

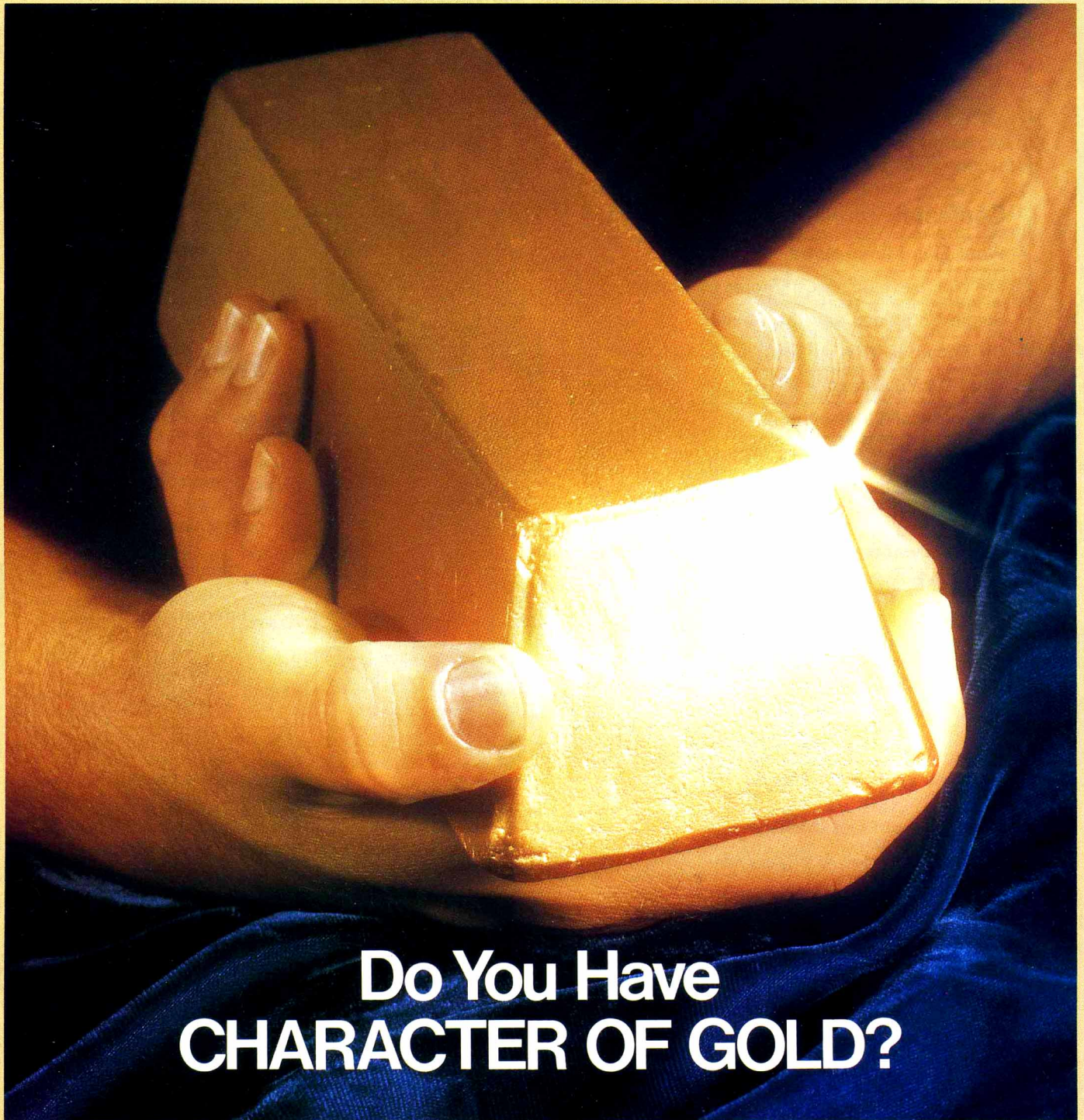
JANUARY 1984

# The Good News

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OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

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Do You Have  
**CHARACTER OF GOLD?**

# The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

JANUARY 1984

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28



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**So Your Child's  
in School!  
See page 14**



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**COVER:** Gold! People have searched for it, fought for it, even died for it. The Bible pictures Christian character as gold, and indeed this precious mineral has several characteristics analogous to the traits we are to develop in our lives. See page 2. Photo by Warren Watson.

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# What Lies Ahead NOW?

*Time is very short! Here is what is about to happen.*

By Herbert W. Armstrong

**W**HAT LIES AHEAD, vital to us in God's Church, in the next very few years?

Bible prophecy does not pinpoint precise dates — or even the precise year — of forecasted events.

But there is an important prophecy in Revelation 10. The apostle John saw, in a vision, an angel come with his hand lifted to heaven, saying, "There should be delay no longer" (verse 6).

Then a voice from heaven told John to take and open a very small book in the hand of the angel, and eat it. In his mouth it was sweet as honey, but in his stomach very bitter. Then the voice said to John, "Thou must prophesy [preach or announce] again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, AND KINGS" (verse 11, Authorized Version).

Now what is the TIME setting of this prophecy? It is sometime PRIOR to the sounding of the seventh trumpet, at which time Christ shall come.

That is clear in verse 7. Also it is followed immediately by the 3½-year mission of the two witnesses. Their 3½ years BEGIN with the Great Tribulation.

So the TIME of this prophecy is just shortly before the work of the Philadelphia church is finished. After that shall come the Great Tribulation, and the Day of the Lord, with supernatural dis-

turbances in the sky. The Laodicean era of the Church shall rise OUT OF, through and in the latter



*Pershing II missile launch. Worsening world troubles offer ominous portents for near future.*

part of the Great Tribulation. They shall be IN it, and turn to God out of and during it (Rev. 7:9-15). They come out of it and are converted as a result of it, which will open their eyes to the fact that what the Philadelphia church proclaims was true, although now, while we proclaim it, they are not heeding.

So Revelation 10 shows that

when our Work appeared to be close to finished more than a decade ago, God held up world events, and I was commissioned to NOW go with the Kingdom message to many KINGS, or many nations, speaking different languages.

That is what, as I now look back, I have been doing, especially since 1972.

Now where are we in the time sequence of prophecies? More and more it becomes apparent that we are right at, or even very shortly past, the event of Revelation 12:7. This is an event in the end time, after the Middle Ages pictured in verse 6.

Verse 7 reveals a fierce battle in heaven. Once again Satan and his demons have swooped up to attack God on His throne — one last satanic try. Michael the archangel — same rank as former Lucifer, now Satan — is pictured with his angels fighting against Satan and his demons. As Lucifer and his angels tried to invade God's throne in heaven before the creation of man, so Satan has made this one last try to conquer GOD. But Satan again was to lose this battle, and he and his demons were cast back to earth (verse 9). This was to occur just prior to the Second Coming of Christ, the resurrection of saints to salvation and establishing the Kingdom of God on earth (verse 10).

But those of God's Church are  
*(Continued on page 21)*



# Are You Developing Character of Gold?

*Gold, a precious mineral, pictures well the precious character God desires to see created in you.*

By James P. Lichtenstein

**N**o quest has excited human passions more than the prospect of discovering gold in some far-off place.

The cry "Gold!" has driven men across deserts, mountain ranges, continents and oceans, a few to riches and fame, many more to disappointment or death. Explorers have searched the world for it.

History books tell of dramatic and irreversible changes brought to entire civilizations by the discovery of gold. Spanish adventurers plundered the vast Aztec and Inca empires of Mexico and Peru, for example, seeking their golden treasures.

From Genesis to Revelation the Bible speaks about gold. Christians are told to build with it, the Laodiceans to buy it. The New Jerusalem will be made of it. Gold is the first metal mentioned in Scripture, and is described as being desirable to men from the earliest times (Gen. 2:11-12). Abraham's great wealth was measured in part by his holdings of gold. Abraham's servant rewarded Rebekah with gold jewelry when sent by his master to find a suitable wife for Isaac (Gen. 13:2, 24:22).

God also enjoys the beauty of

gold. The New Jerusalem will be made of pure gold and have streets of gold (Rev. 21:18, 21). God told Moses to make many of the sacred objects of Tabernacle service of pure gold, and to overlay others with it. The candlestick or the Menorah, according to tradition, weighed at least 66 pounds of pure gold (Ex. 25:31-40).

David amassed an amazing 100,000 talents (6.6 million pounds) of gold to be used in the Temple built by Solomon. The value of this stockpile, more than \$40 billion in today's money, challenges our imaginations (I Chron. 22:11-14).

## **What you can learn from gold**

"All well and good," you might say, "but how do scriptures speaking about gold apply to me?"

Here is the connection: God pictures the Christian character we are to build as spiritual gold. Paul speaks about building our faith in I Corinthians 3. Jesus Christ is our foundation (verse 11) and we as Christians are to build character upon this foundation.

Just as there are different building materials of widely varying quality and value available to a home builder, a Christian is represented as having different

materials available to use in building character. Three of these are valuable and will last; three are ordinary and readily destroyed by burning.

"Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is" (I Cor. 3:12-13).

The trials and tribulations of our physical lives are likened to fire that will test the character each of us is building.

If we are building with the enduring materials — gold, silver and precious stones — we shall receive a reward (verse 14). Any Christian who is lax and builds character that is easily shaken or destroyed by even small trials and tests is compared to one who builds a house with perishable materials destroyed in fire.

A Christian of high character and faith is more valuable to God than the best gold purified by the refiner (I Pet. 1:7).

We must not lose sight that God is building within His Church today His Family to share eternity with. To Christians who were self-satisfied and complacent with their own spiritual

Photos: Four by Five: Hal Finch

works, God instructed, "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich" (Rev. 3:18).

Let's consider the properties and qualities that make gold so desirable, to learn what they represent for a Christian striving to gain character of spiritual gold.

### **Gold is beautiful**

Gold's soft, yellow luster and glow make gold objects attractive. Gold bracelets, necklaces, rings and earrings capture our visual attention with an appeal far above that of other metals. There is nothing quite so beautiful and desirable, it seems, as jewelry and art fashioned from high-quality gold by a skilled craftsman.

Likewise, a Christian with the character of spiritual gold stands out from others. A deeply converted, growing Christian has a special quality of spirit nothing else can match — the inner glow of God's Spirit radiating God's character and works always.

Galatians 5:22-23 details nine special attributes of such a person: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." The more these fruits of God's Spirit abound in our lives, the more golden our character becomes in God's sight. And make no mistake: This beauty of character will make it obvious to others, too, that something special sets such a Christian apart.

We should not be like the builder who is content to use perishable materials just to get by, thinking that our goal is only to "make it" into God's Kingdom. Each Christian must labor hard and long to develop the very nature and character of God — character of pure gold.

### **It does not come easy**

A lot of hard work and expense goes into extracting gold from the ground, and there is not a lot of gold in the world today. One estimate says that if all the gold ever mined could be brought into one place, it would fill a cube only 18 yards on each side. Very likely more gold has already been mined

from the earth than remains in ever more remote and difficult places to reach.

During the California gold rush of the 19th century, miners toiled to collect an average of one-half an ounce of gold per day of work. It was hardly a get-rich-quick venture for the typical 49er!

As supplies of gold left in the ground dwindle, the effort and cost to acquire the gold increases. In some of the world's mining operations today, 20 tons of ore must be processed to yield one ounce of pure gold. In some South African mines, such ore is only found more than two miles below the earth's surface.

Both gold mining and building Christian character take a lot of work to succeed. We are instructed: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

God builds His character in Christians just as He created the gold to be mined from the earth. It requires effort to acquire both. It is not enough to want godly character. You must be willing to work for it with all your being.

Paul writes of the effort required: "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

### **Gold is stable**

Golden art objects buried thousands of years ago still have their original luster and beauty when unearthed by the modern archaeologist or treasure hunter. Only a few strong acids can spoil the lasting beauty of pure gold. Under normal conditions it will not tarnish or rust.

Gold's incorruptible nature pictures Christian character at its best. We are not to be led into sin by the trials and cares of life, or by any of the character-destroy-

ing temptations everywhere present in Satan's evil world. God has called us to remain Christians He can count on to be faithful and obedient to Him always, no matter what corrosive influences are at work to eat away the purity of God's character in us.

Paul emphasized this aspect of golden character when he wrote, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).

### **Reflects light**

Gold makes surfaces highly reflective; this is another of its valuable assets.

Thin gold leaf has been placed on the outer surfaces of many American spacecraft to reflect the intense heat radiation encountered in outer space. Without this protection, the interior temperature of a craft would rise dramatically and endanger its contents.

Gold is added to some window glass to reflect the sun's heat-producing infrared energy. In this way gold lowers air-conditioning requirements without significantly reducing the transmission of light through the window.

As Christians we should give back to God and our fellowman the same love, concern and care God has given us. Our goal is to become like Jesus Christ, who in all ways and at all times mirrored to the world God's very nature and ways. He said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

We are to shine as lights by the power of the Holy Spirit, setting a clear example to this darkened world of God's way of life.

