

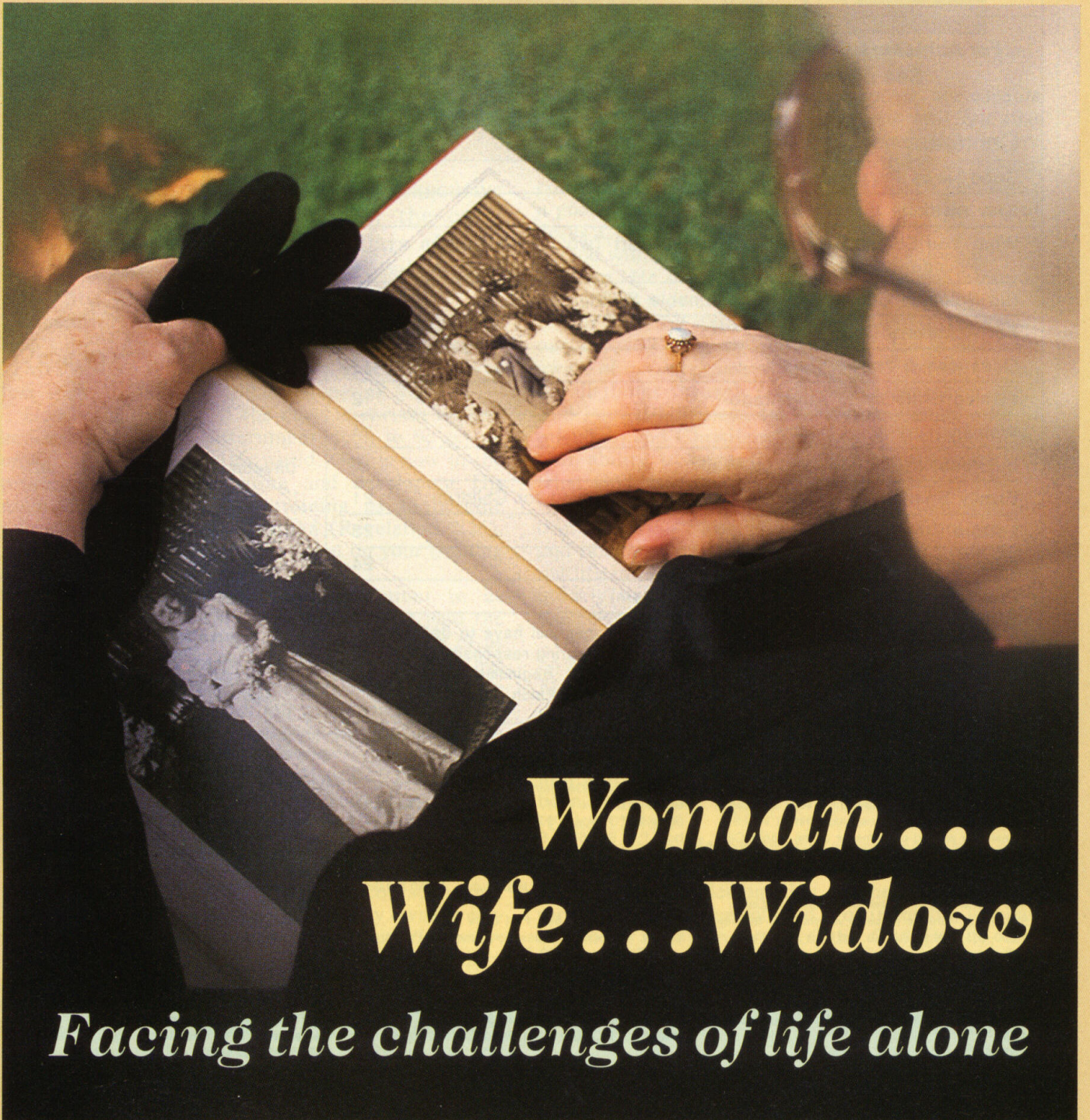
FEBRUARY 1987

# The Good News

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OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

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***Woman...  
Wife...Widow***

