

JULY-AUGUST 1990

The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW



*History
of the Church* PART TWO

TRIAL BY FIRE

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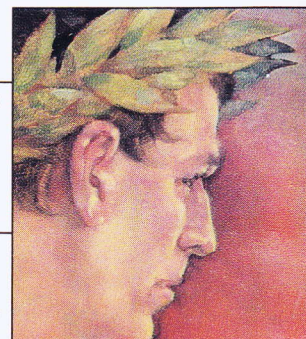
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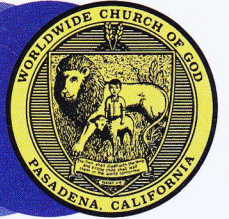
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COVER

Christians were blamed for the disastrous fire at Rome in A.D. 64. Was Nero himself responsible? Part Two of "The History of the Church of God" begins on page 10. Illustration by Dan Andreasen.



GOOD NEWS PERSONAL



Prejudice in God's Church?

Does Christianity have room for prejudice, intolerance and bigotry? Maybe that sounds like a needless question. But, sad to say, many people live as though they think it does. You might say that some Christians appear to have two faces: one when they're talking religion and another when they're talking life.

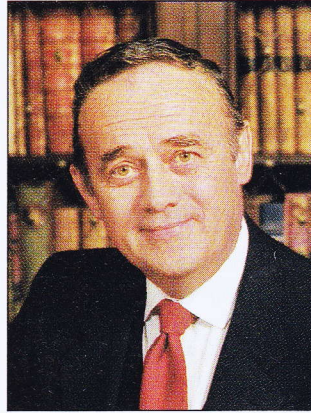
The apostles taught that if we really do believe Jesus Christ died for us and that our sins are forgiven, we will devote our lives to his service—to becoming like him. It is true, of course, that no one will ever be perfect in this life, but true Christians will be learning to think of others in the same way they have come to realize Jesus thinks of *everyone*.

If we really are Christians, we will be shedding our arrogance toward others we once felt not as “good” or perhaps not as “righteous” as we thought we were. This is Paul's message in Ephesians 4:29-5:2.

Looking down on others because we feel superior to them, whether spiritually or even in some physical way, is the exact antithesis of all Jesus Christ stands for, and all he did for humanity, including each of us personally. We certainly cannot claim his merciful and forgiving sacrifice on our own behalf and then go out and treat others in precisely the opposite manner.

If he lives in us, we'll be living a new way of life, a way that *cares* about others and is growing in love toward *all* others. When we fall short, we'll want to throw ourselves on God's mercy and carry on, continually striving to remove the ways of the former self.

Such love is fair, kind and generous to all. It is not limited by the barriers of office, position, economic status, nationality, race, sex, sinful past or



even religion. How can we look down our noses at other human beings if the love of God is in us?

The parable of the man who was forgiven the enormous debt in Matthew 18:23-35 should be a constant reminder of our Christian obligation to forgive. It is when we feel our most “righteous,” because we look down

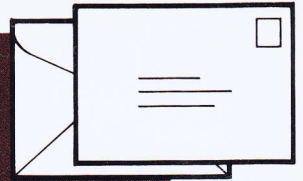
on someone else whose sin we think we could never sink so low as to commit, that we are indeed *weakest* spiritually.

If we abide in God's love, we will extend it to others. We will so deeply appreciate God's limitless love for us that we simply cannot bear malice toward others. As God forgives us so great a debt, so we are pleased to forgive others. As God loves us, so we are enabled to love others, also. This is such a fundamental theme of true Christianity that it can never be overemphasized.

“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:17). Is there room for prejudice, intolerance and bigotry in the Church of God? No, unless there is also room for hatred and hypocrisy. If we are truly children of God, let us daily renew our commitment to live honestly in his love.

Pastor General
Worldwide Church of God

LETTERS



Anger led to jail

I've just finished the article on anger by Carn Catherwood in the January-February 1990 *Good News*. I could identify



G.A. Belluche Jr.

with a lot of issues and found new ways to deal with anger.

I read the article every chance I get. I had blow-up anger at someone—that's why I'm where I am now, jail. I feel this article is helping me more every time I read it.

Lake George, New York

"Workshop" works

In the January-February 1990 issue I was especially impressed by the "Biblical Workshop: A Practical Guide for Successful Living." I found that this series of informative articles provided many practical and helpful tips on how to deal with daily problems.

Antonia Mosca
Middleboro, Georgia

The January-February *Good News* was a powerhouse of lead articles, but I especially appreciated the new section of helpful mini-articles, "Biblical

Workshop." Just as we gain the most nutrition from the main course of a meal, the feature articles set the pace as spiritual fare. Then comes the anticipated dessert, a finishing statement to a fine meal.

Nelson Trickett
New Waterford, Ohio

Don't look back

"Are You Committed?" by Bill Butler was a reminder and eye-opener. One of my favorite scriptures he used is Luke 9:62: "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

When I was about 7 or 8 years old I walked with my father behind a horse-drawn plow. It would have been very dangerous if my father would have taken his hands off of the plow and looked back behind him.

Marie Krueger
Turlock, California

Open letter

I have never had an article to affect me the way "Open Letter to 'Second Generation' Christians" did. I have been in the Church with my mother since the age of 6 and have never experienced the "first love" many baptized members speak of.

I am glad to know that I am not alone in my inner struggle to do and go the right way. I have asked myself many times if I have merely been warming a chair in services for the past 16 years. I believe I can finally say, "No, I have not."

Chilhowie, Virginia

"Open Letter to 'Second Generation' Christians" is a great article! Dexter H. Faulkner did an excellent job answering and explaining questions that I think about. I am a second-generation Christian and have been wondering about baptism for a while. This arti-

cle totally cleared up my doubts about my calling.

Antioch, California

Understanding more

I felt I needed to express my feelings toward everything the Worldwide Church of God and *The Good News* has done for me. I might not be able to list each and every thing they have done for me, but with their help I'm beginning to learn as well as understand much more of God's Word, the Bible.

Terry L. Bush
Dallas, Texas

Seven spirits

The January-February 1990 *Good News* is to be congratulated on the Questions & Answers: What are the "seven spirits of God" mentioned in Revelation 5:6? It is a good example of the Bible interpreting itself, although this interpretation of the seven spirits of God has not been understood for 4,000 years.

Benton, Illinois

In the question, "What are the 'seven spirits of God' mentioned in Revelation 5:6?", your answer upset me very much. Are you saying that Jesus Christ does not know all, see all, know our thoughts and is limited and has to depend on angels to report the information to him? Surely that can't be, for we always were taught that since the universe and the earth were created by the "Word" (Jesus Christ), then he has no limitations and would not need any information brought to him.

Helen Mahoney
Elmer, New York

Helped to relocate God

Your January-February issue had two stories that hit home. One was "Anger" and the other was "Daddy's Gone." I lost my grandchild to crib

death at 35 days old. At the same time, I lost my husband in divorce. When I picked up a copy of *The Good News* I didn't kneel and pray. I ran to my bedside, skidding on my knees begging. Your material has helped me to relocate God and saved my life.

Francis Ringer
Frankfort, Kentucky

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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'If You're Doing It God's Way It Will Work Out'



Letters From Brethren With Nonmember Mates

*Dozens answered a recent Good News challenge.
Here's what they told us.*

By Norman L. Shoaf

A few months ago we invited brethren with nonmember mates to tell us how godly conduct had produced happier relations in their families, or even influenced their mates' conversion.

That simple request has pulled more letters than almost any other item in recent memory.

The conclusion? One, this topic is of tremendous interest among God's people. Two, even more important, God's way works, even in tough situations!

Mates moved by kindness

Few situations are harder than a marriage in which matters of faith are not agreed upon and shared. Our readers told us so.

But they also told us that wisdom, tact, persistence, patience and lots of love, along with God's

help, can work wonders in such a marriage. They know from firsthand experience!

One woman wrote:

"As I submit to my role of being a good wife, my husband changes. . . . One example that is so very vivid proves the point.

"My husband was late coming home again. This was a real thorn in my side. As the evening wore on, my patience grew thin, knowing he was out with his drinking buddies again.

"God . . . has caused this to be a much happier marriage."



Tony Freeman, Photo Edit

Finally, in exasperation, I called our minister and asked, 'How long do I have to put up with this?' After talking a few minutes, he asked if I had ever tried telling my husband I missed him when he's not here and meeting him with a smile. You can be sure this was the exact opposite of what I was feeling!

"When the conversation ended, I prayed, meditated, shed tears and waited for my husband to return. You can be sure there was a terrific battle going on in my mind.

"Finally, the familiar door knob turning and a very cheery greeting from a very jolly husband. My response was anything but spontaneous. I forced myself to smile and say I missed him.

"But what happened then was such a treasured moment. I'll never forget it. My husband's face looked shocked and pleasantly surprised. My usual tirade didn't come and because he didn't have to be defensive, he immediately was sorry for being late and apologized profusely.

"That night was a turning point. I was so encouraged, it has helped my

attitude through many experiences since that night. And, I'm happy to say, he was sincerely sorry and has worked hard at coming home earlier and earlier after work. . . .

"God, of course, has caused this to



Myrleen Ferguson, Photo Edit

be a much happier marriage. He can do it for anyone who will submit to his government."

Another woman described how her husband's drinking problem was overcome:

"When I first met my husband he drank. Whenever he drank he got naughty. So I told him either stop drinking or I would leave him. I said this in a loving way. It's not what you say—it's how you say it.

"Of course, I explained to him all the reasons why he should stop—how it was causing bad things in our life and how it would destroy our relationship.

"He agreed and then he stopped."

It's not easy to be kind after you're treated callously, or to reward hardness with softness. But it's the only way that really works in improving relationships.

Proverbs 25:21-22 says: "If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for so you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the Lord will reward you."

Not that you should see your mate as your enemy! But Proverbs 16:7 promises, "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies [let alone marriage partners] to be at peace with him."

God made kindness work for these two wives!

Seeing their side

Some writers told how seeing situations from their mates' point of view helped them build bridges in their relationships:

"It is not an easy road to live with an unconverted mate. Nor, I might add, is it easy for an unconverted mate to live with a member of God's Church. There are many drawbacks but there are also many areas of personal gain and growth.

"Living in a somewhat stressful situation keeps a spiritually minded person on his or her toes all the time. What should or shouldn't I say? How should I answer that? What would Christ do in this situation? . . .

"Also, some scriptures become clearer. For instance, it is we who change for Christ, not Christ for us. . . . Even when I am in the right, my attitude must reflect godliness. Yes, you can be right and yet handle things all wrong."

This writer also offered a warning to Church members considering marriage into a situation like this:

"I would be the first to say . . . if you are dating, engaged, considering marriage, do not go outside of your beliefs or values. Marriage is a union of minds and attitudes along with a physical union. Mental confusion should be avoided at all costs.

"Rearing four children under these circumstances has proven to be extremely difficult. Husband and wife are to be a complement to one another, not a conflict. These circumstances I have mentioned demand spiritual growth and character development to the utmost."

Well put! Another reader added:

"I think nonmember mates probably feel pretty threatened by their spouses going to church every Sabbath, Holy Days and especially Feasts of Tabernacles.

"We live in a society of extramarital affairs. Probably half your nonmember mate's co-workers and friends are 'stepping out' and the other half are unhappy in their 'relationships' and getting ready to 'change partners.' TV, movies, the press, novels aren't about happy, contented, married men and women, either.

"A wise and prudent spouse will

give lots of assurances to his/her nonmember mate."

One husband's attitude began to change simply because his wife was faithful! She wrote:

"My husband was in the air force and, while he was not hostile, he was not interested in living a Christian life. . . . Since he was in the service, from time to time he would be gone for weeks or months at a time.

"After a while, he told me that a good thing about me being a member of the Church was that he didn't worry about my conduct when he was gone like so many of his friends worried about what their wives were doing. . . . God began to convict him."

Don't try to convert them

Sometimes Church members create problems for themselves by trying to convert nonmember mates. Only God can call and convert (John 6:44). Badgering a mate about your religion will only drive the person farther away.

"I stopped trying to change my husband and began working on myself."



Myrleen Ferguson, Photo Edit

For example, I Peter 3:1-2 tells wives: "Be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear."

Here's a letter from a wife who experienced positive results after she stopped challenging her husband about the truth:

"I came into contact with the Work when I saw Mr. [Herbert W.] Armstrong [the late pastor general of the Worldwide Church of God] on TV one Sunday morning. I was ill, and my family had gone to

church without me. I called for the literature that day.

"When my husband came home, I told him about it. He just rolled his eyes. The truth was so amazing! I encouraged my husband to read it, but he said that he didn't have time. Upon more prodding by me, he became unreasonable in his refusal. He absolutely would not. . . .