### **A craftsman's delight**

Pure gold is extremely soft, malleable and ductile. A pound of pure gold can be drawn into wire so thin it would stretch 900 miles, or it can be beaten into sheets only three millionths of an inch thick. It would require 3,000 such sheets to equal the thickness of a single 3" x 5" card. They are so thin the slightest breeze blows

them away, and light shines through the gold.

Gold easily alloys with other metals used to impart greater hardness or other specific properties. It is a joy for the skilled goldsmith to use. It is not brittle like pottery or glass, or hard and unmanageable like iron. Gold can be fashioned as the craftsman desires.

God is our master craftsman. We are to become spiritual gold, yielded, humble, receptive to His correction and instruction without resisting or breaking. We are to be molded in God's character for His purpose to be fulfilled in our lives (Rom. 6:13).

Jesus Christ set such an example for us to follow: "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38).

#### Gold is a conductor

Gold is often used in sophisticated industrial applications where a corrosion-resistant and highly reliable electrical conductor is required. Where no chances of failure can be taken, the choice is gold.

Christians, too, are to be fail-safe conductors of God's Holy Spirit. God's Spirit is to flow from God through us to do the work He has in mind. We are told, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

#### Heat purifies gold

Here is a fascinating characteristic of gold: Heat causes gold compounds to break down, yielding the bright yellow metal we are familiar with. Not only does heat remove impurities from the metal by forming slag that can be skimmed off the top, but it also changes the chemical composition of gold compounds and returns gold to its pure, metallic state.

God also intends the heat of our trials and tests to bring out

the best in our Christian character. Gold tried in the fire is pure and refined. When we experience personal trials, we should remember that God is refining us to bring out the best, the gold of His character in us.

#### Where can you find gold?

There is a counterfeit gold, you know. It's called fool's

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Our lives are a potential gold mine to yield rich treasure. God gives us all an opportunity to become spiritual billionaires — we can if we are only willing to yield to Him and overcome.

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gold, but in reality it's iron pyrite. To the unknowing it looks like genuine gold, but it is only crystals of a common iron ore.

If you don't know the real thing, iron pyrite can fool you. I remember when I was shown fool's gold by a neighbor boy. We were 6 or 7 years old, and my eyes grew big and I became excited to see a big crystal of pure gold. But I was only being fooled. The lesson here is to be careful. Be sure that the character you are developing is really God's gold and not your own counterfeit. Put it to the test.

Old miners would put the ore they discovered to a simple test. They would bite it! If it were really gold, the soft, precious metal would yield to their teeth and dent. This was gold. If the ore were really pyrite instead, a hearty bite might break a tooth!

The Ten Commandments, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and the list of the fruits of God's Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) are only a few of the many tests we can use to examine our character, to see whether or not it is in full harmony with God's Word or just some worthless substitute — our own counterfeit righteousness.

It is not too likely that any of us have a real gold mine under our house or in the backyard. No alchemist ever succeeded in converting base metals to gold, and it's highly improbable that any of us will strike it rich by discover-

ing a treasure of the bright yellow metal anywhere.

But don't despair of riches. Our lives and experiences are a potential gold mine to yield rich treasure. God gives us all an opportunity to become spiritual billionaires if we are only willing to yield to Him, overcome and put forth some plain, hard work, using the tools of prayer, Bible

study, fasting and meditation to extract spiritual gold from the experiences of life.

This gold is even more valuable than the metal, which can be lost, stolen or destroyed. The time is coming when men will realize there is no lasting benefit from seeking security and protection from money and precious metals. God alone is our sure provider (Ezek. 7:19).

Remember the lesson of the Laodiceans. They were self-satisfied and did not look to God for their needs and security. They were content with their own character and righteousness. They did not know the danger of spiritual fool's gold (Rev. 3:14-17).

God told them to come to Him "to buy from Me gold refined in the fire," so they could come to possess the true gold of God's righteous character that alone will endure eternally (verse 18).

The opportunity to gain the spiritual wealth God offers to those He has called is there for all who are willing to put forth the effort to develop God's character. The reward God promises is to become part of God's special treasures, part of His spiritual Temple (Mal. 3:16-17).

The gold is there, waiting. The cry "Gold!" has echoed for more than half a century now through the ministry of Herbert W. Armstrong and the Worldwide Church of God. It's up to you now. Go and get it! □



**“N**ot married yet? Why not?” “How can you single fellows let those girls pass you by? You need some wheat germ!”

“It’s hard for a single person to have much impact in the Church.”

To the thousands of God’s people without mates (Gen. 2:18), these barbs are familiar. They’ve heard even crueller taunts. Just ask them.

Single Christians — the eligible men and women in God’s Church — form a large part of many congregations. Sometimes a talented, affluent part, as well. Yet so many are just not living the abundant life God intended (John 10:10).

Why?

In part it stems from the effects upon young and old, marrieds and singles alike, of the changing role of the family in our society. A growing number are choosing singlehood, marrying later in life or, some, not at all. We need to understand this trend because God is calling many singles into His Church. They are our brethren. They must be understood (Prov. 11:12).

#### **A growing trend**

Many factors created the “sin-

gles scene” that hit in the 1970s. One of the most important was the sad state of many marriages, especially in the affluent Western world. Young teens, perhaps experiencing a rotten home situation, if not actual abuse, said: “Count me out. If that’s home and family life, forget it!”

Also, rising affluence meant that the old adage “Two can live as cheaply as one” was not as pertinent in a time when competent singles were paid well. Today many successful singles in some large cities own their own houses.

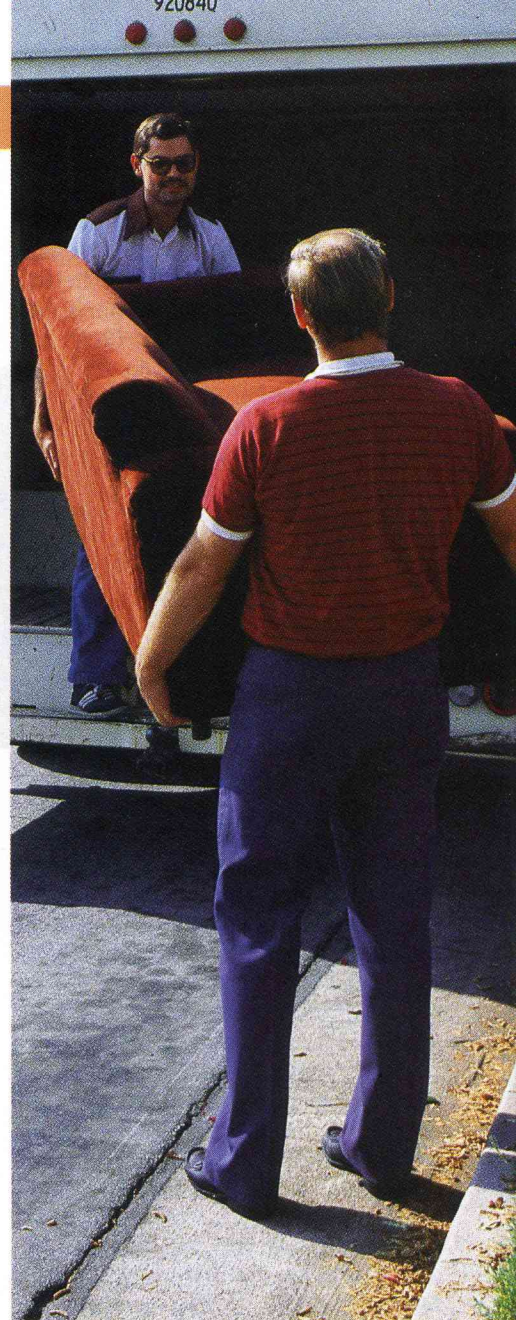
Then, too, alternate life-styles blared from the mass media. For the past 15 years marriage has been eroded, bombarded, subtly undermined. The singles life-style has been glamorized.

No wonder singlehood gained ground in the past few years. No wonder so many eligible young men and women ended up in God’s Church. Not surprisingly, however. Because God always has had effective servants who were single.

#### **God’s single servants**

Remember? The list is actually quite impressive:

The top two members of the Godhead never married in the physical sense. Righteous Abel had no family. Boaz married



# Single Christians and the Abundant Life





*Singles are confronted with unique trials and tests, yet they also have unique opportunities for serving God's people and exemplifying Christ's way.*

By K. Neil Earle



Photos: Hal Finch; Kevin Blackburn; Sheila Graham

quite late in life (Ruth 4:13), while Anna the prophetess lived 84 years unmarried (Luke 2:37). Mary, Christ's mother, was called when still single (Matt. 1:18).

Did Timothy ever marry (I Tim. 4:12)?

John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, the two greatest men who ever lived (Matt. 11:11), were singles.

On the other hand, Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines and ended up a suicide candidate (I Kings 11:3).

Let's not misunderstand. God does not glamorize celibacy (Prov. 18:22). The point is that single men and women are not somehow second-class Christians (Acts 10:28). Neither are they fair game in the Church for the obtuse, unthinking, calloused insults that come their way from those who feel they must make a display of their "superior" status (Phil. 2:3).

Actually, many Christians are single for quite honorable reasons. Often, they simply weren't desperate for the first chance that came along! They had too high a respect for marriage for that. Others had the insight to resist the naive dreams to which young people often succumb. This takes savvy, wisdom, self-discipline. Many are single because they are members of smaller congregations, and the right opportunities have not presented themselves. How many marriage problems have resulted when people were married after whirlwind courtships at the Feast of Tabernacles?

One single wrote: "About singles in God's Church you can only say two things for certain. First, we are single, and second, we know God's truth. Beyond that you can't categorize."

Of course, categorizing people runs the risk of judging them, something God blazes against (Matt. 7:1-5). True Christians try to respect and understand all people. Sometimes God tests our conversion on how we feel about those we regard as beneath us (Matt. 5:22).

So how can single Christians

serve God more effectively? How can they, while they wait for God to provide them with a life partner (Prov. 19:14), live the abundant life God intended?

The answers are not so different for them as for everyone else God calls, but those answers do require a special emphasis. Here are four points to study.

### **1) Remember why you were called**

Advancing the great commission, preparing for rulership under Christ, getting ready to straighten this world out — this is our calling (Rev. 2:26). Singleness is no barrier in helping God's Church. As a matter of fact, sometimes it can even be a plus factor.

Surprised?

"He who is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord — how he may please the Lord" (I Cor. 7:32). Why do singles have this potential? They usually don't believe it, but in general they may have a little more time and money on their hands than the average married person. They usually have fewer binding commitments.

Knowing this, some energetic and dedicated singles zealously volunteer for tasks that free the hands of the married leaders in the congregation.

Newsstand outlets need monitoring; teen activities need chaperones; set-up and clean-up crews for church socials and services are always appreciated; chorales can always use talented singers; sports events are snappier with competent referees, coaches and officials; even bulletin boards need tending and sound systems sometimes require a lot of lugging and hauling.

Some singles plunge in zealously to help.

After all, singles are every bit as much a part of the Church as deacons and evangelists: "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34, Authorized Version).

Singles, you *can* help! Get to know the church leaders. Be tactful when you volunteer for a job, and don't crawl back into the

woodwork if your offer isn't immediately accepted (Heb. 10:38). Ask the minister for a visit. Let him know that you'd like to help; you may be surprised at how he'll remember you at a crucial time in the future.

Be a known quantity in your area. Participate. The Church is always in need of capable help (Gal. 6:9).

### **2) Respect your fellow singles**

What about that other single you dream about as Mister or Miss Right? Stop and think: He or she is first and foremost a brother or sister in Christ, called to advance God's great commission in this age (I Cor. 15:58), qualifying for a key role in the government of God.

This is bedrock! This should be your operating premise in dealing with all members of Christ's Body, but especially other singles (Col. 3:12-15).

Why?

Because some of the cruelest comments and barbs surface from the criticisms and evaluations single Christians make about each other (Gal. 5:15).

Girls decry the slovenliness, laziness and selfishness of the fellows: "They don't date. They're rude. Unmannered." Sometimes, alas, this is all too true, but discord can be sown by tactlessly telling the raw truth as well as by relating falsehood (Prov. 6:16, 19). Some of the same girls refuse dates with "undesirables" among the bachelors. That is their prerogative, but be careful of violating the principle of Hebrews 2:11!

Bachelors sit around in too many bull sessions discussing the girls and how they rate. Every attribute is considered fair game, it seems. Some fellows become obnoxious minor prophets, confident that it's their ordained role in life to set the single girls straight on doctrine, example and personal conduct.

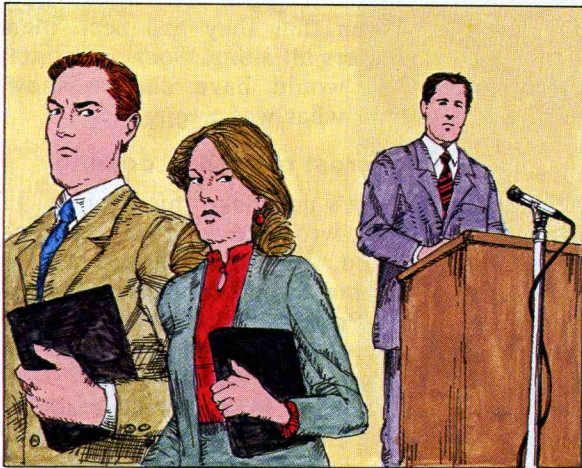
God thunders, "Who are you to judge another's servant?" (Rom. 14:4). Let's all remember  
*(Continued on page 21)*

# Is That All the Thanks I Get?

Nobody expected Ken and Janet to leave God's Church.