***Facing the challenges of life alone***

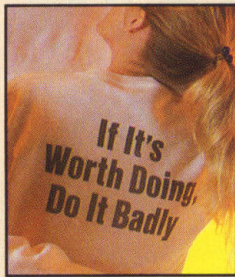
# The Good News

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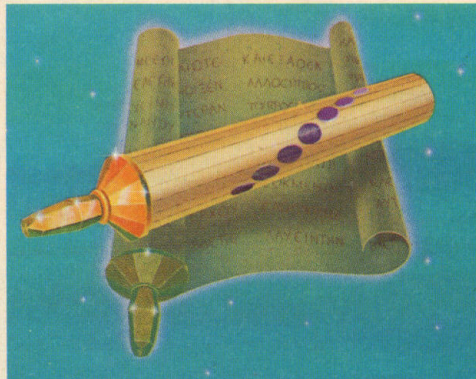
FEBRUARY 1987

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**For Achievers Only**  
**See page 9**



24

## Contents:

Good News Personal: Don't Resign!	1
Stay Awake!	2
What You Should Know About Dating, Part Two: The Forgotten Foundation	4
Did Solomon Commit the Unpardonable Sin?	7
For Achievers Only	9
Questions & Answers	11
Turning Criticism to Advantage	12
Woman . . . Wife . . . Widow	14
But What If God Makes You Wait?	18
Family Sharing: The Ultimate Sharing — Planning for Children	21
Letters	23
Here Is Prophecy Fulfilled! Part Two	24
Prove All Things: You Must Be Born Again!	28

**COVER:** Widowhood is a life stage that many women will have to deal with at some time. Grief, loneliness, financial needs, child-rearing responsibilities — all these must be faced. "Woman . . . Wife . . . Widow," beginning on page 14, examines the sensitive issues involved. Photo by Hal Finch.

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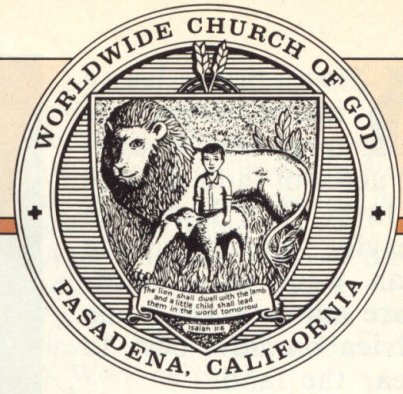
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# Don't Resign!

*In this month's "Good News Personal," Publisher Joseph W. Tkach asked Editor Dexter H. Faulkner to write about perseverance and learning from mistakes.*

**Y**ears ago an IBM junior executive made a mistake that cost the company several million dollars. IBM's founder, Thomas J. Watson Sr., summoned him into his office.

Assuming the worst, the sullied young executive said, "I guess you want my resignation?"

Mr. Watson replied: "You can't be serious. We've just spent millions of dollars educating you!"

God is the founder of the most important organization of all — His government, soon to be set up on earth to rule the entire world. God is now in the process of hiring, educating and developing His management team. He is training *us* to become powerful rulers in that Kingdom (Revelation 2:26).

How much has God already spent on your training and education?

God has made a supreme investment in us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty for our sins. Without that price, none of us could be given the high-ranking positions God has waiting for us. But God doesn't stop there. He invests in us daily through His guidance and correction, and through the continuous outpouring of His Holy Spirit.

In a very real sense, God owns us. The apostle Paul reminds us, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:20).

Our Creator expects to see a profit for all of His time, effort and sacrifice. God, of course, is not interested in making money. He already owns everything. God is in the business of building *character*.

If those of us who are called now succeed in qualifying for positions of rulership, we will in turn be able to help millions of others join the God Family. To put it in business terms, our future profit to the God Family will more than make up for any

of our present losses — *if* we stay with the organization and apply the new lessons!

Christians, like the junior executive, are capable of making costly mistakes. Have you ever felt that God has given up on you? Do you feel like you are wasting His time? Let's see what God says: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

God will never give up on us — unless we give up on Him. He is investing in us with every intention of making a profit.

