you develop godly empathy? One way is to be willing to sacrifice. How much are you willing to give up to empathize with others?

Husbands: When you are tired from work, are

you ready to forego a favorite television show to find out about your wife's day?

Employers: Are you willing to listen to your workers' feelings about the job?

Teenagers: Do you think about your parents' instructions from their perspective?

Just recognizing a need isn't all there is to godly empathy. "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" asks James 2:15-16.

Let's assume a husband does switch off the television set and listens

to his wife. He may hear something like this: "I wish our evenings were more interesting. Why don't we get involved in a hobby together?" Now the husband is aware of his wife's need. But to show godly empathy, he should sacrifice to fill that need.

Likewise, the employer who listens better to his employees will try to create a more pleasant work environment. The teenager who empathizes with his parents will show more enthusiasm in carrying out their wishes.

Learn to look through the eyes of other people, understand their needs and sacrifice to fulfill those needs. You will be one step closer to developing the mind of God!—*Victor Root* ■

PINK ELEPHANTS IN BALLET SHOES

My 10th-grade Bible teacher used to torment us by telling us not to think about pink elephants in ballet shoes.

If you think it's possible to not think about pink elephants in ballet shoes, try it.

Daniel Wegner, author of *White Bears and Other Unwanted Thoughts: Suppression, Obsession and the Psychology of Mental Control*, has studied that very phenomenon.

He's discovered, and this is not too surprising, that just banishing a thought can make it pop back up again with a vengeance—and that this can lead to addictions or

even obsessions. Part of the reason why it's so difficult to banish a thought is because people are haphazard when they try to distract themselves. Those who *focus* their minds elsewhere do a lot better.

But the key, Mr. Wegner says, is to think about the very thoughts you're trying to suppress.

Sounds like strange advice. Can it be reconciled with the Bible's mandate to be

"bringing every thought into captivity to the



IF YOU'RE A BOSS...

Every night Grant came home from work frustrated. His job paid decently, but money wasn't enough. Nearly every week he considered quitting because of problems at work.

To be content with their jobs, people need to feel in control and secure, respected by those they work with and for and hopeful about their futures at work.

Managers can help employees feel better about their jobs by exercising three simple points:

1) *Listen.* Listen to employees' ideas, complaints and updates. Look at them while they talk. Jot down notes.

You don't have to agree with or act on everything you're told. In fact, if you make promises you can't or don't intend to keep, you'll do more harm than good. Grant's boss smoothed problems over when they arose, but did not actually do anything about them. The employees finally gave up telling the boss their

obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:5)? Or with warnings to flee lust (II Timothy 2:22, I Corinthians 6:18)?

Yes. Bringing every thought into captivity doesn't mean we pretend sinful thoughts don't exist. Trying to ignore something won't make it go away.

Besides capturing thoughts, as Christians we ought to be *examining* those thoughts



problems because they knew nothing would change.

2) *Delegate.* Give employees projects that will help them grow in their jobs. Don't just dump distasteful tasks on them.

Encourage them to make their own decisions in areas over which they should have authority. While they should keep you informed about their activities, they shouldn't have to check with you on everything. This will free you to do other important work.

3) *Praise.* Praise and encouragement boost morale and make people try harder. Management experts say the ratio of praise to criticism should be 4 to 1. Criticism is usually given out in the opposite ratio!

Employees are your company's biggest investment. Make that investment pay off by helping each employee feel good about being a part of the team.

—*Kathy Johnson* ■

(II Corinthians 13:5) to understand why they are wrong.

By examining our thoughts in the context of God's laws, we'll be motivated to replace harmful thoughts with meditation on the positive results of obeying God.

Just attempting to ignore wrong thoughts may be as futile as ignoring pink elephants in ballet shoes!

—*Michael Warren* ■

COMING

IN THE GOOD NEWS

◆ Civil War in the Church!

Wherever humans come together, misunderstandings and disputes will inevitably occur. But here's a war in which you can't afford to take part!

◆ Hope for Homosexuals

God is calling men and women out of this life-style to be part of the Body of Christ—his Church.

◆ You Can Do It!

After learning about God's truth, a young man in Malaysia faces his biggest trial—he must depart from his family's traditions at the risk of being disowned.

◆ A Mind to Do the Right Thing

Jesus Christ promises that you can be free from human weaknesses and sins—from actions and thoughts that hurt and destroy you! The power is—or can be—in your mind.

◆ How to Cope With Change

You *can* handle the challenge of change in your life. Here's how.