They had been members for such a long time, and they had always been so helpful.

Ken built a speaker's stand for the congregation, paying for the materials out of his own pocket.



He was always the first to arrive for services, and made sure the hall was ready each week.

Janet served also, supervising the mother's room, organizing a used clothing service for the members and helping to start a small church library.

Ken's minister was pleased to have such a serving couple. His was a large circuit — he had more than two hours of driving between his two churches.

The minister taught Ken to lead the hymns. Ken was no musician, and didn't do it well, but at least it gave the minister a few minutes to recuperate after the drive.

Then the minister also began to rely on Ken to read the announce-

ments, and from time to time give a sermonette.

After three years of diligent service, Ken was ordained a deacon. And later, the minister began to seriously think about ordaining him a local elder.

## Feeling unappreciated

And then that minister was transferred. When the new minister arrived in the area, Ken and Janet were naturally the first to welcome them. At first all was well. But after a while Ken began to notice some changes. The new man sometimes liked to lead songs himself, and he always read the announcements.

Some weeks after his arrival the new minister held a meeting of the leading members of his congregation — not in Ken's basement, where such meetings had traditionally been held, but in his own home. At the meeting he announced that he was making a few organizational changes.

Ken was thunderstruck. He hadn't even been asked! The former minister had always talked things over with him before making decisions.

Ken and Janet had a few more shocks coming. Some of the jobs that they had handled for years were given to others. Ken and Janet were hurt, and began to withdraw themselves.

Then one Sabbath the minister informed Ken that he was replacing him as song leader. There was

really no choice — Ken had not really learned to do it properly. But for Ken it was the last straw. He had had enough. His wife shared his bitterness.

Ken looked at his wife. "Well, is that all the thanks we get," Ken asked, "after all we've done?" Ken and Janet drove away and did not come to church again.

Ken and Janet are not their real names. But their problem is real. Many people who seem to be good, solid, hardworking Church members have thrown it all away in a fit of hurt feelings and resentment.

How about you? Could you, even now, be tricked out of your eternal reward through pride and hurt feelings, because you feel that you are not appreciated?

## The prodigal son's brother

Most of us are familiar with the story of the prodigal son, who wanted his inheritance in advance. His greed and impatience got the better of him — he wasted his fortune and was left destitute. But then he repented, and his loving and merciful father restored him to the family (Luke 15:11-24). The prodigal son's wrong attitude is easy to see.

What is not so easy to discern is his brother's wrong attitude. This son had not wasted his father's money. He had stayed home, working and serving on the family farm. But when the prodigal son was reinstated, he became upset. He refused to join in the celebrations (verse 28).

"It's not fair," he reasoned. "I work hard, I never do anything wrong, I don't bring shame on the household, and yet nobody ever

thinks of having a feast for me. My brother wastes his inheritance, disgraces the family name and then comes crawling back when he runs out of money. And *he* gets a big party. Well, if that's all the thanks I get . . ." (verses 29-30).

Humanly speaking, perhaps this son had a point. But what he couldn't see was that he was making the same mistake as his willful younger brother.

He wanted his reward *now*. Although he didn't realize it, he was putting far too much importance on the approval of men. He was doing the right things, but he was doing them for the wrong reasons. When his father lavished attention and love on the prodigal son, the other son's true attitude came out. He had completely missed the point about the reward for loyal service.

His father tried to explain this to him: "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours" (verse 31).

In other words, his own reward had not been diminished. His inheritance was still intact, and his father still loved him. But if he had persisted in that frame of mind, he would have become just as greedy and shortsighted as his brother had been.

Or as Ken and Janet had been.

### **Whom are you trying to please?**

Let's go back and review the case of Ken and Janet. Nothing the new minister had done had taken away from their reputation or fine record of service. But no position here on earth should be considered permanent.

Many of God's leading servants didn't seem to get much thanks for their labors. The prophets had difficult lives, and as far as we know, only one of Christ's original apostles died of natural causes in old age. Many of God's most hardworking servants were persecuted, ridiculed and even martyred for their efforts.

If that was "all the thanks they got," it wasn't worth it. But, of

course, that was not all the thanks they will get.

Service and sacrifice must not be given just for a pat on the back and the approval of others. Otherwise, we are no better than the Pharisees who did their works before men and thus "had their reward" (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16).

### **What they should have seen**

When Ken and Janet decided the new minister didn't appreciate them, they felt this justified their hurt feelings. How else could they have reasoned?

Well, if they had had the patience and humility to try to understand the situation, they could have arrived at several conclusions, all of which were better than getting upset and leaving the Church. For instance:

- They could have realized: "We have served long and hard. Maybe God now wants to give others the chance so that they can grow, too." With that attitude, they could have cheerfully stepped aside, while continuing to be ready to help when needed.

- Ken could have admitted: "Maybe I was being greedy, and doing too much. The new song leader is much better than I could ever be. And people do seem to understand the announcements better when the minister reads them." In Romans 12:3 Paul warns that a Christian should not "think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but . . . soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."

- Ken and Janet should have realized that Christ does not abandon or discard people. Christ's promise is that He will never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5) or forget our contributions (Heb. 6:10). But from time to time, God says, He will prune back even His most diligent and profitable servants for their own good (John 15:2).

If Ken had been thinking straight, he would have realized that perhaps God was "pruning" him to prepare him for greater opportunities in the future.

- Finally, we must consider the

possibility that Ken and Janet had indeed been the victims of prejudice. Maybe the new minister was not as aware as he should have been of their record.

But even if the new minister had been rather unfair in his treatment of Ken and Janet, was this a valid excuse to get upset and leave? No!

Several scriptures and biblical examples could have shown them how to handle this situation. For starters, read Ecclesiastes 10:4, I Peter 2:18-21 and the many examples of David's trials. David remained loyal even when Saul attempted to kill him.

With patience, humility and prayer for favor, Ken and Janet would eventually have gained the confidence of their new minister.

This couple, in spite of their apparent good attitudes, had proven that they had been men pleasers all along. Sooner or later God would have had to show them what was wrong.

### **The real reward is coming**

Let's not make this mistake. It is not wrong to want to be appreciated, but this should never become an end in itself. Remember Proverbs 29:26: "Many seek the ruler's favor, but justice for man comes from the Lord."

Ken and Janet had no reason to leave the Church, any more than the prodigal son's brother had any reason to be upset when his brother came home. And there is no reason for you to become upset if something happens to make you feel unappreciated.

Those who are loyal and faithful and who endure to the end will one day receive the greatest thanks anyone could hope for. Jesus Christ Himself will welcome them to eternal life with a resounding "Well done, you good and faithful servant."

But Ken and Janet will miss that. They wanted, instead, the temporary approval of men. So they walked away from an opportunity to be a part of the Kingdom and government of God. And that is all the thanks they got. □

# What Do You Mean— “The Spirit of the Law”?

*How well do you perceive the purpose and intent of God's law?*

By Victor Root

**I**t was Saturday, the Sabbath. Jesus and His disciples had entered the synagogue in order to worship.

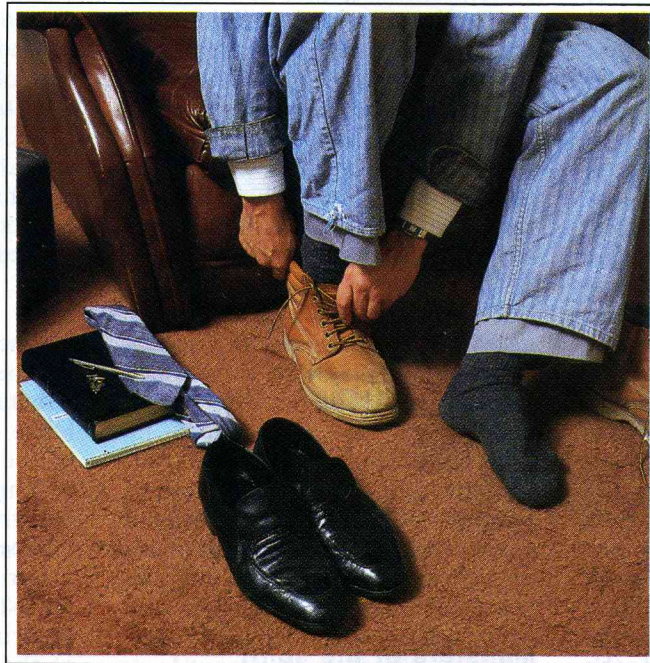
Jesus noticed a crippled man sitting among the worshippers. One of the man's hands, terribly deformed, hung useless at his side.

The man turned and recognized Jesus. This was the wonder-worker from Nazareth! Summoning up all his courage, he called out to Jesus: “Master! Will you heal me?”

The Pharisees watched intently. Was this their chance to get rid of Jesus? For weeks they had been hoping to see Jesus break one of the many traditions that governed Judah's civil and religious life. Then they could haul Him into court! Would Jesus heal the man? This would break the holy Sabbath of God, according to their interpretation of the law. The Bible relates what happened: “They asked Him, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’ — that they might accuse Him” (Matt. 12:10).

The letter of the law was clear regarding the Sabbath: “In it you shall do no work” (Ex. 20:10). But was divine healing “work”? Did God consider it work?

Have you ever asked yourself



questions like these? About God's Sabbath — or about any other of God's laws?

Very likely you have. Beyond vague Sunday-school memories of the Ten Commandments, few today know much about the Creator's wonderful system of laws and commandments.

Thousands, however, are learning the truth about God's law through this *Good News* magazine, or other literature of the Worldwide Church of God! They are learning that the laws of almighty God are no antiquated code of conduct. Instead, they are timeless, immutable principles determining how all nature and society operate.

Are you aware, as increasing numbers are, that your success on the job, in your marriage and

family and in relationships with other people, and even your personal health depend on keeping certain laws of God? (Our popular, free booklet *The Seven Laws of Success* will tell you more. You may have a copy by writing to our address nearest you.)

However, it's not just material success that is at stake! Properly keeping God's laws brings spiritual blessings, too.

For example, the commandment keeper learns to think like God thinks. He begins to develop the

very character of the Eternal! And, as he learns more and more of God's great plan for mankind, he discovers that his own future responsibilities in the soon-coming government of God on earth depend to a large extent on his using God's law wisely today.

## **The key to keeping God's law properly**

How can you reap these blessings of God's law? The answer: Learn to keep the law as Jesus Christ did. So let's return to that tense moment in the synagogue nearly two millennia ago.

Jesus quickly perceived the deadly intent of the Pharisees' query: “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” Angered, He exclaimed: “What man is there among you who has one sheep,

Photo by Hal Finch

and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:11-12).

Jesus then commanded the crippled man to stretch out his hand. Before the awestruck audience, the misshapen limb became perfectly sound!

Think back to what Christ said just before this miraculous healing: "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." This was a truly monumental statement! How so? Because here Jesus Christ pointed to the spirit of the law.

### **God's laws have purpose**

This is the vital key to keeping God's laws properly: We must learn to recognize the spirit of the law. The spirit of the law means God's original intent or purpose behind each law.

Take the Sabbath, for example. When God blueprinted the Sabbath, He intended it to be a blessing to man — a refreshing pause, a chance both to recuperate physically and to draw close to the Creator, in worship as well as in love for one's fellowman. (To see what you may have been missing, write for our free booklet *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*)

Jesus knew the spirit of the Sabbath commandment. Therefore He knew that the split second of divine effort involved in healing was a valid use of time on this Holy Day.

Because of Jesus' insight into the divine purpose behind the Sabbath, the crippled worshiper was freed of his burden. He experienced a blessing he'd scarcely dared to dream of, because Jesus recognized the spirit of the law.

God's law always becomes a blessing to those who recognize the spirit of the law. This applies to the 20th century as well as the first. The following true story illustrates this:

The old man ran breathlessly into the house. "Frank, come quick!" he gasped. "Look what happened!"

His son Frank leaped up and

raced out into the backyard. There he saw it — his father's mobile home leaned at a crazy angle. One side of the undercarriage had collapsed.

Frank caught his breath. This *would* have to happen now — the morning of the Sabbath! Frank knew God's law forbade work on the Sabbath.

However, Frank didn't wait around. He grabbed his tool kit and set to work. After several hours the damage was repaired.

Frank's dad was wide-eyed. He'd been skeptical of his son's new religion, with its "Sabbaths" and "Holy Days." Yet Frank had dropped everything to help him when he badly needed it. On Saturday — the Sabbath.

This experience made Frank's father think. He began to study the Bible. Ultimately, he became converted and was baptized.