"I realized that I was on to the truth and knew I had to do something. Our lives would go along for a while relatively calmly, so I would try to bring up the subject again. As soon as I would mention a word, his manner would change. He'd become stern and make it clear that he did not want to talk about it. This was very unlike him.

"I had a tendency to say some pretty awful things at those times. . . .

"I found a congregation near my home and began attending services. I met a woman there who . . . explained to me that it wasn't until she stopped trying to convert her husband that he showed any interest at all. That was encouraging. I stopped trying to change my husband and began working on myself."

Believe it or not, this woman's husband soon found himself forced to defend her beliefs! She continued:

"[We] were separated for several months due to a job transfer. . . . The new job was close to [his] family, so he saw them regularly. Some family members had questions about what I was doing and why. As he tried to explain to them and to defend me, it began making sense to him.

"One Sabbath, when he was home for the weekend, he announced that he was going to Church with me that day! He continued to attend regularly from that day. We were baptized together January 2, 1988."

Winning by submission

Submitting to someone else's authority, even when that authority is exercised in right ways, is hard enough for us as humans. But when a person abuses and takes advantage of his position or authority—as nonmember husbands sometimes do with their wives—submitting becomes extra difficult.

Yet God says: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the

Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church" (Ephesians 5:22-23).

Dozens of women related how submitting to their husbands—even when their husbands started out unfair and uncaring—produced positive changes.

One wife detailed a struggle with herself as well as one with her husband—and how her efforts finally paid off:

"My husband is not converted. Yet. From the day we were married 28 years ago he was an overbearing, demanding, cold, even cruel person until just a few years ago.

"I writhed in emotional and mental pain beneath his heartless domination. I cried out and complained bitterly in my affliction to anyone who would listen.

"(Have you ever noticed how easy it is to get listeners? I thought, This man doesn't love me and he's slowing my Christian growth.)

"For years I struggled to find the answer within myself as to whether I should divorce him. Everything I read in the Bible or in Church literature only seemed to point to the value God places on marriage. He made me realize divorce was not the answer. Not for us.

"God also brought me to realize my husband was not the problem I needed to be concerned with. He showed me I had a spirit of rebellion.

"Oh, I didn't want to call it that. After all, he was mean to me and I shouldn't have to take that, should I? Why should I have to obey when I wasn't trying to do anything bad or against him? . . .

"I felt martyred and pitiful. I developed a whopping big root of bitterness to go along with my spirit of rebellion.

"But God is merciful, kind and very patient. He works with us a little at a time when we're too weak or too blind to understand.

"The first thing he showed me was my tongue. James 1:26 shows I was not doing right with all my complaining and putting my husband down. I was wrong in this, not my husband. Proper counseling with the minister, yes. Taking the problem and the pain to God in prayer, yes. But not to everyone who'd listen. . . . I began to work on my tongue and still am.

"Ephesians 5:22 tells us, 'Wives, submit to your own husbands,' and we start crying, 'But he's so unfair!' and begin looking for excuses not to submit. In a way, isn't the crux of

the matter submission to God, not just to a husband, converted or not?

"God didn't say, 'Submit unless he's unfair or cruel or unconverted.' (I do not refer to physical brutality that endangers life and limb.) He says to submit to your husband as you would to Jesus, who is our betrothed husband as members of his Church. . . .

"As I began to apply James 4:7 in my marriage, God helped me to begin applying Philippians 4:8 to my husband. What were the qualities that first attracted me to him? What did he do, think or feel that was good? The more good things I looked for, the more I found—things that even converted men would do well to emulate.

"The more I concentrated on the good and overlooked the bad, the more the rebellion and the bitterness began to fade, and the more my husband miraculously changed.

"I prayed that God would show me more positive things to do *for* my husband—to teach me the true meaning of love toward him rather than waste time looking for a 'way out'—to please my husband rather than expecting him to please me. These things have been in God's Word and in article after article in Church publications through all these years and I've read it all, but until I could look at my faults and not my husband's, I couldn't under-



Myrleen Ferguson, Photo Edit

"He respects my beliefs now because he sees the changes in me."

stand the simple truth: Love. Give. Forgive and forget the pain that others cause and strive not to cause others pain.

"So how are things now? I can't recall our last fight. I love my husband and feel his love for me. He's not converted. Yet. But I believe he's well on his way. God will take care of that.

"Where once I lived with a roaring lion, I now live with a pussycat,

a partner. We have peace in our home and love. I still don't have the freedom I once thought I had to have, but it isn't important any more. Our marriage is."

This is not to say submission is a panacea for every problem a wife might face in being married to a nonmember husband. A wife may submit and still find all is not well. In cases of mental cruelty—and certainly in cases of physical violence—there is a time

"I was trying to follow God's laws, and I got a... wonderful husband in the process."



Vicki Silbert, Photo Edit

to seek outside help and solutions. But, as the above letter shows, simple obedience to God's commands often produces startling changes.

Dramatic changes

Here's a dramatic, heartfelt letter:

"I've been married for eight years. I was called into God's Church in my second year of marriage. At that time my marriage was a rocky one.

"My husband was a heavy drinker and not very responsible. Consequently, I was resentful and quite bitter. I criticized him constantly and was very argumentative.

"As I learned God's laws concerning marriage and began living those laws, an amazing transformation slowly took place.

"My husband quit drinking after much prayer on the subject. This in itself relieved a great many of our problems. He took the lead in the family (we have one son) and I grew to greatly respect and honor this man I had married.

"He has become a more caring father, a more honest, hardworking man. He goes out of his way to help others if he sees the need. He respects my beliefs now because he

sees the changes in me. I am a much better wife now!"

Nonmember mates often change because they see the change in their Church-member spouses. A Church member wrote:

"I am certain this marriage would be dissolved had God not had mercy upon us... through no fault of my husband, but because of my inability to submit in all things.

"My husband and I have been married 11 years, and today it is better than the beginning. Together, we have raised seven children. He is blessed in his work and we are blessed in our marriage.

"Should a Christian woman obey her nonmember husband? You bet! When you submit to him, you submit to God."

Amazing changes can take place in a marriage when the issue of control is not in dispute.

Refusing to compromise

Some Church members have had to stand their ground and refuse to compromise under extreme duress or even threats. But God can bless these situations as well:

"My husband told me either him or my Church, because I wanted to be baptized and worship God the way he wanted me to worship him....

"What could I do? Prayer seemed my only tool many times day or night. I threw myself on my knees before my merciful and loving father with heartfelt prayers....

"One morning the telephone rang. It was my husband, who was all shaken up. On the freeway, the tire of his truck had come off the axle, bounced before him and went down a steep hill. He somehow managed to stop the truck unharmed. After he hung up, I knelt down and thanked God for protecting my husband, the father of our two children.

"In the evening, he came home from work tired. I gave him a big hug. He looked at me and said, "Didn't you wish I died on the freeway so you would be free to do what you want?"

"I told him, 'After the telephone conversation, I knelt down before God and thanked him for protecting you.'

"He looked at me lovingly and said, 'Go, be baptized, and serve your God the way you believe.'

"Oh, how glad I was! I prayed to God. Nineteen years have passed

since. God hasn't called him yet, but we have more love and understanding between us. Whenever it's far to travel for church services for Holy Days, he takes me and patiently and willingly waits for me. He loves and cares for me.

"God is patient with all of us and we should be patient with each other."

A woman interested in God's Church was forced to give *her* future mate an ultimatum of her own:

"At the time God opened my eyes and my heart and called me into his Church, my husband and I were living together, not yet married. When I came to understand that I could not follow God's laws and still live with this man without marriage, we sat down and talked.

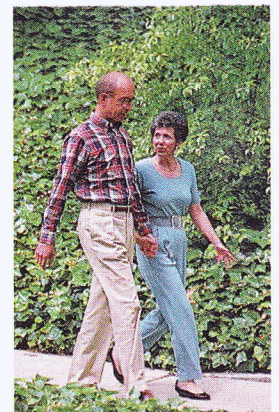
"I explained that I could not live with him without being married and told him a little of what I had come to understand. I told him I would either have to move out, or we could be married.

"Well, I am very happy to say that after I told my husband my feelings, he told me he did not want to lose me, so we made our wedding plans. That was a good feeling. I was trying to follow God's laws, and I got a very good, kind and wonderful husband in the process."

Blessings for the whole family

I Corinthians 7:14 reveals that even if only one mate is converted, the other marriage partner is sanctified—and so are the children. The whole family is blessed because one mate believes and obeys God.

Here's a letter from a child who, years later, much appreciated Mother's example:



"Our whole family benefited from Mother's godly conduct."

Tony Freeman, Photo Edit

"How wonderful to grow up in a home where God's Spirit is working. What a wonderful example of living God's way of life my mother set for all five of her children.

"Our whole family benefited from Mother's godly conduct. What respect and concern she showered on our unconverted dad. She stood beside him and behind him, helping him become an outstanding man in his family and in his community.

"My mom always put God and Jesus Christ first and Dad a close second. What person wouldn't respond to such a lofty position?"

Christ understands

In trying times, do some of us forget Christ's promise never to leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5)?

And Christ understands what his people are going through—even nonmember-mate situations. How? Because Christ himself was married to a wife who became unfaithful to the truth!

Surprised? Look what he told the nation of ancient Israel: "'Return, O backsliding children,' says the Lord, 'for I am married to you'" (Jeremiah 3:14).

What has come to be called the Old Covenant was a marriage contract between Israel and the Lord of the Old Testament, who later became Jesus Christ.

God saw Israel as ceremonially clean at the time of the marriage (Ezekiel 16:14). But Israel strayed from the marriage covenant and, in a sense, drove Christ to his grave. Jesus had to die to pay the penalty for Israel's—and all the world's—sins!

Christ knows what it is like to be hurt by a stubborn, hostile mate. He knows what it is like to want to share love with a mate but not be allowed to.

Christ cried out: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37).

Christ empathizes with you. He cares about what you are going through. And he can change

even the darkest of situations!

After 30 years of hostility to God's truth, one critically ill nonmember husband stunned his wife from his very deathbed. She wrote:

"As I often did, I was reading the Bible about the resurrection, when he broke. He started crying, reaching out his hand, and he drew me to him.

"As I stood in front of him to read his lips, he said: 'Please forgive me. You were right, even from the beginning, and I was wrong. I know I'm not worthy to be in the first resurrection, but please pray with me that I will be given another chance. You have been a good and loyal wife, and I know God will listen to you. Please pray for me!'

"He died three months later. . . . He had lived long enough to repent and ask forgiveness."

A mate's challenge

God is fully capable of turning what might seem to us like hopeless situations into explosions of joy. Read this letter from a woman whose marriage to a nonmember seemed doomed:

"At the time God called me, my husband was addicted to marijuana. He smoked it almost continually. It caused him to have terrible mood swings in which he would become very angry for no apparent reason.

"Before long I also realized he was seeing another woman. Strangely enough, in the past we had been close friends and spent many enjoyable years together. It was those times of laughter and adventures my husband and I had shared before that made me feel this marriage was not to be thrown away.

"Many nights at 4 a.m., when my husband had not come home, I prayed about our marriage and for protection and help for him. I continued to obey him within God's laws, and for quite a while I never mentioned his affair.

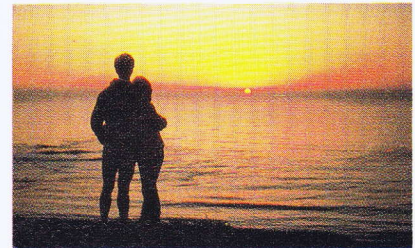
"I also found a pornographic magazine under his side of the mattress when I was making the bed. I put the magazine back where it was and did not mention this to him either.

"Of course, I was angry, hurt and tempted to give up many times, but instead I obeyed him and I obeyed God and prayed, knowing that with God all things are possible.

"Finally, I was ready to approach him. I told my husband that I knew

he was seeing someone else. Then I explained that I loved him and only asked that he spend one entire day with me, because, I challenged him, if he did he would realize he loved me, too, and belonged with me and only me, growing together as best friends throughout our lives.

"I explained how good and full life could be this way and helped him to



Tony Freeman, Photo Edit

"I thank God, who was able to turn it all around."

visualize the empty life he was now pursuing and where it led.

"I did not lecture or act emotionally out of control, although I did express all of this with emotion.

"He took this challenge and spent an entire day with me, after which he left this other woman and began a diligent and successful effort to quit smoking marijuana.

"He later told me he knew I saw the magazine under the mattress and was impressed with the fact that I did not nag or lecture him, even though he knew I hated that sort of thing. It wasn't long before he was telling me about pornography and how it influenced him.

"He wants nothing to do with that kind of influence today and is completely loyal, very loving and has been attending God's Church for seven years now. He is also counseling for baptism at this time.