Our merciful Father sees our potential. He knows our capacity to grow and develop. He is also well aware of our weaknesses, and is ready to help. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," said Paul (Philippians 4:13). Humans make a lot of mistakes, and Christians certainly aren't exceptions. Our ability to learn from our mistakes is part of what God uses to build character in us.

In the book of Revelation, we read that it is the overcomers — those who don't resign from serving and obeying God — who ultimately are given eternal life in God's Family: "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work" (Revelation 22:12). And, "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Revelation 3:21).

God is ready and willing to forgive us for our mistakes. But He expects us to learn our lessons well. "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48).

Have you made costly mistakes? Have you been stumbling and seemingly wasting God's time? Don't resign! Learn the lessons that will help you to better serve in the Kingdom of God. For if you do, you can become a ruling member of the God Family, and help countless others to be born into that Family. That's where the real profit begins!

Dexter H. Faulkner  
Editor

**Y**ou may have heard about the man who bought 40 acres of land to start a farm. The land was heavily wooded, so the man went to a hardware store to get some advice on how best to clear the land.

"What you need is a chain saw," said the hardware-store clerk. "With a chain saw you can easily clear about an acre of land every day."

So the man bought a chain saw and went to work.

Five days later, the man stormed into the hardware store and angrily slammed the chain saw down on the counter. "I want my money back!" he demanded. "This thing isn't any good!"

"What's the matter with it, sir?" the clerk asked.

"You told me that with this chain saw, I would be able to clear an acre of land every day," the man fumed. "But I've only been able to cut down five or six trees at most each day."

"I don't understand," said the clerk. "When I sold it to you, it was in perfect working order." With that, the clerk picked up the chain saw and gave the cord a jerk. Sure enough, the saw roared to life, buzzing away just as it was supposed to.

The startled man jumped back from the counter and yelled, "What's that noise?!"

### **A world unaware**

Sad to say, most of the people of this world are just like the man in the story above! They hear a great noise, but they have no idea what it means. They fail to comprehend the great noise that the Worldwide Church of God is making in warning this world about what is coming because of man's sins. Most don't seem interested, either, in the good news we offer about the new world God is about to set up.

But longtime readers of *The*



# STAY AWAKE!

*World troubles are drawing us closer to the end of this age and the return of Jesus Christ. We need to stay alert to what is happening!*

By Norman L. Shoaf

*Good News* understand, and all too well, what escalating world troubles and evils mean.

Herbert W. Armstrong, the founder of this magazine, used to describe this society as a building that Satan the devil has constructed. That condemned building is about to come crashing down at the return of Jesus Christ, to be swept away and replaced by the Kingdom of God!

But most people take no notice. They either don't want to, or they

think that man's own efforts will somehow solve world evils.

For all practical purposes, at this most crucial time in history, the people of this world are asleep!

### **The danger for us**

Here's the point: If we are not careful, even we to whom God is revealing the truth can get tired and fall asleep, too!

The cares of this world can take our minds off the Work of

God. Personal problems can draw our attention away from the wonderful world tomorrow. Immersed *in* this world (though not *of* it), surrounded by its ways and customs, we can forget how evil this society, apart from God, really is, and what is about to happen because of it.

Even Jesus Christ's original disciples had this problem. At the most crucial, trying time in Christ's life, in the hours just before He was beaten without mercy and then crucified for all our sins, the disciples fell asleep (Matthew 26:36-46)!

We must make sure that we, Christ's end-time disciples, don't fall asleep now. We are on the brink of some of the most important events of all time: the end of Satan's misrule on this planet, the return of the glorified Christ, the re-establishment of God's government on earth. For true Christians, final victory in the long struggle of God's Church is now at hand.

What a tragedy it will be if any of us fail to remain awake, alert and aware now!

A playwright once asked Carl Sandburg, the American author and poet, for an opinion of his new play. Sandburg attended a dress rehearsal of the play — and slept through the entire performance! The dramatist complained, saying that Sandburg had known how much he wanted his opinion. Sandburg replied, "Sleep is an opinion."

If those God has called to do His great Work in these last days fall asleep on the job, it will certainly show God our opinion of His calling!