Frank knew the spirit of the Sabbath law allowed him to "do good" on the Sabbath. He understood the principle of the "sheep in the pit." He knew what a real emergency was. Therefore he went ahead and repaired the trailer undercarriage. Thus he helped pave the way toward his father's conversion. What a terrific result of perceiving the spirit of the law!

### **Ministers of the spirit**

On the other hand, ignoring the spirit of the law can have devastating results.

Remember the Pharisees? They only had eyes for the so-called letter of the law, the exact wording human servants of God had used in writing down God's divine instructions. They were therefore more concerned with a doctrinal technicality than with ending the misery of a suffering human being.

Jesus said of them: "They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders . . . Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you . . . have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith" (Matt. 23:4, 23).

Part of Jesus' divine commission was to point out that God's

laws were more than mere rituals: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law . . . I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17).

Jesus wanted to fulfill, or fill full, the missing dimension in the comprehension of the law. He showed there was a weightier aspect to the law than superficial guidelines of conduct based upon analysis of precise spelling, wording and phrasing. He pointed to the spirit of the law!

Christ emphasized the importance of the spirit of the law to His disciples. Paul later wrote, "[God] hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit" (II Cor. 3:6, Authorized Version).

The apostles decided matters of doctrine as well as questions regarding Christian conduct only after carefully considering the spirit of the law. This was, of course, particularly necessary in cases such as the question of circumcision, where there was no letter of the law applying directly to the case in point.

The same applies to God's Church today. Christ's apostle, Herbert W. Armstrong, and the other true ministers of Jesus Christ base decisions regarding doctrine and conduct on the spirit of the law.

Christians realize this when there is occasionally no specific letter of the law associated with a new Church ruling.

Despite His emphasis of the spirit of the law, Christ continued to uphold the letter as well. He clearly stated, "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18). Here Jesus referred to the very punctuation and pronunciation marks contained in the written law!

Yet most modern theology discards the letter in favor of the spirit. One extreme is as bad as the other, though. The Christian needs both the written letter of the law as well as the spirit in order to keep it properly.

We find the letter of the law,

the written Word of God, in our Bibles. Yet we have clearly seen how vital it is to recognize the spirit of the law. So how can we learn to recognize it?

### **Recognize the spirit of the law**

Realize this first: Without the direct help of almighty God, not one of us could truly grasp the spirit of the law. We read, "The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit" (I Cor. 2:14).

Therefore, God grants those He is calling insight through His own Holy Spirit: "Now we have received . . . the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (verse 12, AV). Moffatt translates I Corinthians 2:15 this way: "The spiritual man . . . can read the *meaning* of everything."

The Bible records that King David perceived the divine meaning in God's law. For example, David was able to see past the letter of the sacrificial law to the spirit beyond it:

"You [God] do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart — these, O God, You will not despise" (Ps. 51:16-17).

David recognized that the sacrificial system was not an end in itself. Instead, it was to help the Israelites wake up to the high cost of sinning — and to stop sinning. David knew the source of his insight. He pleaded with God during one crisis in his life, "Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me" (verse 11). Without God's Spirit, David would have been as spiritually blind as the rest of Israel.

David's writings also show what he did to activate the spiritual insight God offered through the Holy Spirit. There are three things we must do in order to grasp the spirit of the law.

#### **First: Meditate and study**

Set aside time to think deeply about each of God's laws. David did. He wrote, "I have more

understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation." (Ps. 119:99).

Ask yourself, "Why did God make this law?" Or, in the case of a new Church ruling, "Why did God inspire His ministry to make this decision?" Realize from the onset that God's mind — not man's — conceived the ruling. Seek to determine how the law fits into God's great program to develop His character in us.

Study the Bible to see how men like David understood and applied God's laws. Most important, look at Jesus Christ's example. Do the gospel accounts throw light on the spirit of the particular law you are concerned with?

Don't lose heart if you are still somewhat unfamiliar with using the Bible. The publications of the Worldwide Church of God are designed to help you study God's Word and get answers to your personal questions. Likewise, the ministry of the Church is willing and able to help you learn how to keep God's laws.

#### **Second: Pray for insight**

Spiritually speaking, human beings have a restricted field of vision. Ask God to widen yours. Pray for God to grant you insight into the spirit of His law.

David constantly spoke with the Eternal about God's laws. He implored: "Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart" (verses 33-34).

Remember that only if we are really serious in desiring this insight will God give it to us.

#### **Third: Obey the law**

What if we meditate and pray, and still do not immediately perceive the spirit of the law? May we delay our obedience until full comprehension comes?

Did David ever delay in obeying? Notice verse 60: "I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments."

God did not promise us complete comprehension of the truth

in this life. Paul concluded: "At present we only see the baffling reflections in a mirror, but then [when we are born into God's Family in the resurrection] it will be face to face; at present I am learning bit by bit, but then I shall understand, as all along I have myself been understood" (I Cor. 13:12, Moffatt).

Mr. Armstrong did not immediately receive full comprehension of God's Holy Day laws, for example. Nevertheless, he and his wife, all by themselves, proceeded to obey those laws for seven long years. In response to their unquestioning obedience, God gradually expanded their comprehension. Mr. Armstrong came to recognize that the Holy Days reveal God's fantastic plan for mankind. (Have you read Mr. Armstrong's book-length explanation of this foundational truth, *The Incredible Human Potential?* If not, write in for your free copy.)

Experience shows that God grants the great gift of spiritual insight only after He has evidence that we will obey Him even in the absence of insight. As David wrote, "A good understanding have all those who do His commandments" (Ps. 111:10). Often, full understanding of God's laws comes only after we begin to keep them.

#### **A key to spiritual growth**

To grow spiritually, we must learn to discern the spirit of God's law. This is vital, if we want to keep the letter of the law meaningfully and joyfully.

So remember: Study each law and meditate on it, then pray for comprehension through the Holy Spirit and, finally, obey! Thus shall God's law truly become for you a "law of liberty," as James put it (Jas. 1:25, 2:12).

Don't forget: James had probably witnessed that healing in the synagogue. He had seen a crippled man liberated from his suffering. The law of the Sabbath had become a law of liberty for the cripple, and all because the One who healed him grasped the spirit of the law! □

# So Your Child's in School!

*You can greatly promote your child's education if you will follow these simple principles.*

By Joan C. Bogdanchik

**R**r-r-r-ring goes the school bell, signaling vacation's end.

The important, much-anticipated event is now a reality. Your child has taken his first steps away from home. He has entered the new realm of school.

If the truth were known, Mother and Father are probably more anxious than their new student!

Mother has inwardly looked forward to, and yet dreaded, this day, for with it comes a new experience for *her*. Her baby will now be in the hands of another for many hours of the day. Her child will get to know — and love — this new personality in his life, and Mother will hear statements such as "But Mrs. So-and-so said to do it *this way!*"

Also, if he is the only or youngest child, Mother will now be alone for the first time in years.

## **The parents' responsibility**

But is the parents' responsibility for their child's education finished when the child enters school? No!

Both Mother and Father should realize that going to school is a step of growth in their child's life — a step all the family should be taking together. They should be encouraging their child to look forward to this new venture, and should support him and his school.

Parents should try to put aside

any feelings of jealousy as their child speaks highly of this new personality in his life, the teacher, for it is with and by this love that a child thrives in school.

After all, isn't a good education what you have been attempting to give your child during the pre-school years?

In my experience as a teacher, I have found that a child does best who has a love for his teacher. Love causes one to want to please the one loved. This mutual love and encouragement between teacher and student makes for tremendous academic strides. Don't hinder it. Look how pleased the teacher is as she beams at the child's good work!

Alas, some parents unwittingly damage the relationship between the teacher and their child. How? By resenting assignments a child may work on at home. The parent may say: "She wants you to do it *that way?* I know another way."

Fine. There are many ways to do many things, and parents should tell their child so, but he has been given an assignment. He wants to please his "boss." (How does Father carry out his supervisor's instructions?)

Encourage your child to complete assignments as he has been directed. Back up the teacher's instructions with your support.

Often, giving the child "another way" to do it is confusing to him. Children are not capable of making intelligent decisions without guidance. They feel more secure when home and school are

unified, and they blossom in this security. A harmonious, positive relationship between student and teacher is essential in education.

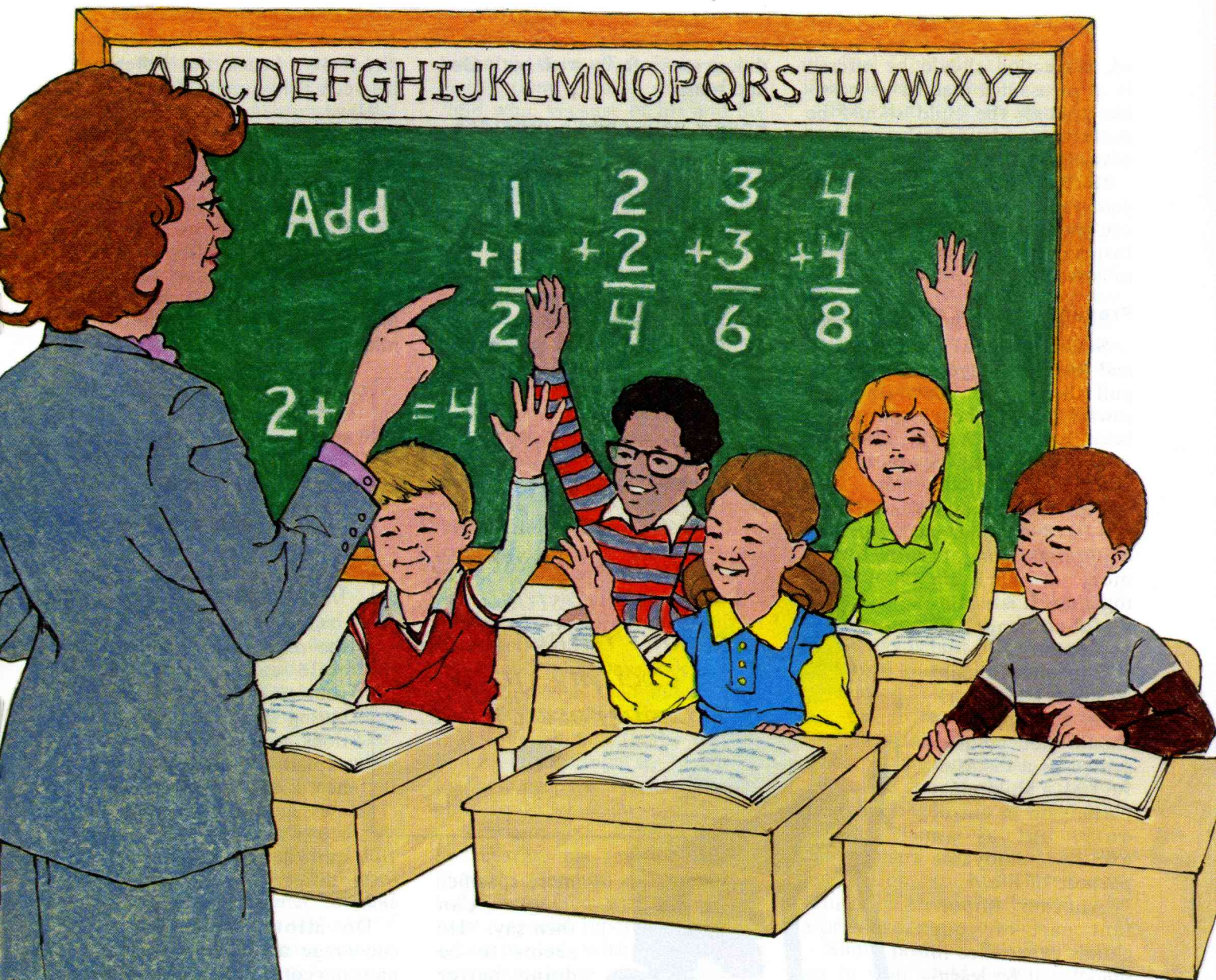
Of course, the unhappy fact is that many of the educational systems of this world do not provide satisfactory environments for learning. Unfortunately, while the vast majority of teachers may be perfectly competent and sincerely interested in giving your child the best education possible, some few teachers have misunderstood or shirked their responsibilities in various ways.

With this in mind, you should encourage your child to obey and cooperate with his teacher, and yet you should always be alert to negative signals your child gives you about his schooling. Sad to say, in some few cases teachers may be "off the track" and can harm your child and, in these extreme situations, you may have to investigate and act to alleviate the problem.

Occasionally both your child and you may have to sacrifice time to see a job through, but that is not bad — it's developing character for other life situations. Education is not always an easy process — it often takes plain, hard work. Expect this and do not be surprised.

When the opposite approach is taken at home, it is reflected in the child's attitude toward his work the very next day. He doesn't put his full interest into it. Why should he? Daddy doesn't agree with the teacher's





way. He may have heard other negative comments about the teacher, too. Academic problems now appear, and they may accelerate rapidly.

### Take an active interest

Parents should take an active interest in all assignments and papers children bring home. These assignments are your window into the classroom — the biggest continuous link between the school and home.