"Those years of laughter and positive experiences as husband and wife are back, and they are here to stay.

"I thank God, who was able to turn it all around, and I remember often a sermon I heard in which the minister said: 'If you're doing it God's way it will work out. It just does!'"

It's true. God's way works, in nonmember-mate situations and in every other area of life. Christians who have conquered this and other trials can tell you. Will you believe it? Will you *act* on it? □

Daily Bible study. Sometimes it's a struggle. How well I understand the frustrations!

For many years I struggled along, studying the Bible because I knew I *had* to, not always enjoying it or even profiting a great deal from it.

Constantly studying to prove doctrine became boring and routine.

Frankly, I'm not all that interested in the original Hebrew and Greek or in digging through commentaries and lexicons. Many women aren't.

But my daily Bible study since then has changed from drudgery to delight!

The change came once I recognized that Bible study was more than an obligation to know and be able to prove doctrine or memorize key scriptures.

The Bible is the holy, inspired, living Word of God. It is God's personal conversation with each of us, just as prayer is our personal conversation with him.

For many women, daily Bible study serves not just to help us gain knowledge and facts, but it also fulfills a deep emotional need for inspi-

ration and encouragement. After we have proven the basic doctrines, daily Bible study helps us "hold fast," as Paul told us to in I Thessalonians 5:21.

Study by writing

I'd like to share with you a method that has helped me get past the "so and so begat so and so" to being able to hear God speaking personally and individually to me. To put it simply, it is

a technique of making notes as I read the Bible. As I read a verse, I ask, What is God Almighty, my loving, caring Father, saying to me in this verse? Then I write down my thoughts, feelings, sometimes even questions.

How does this particular verse apply in my life today? Is it instruction from God or, perhaps, admonition? Is this verse a

junior-high and teen years. We were establishing another home, another yard, plus getting acquainted with a congregation of 700 people. There was just a bit of turmoil in my life, to put it mildly! I was not at peace.

At that time, I began to study Paul's epistles. As I took notes on what I was seeing or feeling in Paul's letters each day, it began

to seem humorous.

Over and over again, Paul says such things as "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thessalonians 1:2) and "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). I had not noticed before how often Paul referred to peace.

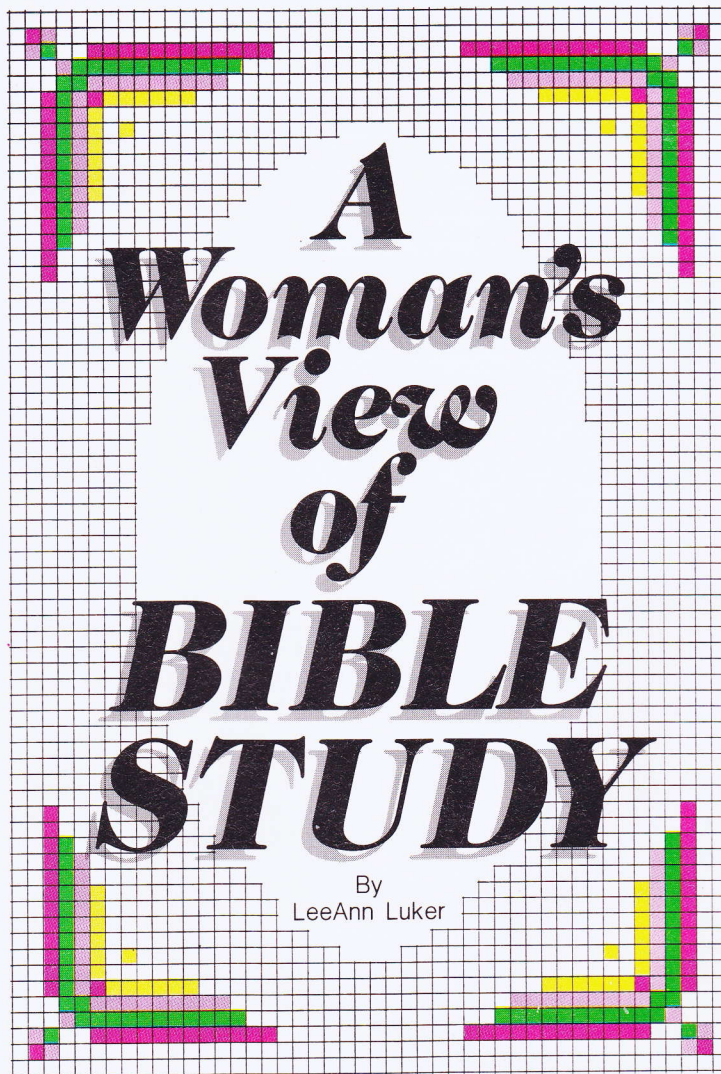
My life seemed anything but peaceful, but each day God seemed to be saying to me: "Did you see that, LeeAnn? Rely on my peace. I'll take care of everything. Now, LeeAnn, I think we need to go over this one more time!"

The more I studied, the more I saw how often and in how many different ways God admonishes us to have peace and promises peace. By taking these daily

notes, I was able to see the pattern. I truly felt that God Almighty and Jesus Christ, the Word, were speaking *directly* to me, giving me encouragement and helping me deal with that particular time and situation.

The message changes

Through the years, I've noticed that the communication from the Bible changes, even through the same words. I've read through



promise that I can rely on and claim in my own life?

When I began this Bible-study method, my husband, a minister in God's Church, and I were in a period of great transition. We had just returned to the United States from Australia. We were adjusting once more to life in the United States and trying to help our children adjust. We had been transferred twice in six months and our children were entering

Paul's letters many times since then. The message is always different, depending on what is going on in my life at the time.

It has been encouraging to compare notes on the same subject, written at different times, and see how specifically I've been given guidance and direction for that precise time in my life.

I've also found that I remember my Bible study more effectively with these notes. How many times have you diligently read the Bible for 20 or 30 minutes and, a few hours later, couldn't remember a single thing you'd read? Jotting down notes reinforces what you read and helps you apply more effectively what you learn.

This method is particularly helpful for mothers with young children. These mothers face constant interruptions. Keeping notes on your reflections and feelings helps you pick up your train of thought again after an interruption. And a few minutes of focused, inspiring and motivating study is more beneficial than an hour of ineffective reading.

A modern translation of the Bible can also be helpful. It is more difficult to hear God's Word if you don't understand the language.

Visualize

As you take notes, try to put yourself in the picture. This is particularly helpful when studying the Old Testament.

Walk along beside Ruth, gleaning in the fields in the warm sun.

Walk down the long corridor to the inner court of the king's house with Esther. Feel the im-

mense responsibility that was upon her shoulders to save her people. Feel the uncertainty churning within her. Share the joy she must have felt when God miraculously intervened.

What responsibilities and uncertainties do you face? How do Bible examples apply to you? Write it down!

After practicing this tool for a



Barry Stahl

while, you'll find you're much more eager about your Bible study. You'll remember more of what you've read and learned. You'll ask, "What does God have to say to me today?" and you'll look forward to the answers. And, you'll be more consistent because your Bible study will be more personal and intimate.

Keep an index of what you study and when. It's helpful to notice when you last studied the

book of Matthew or reviewed the Proverbs, for example.

Your own treasure chest

Through the years, with this method of study, I've come across some verses that were particularly helpful and inspiring. I think of these scriptures as precious gems given to me by a loving Father. I keep them in a separate notebook I call my "treasure chest."

I'd like to share a few of those gems. The book of Psalms is one of those "gold mines" of the Bible.

Psalms 31:15 has been a particularly brilliant gem: "My times are in Your hand." The good times, the bad times, the times of indescribable joy and the times of immense pain—all these have been in God's hands.

Isaiah 61 is filled with encouragement. It begins with: "The Lord has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted (verse 1, New International Version).

There are times in life when we all feel crushed by circumstances. At those times, Christ is there, bandages in hand, to gently cleanse our wounds and mend our broken hearts.

My favorite gem is Jeremiah 29:11: "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" (NIV).

What joyful, thankful notes I have on that verse!

Bible study doesn't have to be a chore. I hope this approach to Bible study will help make your daily walk and talk with God more inspiring! □

**THE
HISTORY
OF THE
CHURCH
OF
GOD**

the Church than perhaps any other. He was Saul of Tarsus. His name was changed to Paul.

The New Testament Scriptures tell us only a little about the work of the original apostles Jesus personally trained.

We have the biographies of Jesus compiled by Matthew and John. Later John wrote three letters that became part of the Scriptures. He also penned the

ish Holy Days. For many years the Church suffered persecution because of complaints by the Jewish community. Sometimes those persecutions were severe. At other times years went by with rapid growth and relatively few major problems.

By the early 60s Christian congregations existed in most major cities of the Roman Empire. There was even a growing Christian community in the capital city, Rome.

The apostle Paul was sent to Rome as a prisoner because of charges filed against him in Jerusalem. After two years in the city of Caesarea, Paul appealed his case to Caesar at Rome.

Although a member of a Jewish family, Paul was a free-born Roman citizen. Roman citizens had the right to appeal to Caesar. So Paul, finding he could not obtain justice in Judea, appealed to Rome.

Changes at Rome

In the year A.D. 54 the teenage, adopted son of the Roman Caesar Claudius had come to the highest office in the Western world. His name was Nero.

Nero's mother contrived the death of Claudius to bring her son to power. Young Nero was to have a major effect on the now established Christian Church.

When Paul finally arrived in Rome after an arduous Mediterranean voyage, he was placed under house arrest to await trial. It was A.D. 60.

Because no charges from Jerusalem were formally filed against him, he was released two years later.

It does not appear there was anything more than casual contact between this dynamic apostle of the Christian Church and the Roman emperor. But things were to change.

The fire at Rome

When Nero viewed the city of Rome from his balcony, the slums of the city spread below him. Nero envisioned Rome as the world's premiere city. He planned fabulous buildings, beau-

**THE AGE
OF
SHADOWS**

BY RONALD D. KELLY

Much of what we know about the beginning of the Church founded by Jesus Christ, we owe to a man named Luke. He was a physician who became a minister in the first-century Church.

Luke wrote that early Church history in "The Acts of the Apostles," one of the inspired books of the New Testament.

We will not here go into full details of the book of Acts. We advise our readers to carefully read Acts for a better background to what we discuss.

Luke was a frequent traveling companion and fellow-minister with another convert to the Christian Church. That other man was to have more effect on

final book of the New Testament, called the Apocalypse or Book of Revelation.

There are also two letters of Peter, who held the principal position of leadership in the early Church.

Through Paul, the gospel goes to the world

Paul made by far the largest single contribution to the New Testament Scriptures—14 letters in all. Paul told the story of his travels and defined doctrines of the Church as he preached the gospel of the kingdom of God throughout the world.

As we noticed last issue, the growth of the Church went largely unnoticed in the Roman Empire. The Church appeared to be no more than a Jewish sect. The early Church kept the seventh-day Sabbath and observed what most people called the Jew-



tiful gardens, impressive statues and fountains. The slums below his palace, where thousands of poor and indigent people lived, had to be replaced.

History is often polluted by legend. But most modern historians feel the account of the fire at Rome in A.D. 64 leads to the conclusion Nero was responsible for the fire.

Whether or not Nero was to blame, the fire was a great tragedy. Ten of Rome's 14 precincts were burned. Thousands were killed. Public and private buildings were ruined.

Roman persecution begins

Who was to blame? Rumors quickly spread that Nero was personally behind the tragedy. Shrewd politicians had to find someone else to point the finger at.

These Christians—they could be blamed.

"They believe the world will be destroyed by fire," one noted.

"Why, they wouldn't lift a hand to extinguish it," another shouted.

"The Christians say this terrible fire was God's fiery vengeance on us," yet another exclaimed.

So Christians became the scapegoat.

The horrors of A.D. 64 make up one of the great tragedies of Church history. It was the first of 10 Roman persecutions to afflict the Church for nearly three centuries. But no persecution could stamp out Christ's Church. Jesus said it would never die (Matthew 16:18).

Meanwhile, back in Judea

Two years after the fire at Rome, in the eastern province of Judea, the Jews attempted to overthrow the Roman government. It was A.D. 66.

A leading Roman general, Vespasian, was dispatched to Judea to put down the rebellion. A bloody four-year war resulted.

During that time, Paul, the best-known leader of the Christian Church, was arrested by Roman officials, although his arrest

was not directly related to the Judean war. Paul was taken to Rome for trial. The government found him guilty of crimes against the state and sentenced him to die.

Since Paul was a Roman citizen, his execution was by beheading. It was the spring of A.D. 68 when the untimely and unfortunate death of this great apostle took place.

Ironically, Nero's political strength had collapsed. Within a

“*The scanty and suspicious materials of ecclesiastical history seldom enable us to dispel the dark cloud that hangs over the first age of the church.*”

Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,
Gibbon, chapter 13, 7th edition

few days Nero committed suicide after his military forces revolted.