### **Awake, alert and aware**

Here are some practical steps we can take to make sure we stay awake spiritually during these final months and years before this age ends and God's new world is ushered in:

- *Watch world events.* In Matthew 24:43-44, Christ warned: "Know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not

allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him."

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ will take most of this world by complete surprise. But those with whom God is working need not be caught unaware, if we are watching the sure signs in the world around us.

International troubles and wars are mounting. Famine and disease are increasing. Natural disasters are multiplying. And the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is being preached in power around the world! These were the very signs Christ listed earlier in Matthew 24.

"Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man," Christ commanded His followers (Luke 21:36).

Know what is going on in the world around you. Stay abreast of the news. Read the *Plain Truth* magazine every issue. Also, request and read our free booklet *Are We in the Last Days?*

- *Stay involved with God's Work.* Pastor General Joseph W. Tkach has said that God's people grow spiritually in direct proportion to how much their hearts are in God's Work. God's Work consists of 1) preaching the Gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to the world as a witness (Matthew 24:14), and 2) growing in grace and spiritual knowledge (II Peter 3:18), preparing to become teachers under Christ in the world tomorrow (Isaiah 2:3).

Is doing God's end-time Work the most important purpose in your mind?

Watch the *World Tomorrow* telecast every week. It is shown on stations throughout the United States and Canada and in many other countries. *The World Tomorrow* boldly explains world events in the light of Bible prophecy and points viewers toward the new world to come.

Keep reading *The Plain Truth*, *The Good News*, *Youth 87* and

the books and booklets published by the Worldwide Church of God. They will keep you aware of what is going on in God's Work and teach you about the true doctrines of the Bible.

And of course, personal Bible study and fervent prayer will keep you in contact with God Himself, the ultimate Head of His Work on earth.

- *Overcome personal problems.* Sins that are not repented of, chronic character flaws and bad habits — all these can lull you into unconsciousness, spiritually. They prevent the spiritual growth God desires in His called people.

As Isaiah 59:2 says, "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you."

The solution is to repent. You can change, with God's help. You can overcome every problem, with the help of Christ's strength (Philippians 4:13).

### **Don't become weary**

Most of the decade of the 1980s has now passed. Because man refuses to repent, events continue to hurtle toward the grand-smash climax that will end this age and usher in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

In short, we are coming to the most crucial point in history, and the most crucial point in God's Work in this age. We who have been called by God must not become weary in well doing (Galatians 6:9).

The apostle Paul wrote, "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed" (Romans 13:11).

Elsewhere Paul encouraged, "Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober" (I Thessalonians 5:6).

Don't let the cares of this world, boredom, laziness, trials or a casual attitude toward God's way of life lull you to sleep. Watch world events. Stay involved with God's Work. Strive to overcome personal problems.

This is now the challenge for God's people: Stay awake! □

Illustration by Ken Tunell

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

# Dating

## The Forgotten Foundation

*Millions have overlooked the most basic fact concerning male-female relationships! Our series continues with a revealing look at why men and women were created in the first place.*

By Larry R. Salyer

**L**et's face it: *Everybody* wants to be happy. *Nobody* wants to be lonely.

Ask the average single person what would make him or her happy and you'll probably hear something like this: "I just want to be loved. I want to build a relationship with someone with whom I can share my life — someone who understands me."

A few will profess contentment with being unattached and independent. Still others will loudly proclaim they have all they ever wanted — a new sports car and a nice place to live.

How about you? What makes *you* tick? What do you really know about yourself? Do you know what it would take to make you happy — to make your life exciting, satisfying and full of joy?

### Happiness in relationships

True happiness is not produced by material things. It is bound up in the relationships we have with, first, God, and then with other people.

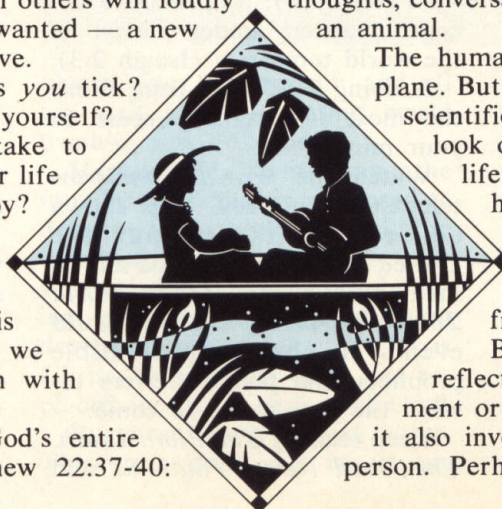
Jesus Himself summarized God's entire perfect and holy law in Matthew 22:37-40:

"Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.'"