What these papers reflect is

how your child has done at school that day. Through them you can see where you need to give your child more practice and encouragement.

Don't let the hours spent in the classroom be all the education your child receives. Your responsibility has not ended. It continues — and grows! You must constantly be aware of how your child is doing. Education must be a cooperative venture between parents and teachers — home and school. How many parents seemingly forget this!

How gratifying it is to a teacher — and how advantageous to your child's growth — when a parent reviews his child's papers. The parent should spot at a glance what the child's difficulty

is and have him do the example or problem over. Then he could give the child a few more problems of the same type.

For instance, if the child makes spelling mistakes, have him write the word several times, then ask him to spell it out loud. When the child returns to class, he'll be on top of that situation.

"Where will we get the time to do that?" parents may ask. "And is that *our* responsibility?"

Well, parents should be spending time with their children in the evenings. Is a few minutes spent on educational pursuits too much to ask? Isn't education for life?

Without parental involvement, a child is prone to start a deadly downhill slide.

When a child must be correct-

ed, correction should be offered in as pleasant a manner as possible, though the child should be made to understand the seriousness of the situation.

Don't jump on your child in your vanity and ask, "How could you make such a silly mistake?" Instead, lovingly show him how to correct it.

### Present work as enjoyable

School should bring parents and children together, not pull them apart. How sorrowful it is to hear (and I have heard), "You'll lose your child when he starts school."

This should not and need not be. Now you and your child, if anything, have even more to work on together. It is a wonderful challenge and opportunity.

Education should be given high priority in the family. It should not be presented as a distasteful task a child must participate in out of duty, but as an exciting, enjoyable purpose of life.

Another important part of your child's experience in school will be learning to cope with other children on his age level. After all, won't he be working with like individuals at a later time in God's plan?

Working with other children helps to train him — helps him to become balanced socially. Shielding him from learning to cope is not a help to him, but a potential hindrance. That's why mixing on a social level is an important part of his education.

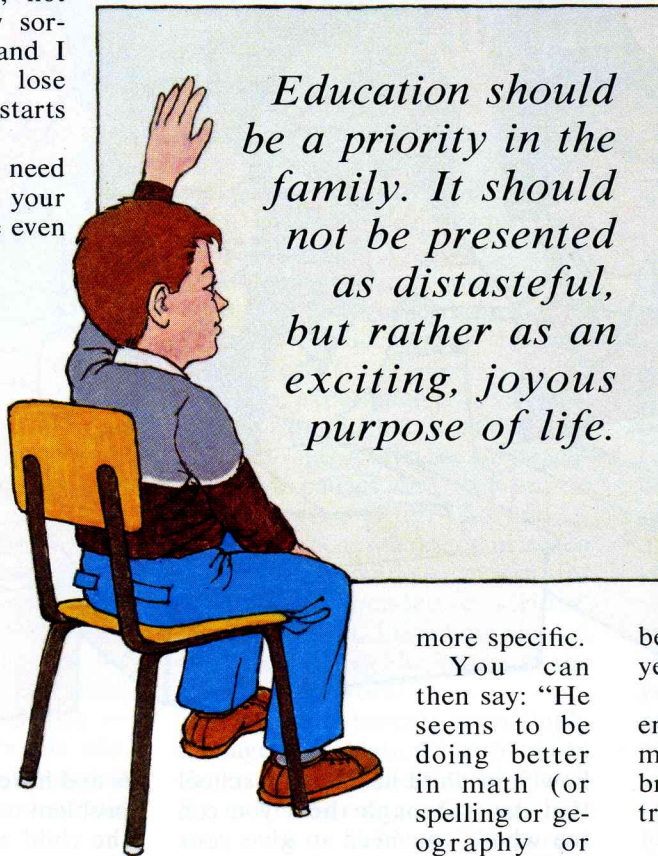
This is why you should have daily discussions with your child. You should help him in his approach to others — show him how to mix with peers while, at the same time, not diminishing from the godly principles you are teaching him. He should, as Jesus

did, grow in favor with both God and man.

### Follow your child's progress

If you regularly work with your child, you will have a fairly good idea of how he's doing.

Then, when you do converse with his teacher — and you should do so regularly, especially during the early years of his education — you won't have to ask general questions. You can be



*Education should be a priority in the family. It should not be presented as distasteful, but rather as an exciting, joyous purpose of life.*

more specific.

You can then say: "He seems to be doing better in math (or spelling or geography or penmanship),

according to his papers. Are there other areas we haven't noticed in which we can help him at home?"

This shows you have been watching his progress and want it to continue. What an advantage this child has!

But be careful. Helping doesn't mean doing. Have your child work independently after you help. Do not do his assignments for him. He'll be looking for you at his right hand and will flounder at school in your absence.

Besides, doing his work for him helps him as much intellectually as eating his food for him does

physically. Learn the difference between helping and doing.

Have a quiet, well-lit corner for him to do his work in, or a desk and lamp in his room if possible.

He can keep his work organized and perhaps file his papers according to date in a box or drawer. This is useful education in organization during his early years, and a fine way to see his growth over time. It can also minimize report card surprises.

If your child uses the kitchen table as his desk, do see that it is wiped first. Too many papers each morning are handed in looking like used dinner napkins or serviettes. This lowers the pride a child takes in his work.

### Teach concentration

Concentration is one of the most important skills a child can develop. Have your child work on remembering the teacher's instructions, not expecting you to explain what you haven't heard. Have him deliver all messages to you faithfully. He will most times, and quite accurately, if you have

been diligent in his preschool years.

Do allow for errors, but encourage and lovingly praise a message correctly and completely brought home. This is part of training to listen.

In this regard, have him remember his school bag, lunch box and jacket or sweater. Using the lost-and-found service should be an infrequent necessity if good preschool and early school training has been done by parents. Have him remember what he takes to school daily, and to return the same. When your child finishes his homework, have him place all his books and material in his school bag and put it, closed, by the door he'll be exiting through in the morning.

What an organized home is reflected in homework coming in each day without fail, and how it saves a parent having to make an extra trip, wasting time and ener-

gy, to deliver a bag or lunch left because of irresponsibility!

Of course, all of us forget on occasion, but we're talking about the rule, not the exception.

Keep reading to your child before bedtime. Often, at bedtime, in the warmth and security of family love, other details of the day not mentioned or remembered earlier spill forth, helping the parent see where he can help his child cope with life and overcome difficult spots.

Use this information judiciously and lovingly, for it flows from the heart in confidence to his parents. Don't abuse it, or your child will learn not to confide in you.

### **Encourage steady attendance**

Daily school attendance should be encouraged. Do not let your child get away with feigned sickness or provide excuses for him.

Each day is important. Getting behind is discouraging and frustrating to a child, and disrupts the progress of the rest of the class. Have your child ask the teacher for work the class has done when he was absent.

Also, have you ever wondered what happens at school when children are instructed by their parents, "Tell your teacher to send you home if you don't feel well"? In numerous cases, from minute one the child asks, every few minutes, to go home.

If your child is ill, keep him home. If he is not, do not put the idea in his mind. After all, he reasons, it is easier at home than working here, and Mother doesn't mind if I come home.

Remember: If a child genuinely becomes ill during the day, the school will contact you.

How much sleep should a young pupil have? Far too many are sent to school with far too few hours of it! They are hard to stir to action during the first hours of school and wilt after lunch.

Do your children get sufficient sleep every night? Coming to school half asleep results in spotty learning.

An attentive and diligent child should have far less difficulty

obtaining days off to keep God's Feasts than a lazy, disobedient child who, because of his and his parents' actions, is already behind others in the class.

### **A light in his school**

Teach your child that we have priceless knowledge that no one else in his school has at this time. Explain to him how his good work shows the teacher what God says a child attending His Church should do. Tell him what a wonderful helper of God's Church he is by showing the teacher what good work he can do.

Be sure, however, to make your child understand that he should not preach to classmates or think he is better than others. This will only arouse other students and teachers alike against him. Teach him that he should rather let his good example represent his religious beliefs.

When Holy Days occur, tell your child that God indeed says we must take these days off, but that you will talk to the teacher politely to arrange it. Have the teacher prepare work for your child to do while away.

Reassure your child that when he returns, his teacher will be pleased to see him and his beautifully completed work (and perhaps a special report on the trip, accompanied with post cards, mementos, maps and souvenirs to show to the class).

Upon your return, encourage your child to find out if he missed anything else and to do it that evening and the next. What a fine example he'll be!

But if a child, as a matter of course, has a lazy, disobedient attitude toward his work, a teacher naturally will be distressed at his taking time off.

Having instilled good work habits in your child before he starts attending school will be a big plus in his favor when you request days off and other exceptions, such as no involvement in worldly holiday observances.

With a reputation of work quickly and completely done, asking for days off for Feast attendance becomes easier. Children

of God's people then shine as lights in their schools.

But can you imagine what impression of God's Church a teacher receives when a surly child demands time off and then comes back with work unfinished or carelessly done? This should not be the case.

Ask yourself: Is your child's work always completed, no matter when during the school year? Homework is an important opportunity for a child's character development.

Unfortunately, of course, no matter how polite you are or how diligent your child is about his work, your child may still occasionally have a teacher who expresses a negative attitude toward him simply because of religious bigotry.

You will need to help your child understand that, while God's way is best, not everyone in the world knows this now. In such a situation you will need to do all you can to encourage your child and focus his mind on the wonderful world tomorrow.

A child should not go to school speaking negatively of it, no matter what. This is disheartening to his teachers and contagious, by suggestion, to his classmates. Education should be looked at as a privilege, not a burden.

Show positive, involved interest in your child's education. Be present at school functions, performances and award ceremonies in which your child is involved. Don't miss an open house, and when you are there, take a sincere, active interest in your child's work and displays. Give him the praise and encouragement he needs.

Don't minimize the part the home serves in your child's education. Help your child achieve his highest potential! □

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# Have You Ever Asked— Why Doesn't God Do Something?

*Are you going through your own “valley of the shadow of death” (Ps. 23:4)? Don't despair! Cast all your cares upon God, who allows trials for our good.*

By Peter F. Grainger

**Y**ou're battling a sore trial. Nothing seems to be going right. You ask, “Why me?” You're thinking: I'm the only Christian fighting this problem. No one else is plagued by this affliction.

Most of your friends don't seem to be concerned. And those who try to help aren't helping.

“Oh, God,” you cry out, “why don't you *do* something?”

Every Christian will face this situation sooner or later. All of us will suffer sore trials in our lives. For some, it is a health problem. For others, it could be an economic or marital problem. Still others are fighting a lifelong battle against drug addiction, emotional depression or a major character weakness. Maybe your greatest trial is the lack of career advancement.

One common question surfaces during a personal spiritual struggle: “What did I do to deserve all this?” That question is usually followed by: “No one cares. Even God doesn't seem to notice my hardship.”

When we voice these thoughts during a sore trial, we are experiencing doubts and questions that all of God's servants down through history have endured at one time or another. Our tribula-

tions are not unique, isolated cases (I Pet. 5:9).

## **All face trials**

The way to the Kingdom of God is strewn with hardships and obstacles. “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God,” wrote the apostle Paul (Acts 14:22). “Many are the afflictions of the righteous,” promised David (Ps. 34:19).

Throughout history, God's loyal, obedient servants have suffered personal crises and hard trials in their lines of duty.

Jeremiah wrote: “I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. . . . Even when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer. . . . My enemies without cause hunted me down like a bird” (Lam. 3:1, 8, 52).

Notice the psalmist's words: “In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. . . . will He be favorable no more? Has His mercy ceased forever? . . . Has God forgotten to be gracious?” (Ps. 77:2, 7-9).

John the Baptist began to doubt when in prison: “And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus, saying, ‘Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’” (Luke 7:19).

Yes, some of God's greatest servants became impatient while enduring difficult trials. Some temporarily lost faith and began

questioning their heavenly Father's love.

None of us are so small or so great that we are exempt from having to learn the lesson that the “times” and “seasons” are in the hands of our God (Acts 1:7), whether He is dealing with a major world event or our own personal trials.

But why does almighty God leave us in some major trials for a long time? God's Word, written “for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4), suggests various reasons why Christians encounter hardships in this life. Let's examine some of them.

## **To test our conversion**

God wants to know, frankly, if we are just flash-in-the-pan Christians. After our initial actions of receiving God's truth, repenting of sin and being baptized, do we continue obeying God faithfully?

Or “when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word [God's commandments],” are we offended? (Matt. 13:21).

God is investing much time, energy and love in training us for high positions as kings and priests in His coming Kingdom (Rev. 5:10, 20:6). He needs to know if we will be loyal to Him through the good *and* the bad times.

That's the reason God often

allows tests during the early days of our conversion, "after you were illuminated" (see Hebrews 10:32-33). When you begin to obey God, former friends may shun you (I Pet. 4:4). God might allow this trial so He may see if we love His way more than our former friends (Luke 14:26).

God's method of proving His people is not new. Hear what He did to Israel:

"The Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not" (Deut. 8:2).