On the eastern front, Vespasian left his son Titus in charge of the armies to continue the fighting in Judea. Vespasian rushed to Rome. He would soon become Caesar.

During the fighting of the hot summer of A.D. 70, the armies of Titus broke through the walls of Jerusalem. The Jewish insurrection was crushed. Jerusalem was savaged.

Even the great temple King Herod had renovated was torched. Titus carried many temple accoutrements back to Rome. If you travel to Rome today, in the ruins of the ancient city, you can see the conquest of Judah pictured on the arch of Titus.

The Church knew to flee

But what about the Christians? Jesus' followers were commonly called Nazarenes, after Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 24:5).

Jesus had warned his Church,

in the Olivet prophecy of Luke 21: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains" (verses 20-21).

When Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70, believing Christians (Nazarenes) had already fled the city. On an earlier Feast of Pentecost, God miraculously warned those who would heed to get out before the destruction took place.

The Church fled to the northeast—to the town of Pella, beyond the Jordan River.

By A.D. 70, the organized preaching of the gospel was halted. Peter had been crucified. James, the Lord's brother, was killed. Paul had been beheaded. Jerusalem had fallen. Christians were driven from Rome.

The Church was being severely tested. Would it survive? Or would persecution end the Church after only 40 years?

Remember, Christ had assured his apostles, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

The Church would not die.

It would be persecuted. It would be small. But it would not die.

For nearly a hundred years after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, historical evidence of the Church is indeed scanty.

The biblical record closes late in the first century A.D. The aging John was the sole survivor of the first apostles. He was left to combat mounting heresies and endure persecution from within and without.

The beginning of heresy

Among the final battles John had to fight was a mounting heresy that had begun many years before.

Perhaps as early as A.D. 33, the first great heretic to deceive in the name of the new Christian religion came on the scene. The Bible tells of this important figure in Acts 8. This man's name was Simon Magus, or Simon the magician.

Simon was the high priest of

the Samaritans—the peoples who lived just north of Judea. The bulk of the Samaritans descended from the peoples transplanted by the Assyrians into the region in the eighth century B.C. They had brought their Chaldean religious customs with them.

Over the centuries, living near the Jews, the Samaritans had adopted some Jewish practices while retaining their ancient Chaldean customs. They had also added Greek philosophies and Persian customs. This mixing of religious customs and beliefs is called *syncretism*.

When Philip, the first Christian minister to preach in Samaria, powerfully proclaimed Christ's message, the Samaritan high priest believed his preaching—or at least he appeared to.

The apostles at Jerusalem, learning how many Samaritans were becoming believers, sent Peter and John to continue preach-

purchase a church office *simony*, after Simon Magus.

Simon left without truly being converted. He did not have hands laid on him and did not receive the Holy Spirit. But Simon saw the attraction of this new Christian doctrine and way of life.

To his already mixed religious philosophies, Simon added something new—Christian words and practices. Of course those practices were twisted and distorted. They were combined with Jewish ceremony, Babylonian superstitions, Greek mythology and Persian mysteries.

Like the true apostles of Jesus, Simon carried his message from city to city. In time he arrived in the capital city of Rome.

He attracted a significant following. So great were Simon's power and influence that some people honored him as a god. They even erected a statue of him on the Tiber River, an action reserved only for the most important dignitaries.

Then Simon yielded to his great vanity. The traditions about his death vary, but two that are popular involve an attempt to prove his supernatural powers.

One tradition says he asked to be buried alive, promising to reappear in three days just as Jesus had done. Another tradition tells that Simon, to prove his powers, tried to fly off a tall building.

In any case, Simon died. His heresies, however, live on today! Many modern religious practices and concepts are nothing more than

Simon's, with Christian names added.

But the work of Simon was only the beginning of heresies.

Simon not the only heretic

From the earliest days of the Church, the truth Jesus' apostles proclaimed became distorted.

One deception was Gnosticism. The Gnostics, from the Greek

word *gnosis*, meaning "to know," exerted a powerful influence on first-century religion.

A careful study of the New Testament books reveals numerous confrontations with gnostic influence even among members of the true Church of God. You can read the second chapter of Colossians as an example.

Late in the first century, another influential heretic, Cerinthus, confronted the apostle John. The Bible does not name Cerinthus, but concerns John expressed in his three epistles refer, without a doubt, to this man's teaching and influence.

The first century ends

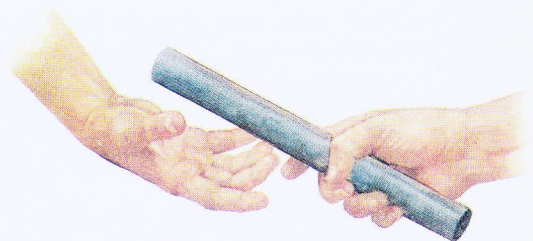
Late in his ministry, the aging John prepared for the passing of leadership in the Church to a new generation.

John probably lived past the turn of the first century. He would have been more than 100 years old when he died.

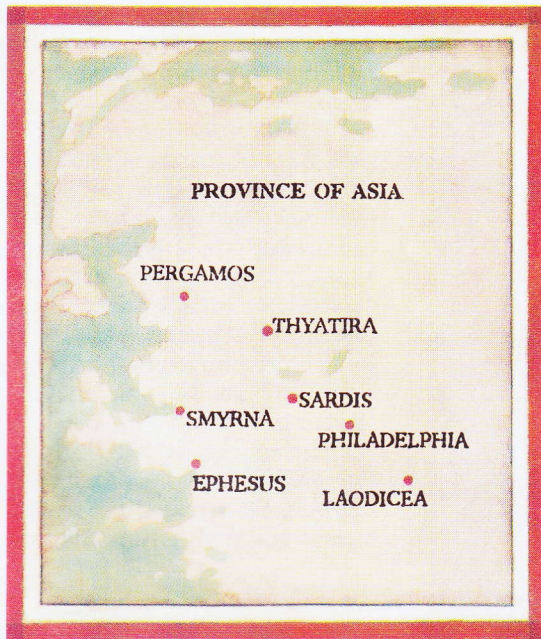
During the decade of the 90s the Roman emperor Domitian (81-96) exiled John to the Aegean isle of Patmos. The Bible does not document much of this period, but God did inspire the visions of the Book of Revelation while John was imprisoned there.

After his release from prison, John continued his ministry in western Asia Minor (modern Turkey) in the seven-congregation circuit mentioned in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation. His principal headquarters was at Smyrna. There he took under his special care and tutelage a young man named Polycarp.

After John's death, the baton



of leadership in the Church of God would be passed to this man. For more than another half century, Polycarp was to direct the affairs of the Church of God in Asia Minor. □



ing and complete the baptism ceremonies begun by Philip. Miracles accompanied those early conversions.

Soon Simon's true spirit was revealed. He offered money to Peter and John for the powers of the ministry they had.

Peter rebuked Simon for his lustful attitude and bribery. To this day we call an attempt to

KING HEZEKIAH: The 'Caged Bird' That Got Away

When there was no way out, this king made the right choice and lived.

By Paul Kroll

Imagine yourself living about 2,700 years ago in the small mountain kingdom of Judah. Your capital city, Jerusalem, is, by today's standards, a tiny and insignificant village.

Your nation is locked in a struggle with Assyria—the superpower of the day. Assyria intends to wage a merciless war against your nation.

As a citizen of Jerusalem you know your city is a prime target of the Assyrian king, Sennacherib.

But Jerusalem's story will be a tale of *two* cities. She is living through the worst of times now, but soon will live through the best of times.

Your days will provide future generations with exciting exam-

ples of the Bible's historical accuracy. Jerusalem also will offer great encouragement to future generations of God's people. For your city's ultimate victory will be proof positive that Almighty God protects his people in time of trouble.

The king on Judah's throne, Hezekiah (circa 715-686 B.C.), is an extraordinary person. He is quite unlike his father Ahaz, the former king, who failed to trust in God (II Chronicles 28:22-23).

In the very first year of his reign, Hezekiah rid the land of pagan religious practices. He began a spiritual rebirth in the na-

tion and reaffirmed the national covenant with the true God of Israel, as chapters 29 through 31 of II Chronicles show.

Hezekiah determined to obey God's law and to trust God. It will be written in the Bible that Hezekiah "trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any who were before him" (II Kings 18:5-6).

A worried Assyria

The Assyrian king has a different view of Hezekiah. He sees the Judean king as the ringleader of a revolt against his authority.

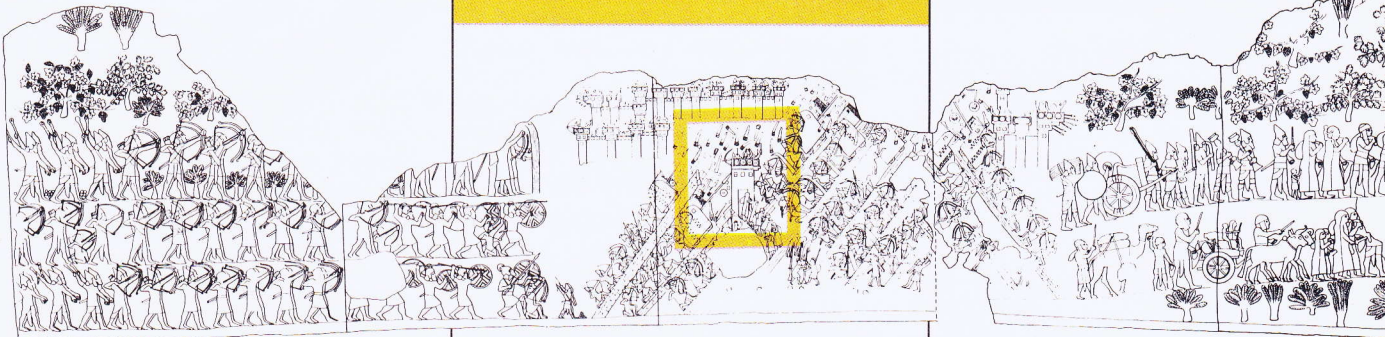
Hezekiah, by putting his faith in God, threw off Assyrian domination. He even won some military successes in the western plains. Under Hezekiah, Judah gained control of the major trade routes connecting Egypt to the Fertile Crescent.

The Assyrian leadership is determined that Judah must not remain an independent power. Judah's position is too strategic. Judah is becoming too serious a competitor to Assyria.

In 701 B.C., Sennacherib carries out a terrifying blitzkrieg war against the west and Hezekiah in particular.

The Assyrians quickly advance westward across the Fertile Crescent. They reach the Mediterranean Sea north of the Holy Land. Then Sennacherib starts down the Phoenician coast in a show of force.

Tribute comes from most of the petty kinglets and city-state rulers of the coastline from Byblos to Ashdod. Cities that refuse



to do obeisance are taken by siege.

Sennacherib begins to systematically subjugate Judah's cities and towns. He attacks the southwestern Judean fortresses of Azekah, Philistine Gath (annexed earlier by Hezekiah), Lachish and Libnah.

The siege of Lachish

The most important of these strongholds is Lachish, in the lowlands 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Lachish protects the southern Judean hill country from invasions from the southern Philistine plain.

Sennacherib launches a massive siege against the fortress (II Chronicles 32:9). Scholars disagree on whether the Assyrian occupation of Lachish mentioned in II Kings 19:8 refers to a second, later campaign by Sennacherib. This article takes the position that he conducted a single campaign against Hezekiah's kingdom in 701 B.C.

Neither the Bible nor Sennacherib's own annals will say more about the fate of Lachish. But reliefs from his palace at Nineveh will show how the Assyrians stormed and eventually took this citadel.