The nature of the human mind is such that it demands a relationship with other human minds. A dog may be "man's best friend," but a person will be quite lonely if he or she goes through life sharing thoughts, conversation, hopes and dreams only with an animal.

The human mind is simply on a different plane. But most people — the most brilliant scientific minds included — simply overlook or ignore this fact! Look at your life. Undoubtedly your greatest joys have come from positive, successful experiences with other humans — perhaps a parent, a brother or sister or your all-time best friend.

But conversely, you can probably reflect back on your deepest disappointment or moment of sadness and find that it also involved a relationship with another person. Perhaps it was a broken friendship



or the abrupt end of a budding romance. Maybe it resulted from being called names at school, losing an athletic contest or the embarrassment of showing up at a party in the wrong kind of clothing.

The common denominator in all of these instances is that we're all deeply concerned about what other people think of us, as well as what we think of ourselves. That's simply the way the human mind works.

Nowhere is this more evident than in our relationships with people of the opposite sex. Somehow it seems so difficult to know what is expected of us, to understand just what's going on in the other person's head.

And lack of real understanding of relationships — the result of rejecting the revelation of Almighty God — has left most of mankind to human reasoning and experimentation, which in turn have led to deeper misery!

Rather than humbly look to God and His Word, the basic source of all true knowledge, which would require repentance and obedience, many have taken the position that nothing is going to work out anyway. After all, we live daily with the threat of nuclear war. Why not live today as if there will be no tomorrow?

This philosophy leads to reckless abandon and thrill-seeking in a sort of perverted attempt to make the best of a bad situation. It can leave scars on the mind and body that may never heal! And it often wastes the best years available to prepare for a happy marriage and a stable future. What a tragedy!

### **This world is blinded**

Satan the devil has cleverly blinded humans to our wonderful potential to become members of the God Family. He doesn't want us to enjoy the kind of personal, family love that would open our eyes to God's marvelous plan. And so Satan has deliberately led people away from truth and into philosophies that lead to destruction.

Among these is the idea that marriage is not necessary for sex, and that the gratification of sexual lust is something we owe ourselves. So we have developed sayings like "Do your own thing" and "Whatever turns you on."

Such a philosophy leads to the rejection of moral absolutes and leaves each person as a law unto himself. But notice what happens when man makes his own judgments on morality: "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due" (Romans 1:26-27).

These words are even more timely in this society today than when they were written.

Is there a way out? Are there any dependable, workable principles that govern our human relation-