God chastises us out of love. These tests help develop holy character in us (Heb. 12:6, 10).

How should we respond? "Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God [after we continued faithful to Him through thick and thin], you may receive the promise" (Heb. 10:35-36).

### **To uncover hidden sins**

Sometimes a major trial overtakes us years after our initial conversion. Even after we have sincerely repented of past sins (Acts 2:38) and regularly examined our Christian conduct (II Cor. 13:5), we may still encounter major problems — for example, major health or family problems.

It could be because of a major character weakness that we don't know about!

Consider the patriarch Job. Even God stated that Job was "a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:8). Yet this "upright" man lost his wealth, livestock, his sons and his servants all in one day. Shortly thereafter Job lost his health and peace of mind when Satan was allowed to strike him with boils all over his body.

Why this terrible affliction? Because Job was a rotten sinner who refused to repent? No! Job acknowledged his sins (Job 7:20-

21, 31:33) — that is, the sins that he saw within himself.

However, God saw within Job a secret fault of self-righteousness — a sin that needed to be rooted out and destroyed (Job 33:9, 32:1, 35:2). Job wasn't aware of his great spiritual weakness.

So God allowed this severe trial to teach Job that his self-righteousness blocked his further understanding and appreciation of God's will and glory.

Sometimes God allows havoc in our lives because we need to see ourselves as we really are and realize it's time to "go on to perfection" (Heb. 6:1).

Notice that Job didn't give up. He continued to trust in God: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15). Job sought answers: "How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me know my transgressions and my sin" (verse 23).

God answered Job! At the right time and in the right way God spoke to the heart of the matter, identifying Job's spiritual problem and offering a solution. And when Job repented of his hidden sin (Job 42:1-6), God immediately forgave and blessed His servant abundantly.

### **To witness to others**

Sometimes God requires a Christian to serve faithfully in trying circumstances in order to teach others about God's existence and authority.

Remember Daniel's sore trial? Daniel believed so fervently in the daily practice of prayer that he disobeyed a royal Persian order that prohibited citizens for 30 days from asking petitions from their gods (Dan. 6:7, 10). As a result, Daniel was sentenced to be thrown into a den of lions.

Almighty God knew Daniel had the faith and courage to live through this horrifying experience. God showed His love and might by sending an angel to shut the lions' mouths (verse 22).

King Darius saw this mind-shattering witness of God's concern and power with his own eyes (verse 23). This event so humbled this powerful pagan king of Per-

sia that he wrote to all his subjects: that they must fear the God of Daniel (verses 25-27).

When God knows we can endure (I Cor. 10:13), He may allow us to suffer a sore trial in order to trumpet a powerful witness to our relatives, our bosses or our neighbors who might be persecuting or otherwise making our lives miserable.

Let's patiently trust God until He sends help in these situations (Prov. 3:5-6). This gives our heavenly Father a glorious opportunity to show the unconverted that He exists and does intervene in the lives of humans.

### **To develop our patience and faith**

Severe trials teach us to look to God, to develop the habit of waiting for God's answer.

That's why we glory in tribulation! We know that "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Rom. 5:3-4, Authorized Version).

The Bible prophesies horrifying, violent times ahead (Matt. 24:21). Mankind will become increasingly blasphemous, "without natural affection" and "despisers of those that are good" (II Tim. 3:2-3, AV).

When God allows a family member or fellow worker to continue despising or persecuting us, we are being toughened up spiritually. If we learn to be kind to our enemies (Matt. 5:44) and endure, we become strengthened spiritually.

And God promises to supply the assistance we need to endure any hardship (I Cor. 10:13).

Therefore we can rejoice — we can "count it all joy" (ouch!) when we fall into various trials (Jas. 1:2).

You may have lost your job, your family, your wealth or your friends because of persecution. If so, you know how Joseph felt!

In one fell swoop, poor Joseph lost everything — job, wealth and reputation — because of a false accusation by his employer's wife (Gen. 39:7-20). Although unjustly imprisoned for two years and

# LETTERS

## "The Wonderful World Tomorrow"

I am very grateful for Herbert W. Armstrong's lead article in the Feast edition of *The Good News*, "The Wonderful World Tomorrow" [September]. This inspiring message from God's apostle jolted me with the reality of a literal Kingdom.

It also poignantly brought home the point that our works and character development right now are what God is using to determine (judge) our position in His Kingdom.

Thanks for this loving prod to get involved, seize opportunities and put our hearts in God's Work.

Craig Arnold  
Prattville, Ala.

## Feast issue

I received the 50th-Feast anniversary issue of *The Good News* and could hardly put it down. It is really a collector's issue — words don't describe it properly. It is truly a very beautiful issue — full of the proper spiritual diet we all need. The world sure can use a dose of good news.

R.L. Wright  
Clintwood, Va.

## Inspiring illustrations

I thank you for the beautiful *Good News*. The picture on the front is so beautiful. I hope we all have one of those crowns.

Rosetta Neal  
Fremont, Mo.

My thanks to the artist of that lovely, inspiring picture of the farm and family

with their pet lion and dog. I framed the picture and can enjoy it daily, and be constantly reminded of the wonderful world tomorrow.

Thank you also for all the many other spiritually powerful articles in this Feast of Tabernacles special issue of *The Good News*.

Anna C. Kasper  
Liberty, N.Y.

## "Does Jesus Really Understand?"

I had to write and thank Graemme Marshall for his article "Does Jesus Really Understand?" in the August *Good News*.

For years I have heard sermons on how Jesus was tempted in all points as we are. But in the back of my mind I would always think:

How could He have been tempted as I am? How could He really understand about having an unconverted mate? Many have had to leave homes and families. Never having been married as a human, He couldn't really understand.

I kept reading the article and it mentioned about everything else.

It was almost at the end of the article. Mr. Marshall writes: "Perhaps there are other things Jesus might not have specifically experienced. For instance, He did not marry as a human. On the other hand, He was symbolically married to Israel."

Well, there it was. Jesus was married symbolically to Israel. Israel was, symbolically, an unconverted mate and, as such, caused Christ a lot of grief and unhappiness.

Now I can know that Jesus really has

been tempted in all points as we are — even in having an unconverted mate. And I know He understands.

Reader  
Missouri

## Shocked by truth

I was shocked to find out that the Sabbath is on Saturday.

I know, like so many others, for years I had always thought that the Sabbath was on Sunday. I've known this truth about the Sabbath for about a year now.

I've been getting *The Good News* right along with *The Plain Truth* and I have learned some really shocking facts from both magazines this past year on scriptures from the Bible.

You are always telling us to read and study the Bible because that is where all the answers are. I know that I want to continue learning more, especially about the new world tomorrow.

Mrs. Jack Scott  
Wapato, Wash.

## Food and light

*The Good News* contains food to support us and light to direct us. It teaches how to overcome temptations and life problems we encounter in our everyday lives.

Reading this magazine, I understand and accumulate more and more knowledge about the right way of life. I neither eat nor drink without reading *The Good News*.

Keep up with your work of spreading the Gospel to the people worldwide.

S. Sarimo  
Pote, Karoi, Zimbabwe

completely isolated from his family, Joseph never gave up believing God (Gen. 40:8). Joseph finally regained his freedom and a job — a promotion to second in power in the Egyptian empire (Gen. 41:40, 43)!

The Bible indicates that all of God's true servants — those who qualified for God's Kingdom — ultimately endured, obediently and faithfully, their horrendous hardships and terrible trials.

What was their secret?

## Endure to the end

How did God's faithful servants overcome their trials?

First, they accepted sore trials

as part of their calling (Prov. 24:16).

Second, they understood that becoming perfect in obedience to God requires a degree of suffering. In this world, "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12). Even Jesus Christ "learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5:8).

Third, they believed God is always in control (Job 1:21, John 19:11, Matt. 28:18).

Fourth, they lived by faith (II Cor. 5:7), and their faith stood strong in God's promises (Dan. 3:17, Rom. 4:20-21).

Let's follow their example and

never give up the Christian way of life because of sore trials. Even if we walk through our own "valley of the shadow of death," we can believe that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

We belong to a select group of people — God's begotten children. No one can pluck us out of our Father's hand (John 10:29). God will finish the work He has begun in us (Phil. 1:6).

Therefore, let's endure to the end, confident that God will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5-6)! □

# What Now?

(Continued from page 1)

at this time to overcome Satan by the blood of Christ and the Word of God (verse 11); but because Satan knows he now has but a short time to defeat God on earth through God's Church, even after he failed in the heavenly war with Michael (verse 12), he was immediately to persecute this CHURCH (verse 13).

Ever since my conversion, I have suffered persecution from men, though inspired by Satan — and so have many of you. But never before did Satan strike the CHURCH AS A BODY until the lawsuit launched against the Church Jan. 3, 1979. It surely seems that fulfilled verse 13.

But our Work is not yet completed. This prophecy indicates it will be soon — and apparently during the decade of the '80s — though we cannot set definite dates. Yet WE SHOULD BE WARNED! We should realize our time for completion of Christ's great commission is now very short, and growing shorter daily.

I have warned you all, Satan is now FURIOUS. He is mighty. He is subtle, clever and can deceive and outwit the best of us. He is HARD AT WORK AGAINST THE WHOLE CHURCH RIGHT NOW in ways you know not. But the Church NEEDS your urgent, faithful FASTING AND PRAYING!

Continue this prophecy. Next, when our great commission is in God's sight completed, we are to be taken — symbolically flown on the two wings of a great eagle — which could mean by a friendly government made friendly to us by my contacts with heads of so many governments — we shall be taken to a place of protection from the Great Tribulation, which is the furious wrath of Satan (verse 14).

While we are in this place of safety 3½ years, the two witnesses shall be preaching to the whole world, protected from Satan. But Satan in his mad wrath will then make war with the REMNANT Church. This has to

be the Laodicean era of the Church (verse 17).

Finally, what of the Laodicean era of God's Church? Remember, it, too, is GOD'S Church — having the commandments of God and testimony or Word of Jesus (Rev. 12:17).

But that era of the Church is pictured in Matthew 25. Matthew 24 shows the signs Jesus showed would occur prior to His Second Coming.

Matthew 25 shows the time just before Christ shall return. It pictures the Laodicean church as 10 virgins who took their lamps (their Bibles) and went forth to meet Christ at His coming. But five of them — half of the Church — took their lamps (Bibles) but without oil to light the lamps (having the Holy Spirit to UNDERSTAND the Bible).

Some translations indicate they were losing the Holy Spirit, because of negligence, lack of prayer, lack of fellowship with the brethren and with God and Christ and being overcome with materialistic and worldly interest. Are some of us like that, even now?

While they — the backsliding half of the Church — are trying to get back closer to God, the coming of Christ shall take place, and the door into God's Kingdom shall be SHUT in their faces! WHAT A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY! It could happen to you or me.

Brethren, we're living in more terrible, troublous times than you realize. DO NOT FOR A MOMENT GET TO THINKING TIME WILL JUST KEEP GOING ON AND ON. It won't! Satan knows how short time is. He is now striking at destroying the CHURCH. WE ALL NEED TO BE FASTING AND PRAYING as never before that God will restrain Satan.

TIME IS NOW VERY SHORT.

This Work is launched on the GREATEST AND MOST POWERFUL THRUST FORWARD IN ITS 50 YEARS. NEVER have I and the whole Work needed your prayers and continued EXTRA financial backing as now. We are launched on the greatest PUSH FORWARD ever. PRAY! PRAY! PRAY! □

# Single Christians

(Continued from page 8)

the slogan: "Don't be too hard on me; God isn't finished with me yet."

We can be thankful that God's Spirit predominates in His Church (II Tim. 1:6). When appealed to, most singles quite quickly shelve their hang-ups and grudges and get down to the tough core of real Christianity — loving all men as brothers (I Thess. 4:9-10).

One of the ennobling traits of single Christians as a group is their eagerness to follow government, their sincere appreciation for any efforts made in their direction. There is a good reason for this. They are, in a sense, poor in some of the things those with the middle-class-station-wagon-split-level-two-children background sometimes take for granted — things like companionship, moral support and a sense of belonging.

Singles, in some ways, are out of the mainstream of society. This is why so many respond to God's calling. He specifically seeks recruits among the deprived, the left-out, the unfulfilled, the emotionally wounded. They enlist in His Church (Luke 14:21).

## 3) Don't over-romanticize marriage

Don't misunderstand!

This is neither an appeal for celibacy, nor in any way a slight of God's sacred institution (Heb. 13:4). Not at all. A happy marriage is an intense delight (Eccl. 9:9). Looking forward eagerly to spending the evening with your husband or wife is a precious feeling, savored by only a few in our society.

But the plain truth is that in most nations today marriage is a risky proposition. The chances of your marriage ending in divorce in the Western world are almost 50-50. Dead even!

Loneliness drives many singles to distort one of the truisms about life and marriage — the simple fact that if you are a reasonably

contented and well-adjusted single to begin with, you will probably make someone a wonderful life partner.

There are no magic personality changes after you say "I do." The opposite is often true. Some men go from "the best" to "the beast" very quickly while (we joke) many brides don't make a man complete, they "finish" him!