During these hostilities, Hezekiah decides on two courses of action. First, his resolve apparently weakens and he sues for peace. Hezekiah sends a message to Sennacherib while he is besieging the Lachish fortress:

"I have done wrong," Hezekiah tells him, "turn away from

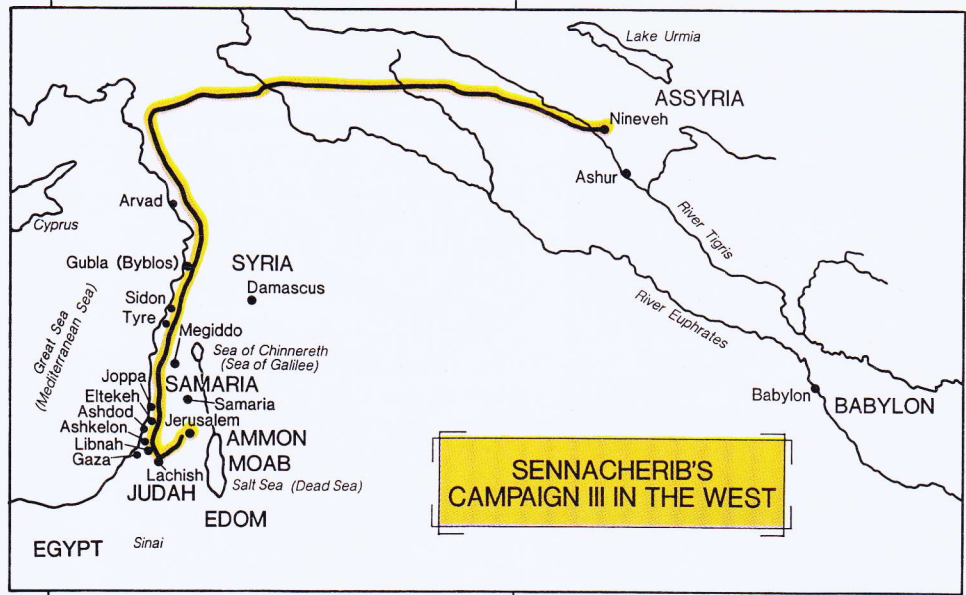
me; whatever you impose on me I will pay" (II Kings 18:14).

Sennacherib pretends to accept

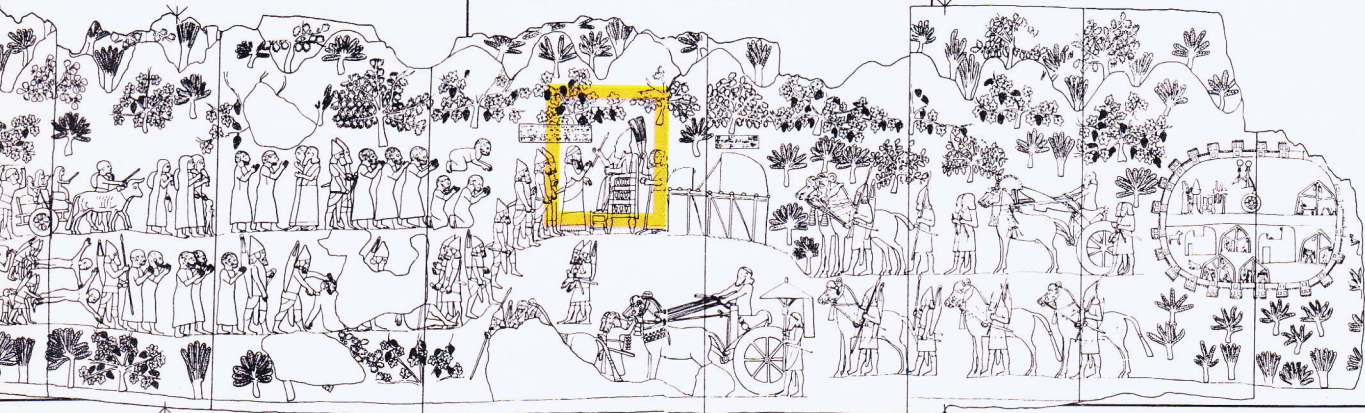
the offer. Hezekiah pays him 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold, among other treasures. He is forced to strip the gold from the doors of the Temple to amass the tribute money.

But events prove that Sennacherib has no intention of sparing either Judah or Jerusalem. Hezekiah realizes that he and the leading citizens are to be put to death for their rebellion.

But Hezekiah is no fool. He has also been hurriedly preparing Jerusalem's defenses for a possible siege. The king reinforces and



Below: Drawing of Sennacherib's relief of his siege of Lachish. Far left: Section of relief showing assault on Lachish. Left: Detail of relief showing Sennacherib on his throne receiving the booty taken from Lachish. (Photos and drawing: Trustees of the British Museum.)



The Annals of Sennacherib

The Assyrian king, Sennacherib, wrote down a personal version of his military expedition against Judah and his siege of Jerusalem.

Selected parts are given below. They can be read on several prisms, the best known being the Taylor Prism, which is inscribed with the details of Sennacherib's eight military expeditions throughout the empire.

"As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered (them) . . .

"I drove out (of them) 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle beyond counting, and considered (them) booty . . .

"[Hezekiah] himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage.

"I surrounded him with earthwork in order to molest those who were leaving his city's gate. His towns which I had plundered, I took away from his country . . .

"Hezekiah himself, whom the terror-inspiring splendor of my lordship had overwhelmed and whose irregular and elite troops which he had brought into Jerusalem, his royal residence, in order to strengthen (it), had deserted him, did send me, later, to Nineveh, my lordly city, together with talents of gold . . . talents of silver . . . (and) all kinds of valuable treasures, his (own) daughters, concubines, male and female musicians.

"In order to deliver the tribute and to do obeisance as a slave he sent his (personal) messenger."

—Translation found in *The Ancient Near East*, Volume 1, edited by James B. Pritchard, 1958, pages 199-201. □



extends the fortifications around the city, organizes the troops and amasses weapons of war.

Digging a water tunnel

Jerusalem needs an adequate and secure supply of water if the city is to withstand a long siege. Hezekiah orders the building of a tunnel to redirect Jerusalem's water supply.

This tunnel would carry water from Gihon Spring on the eastern slope of the City of David to the Siloam reservoir on the western slope, a point within the city walls.

The Bible will describe the tunnel project to redirect the water: "This same Hezekiah also stopped the water outlet of Upper Gihon, and brought the water by tunnel to the west side of the City of David" (II Chronicles 32:30).

It will go down as Hezekiah's major engineering exploit, recorded for posterity (II Kings 20:20).

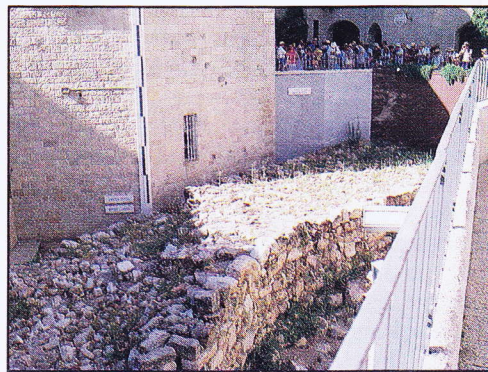
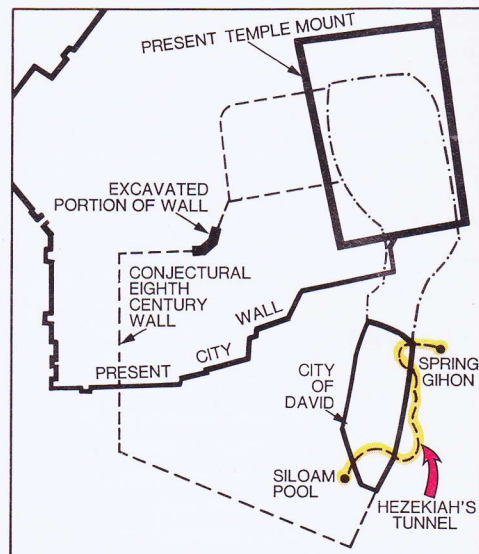
The tunnel is an incredible underground aqueduct 533 meters, or 1,749 feet, long. It was cut out of solid rock.

Workmen, digging from two ends, used iron hand tools to cut this tunnel, which is about a third of a mile long. The project was accomplished without surveyors or instruments—not even a magnetic compass.

The tunnel follows an S-shaped path under the oldest part of Jerusalem, which David took from the Jebusites, from the Gihon spring to a new reservoir, the Siloam pool. "How they managed to meet," one observer will ask, "while following this serpentine path is still a mystery."

The "Siloam Inscription"

The construction time on the tunnel has taken about eight months. Hezekiah has extended



Jerusalem's wall so that the reservoir will be within the protected city limits.

The diggers carve an inscription in the rock wall of the tunnel about 20 feet from the Siloam entrance.

This inscription, written in classical Hebrew, will enable scholars to date other Hebrew inscriptions by reference to it. The Siloam inscription will be the longest and oldest ancient Hebrew inscription found in Israel.

The siege of Jerusalem

Hezekiah has now done all that he can from a human standpoint. But he knows that his preparations are not adequate to save the city. Either God will save Jerusalem or its people are doomed.

Hezekiah gathers the leaders to encourage them that God is with them and will fight their battles (II Chronicles 32:7-8).

The situation in Jerusalem is desperate, however. Sennacherib has already destroyed the major



Far left: Taylor Prism, one of several clay prisms inscribed with details of Sennacherib's military campaigns (Photo: Trustees of the British Museum). **Left:** Hezekiah's wall in the Old City of Jerusalem (Photo: Paul Kroll). **Above:** Pool of Siloam entrance to Hezekiah's tunnel (Good News photo). **Right:** Museum-quality replica of the Siloam Inscription found in Hezekiah's tunnel (Photo: G.A. Belluche Jr.).

fortress cities and controls the Judean countryside. Jerusalem is Sennacherib's final plum to pick.

The destruction of Jerusalem is to be the crowning achievement of Sennacherib's victorious military campaign in the west. But Sennacherib's plan for Jerusalem's destruction goes awry.

The "caged bird"

Some of Sennacherib's own writings on clay prisms, called the Annals, will describe this third military campaign and crusade against Hezekiah in the year 701 B.C.

These, some of the most detailed Assyrian accounts of an episode related in the Bible (II Kings 18:13-16), will thoroughly support the historical accuracy of Scripture in the report of Judean cities Sennacherib captured and the tribute Hezekiah paid.

The most revealing of Sen-

nacherib's statements is this one: "Hezekiah . . . himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem . . . like a bird in a cage."

But Sennacherib *never claims* to have destroyed Jerusalem. Why didn't he breach the walls?

Certainly, the purpose of caging up Hezekiah like a bird—to lay siege to the city—was to starve out the inhabitants, to break through the city walls or in some other way get inside the city and destroy it.

What happened? Why did Sennacherib fail to take Jerusalem? The reason is because God intervened.

When Sennacherib threatened to annihilate Jerusalem, Hezekiah beseeched God to save the city (II Kings 19:14-34, Isaiah 37:14-35).

God gave Hezekiah a positive answer: "Thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria: 'He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor build a siege mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he come, by the same shall he return; and he shall not come into this city'" (II Kings 19:32-33).

Jerusalem is saved

Shortly thereafter, God sent an angel into the Assyrian military camp and killed 185,000 soldiers. The Assyrian king now found himself far from his home base and with a substantial part of his army dead.

To the south were the Egyptians and Ethiopians. To his northern flank was Hezekiah's intact fortress at Jerusalem. And what would happen back home when the Babylonians got word of his army's defeat?

Sennacherib had no choice but to scurry away as fast as possible from the west and escape to his own land—back to his fortress capital.

"So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away," the Bible will write, "returned home, and remained at Nineveh" (verse 36).

God had saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem. □

The Siloam Inscription

This exciting inscription was carved by workers digging Hezekiah's tunnel. It was found in the east wall of the tunnel, about 20 feet from the Siloam Pool entrance.



The inscription graphically describes the drama of the final moments before the two groups of tunnelers broke through to each other—allowing the water to flow from the Gihon Spring to the Siloam reservoir.

The inscription was found in A.D. 1880. After it was discovered, the inscription was cut away from the tunnel wall. Eventually it was acquired by the Ottoman government then in control of Palestine. The inscription was placed in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, where it now resides.

"This is the story of the boring through. While the tunnelers lifted the pick-axe each toward his fellow and while 3 cubits [remained yet] to be bored [through, there was heard] the voice of a man calling his fellow—for there was a split [or overlap] in the rock on the right hand and on [the left hand].

"When the tunnel was driven through, the tunnelers hewed the rock, each man toward his fellow, pick-axe against pick-axe.

"And the water flowed from the spring toward the reservoir for 1,200 cubits. The height of the rock above the head of the tunnelers was a hundred cubits."

—Translation from Hershel Shanks, *The City of David: A Guide to Biblical Jerusalem*, 1973, page 55. □

Suppose you're giving a dinner party and you have room for 10 guests. How would you choose them?

You might pick those 10 people whose company you most enjoy. They would be your closest circle of friends.

But what about the people you would leave off your list? Why would they be left off?

How you answer these questions may yield some insight into how you view Christian fellowship.

Your best friend

The Bible says a lot about Christian fellowship. Most important, we have fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ:

"That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (I John 1:3).

This fellowship we have with God is astounding and miraculous!

Christ calls us "friends" if we obey him and love one another as he loves us (John 15:9-17).

How is it that we can be the friends of the Creator of the universe, the all-powerful, almighty God? It's hard to imagine. And it would seem blasphemous to presume such a relationship on our own. Yet God has extended his hand of fellowship to us.

The friends of Christ. Imagine. If, for a moment, we step out of our own self-centeredness, which would have us believe we are "monarchs of all we survey," we can begin to understand the depth of this astounding personal relationship.