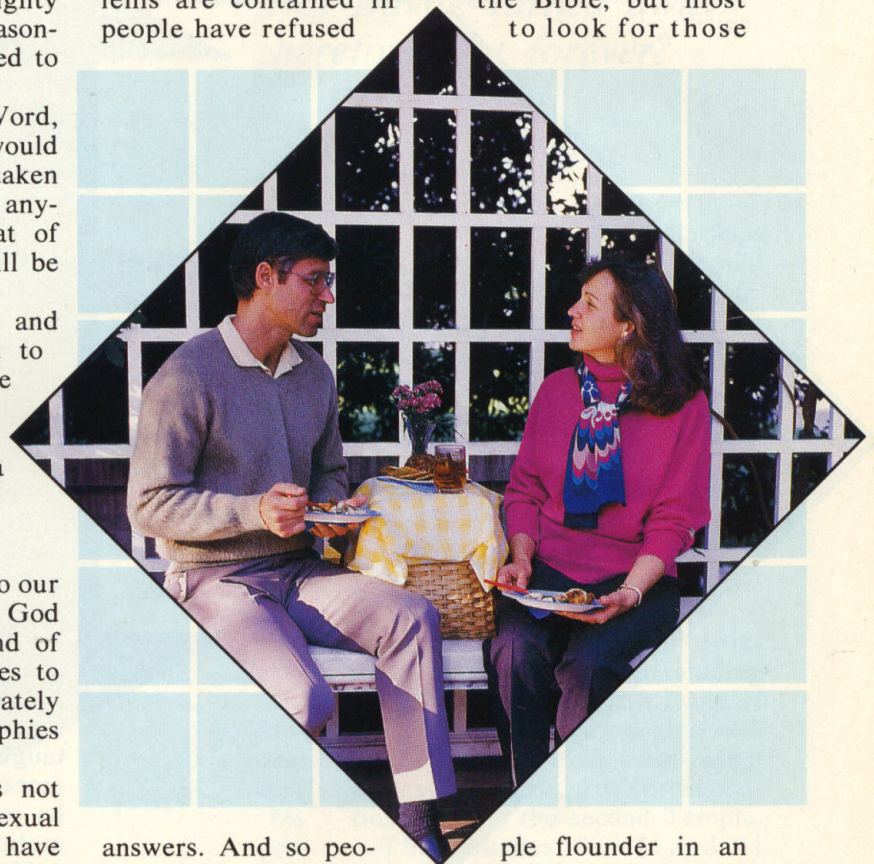
ships? Can we know what leads to successful courtship and marriage?

### **Laws in motion**

Yes, there is a way to success. But if you will find it, you must be willing to swim upstream. You must have the courage to break out of the accepted routines of singles around you. You must dare to be different!

Most of mankind is ignorant of the living laws that govern human conduct and relationships. Regular readers of *The Good News* know that this magazine carries a message of hope founded on the truth of God as revealed in His Word.

Answers to all of man's seemingly insolvable problems are contained in the Bible, but most people have refused to look for those



answers. And so people flounder in an ever more confusing array of humanly devised ideas and philosophies, which offer no solutions.

Yes, human authorities justify their approval of wrong marriage and sex practices by calling them "alternate life-styles." But what does God say? Let's look into the Word of God and find out.

### **The purpose of marriage**

"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27).

This simple statement of fact is the cornerstone of understanding male-female relationships. Yet few indeed even accept it as truth.

Notice that all of mankind was created in God's image. Not just the male. Not just the female. But "male and female He created them." So man and

Illustration by Wendy Lagerstrom;  
photo by Hal Finch

woman together reflected the image of God. God actually made them to complement each other perfectly. This is most obvious in the sexual union and in the means of reproduction.

But the sexual compatibility of the bodies is only one example of the many characteristics of male and female that are designed to complement the opposite sex. When combined in marriage, they create the perfectly balanced whole.

Reading further in the Genesis account, we find, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24, King James Bible). They become one flesh in the sexual relationship, but again, this is a picture of the complete and total union of the two beings in body, mind, emotion and spirit.



**Mankind was made in God's image.  
This statement is the cornerstone  
of male-female relationships.  
Yet few accept it as truth.**

When a man and a woman commit themselves to each other in marriage, they commit themselves to the mutual sharing of all of life's experiences. They become one. The word *cleave* in this verse means to "stick to" or "be welded to."

Two other scriptures should make it plain. In Amos 3:3 we read, "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" And Proverbs 18:24 says, "There

is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Clearly, God intended that a man and a woman leave their parents and marry. Their new relationship is to supersede even the attachment to their blood relatives.

And God provided that through the most intimate expression of love for one another, in the sexual union, husband and wife could produce a child with the blood of both in its veins.

### **Millions robbed of joy**

Today's ideas about group marriage, communal living, homosexual "marriage" and surrogate parenting cloud the meaning and purpose of the God-ordained male and female roles and rob untold millions of the profound joy of a godly marriage.

Such "modern" ideas actually go back to Sodom and Gomorrah and are soundly condemned in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible (Leviticus 18:22, I Corinthians 6:9, Romans 1:26-27).

By contrast, we are given in Ephesians 5:22-33 a beautiful picture of a marriage built on commitment, of love between a man and a woman that elicits total participation by both parties.

This is the kind of human relationship that overwhelms loneliness! It is a giving and sharing of the self with another of like mind that reflects the attitude of Christ and the Church.