Be as balanced and as successful as you can while single. Imitate Jesus, the strongest person who ever lived (Luke 2:52).

Don't fall for the quasimarrried state of going steady or pairing off too early. Often the steady-dating rut leads many young people to settle for a second-best life partner out of sheer habit and familiarity. Their personality, character and social experience are stunted at an early age.

There are so many alternatives in our day and age.

Travel. Study. Solidify a career. Sharpen your talents. Date widely. While dating, strive to build friendships or boost others who need a lift. This is the wisest use of your single years. It is the way of give. You'll be surprised how Mister or Miss Right has a way of turning up when least expected (Acts 20:35).

Reread our book *The Missing Dimension in Sex*, especially the chapter on the best age for marriage. If you do not have it, you may request a free copy by writing to our address nearest you.

Does it really take much self-discipline and maturity to go the easy route, the way of the crowd? Resisting second-best impulses takes a sense of purpose and commitment, and that, interestingly enough, makes us more attractive to other high-minded and principled singles (Prov. 27:17).

It's a wise old saying: "Marry in haste, repent at leisure."

Study the book of Ruth to see how God brought two eligible people together in spite of distance, tragedy and widely different backgrounds.

These principles reflect the best and noblest that singles can aspire to. And why settle for anything else (Prov. 12:26)? For a lot

of people marriage is something like the proverbial butterfly, which eludes the feverish pursuer but alights on his shoulder when he's become immersed in another interest.

Marriage is indeed wonderful. It is an intensely enjoyable source of emotional sustenance and recuperation, at its best. But be well advised: It is much more preferable to endure the sometimes frustrating pangs of the single life than to end up trapped in a miserable marriage.

#### 4) Cherish your family

I remember when I was first accepted into the Church of God. I was a young single. It seemed that some of Christ's boldest statements applied directly to my situation:

"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit everlasting life" (Matt. 19:29).

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

The Savior of humanity, the Head of God's Church (Eph. 1:22), did not marry in the strict physical sense of the word. Yet there was never a more effective, more confident person (John 12:19). He pioneered the abundant life for us. How?

First, by honoring His own parents (Luke 2:51). Then by setting the example and giving a strong lead to His own brothers and sisters. Charity begins at home, after all. We all have some family, however distant, to nurture and cherish. Yet even Jesus, our example, was mistreated by close relations (Mark 3:21).

He knew the pain of rejection, the uneasy feeling of impermanence that many singles feel in the Church today. Yet Christ loved His own fervently, even in their carnality and blindness (John 15:15).

Single Christians sometimes

get resentful that their new spiritual family, the Church, doesn't seem to have time for them often enough. Such is often the case because God's Church is still flawed with human weakness (Eccl. 7:20).

What is the answer?

The answer is to love others even more fervently, as Christ taught us. Launch a spiritual offensive!

Do members ignore you for invitations to their houses? Invite them to your place (Rom. 12:17)! It was Abraham Lincoln who wisely stated, "I can destroy my enemies by making them my friends."

Are families turning inward, weighted down by daily cares? Offer to baby-sit for free; urge them to get out for a movie or a concert. Serve. Help. Build up, without ulterior motives (Rom. 12:10).

Are some Christians negative, aloof, reserved? Overpower them with kindness, heal with hospitality, shower them with thoughtfulness. Be balanced, but let your light shine (Matt. 5:16).

"I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. . . . I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you. . . . We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren" (I John 2:13-14, 3:14).

How true! Rather than selfishly bemoaning your fate, you should actively take the offensive (Phil. 3:14). Don't be overcome by rebuffs or lack of appreciation (Prov. 24:10). This is the love Jesus had (I John 4:4), the love that conquers the world.

As a single Christian you have some unique opportunities that others do not have to be a goodwill ambassador, an ambassador of peace (Rom. 12:18).

Be wakeful! Be zealous! Be open to your opportunities. None of us, married or single, has yet reached the highest peaks of real Christianity. Why not rise to the occasion?

You'll never regret it (I Cor. 15:58). □



# The Faith Required for Salvation

What is the biblical definition of faith? Exactly what kind of faith do we need to please God — to live the obedient, overcoming Christian life outlined in the Bible and be born as glorified children of God in His great ruling Family?

First, we must understand that this faith is not the power of positive thinking — trying to improve and overcome by just thinking positive thoughts.

Many people also make the mistake of confusing faith with emotions. They try to work up faith, which to them means an emotional feeling. These feelings are not the evidence of having real faith. They are in the class of what can be seen, heard, tasted, smelled or felt — in other words, they're of the flesh.

Real faith is a *spiritual* matter, not physical. Let's understand God's definition of the kind of faith required for salvation.

1. Are Christians to "walk" — live their lives — by faith? II Cor. 5:7, Rom. 1:17.

2. Should they seek and look forward to obtaining promises and rewards that are not seen? Col. 3:1-2. Did Paul elsewhere verify that Christians seek after the real, but unseen, eternal rewards and promises of God? II Cor. 4:18.

3. Do the above scriptures confirm God's definition of faith found in Hebrews 11:1?

Faith is the substance — more accurately the assurance or confidence — "of things hoped for." Before you receive what you hope for, you already have it in substance, and that substance — that assurance or confidence that you shall possess it — is faith. Faith is your evidence that you *shall have* what you do not yet see. This faith is based on the sure promises of God, which are recorded in the Bible.

4. Is it possible to please God without real faith? Verse 6.

As this verse explains, faith toward God is our absolute recognition that He exists, and our reliance that He blesses us according to His promises as long as we sincerely strive to serve and obey Him. This faith is *acquired*. You cannot cause yourself to have that kind of faith through autosuggestion or any other self-help

technique! (More about the source of real faith a little later.)

5. Must obedience to God accompany one's faith in order to make it *alive* and acceptable to God? Rom. 3:31, Jas. 2:14-26.

6. How does one demonstrate his faith? Verse 18. What does one's faith become if it is not accompanied by works? Verses 17, 20, 26.

Many professing Christians have a *dead* faith. Faith to them is merely belief in Christ's existence and His sacrifice for the sins of mankind. They do not understand that there is something God requires them to *do* to make their faith alive and active.

Traditional Christianity believes that Jesus lived a good life for us — that He obeyed God's law in our stead. However, the Bible makes it crystal clear that having faith does not excuse us from spiritual obedience to God.

This is a great mystery to those who don't understand. Since God requires us to follow His law of love — His way of life as spelled out by the Ten Commandments — to be saved (Matt. 19:16-19), yet we are utterly unable to do so of ourselves, it is natural to conclude that God sent Jesus to obey Him for us and thereby excuse us from obedience to God. Nothing could be further from the truth!

7. Did Noah express *living* faith when he obeyed God by building the ark God had commanded? Heb. 11:7. Was there any physical evidence that a Flood would come? Same verse. (Notice the words "things not yet seen.")

Noah had a trust and confidence that the invisible God would perform what He had promised. And he proved his faith *by his works*. Faith and obedience went hand in hand to produce *living* faith.

8. Did God find Abraham to be "faithful" — full of faith? Neh. 9:7-8. Did Abraham have living faith? Gen. 26:5, Heb. 11:8-10, Jas. 2:21-24.

Abraham proved his faith by his works. Therefore God promised to greatly bless him and his descendants (Gen. 22:15-18). Abraham is an outstanding example of the kind of faithful obedience God requires of all Christians.

One of the most thrilling examples of living

faith is that of Daniel's three young friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. Recall that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had erected a great golden image and ordered everyone to worship this idol at certain designated times. Those who refused were to be thrown alive into a fiery furnace (Dan. 3:3-6).

**9.** What did Nebuchadnezzar do when Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego informed him that they would not worship his golden idol? Verses 19-23.

What would you have done had you been in their shoes? Would you have said, "Well, I have no choice but to bow down to this image — I have to do it or be killed"? Or perhaps you might have excused yourself thus: "I don't think God would be fair if He punished me for bowing down before this idol when He knows I'm forced to do it."

Yes, it's easy to use human reasoning to excuse disobedience to God. But God isn't looking for chances to punish us, but rather for opportunities to save us through faith in His power.

These three young men knew that "we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). By faith they knew that God makes it possible for us to obey Him.

Notice that God allowed them to go beyond the point of human help. No one could help now, but God. He had to see that they would not only be willing to say they would go all the way, but He allowed them to go all the way before He saved them from the trial. He expected them to go that one step further — to back up their words by their actions.

**10.** To his amazement, what did the king find when he looked into the furnace? Dan. 3:24-25. What did Nebuchadnezzar say to the three men as they and an angel from God walked around in the midst of the fire? Verses 26-28. (Notice the words "delivered His servants who *trusted* in Him" in verse 28.)

This is an astounding example of living faith — a faith that trusted God to make it possible to obey His law.

God tells us through Paul that He will never test us beyond what we are able to bear (I Cor. 10:13). Yet it would seem that if anybody ever came close to the breaking point, these men did! But they didn't reach a breaking point in this trial because they had absolute faith in God. And the God they faithfully obeyed did intervene to save them!

**11.** Is the faith through which we are to please God and receive salvation a *gift* from God? Eph. 2:8. Is this faith an attribute of the Holy Spirit that all true Christians must possess? Gal. 5:22. Whose faith, in reality, is it? Rev. 14:12.

In Revelation 14:12 is a description of the true Church of this day. Those in this Church have the faith *of* Jesus. It is not just *their* faith *in* Him, but *His* faith placed in them and acting in them!

**12.** Did Paul plainly state that Christ lived in him? Gal. 2:20. How did Christ live in him? Phil. 2:5, Rom. 8:9-10.

Jesus Christ dwelt in Paul through the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit of God from Christ implanted in Paul's mind the faith *of* Christ — the same faith that can be in your mind. That faith — the very faith of Jesus Christ — will enable you to live a life of obedience to God as did the apostle Paul and all the righteous men and women of God.

If we were able, of ourselves, to supply the faith to obey God, our obedience would be self-righteousness, which to God is but "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). Our righteousness must be through the faith of Christ. Yes, Christ's faith, not our own!

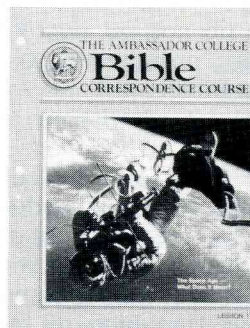
**13.** What must one do to receive the Holy Spirit and very faith of Jesus Christ? Acts 2:38. Must one be willing to obey God? Acts 5:32. And must you first show faith toward Christ before you can receive His faith? Acts 20:21, Rom. 1:17.

God will give His Holy Spirit and the resulting faith of Christ only to those who meet these prior conditions.

Yes, it does take our own faith to believe in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins. But *that faith doesn't save us!* It is only when the Holy Spirit comes into us that we receive the *saving* faith of Christ! And it all comes as a free gift from God. We could never earn it.

Jesus is the source of living, active, dynamic faith. And if Christ is in us through His Spirit, He imparts His own faith to us, which makes our spiritual obedience and ultimate salvation possible.

(For an in-depth study of the kind of faith required for salvation and how to receive it, write for a copy of our free booklet, *What Is Faith?*) □



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# How to Overcome Depression and Discouragement

*In the face of life's trials, we need to know how to stay on the path of positive Christian growth.*

By Paul Krautmann and John Siston

**D**o you ever get discouraged?

Do hard times get you depressed?

Are you overtaken by feelings of despair and hopelessness?

A recent survey showed that 45 percent of the men and 57 percent of the women interviewed admitted to feeling depressed

during the past year. Some specialists feel that 80 percent of Americans, for example, are experiencing differing degrees of depression at any given time.

So it would seem that depression is quite common. How do you deal with it when it enters your life?

Depression can range from occasional bouts of moodiness and

discouragement to continued and extended periods of chronic despair. Some may experience it occasionally. To others it may be a way of life.

## **Churchill's battle**

Winston Churchill, though renowned for his optimism in times of adversity, suffered from prolonged and recurrent fits of

Photo by Hal Finch

depression. Many circumstances in his life contributed to this depression.

As a youth, Churchill had little contact with his parents. He was sent to boarding school, where he was unhappy. He received severe beatings from the headmaster. While he was in school, his parents seldom wrote; when his father did write, it was to rebuke his son.

At age 20 Churchill was in the army. In World War I he planned the Dardanelles campaign, in which many men lost their lives. This episode brought Churchill under heavy political attack and forced him to resign his command. Later, World War II brought many more moments of despair.

Yet Churchill was, for the most part, able to defeat his depression.

“His own name for depression was ‘Black Dog’ . . . In the course of his life, he experienced many

trial was just too much to bear. He was despondent to the point of wanting to die (Job 6:1-4, 8-10).

Moses, to whom God personally gave the Ten Commandments, was dejected enough at one point that he asked God to kill him (Num. 11:11-15).

This was also true in the case of Elijah. God used Elijah to work many mighty deeds, yet he, too, was subject to depression (I Kings 19:4).