We—the mere dust of the earth—have been befriended by our Creator.

It's also difficult to comprehend that we, who collectively



Hal Finch

Break Down the Barriers

What stops you from making new friends?

By Michael Warren

betrayed and murdered our Creator when he came in human form (Acts 2:36), may still claim that friendship.

Think about the lengths to which Christ has gone to show himself friendly. He humbled himself—divested himself of his divinity—to give his life that we might live.

Proverbs 18:24 says that if you want friends you must show yourself friendly. What an understatement this is if you apply it to the friendship Christ extended to us.

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life

for his friends," Christ said (John 15:13).

Walking worthy

Paul wrote, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Ephesians 4:1).

Our debt of gratitude toward Christ is enormous. Like Paul, we are a kind of "prisoner of the Lord"—bought with the price of his blood. We are no longer our own. Our life now belongs to the One who died for us.

Seeing this burden of debt, we as Christians have chosen to live our lives in honor of the One who made our life possible. We strive to emulate Christ.

Paul continues to explain how we do that: "With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (verses 2-3).

We are to act with humility, to bear with one another in love. In other words, we are to show the same kind of friendship God showed to us.

With this in mind, is there anyone with whom we cannot be friends? Is there anyone who is so far beneath us that we cannot stoop down and show kindness? Is there anyone so offensive that we cannot love him or her?

To whatever measure we feel above others, we are not emulating Christ. He died for each of us, for every person, no matter how vile.

In God's eyes we were all once condemned to die, yet we can be pardoned by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Isn't it comical that we—insignificant specks in the cosmos—can think of ourselves as superior to others?

Even if you or I were the most superior being on the earth, we'd still be drawing breath only by God's mercy. We'd still be only a

single heartbeat away from non-existence.

Back to the dinner party

With these points in mind, that dinner party at the beginning doesn't seem to matter much, does it?

But it does, and that's just the point.

We don't have time to waste in this business of taking on the mind of Christ. And we don't have opportunities to waste in showing love to fellow humans.

You've got 10 places available at your dinner party. Maybe it's time to consider those who are not your closest friends. After all, you probably have plenty of chances to fellowship with your friends.

What about, instead, making this an opportunity for service? What about gathering together a small group of people who need friendship?

One Sabbath evening, Jesus was invited to a meal at the home of one of Jerusalem's religious leaders. It was a gathering of the elite, perhaps one of those obnoxious social affairs where everyone is trying to impress everyone else but nobody's paying attention because they are too busy trying to do the same.

Well, Jesus was paying attention. He took the opportunity to talk to the group about a subject that probably didn't go over too well: humility.

Then Jesus directed his comments at the host. You can read about it in Luke 14:12-14:

"Then He also said to him who invited Him, 'When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor your rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid.

"'But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.'"

Jesus was not saying one should never socialize with one's close friends. Jesus himself spent a lot of time with his close circle

of friends. But he did not limit himself to those. He associated with all kinds of people.

The problem he was correcting was that of limiting our social circle to those we feel comfortable with, those who can reciprocate, those whose conversation we find the most interesting or those whose homes we find the most attractive.

We limit ourselves and limit our calling when we erect barriers to fellowship. We need to break down those barriers and learn to take greater risks in our fellowship.

Almost any way that we can identify a group of people is a way that we can ostracize them. Let's look at some obvious ones.

Barriers to fellowship

● *Age.* We most often associate with those of our own age group because we have the most in common with them. However, there is a lot we can and should learn from people who belong to different generations.

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). Here are two ends of the age spectrum. And God tells us both should command special attention from us.

● *Sex.* If you're a single man, are you fellowshiping with the women in the Church? What about those women who don't get out as much? Is there a time for nonromantic dating simply for the purpose of giving someone a pleasant time? Sure there is.

Remember, too, that there are not a few single men who would appreciate being asked to dinner by the opposite sex.

● *Marital status.* Isn't it strange how when people marry they often begin to socialize almost exclusively with married couples?

For unmarried people, watching this happen around them can be a discouraging experience—especially if they themselves would like to be married.

The converse is true, too. Sin-

gle people should not exclude those who are married.

What about married people with children? Successful parenting requires a lot of time and effort, but families needn't keep just to themselves. Others—prospective parents, for instance—might appreciate and benefit from their experience, too.

Also, people without children need to be sure those with children feel that the whole family is welcome.

● *Money and social status.* "My house isn't nice enough to invite Susan over, but I guess it's nice enough to invite John." What unusual logic. Christians, ideally, are not supposed to allow wealth to be a barrier to fellowship (James 2:1-9). Rather, everyone is supposed to exercise humility in their fellowship with each other.

Or what about "important" people? Is it possible that "important" people and "nonimportant" people could actually get together and enjoy one another's company?

It is possible, and the Bible shows it is. Jesus Christ, the most important person on earth, enjoyed being with people from all walks of life.

Do you enjoy fellowship with all types of people? What about those of a different race, those who are handicapped, those who are single parents or those with nonmember mates?

It takes a little effort to break down walls at times, but certainly greater barriers have been torn down before—the barrier between us and God, for instance.

"For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. . . . Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away" (II Corinthians 3:14, 16).

God went to enormous lengths to break down the barrier that separated us from him. How much more, then, should we break down the barriers that separate us from our brethren? □

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Q&A

Does Exodus 34:28 mean that Moses, not God, wrote the Ten Commandments?

This verse is often misunderstood. It says: "And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments" (King James Version). Some have assumed the word *he* in this verse refers to Moses—that Moses wrote the Ten Commandments on the tablets.

This assumption is wrong. Other verses in Exodus make it clear that God himself wrote the Ten Commandments.

In Exodus 24:12, God told Moses, "I will give you tablets of stone . . . and commandments which I have written." Exodus 31:18 and 32:16 also state that God wrote on the tablets.

Moses broke these first tablets when he came down from the mountain and saw the people reveling in idolatry (verse 19).

Then God commanded Moses: "Cut two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I will write on these tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke" (Exodus 34:1).

Near the end of the 40 years in the wilderness, Moses reminded the Israelites that God wrote the Ten Commandments both the first time (Deuteronomy 5:22) and the second time (Deuteronomy 10:1-4).

Jesus mentioned only six of the commandments in Matthew 19:16-19. Does this mean we don't have to keep the other commandments?

Christ did not need to quote all of God's commandments. His hearer knew them. All Jesus needed to do was mention several to show which set of commandments he was referring to as the supreme rule of conduct—so the

person would know Jesus was speaking of the Ten Commandments and not the commands of the nation's religious leaders.

Notice the commandments Christ did mention. These laws explain man's responsibility to others.

Christ's hearer needed to be reminded of his duty to his fellowman—of how to love his neighbor. This rich young man's refusal to use his great wealth for the good of others proved he did not love his neighbor (Matthew 19:22).

Now notice the commandments Christ did not refer to directly: "You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself any carved image. . . . You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. . . . Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . You shall not covet" (Exodus 20:3-4, 7-8, 17).

Since Jesus did not list these commands, does this mean it is all right to worship other gods, curse, break the Sabbath and covet? Of course not! David said all of God's commandments are sure and stand forever (Psalm 111:7-8).

Jesus inspired James to write that we must keep every point of the law—not just one or two commandments, or even half of them. Anyone who offends in one point is guilty of all (James 2:10). To break any of the Ten Commandments is to be guilty of sin (I John 3:4).

Would you explain what law Paul was referring to when he said, "By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight" (Romans 3:20)?

Paul is referring to the whole system of law. No law-keeping of any kind can justify a person in

God's sight—it takes the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice. No law can justify sin.

Only Christ's death can pay for our sins and justify us to God. Even keeping the commandments perfectly for the rest of our lives would not pay for the sins we have committed in the past by breaking the law.

Sin is the breaking of God's laws (I John 3:4). The penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23). The only way to have that penalty removed is through faith and the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-9). But forgiveness of past sins does not give us permission to continue sinning (Romans 6:1-2).

The same principle is seen in man's civil laws. If a person is arrested for running a stop sign, a fine is usually imposed. Regardless of how well a person obeys the law in the future, the fine must still be paid.

This is the case with God's law. No matter how much we keep the law after having broken it, the penalty must still be paid.

Paul makes it quite plain that obedience to the law—any type of law—cannot justify us. Instead, it is the faith and sacrifice of Christ applied on our behalf that justify or make us right with God.

But this does not imply that we may stop obeying the law. We must have active, living faith in God, which will lead us to a more complete obedience to God's perfect and righteous law. We are to have good works, but we are not to depend on those works for our salvation.

Only Christ's sacrifice and his life in us can forgive sin and save us (Romans 5:8-10). But Christ will not save anyone who is not willing to keep his laws (John 14:15, 15:10, I John 2:3-6). □

Filling the Empty Nest

After the last child leaves home, what's left for Mom and Dad to do?

“Papa, I will always love you and Mom.”

With that parting comment of reassurance, my little girl—now a beautiful young lady—turned and slowly walked up the stairs to her college dorm.

Before she went out of sight, she turned to wave goodbye, then affectionately blew us a kiss. The closeness we had shared for those now seemingly few years would slowly dissipate, wouldn't it?

It seemed impossible for life ever to be the same. It seemed that a large hole had just opened in our lives, and nothing could fill it as our daughter had.

It was then I felt the stunning impact of an empty nest. Her mother likely felt the loss even more strongly.

There must be a way to survive this, I thought. Better, to make it work for good in our lives and the lives of others.

All parents go through this important stage of life. What could I learn from this that I could pass along to others? Maybe some of our thoughts, hints and counsel received can help you who have yet to see your children leave the nest.

Life must go on

Just as the mother bird nurtures her little ones until it is time for them to fly away, so do we parents prepare our children to seek and build their own “nests.” It is a stage of life God has planned for us parents to live through.

Lesson one, for me, is simply to accept this “empty nest” as an important period of growth. It is inevitable. But God doesn't ex-

By Jerold W. Aust

pect us to lie down and quit. Life must go on.

It is natural to turn inward when we experience loss. It is natural, but it can be harmful if we remain in that state.

God can help us turn outward. His truth can refresh the mind and fill the heart. We must take the initiative and turn to his words of life for encouragement and comfort.

God's Word can also rekin-

tiful addition is well worth any sacrifice we have to make.

But now the nest is empty. What should we do? Sit back, feet up, resting? No, there are more productive efforts ahead.

Reading, for example, is inexpensive, but reaps great rewards. Start exploring the world by reading about it. You can gain a wealth of information and inspiration through reading.

There are dozens of other profitable ac-



dle God's unselfish love for others through us. This helps us to repair and heal. This can even inspire us to renew past goals.

Fulfill worthwhile goals

How many of you parents were pursuing some academic or vocational goal when you discovered you were to have a baby? Many an endeavor has been interrupted because more attention needed to be given to the sweet, little baby.

That's OK. This new and beau-

tiful addition is well worth any sacrifice we have to make.

Whether it be lessons on some musical instrument or taking night classes in accounting or languages or something else, don't wait. Fulfill those needs you have put on hold. Start now!

But this doesn't mean we forget our children now gone.

Never close the door

“If my son doesn't fulfill my dreams for him, he is no son of

mine.” Parents who say this are being selfish when they impose such demands on their sons or daughters.

We have told our son and daughter they always have a place to sleep, a warm meal to eat and undying love and affection from us (Ephesians 6:4, Titus 2:4). We support their dreams and aspirations as well.

This is not saying our grown children need not shoulder their responsibilities. But times can get tough. We will not close the door

**God will
bless you when
you experience
the empty
nest. Review
priorities and
see where you
might improve
all your
relationships.**

on our children when they leave. Of course, when they marry, their mates also, in a sense, become our children. As God gives us the ability, we will share ourselves and our blessings with our expanded family as they have need.

God instructs us to lay up in store for our children (II Corinthians 12:14).

Why? Because sooner or later we will die. Our children can receive what we have worked for, wisely invest it and pass that inheritance to their children. This is the way of God.

God is very pro-family. He is faithful to us, his children. He says he will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). We will always be his children (Rev-

elation 21:3, Hebrews 2:10, Luke 6:35).

Loving parents would . . .

Let me share with you a note our daughter wrote us the evening we left her at college. She had hidden it above the sun visor in the car, hoping we would find it and read it later. This we did.

It was very touching. It speaks of her love for us and our love for her. In it she reflects in poetry those thoughts she experienced while in our nest:

“A loving dad would take his daughter on walks,

“A loving mom would take her daughter shopping for talks.

“A loving dad would with his daughter play basketball,

“A loving mom would help pick a pattern and sew it all!

“A loving dad would take her to the beach,

“A loving mom with her daughter cheerleading teach.

“A loving dad with his daughter would sing,

“A loving mom would attend all sporting events and a smile bring.

“A loving dad would sneak off with her to see a show,

“A loving mom would sit forever and listen to her play piano.

“A loving dad would tuck her in even when she is ‘old,’

“A loving mom would try on makeup with her even if it’s bold.

“An average daughter would be very thankful and kiss them night and day,

“Still it would not be enough to put in words and say.

“Loving parents never said, ‘I don’t have time for you.’

“God has blessed this daughter the most because he gave her the two of you!”

These were moving and touching words. But what about the two of us? For us, we could renew our relationship we enjoyed 25 years earlier. But I’ve heard some say they couldn’t.

Build your marriage

In my 22 years of ministerial marriage counseling, I have heard this statement a few times: “The

only reason we’ve stayed together was because of the kids.”

Parents often devote more time to their children’s care than they do to their own marriage. They allow the love that led to those precious children to flicker and die out.

It’s very important to keep your marriage vibrantly alive throughout the time your nest is full.

Think back, husbands. What did it take for you to win that lady you so strongly desired to share the rest of your life with? Roses, romantic music, dinner by candlelight, endless conversations, laughter and joy?

Think back, wives. How much of your time did you invest sharing, encouraging and supporting him? It worked then. Why not now? It will work now.

Most husbands and wives have simply left unattended the ongoing romance in their marriages. This can be corrected.

What can we do? Husbands, date your wives. Wives, respond to your husbands as when you first were swept off your feet. Become lovers again.

Fill your nest by understanding God grants growth throughout the empty-nest stage. Fill that empty nest by letting go and living. Fill your nest by fulfilling needs you put on hold.

Fill your nest by building on past close relationships. Fill your nest by never closing the door on your children.

Fill your nest by laying up in store for your children and grandchildren. And fill your nest by becoming lovers, strengthening your marriage.

God will richly bless you when you experience the empty nest. For those who haven’t, prepare for it now. For those who have, review your priorities and see where you might improve all your relationships.

Your empty nest can become full and running over with unspeakable joy and peace. Remember to seek God’s help. It is God our Father and Jesus Christ our elder brother who can help us fill the empty nest! □

What Does God Want From

Who do you love most?

Is it your wife? Your husband? A son or daughter? Perhaps your father or mother? "Do you love Me *more than these?*" Christ asked Peter nearly 2,000 years ago (John 21:15).

Christ asks *you* the same question today!

God wants from us what he wanted from the nation of Israel: to "love the Lord your God" and to "cling to Him" (Deuteronomy 30:20). Yes, *cling* to him.

Genesis 2:24 describes a similar relationship between a man and a woman in marriage. But God wants and commands a relationship of even greater intensity, intimacy and passion.

Notice what Christ told his disciples in Matthew 10:37: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37).

And again, "If anyone

YOU?

*Perhaps more than
you think!*

By David Fraser

comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters... he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26).

Our love for God should be so great that our love for others whom we care about would seem like hate by comparison.

It's quite a command to love God to this degree. But only then are we fulfilling what Christ

called the "great commandment": "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37).

But how can you know if you love God this much?

How do you measure love?

You can measure love by *thoughts*. Notice how God expressed his love toward the ancient nation of Israel: "Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore my heart yearns for him" (Jeremiah 31:20, New International Version).

God loved Israel. Israel was on his mind. God's thoughts are on those he loves.

"How precious are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand" (Psalm 139:17-18).

You think about those you love. How much do you love God? How much is

The woman, motivated by God's love and mercy, wept, and she washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair, and she kissed them and anointed them. Illustration: Ken Tunell.



he in your thoughts? Notice, in contrast, how Psalm 10:4 describes the wicked: "The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts." In life's hustle and bustle, if we are not careful, we can find God absent from our thoughts. This is not loving God!

Spending time with God

You can also measure love by *time spent*. Not only do you think about those you love, you want to be with them, to spend time with them. And the more you love someone, the more you want to be with that person.

The writer of Psalm 84 expresses his love for God in precisely this manner: "How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God" (verse 1).

Christianity is about an ever growing, ever deepening and more intimate knowledge of our Creator. Christ tells us, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

Sometimes we wonder, "How long should I pray?" Or, "How long should I study the Bible?" But think about this: Do we ask ourselves how long we should spend with someone we love? Usually we don't.

Asking such questions about our relationship with God shows how incomplete our love for God is. King David tells us the righteous meditate on God's law "day and night" (Psalm 1:2).

Christ set the example for us. His relationship with God the Father was so close and so intimate that he could say, "I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me" (John 8:28, NIV). He could say this because of the many hours he spent praying to his Father and studying the Scriptures.

The more you love someone, the more you want to be with him or her. And as love grows, so does the intensity of that desire.

If you love God, you want to

spend time with him through prayer and Bible study.

Pleasing God

Another way to measure your love is in how much you *seek to please*. You want to please someone you love. This is true in your relationship with your Creator.

Paul said he sought to please God in everything he did (II Corinthians 5:9). David prayed that everything he thought and said would please his Creator (Psalm 19:14).

Paul told the Colossians he prayed "that you may live a life

God wants a relationship of love that transcends all human relationships.

worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way" (Colossians 1:10, NIV).

If we truly love God, we will seek to please him in every area of our lives. Nothing we do will be outside the scope of his will. And we will keep his commandments. Christ said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). We do so not to please men, but to please God.

Love's foundation

Christ shows us how we can develop this kind of love.

Simon, a member of the Pharisee sect, had invited Christ to dinner. In his apparent disdain for Christ, he did not extend to him the usual social courtesies. No water for a foot bath. No kiss of welcome.

A sinner—probably a prostitute—entered the Pharisee's home and started to show her appreciation for the message she

had heard from Christ. "As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them" (Luke 7:38, NIV).

For the first time, this woman had heard a message of compassion and forgiveness. This was not the Pharisees' teaching.

Pharisees outwardly attended to the demands of the law in a meticulous fashion, and despised others (Luke 18:9). Unfortunately, they neglected what was most important: "justice and the love of God" (Luke 11:42).

Simon criticized Christ for allowing such a woman to touch him. Christ explained to Simon that "her great love proves that her many sins have been forgiven; where little has been forgiven, little love is shown" (Luke 7:47, New English Bible).

Christ was not saying this woman expressed more love because she had been a greater sinner. Rather, she showed more love because she deeply realized the reality of her sin, and the greatness of God's love and mercy in forgiving it.

Simon, like most Pharisees, thought he had little or no sin (Luke 18:9-13). Blinded to his need for forgiveness, he exhibited little love toward the Son of God.

Loving God and fulfilling the "great commandment" is rooted in a deep awareness of God's greatness, his mercy toward us and our total unworthiness. "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Christ died for all of us. Only from this understanding can true love for God develop. And only from this foundation can we please God.

What God wants from you and me is a relationship of love that transcends all human relationships: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38). □

If Only Humans Were Goldfish

*Christianity is about improving human relations.
How can you become "other oriented"?*

By Carla Pearson

When I was young my cousins stayed with us for a few days. One morning at breakfast they asked for some ketchup, and my mother took a bottle of a local store's own brand from the cupboard. They wouldn't use it. They insisted it be Heinz or bust.

It seems I had commercials for cousins.

We barbecued hamburgers the next evening and my cousins were hungry for Heinz. Mom poured the local brand of ketchup into an empty Heinz bottle and gave it to the ketchup connoisseurs. They didn't even notice the difference!

This tendency to see words and labels as more important than the things they represent is called *intensional orientation*. According to semanticist S.I. Hayakawa: "These are the people whose self-respect is absolutely dependent on the kind of clothes they wear, the kind of car they drive, the kind of society they are seen with."

Intensional orientation has some symptoms: responding to an artist's or composer's name rather than the painting or music itself, professing to like a sport or sports team we know nothing about or believing everything we read or are told without proving

it ourselves. People with this off-base orientation often confuse what they wish they were with who they really are. They are more concerned with what others think of them than with how they think of others.

What we need is a more open, more realistic self-concept. We need to use new experiences to learn more about ourselves and others. We need to learn more about what God wants *us* to become and how *we* should go about achieving it *together*.

This is the opposite of *intensional orientation*. It is described as *extensional orientation*.

Extensional orientation— "other oriented"

We must distinguish between reality and the words used to describe it. Extensional orientation means responding to the way things are and not how they are talked about. It means "proving all things." In essence, this *outgoing* concern, rather than concern for the *self*, is what it means to be a Christian.

Christianity is about improving human relations. As Mr. Hayakawa would describe it, we need to stop "being crippled by unsound evaluative habits." In other words, we need to stop judging unfairly.

Mr. Hayakawa likens human relations to owning goldfish.

Perhaps we keep goldfish in a small fish bowl and we want to transport them into a large, new

aquarium with fresh water. We try to catch the goldfish with a net. Despite the fact that such a move is good for them, they resist. But we don't get impatient with them. After all, they are merely fish.

Why, then, do we get so impatient when people don't do what we think is good for them?

To improve human relations, we need a constant awareness of the two-way nature of communication. We should put ourselves in the other person's shoes to better understand each other.

To become better Christians, we need to be other-oriented. Here are four essential keys to this developmental process.

1) Get a multivalued view

There are two kinds of people in the world: those who divide other people into two kinds, and those who don't.

We have a tendency to view life in extremes: either-or, black or white, pro or con, win or lose, rich or poor, love or hate. But Christians must recognize that, short of extremes, there are many acceptable shades and degrees.

For example, there are many different personality types. Some are talkative and bubbly. Others are more quiet. But both ways of expression are acceptable.

We also have the tendency to think people should meet our ex-



pectations. When people don't measure up, we become intolerant. We need to remember that Christianity is a process of *becoming* perfect. People won't always be at the level we'd like. *We* won't be at the level we'd like.

The game of life is made up of more than just winners and losers. Those who do their best score, too. Such is the lesson of the parable of the talents in Matthew 25.

2) Don't discriminate

"Women drivers!" "Men are so insensitive!" "Parents just don't understand!" "What can you expect from a teenager!" We often have preconceived notions about people because of what they are. Politicians are labeled as crooks, Germans as aggressive, British as stubborn and cynical, Americans as ignorant. It's called discrimination, and the list goes on.

Although we readily admit we are all unique, we often act as if everyone should be the same. Are we friendly with everyone regardless of class or education, race or color, political or religious belief? We must learn to respond to individuals rather than classes, to differences rather than similarities.

3) Allow others to change

Have you ever run into an old friend who says to you, "You haven't changed a bit!"? It's meant to be a compliment—but is it true? Life—physical or spiritual—is a process of growth and development.

Nothing is constant but change, as the old saying goes. Humans are the most changeable of all that exists in the world. To formulate judgments of individuals based on who they were, not on who they have become, is not fair. But first impressions seem to last.

T.S. Eliot put it this way: "What we know of other people

is only our memory of the moments during which we knew them. And they have changed since then... at every meeting we are meeting a stranger."

The failure to recognize—to hope for, work for and pray for—change in others can even hinder our own growth.

We should see people and things as they are now. Isn't that how we'd like God to view us?

After all, static evaluation suggests conversion is impossible.



We need to learn to show love the way God does—with mercy, compassion and sensitivity for each individual.

4) Get the facts

A friend of mine was upset because a young man she really liked was ignoring her and hadn't asked her out. Her pathetic moping led me to investigate.

It seems we were dealing with a mutual interest. The young man had called my friend three times to ask her out, and each time she wasn't home. He left messages asking her to return his calls. She never did, so he took the hint and turned his attention to someone else. Her roommates had never bothered to pass on the messages to her, and she had assumed the worst.

An inference is a statement about the unknown made on the basis of the known, whereas a fact can be observed, verified and

proven. Both are necessary. The trouble arises not from making inferences, but acting as if those inferences were facts.

Fact-inference confusion cost Romeo his life when he assumed Juliet was dead. And Othello killed Desdemona because he assumed she was unfaithful. Both were wrong—dead wrong!

We must recognize the distinction between statements of facts and inferences. We sometimes need to be less dogmatic about what we say, open to conflicting ideas and willing to admit when we are wrong.

The Christian's duty

Showing outgoing concern involves responding to people and things as they are, not as they are talked about or labeled. It requires being tolerant. It takes acknowledging that everything is in a constant state of change, and being able to distinguish between facts and inferences.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't try to help others grow and improve as we have opportunity. Goldfish need fresh water from time to time, whether they realize it or not.

But we need to learn to show love the way God does—with mercy, compassion and sensitivity for each individual.

After all, we are to love our neighbors *as ourselves*. Don't we want to be treated this way?

"A person who is fully open to his own feelings and deeply aware of other people as well, can hardly act blindly or selfishly. When he is most fully himself he cannot help but be most deeply identified with others too," Mr. Hayakawa explains.