How about you? How do you cope with depression? Although these people had their trials, they found the strength to fight and win their battles with depression. We, too, must learn to thwart discouraging and depressing thoughts.

### **The origin of negative thoughts**

To conquer depressing and discouraging thoughts, we must first recognize the cause of such thoughts. We need to realize that

you might start thinking about all the things you don’t have but would like to possess, but for which you lack the money. Or that your personality or health is not as dynamic as that of some of your friends. Or that you get lonely sometimes.

Matters like these start to fill your mind. Before too long you can become depressed without even knowing why.

The way to protect ourselves from this kind of attack is to be constantly on guard against such depressing thoughts. And when they do start to grip us, to seek the counteracting help of God (Jas. 4:7). God is the one who will help us control them (II Cor. 10:4-5).

We have to trust God to help us in times of discouragement. This involves drawing on the power of God’s Holy Spirit — the mind, attitude and nature of God Himself. We have to walk with God.

### **Walk with God**

Let’s face it: We usually get depressed because we are far from God. It is easy for negative moods to overtake us when God is not the center of our lives. Satan can easily take advantage of these moods and influence us to sink into even deeper despair.

The solution, of course, is to continually walk with God, particularly at times when we feel a mood of depression or discouragement coming on. The nearer we are to God, the more we develop the sound mind of God (II Tim. 1:7).

So how can we walk with God? Here are seven powerful ways to stay close to God and conquer depression and discouragement.

- *Pray every day.* Prayer is crucial. Without it our attitudes are easily battered by the world around us. We *can* overcome the world and its moods, however (John 16:33), by using the stabilizing, strengthening tool of prayer every day.

- *Realize God’s presence.* God is omnipresent, continually aware of what is happening in our lives (Ps. 139:7, Heb. 4:13). Nothing

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## **Negative thoughts originate with Satan the devil, who can capitalize on difficulties in our lives. Sickness, job pressures, other severe trials — the devil can use negative episodes like these to generate feelings of dejection.**

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reverses: disappointments which might have embittered and defeated even a man who was not afflicted by the ‘Black Dog.’ Yet, his dogged determination, his resilience and his courage enabled him, until old age, to conquer his own enemy, just as he defeated the foes of the country he loved so well” (*Churchill: The Man*, Anthony Storr, pp. 207, 245).

Of course, Churchill is hardly the only great person who has grappled with depression in adverse life circumstances. The Bible is replete with examples of servants of God who, in the face of intense trials, got discouraged. Their situations got them thinking negatively. They were tempted to give up.

Job, for example, felt that his

negative thoughts ultimately originate with Satan.

Satan can capitalize on the difficult circumstances that happen in our lives. You or a family member may be sick. You may be experiencing intense pressure on the job, or may even be out of a job. Or you may be wrestling with another severe trial in your life.

The devil can use these trials and negative episodes to generate feelings of dejection.

Satan, the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2), can also broadcast negative feelings and moods into our minds even when there is no circumstance or apparent reason for us to be “low.” These thoughts can enter our minds quite subtly. For example,

takes place of which God is not aware. Christ recognized this (Matt. 10:24-30) and we should, too.

During periods of depression there is a tendency to feel cut off from God or completely alone. But we can, and ought to, seek God's help anytime (I Thess. 5:17).

• *Respond to the Holy Spirit's lead.* David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). He sought God swiftly when situations in his life began to overwhelm him. He "made haste" when it came to obeying God (Ps. 119:60).

If we are being led by God, we will be moved to seek Him. The more effectively we can develop the habit of responding immediately to the influence of God's Spirit, the more quickly our minds will take on God's thoughts, replacing thoughts of discouragement and despair.

• *Study the Bible daily.* The Bible contains many encouraging and inspiring passages. It includes examples of faith of people who faced virtually insurmountable odds and yet overcame. The Bible shows us the greatness of God and the vastness of the master plan He has lovingly designed for the whole universe.

The more a Christian reads this book, the more he takes on the mind of God. This is why daily Bible study is essential. We need to make the Bible the basis of our behavior and the basis of the sound-minded, uplifting thoughts that dispel despair.

• *Live the give way.* Depression many times begins when we start to focus on ourselves. Thoughts of our own problems, fears and worries begin to fill our minds instead of the thoughts of God.

Pretty soon we lose perspective and our own little world starts to overwhelm us. We must not allow this to happen.

An excellent way to overcome feeling sorry for ourselves is by living the *give way* of life. We must always look for ways to help others, but especially at times when we develop an unhealthy preoccupation with ourselves

(John 15:13). Maybe it is a matter of visiting those who are sick or cheering up someone who is feeling down. It might be writing a letter of encouragement, taking someone out to dinner, helping a person to move, serving a widow or the fatherless.

It is a matter of giving happiness to others. It is very difficult to feel discouraged when you are doing these things. Giving is a natural, unbreakable law that produces happiness for the giver. The key is to get your mind off yourself.

• *Make each day count.* Paul says that we are to redeem the time (Eph. 5:16, Col. 4:5). The New International Version translates Ephesians 5:16 to read that we should be "making the most of every opportunity."

If we allow ourselves to get lethargic in our approach toward life, we give ourselves time to start thinking how much better off we ought to be.

and problems can get the better of us. When this happens, we must, in spite of how bad things may seem, hold on to God and not let go.

In spite of his many hardships, the apostle Paul relied on God and did not allow himself to get depressed. He told the Corinthians:

"We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed . . . therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day" (II Cor. 4:8-9, 16).

Paul certainly had many reasons to get discouraged. His letters and the book of Acts record many unpleasant predicaments in which he found himself (II Cor. 6:8-10, 11:23-33). Yet he did not let circumstances dishearten him!

"I have learned to be content

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Every day is a chance to grow, serve and produce. Do you view life as something you must endure, or do you instead take the initiative and strive to accomplish as much as you can in serving others and God's Work?

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Every day is a chance to grow, serve and produce. Do you view life as something that you must endure, or do you take the initiative and strive to accomplish as much as you can in serving others and the Work of God? How you answer that question will determine how God judges you (II Cor. 5:10).

Every day you have a chance to make an impact, whether it be on the job, at home, with your family, with your friends or elsewhere. There is much you can do within your own individual sphere of influence.

• *Hold on to God no matter what.* The Christian life is not an easy one. Everyone whom God calls can expect difficulties (Acts 14:22). At times these difficulties

whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:11-13, NIV).

As long as we hold on to God, God will not forsake us (II Tim. 3:11-12). He promises that He will deliver us (Ps. 34:19).

You need not suffer under the cloud of depression and despair. By applying these principles and by building the right positive mental habits, you can develop a happier, more positive outlook. You *can* win the battle over depression! □

# Exercising Faith

**T**he man was deeply shaken.

A drunk driver had run a red light and hit his 8-year-old son. The little boy now lay in a coma in the intensive care unit of a hospital.

didn't have enough faith in God to be able to pray and expect an answer. His inadequacy held him back from seeking the help that only God could give.

Have you ever felt a lack of faith when faced with a severe trial? If so, there is a solution to

if it is to bear fruit. In other words, faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:17-26).

The true, living faith God imparts is based on an ongoing relationship between you and your Creator — constant, intimate contact with Him. It's a track record of trust — of experiencing God living His life in you.

The Bible admonishes Christians to always trust and fear God (Ps. 62:8, Prov. 23:17). Living faith involves being God-centered — walking with Him — day by day throughout your life. You must constantly be “building yourselves up on your most holy faith” (Jude 20).

Those who walk with God by faith receive powerful answers to prayer. They are in constant contact with Him. When a trial arises, they don't have to “work up” faith — God has already given it to them. They have living, dynamic, ever-present relationships with God, and they know that God will never leave them nor forsake them (Heb. 13:5).

You, too, can have this living faith. The following seven principles will show you how.

## Keys to powerful faith

1) *Be aware of God's presence and renew your covenant with Him daily.* God is almighty — omnipotent. His Spirit fills the entire universe — His invisible presence is everywhere (Ps. 139:1-10). He is at this very moment upholding all things by the “word of His power” (Heb. 1:3).

God sees and knows your every secret — your life is open to His view (Heb. 4:13). Are you constantly aware of Him and stand-



The doctors had done the best they could, but with so much internal bleeding and injury, they were doubtful if the child would survive.

“Only God can help him now,” one of the doctors said.

The man was in the depths of despair. He believed that God existed, but doubts and anxieties kept flooding his mind. He felt distant from God — that God was “a long way off.” How could he pray to God for help when he had no faith that He would hear?

In this illustration, we see a man who, faced with a crisis,

this problem. You can have living faith — every day — to face any difficulty that arises.

How? By learning how to use the faith God gives!

## Living by faith

To most people “faith” is simply a belief that God exists, that the Bible is His Word or that Jesus is the Savior of the world.

Of course, these concepts are right. But they do not capture the complete reality of what faith is. Faith is more than just a dry mental concept. True faith comes from God as a gift (Eph. 2:8) that must be internalized and acted on

ing in awe of His sovereign power?

When one is baptized and receives God's Spirit, he begins a new covenant — a special agreement — with God. If you have done so, you had to count the cost and present yourself a living sacrifice (Luke 14:26-33, Rom. 12:1).

Now, each day, you must renew your pledge of surrender and obedience — your commitment to unreserved loyalty and dedication. Keep this fact in the front of your mind and it will sustain the faith God has given you.

2) *Be instant in prayer.* Put God first, from your waking moments. Place Him at the center of your thinking before personal desires and activities start crowding in.

The Bible commands us to pray without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17). It is good to start your day with prayer and ask God to guide you throughout the day and keep you from falling into sin. Pray for instant strength and self-control when you encounter destructive attitudes.

Always stay in an attitude of prayer and sustain an ongoing relationship with God. Allow nothing to break your contact with Him — become so close to God that He's just a prayer away.

3) *Let the Bible live in you.* Study the Bible daily and apply its teachings to every decision you must make — to every problem you face. Remember, it's not the hearers but the doers of God's Word who will be justified (Rom. 2:13). Faith comes by hearing and obeying God's instructions (Rom. 10:17).

Allow the Bible to so fill your mind that it becomes the basis of all your behavior. The more you experience the Bible, the greater your faith will become.

4) *Lay down your life in service and make each day count.* Jesus Christ said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

This is one of the most

powerful and succinct definitions of love in the Bible. Love is giving your life in service to others. With each person you meet is a new opportunity to express love in some form — kindness, courtesy, encouragement, recognition or appreciation.

With each passing day you are a step closer to the Kingdom of God. Therefore, strive to improve over yesterday's performance.

Work hard at setting the right example — be a better husband or wife, father or mother, employee and neighbor. Spend your time pursuing positive ventures and striving to be a better servant of God as you prepare yourself for Christ's return. There are literally dozens of opportunities around you to show love each day. Exercise your faith!

5) *Respond to God's Holy Spirit.* God's Spirit is the power by which He created and sustains all things. It represents His perfect attitude and strength that He imparts to His servants to lead them to do His will.

We are warned not to grieve or quench God's Spirit (Eph. 4:30, I Thess. 5:19). We should be responding to it and allowing it to completely convert us until we are perfectly serving God.

When God's Spirit leads you to recognize sin or error, respond immediately. Crush out the temptation before it takes root and starts to grow. Be prepared to resist Satan's attacks — be vigilant (I Pet. 5:8-9). Keep yourself in the fear of God so that He may grant you the faith to live triumphantly.

6) *Start expecting miracles.* Answered prayer and God's protection are miracles. Any direct intervention by God in your life, however small or insignificant it may seem, is a miracle. As you grow closer to God each day, your awareness of these miracles will increase. And you can expect greater miracles to the degree you submit to and rely on God.

Don't think of God's miracles solely in terms of great healings, deliverance from horrendous trials

or provision of physical needs — food, shelter and clothing. Think of miracles as the power God provides you to overcome Satan, temptation and discouragement — as the strength He gives you to live a clean, holy life.

If you are truly walking in faith, you should begin to experience more miracles each day.

7) *Hold on to God in your darkest hour.* Trials will come in every Christian's life (Ps. 34:19, II Tim. 3:12, Acts 14:22). Some trials are so severe you'll be tempted to give up and quit — a grave illness, a death in the family, the loss of a job, a lawsuit where you stand to lose all your possessions. There are times when the devil will unleash his full fury in an effort to destroy you.

During these moments, hold on to God and trust Him to the end. "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7).

God in His infinite wisdom has decreed that we each must stand and give an account before Christ of the way we have chosen to live our lives. We, then, should live each day with this in mind.

Remembering God's coming judgment should be one of the greatest incentives to living a righteous and holy life. We, as Christians, as opposed to the rest of the world, are being judged now (I Pet. 4:17).

### **An ongoing relationship**

Read these seven steps again and review them frequently. Make exercising them a part of your everyday life. Unless you resolve to apply them diligently, they will do little more than give you a temporary lift.

Living faith is an ongoing relationship with God — a constant, daily trust.

As you exercise God's faith, it will grow stronger like a muscle that is developed. You'll discover that looking to God in any circumstance will eventually become your first thought — an instinctive response.

Then you'll really be living by faith! □

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