Learn to appreciate why others may want to live in their old "fish bowl" rather than move into the "aquarium" you've designed specially for them.

Strive to be a more empathetic thinker and communicator. By developing an other-orientation, an appreciation for where each of us is at as well as the vision of where we all should be going, we can learn to better love one another. □

BIBLICAL WORKSHOP

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING



DISCOVER YOUR CHILD'S TALENTS

Talents are what make people unique. Talents give us the chance for creativity and self-expression. And, just as important, talents can be used to serve others.

Parents, are you able to recognize talents in your children? What can you do to cultivate their talents?

One way to recognize talents is simply to observe what your children are interested in. Children who have talent in a certain area tend to show more interest in that area. For example, does your child like to draw pictures? Does he or she enjoy dancing around the house?

Children are naturally curious. Be sure to answer questions about animals, nature or how

things work. As they grow older, show them how and where to find information.

As your child grows, it is important to expose him or her to many different areas where talent can be found. Opportunities are endless—sports, art, music, singing, dance. Outings and travel also broaden a child's horizons.

Here are some ideas to help you and your children to discover their talents:

- **Music.** Play a variety of music and help your children dance or bounce to the rhythm of the music. Sing to your children. Show them different types of instruments. Take them to concerts.

- **Art.** Provide a work area with colored pencils, crayons, paint, brushes, glue, scissors, paper and clay. Encourage your children by displaying their works of art. Try new approaches to art. As you read to your child, ask him to draw pictures of what the story says. Have your child create a book.

- **Sports.** Almost all children love to run and kick or throw a ball. Provide opportunities for them to learn different sports. Take them to a variety of sports events.

- **Intellectual.** Encourage

questions from your children. Give intelligent responses. Make frequent trips to the library with a child who loves to read. When your children are faced with a dilemma, encourage them to find the solutions. Ask them questions that will help them see new ideas.

- **Social skills.** Give your children the chance to interact with a variety of people. Watch to see how your children react to relatives, neighbors,

acquaintances, strangers and close friends. How well do they get along with other children?

People who use their talents to the fullest throughout their lives are usually content and happy people. And look at the benefits others enjoy when a person exercises his or her talents! The time, encouragement and opportunities you give your child will surely yield rich results!

—Maryann Pirog ■

ARE YOU PLEASED TO RESPOND?

When you see *RSVP* on the bottom of an invitation, do you

- ignore it?
- wonder what it means?
- put it in a drawer and intend to call later, but usually forget?
- inform the host or hostess whether you plan to attend?

RSVP, an abbreviation for the French phrase *Repondez s'il vous plait* (Respond if you please), is a nice way of saying that you have a responsibility to let the host or hostess know whether or not you will attend.

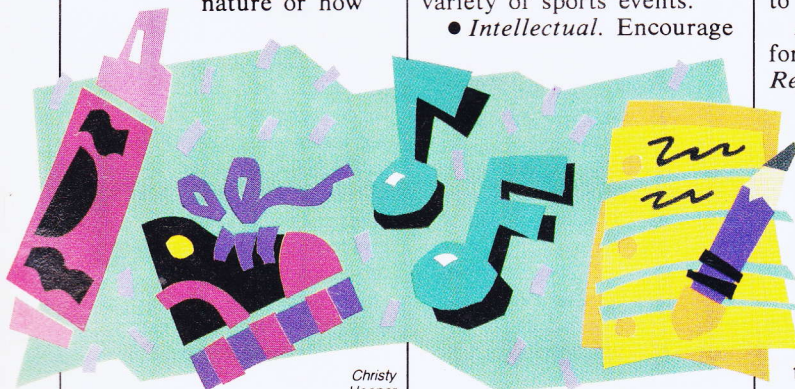
It's easy to ignore those four little letters, but it isn't much more trouble to pick up the

telephone and do the right thing. Responding to an invitation is not a meaningless point of etiquette. It is a vital point of consideration and of respect.

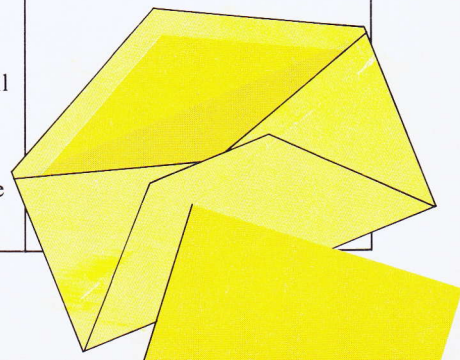
God's Word says that we are to esteem others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). We should think about how we would like to be treated in the same circumstance—and then go beyond that.

Consider the hostess who mailed 20 invitations to a bridal shower three weeks in advance. Three days before the shower, she had heard from six people. Two couldn't make it; four said they would be coming.

She didn't know how much food to buy and prepare or what kind of activities to plan. She worried that the bride-to-be would feel that no one



Christy Hooper



cared enough about her to come to her shower. Should she telephone all of those who hadn't responded, or should she cancel the event?

In this case, this hostess decided to make the telephone calls, which resulted in a list of 14 women who said they would be there. In the end, though, two of those did not come, nor did they call to say they couldn't make it.

Today's frenetic world neglects respect and courtesy in many situations. Guests arrive late to weddings and interrupt the wedding party. Shoppers cut in line

in grocery stores. Drivers assume rights-of-way that do not exist. Appointments are not kept. Obligations are not fulfilled.

Those who forget simple courtesies rarely intend to be malicious. Usually they just haven't stopped to contemplate the effects their actions—or lack of actions—can have on others.

Those effects may seem insignificant, but often they are not. As Christians we need to be sure our courtesy is not tucked away in a drawer, waiting to be remembered, but usually forgotten.

—*Kerri Dowd* ■

HAVE YOU HEARD?

After years of fighting, Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh were allowed to settle down and begin enjoying their promised inheritance east of the Jordan River. On their way home, they erected an altar to stand as a witness that they and the other tribes of Israel were united, both serving God.

But that's not what the rest of the Israelites heard. They heard that Reuben, Gad and Manasseh had built an altar to another god and had turned from following the Eternal. So the remaining tribes gathered together to go to war

against them (Joshua 22:1-20). The power of a rumor is immense. Israel heard that their brethren were rebelling by turning to a false god. Based on this rumor, they amassed an army and prepared to destroy their brother tribes.

Fortunately, leaders from Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh were able to assure emissaries from Israel that they were not turning from God (verses 21-33).

We need to be careful about rumors we hear. Though they may be true, they can color our thoughts. We also need to watch what we repeat to others, remembering what could happen.

As James 3:5 says: "The tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!"
—*Kathy Johnson* ■

GOD KNEW ALL ALONG

It wasn't so long ago that most authorities believed the link between emotions and physical disease was weak. But advances in neuroscience and immunology are bearing out, in more detail, what the Bible has revealed all along.

Among the advances in neuroscience is the discovery of the intricate communication network between the brain, the immune system and organs.

For example, chemical messengers called *neuropeptides*, produced by the brain, can "talk" to neuropeptides found in the stomach. Neuropeptides are involved in the regulation of moods and emotions. This discovery

may explain why we can actually feel emotions such as disgust in our stomachs.

While other physical factors certainly play a part in regulating health, evidence that specific emotions affect health in specific ways is mounting.

For instance, some research indicates that jealousy affects the parathyroid gland. This gland helps



Ken Tunell

EIGHT REASONS TEENS TURN TO ALCOHOL

The following factors lead to alcohol abuse in teenagers, according to the *Los Angeles Times*:

1) *Biological risk.* The idea of genetic predisposition is gaining acceptance. Kids at biological risk get hooked much faster.

2) *Lack of supervision.* Parents who are never around may find their teens getting into more trouble.

3) *Parental attitudes.* Children who do not ever see their parents having a good time without liquor will pick up that attitude.

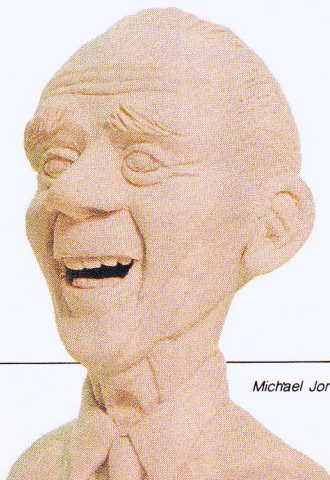
4) *Life crises.* Death, divorce, moving or family problems affect young and old alike. Alcohol is a dangerous crutch.

5) *Peer pressure.* A teen is five times more likely to have a problem if a good friend drinks heavily.

6) *Early drinking.* This can be a major problem if a young child uses alcohol to overcome the natural anxieties of growing up.

7) *Lack of family bonding.* Children without strong ties to family, church or community are more likely to drink.

8) *Parenting style.* Many parents just don't care enough to be concerned. ■



Michael Jon Woodruff

control levels of calcium in the blood by releasing calcium from the bones. An out-of-balance, overactive parathyroid gland can cause thinning or dissolving of the bones.

The book of Proverbs, in more than a dozen scriptures, has long shown the connection between our emotions and our health. Here's one: "Pleasant words [indicating positive emotions] are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones" (Proverbs 16:24).

Does Proverbs 14:30 show a connection between jealousy and brittle bones? "A sound heart [right emotions] is life to the body, but envy [a negative emotion] is rottenness to the bones" (Proverbs 14:30).

It shouldn't come as a surprise that good emotions and positive thinking lead to good health, while negative emotions weaken the body—even in specific ways science is now documenting.

—Lana Walker-Helmuth ■

WHICH POSITION FOR PRAYER?

Ask four people what is the proper way to pray and you will get four different answers.

The only way to pray is down on your knees, one might say. Another will say you need to stand up straight with outstretched arms. Still another will tell you to bow your head and close your eyes. The fourth person says you should lie on the ground.

Is there a best way to pray?

One man told about a

FORGET IT!

Ancient Israel's wandering through the wilderness is a catalog of rebellion and murmurings. They complained about everything, it seems. And they sinned—a lot.

So how could Balaam's statement in Numbers 23:21 be true? "He [God] has not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen wickedness in Israel."

Was Balaam—admittedly a false prophet—really telling the truth?

To find the answer, we'll pick up the story in Numbers 21. Here were the Israelites complaining again about having no food or water (verse 5).

It was a familiar gripe. But this time, God sent

poisonous snakes into the camp. It became obvious that unless the snakes were stopped, all Israel would be wiped out.

The people turned to Moses for help.

Moses sized up their attitude. As far as he could see, it was one of repentance. Moses prayed to God that the plague would be removed.

God told him to make a serpent and put it on a pole. "And it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live" (verse 8).

This incident pictured an event that would occur many centuries later. John records how Jesus Christ explained the significance of that bronze snake:

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have

eternal life" (John 3:14-15).

The bronze snake was an advance picture of Christ's crucifixion, a sacrifice that had to occur to make possible the forgiveness of our sins.

Just as the Israelites were to look to the snake to be healed and have continuation of life, so must we look to the crucifixion of Christ if we are to be spiritually healed and receive eternal life.

In God's eyes, once a sin is repented of, it is forgotten. The slate is wiped clean. That is why Balaam's statement is true. And it is true for us today.

If you repent of sin, God forgives you and no longer remembers the incident (Hebrews 10:17).

With that knowledge you can go forward to accomplish the growth God is looking for in each of us! —Philip Stevens ■

time he fell into a well, his head pointing down and his feet sticking up. He said he "prayed the best prayer I ever prayed!"

God isn't as concerned about your position in prayer as he is about your attitude in prayer.

What attitude is he looking for? "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).

God is looking for a humble attitude. He wants your prayers to be heartfelt. God wants you to assume whatever position from which you are able to pray most effectively.

God gives us two instructions to keep in mind. "Be instant in prayer," says Romans 12:12 (King James Version). And, "Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17).

There are several ways to pray. While the Bible offers different examples of positions from which

people prayed, it does not prescribe any one.

You can sit, kneel, stand or lie down. God hears your prayers whether you are walking, driving, swimming or flying. It doesn't matter.

What matters is that you pray in a humble, heartfelt manner.

God is able to—and wants to—hear this kind of prayer at any time, at any place.

—Rick L. Shallenberger ■



COMING

IN THE GOOD NEWS

◇ Family Feast Traditions

How can parents help children look forward to the Feast of Tabernacles? Letters from Church members tell.

◇ Would Jesus Marry You?

Jesus Christ, in effect, has asked his Church to marry him. Are you ready to say “I do”?

◇ “Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land”

These famous words, inscribed on the Liberty Bell, were used to proclaim the United States’ freedom. But they originally referred to an even greater freedom coming for all mankind!

◇ From Here Through Eternity

God intends to take mankind to the stars and beyond. Here’s a closer look at a plan bigger than the universe!

◇ A Child and Her Chooks

Or, how even the nature of animals will change in the world tomorrow.