Such a marriage relationship can result only when it is built on a right foundation. And that foundation starts with personal understanding of the purpose for the creation of man and woman.

But those who will not read and accept the truth, as revealed in God's inspired Word, cannot understand!

### **Look at your beliefs**

What can you do? You can begin by taking an honest look at your own concepts of love and marriage. You are a product of what you have been taught by the society around you. Your beliefs and moral values may have no basis in fact. They may be contrary to the living laws your Creator set in motion.

If so, you need to consider the long-term results you may be headed for, and choose between the reasonings of human minds and the absolute truth of God.

If you would like to pursue a deeper study of the marriage and sexual relationship, write for our free full-length book *The Missing Dimension in Sex*.

And keep reading *The Good News* as we continue this series of articles on dating. In coming articles we will study the male and female roles, the singles scene, courtship and romance and the meaning of real love.

Happiness is elusive in today's world. But *you* can be truly happy — filled with the real joy that comes from a deep and satisfying relationship.

Let the Creator of love and marriage show you the way! □



# Did Solomon Commit the Unpardonable Sin?

*In his old age, ancient King Solomon, son of David, turned away from God. Did he sin willfully? Is he therefore lost forever?*

By John Ross Schroeder

**H**ebrews 10:26-27 warns: "If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries."

Hebrews 6:4-6 adds, "It is impossible . . . if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance."

The Bible says that sinning willfully — refusing to repent — is unpardonable! Is this what happened to Solomon? Has it happened — or could it happen — to you?

Somehow, Solomon's eternal destiny continues to intrigue people even today. Almost always, those who ask about Solomon do so with the sneaking suspicion that he did commit the unpardonable sin. Buried deep in our human nature is a secret delight when things go wrong. Our own inferiorities are somehow assuaged by bad news about others.

On its face, even asking such a question doesn't seem very profitable. Yet many of us have at least entertained the question.

But the whole matter is worth

considering from the standpoint of proper Bible study habits. One of the prime rules of Bible study is to get all the facts. Do we have all the biblical facts about Solomon? Is our perspective limited to the account of his apostasy in I Kings? Or have we somehow overlooked other vital factors?

## Solomon's transgressions

Biblical law stated that a king of Israel was not to multiply to himself three specific items — wives, gold and horses. Solomon broke all three injunctions.

God punishes every son He loves. Solomon was no exception. The account in I Kings starts the sad story: "So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel . . . he did not keep what the Lord had commanded" (I Kings 11:9-10).

Various punishments were to follow the king's sins. The kingdom would be divided after Solomon's death. An adversary would rise up within the nation.

The Bible does not state that Solomon repented. I Kings concludes the account of his life with this: "Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?" (I Kings 11:41).

Solomon did more than is

recorded in the Bible. Perhaps other incidents in his life would help answer our question. Perhaps not. At any rate, the Book of the Acts of Solomon has been lost.

## A later parallel account

I and II Chronicles are placed at the end of the Jewish Bible. They sum up the Old Testament. (The 12 minor prophets conclude the Old Testament portion of the King James Bible.)

Jewish rabbinical authorities had good reason for concluding the Old Testament with I and II Chronicles. The story begins with the pre-Flood genealogy of Adam and ends with Cyrus' proclamation to build the second Temple.

The sources for I and II Chronicles are many. The four books of Samuel and Kings are often quoted verbatim. Other books of the Hebrew Bible are often utilized. Sixteen nonbiblical sources are mentioned by name. Among the titles are these three: the Books of the Kings of Israel and Judah, the Chronicles of Samuel the Seer, the Commentary on the Book of Kings.

That last title might have helped us with our question. But all 16 are lost.

One point is certain. I and II Chronicles were written *after* I and II Kings. The writer of I and

II Chronicles had occasion to consider the historical facts. What portions of I and II Kings did he include and what portions did he exclude? What portions of Solomon's life did he put in? How did God inspire the writer?

The first nine chapters of II Chronicles concern themselves with Solomon's reign. Notice chapter 1, verse 1: "Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the Lord his God was with him and exalted him exceedingly."

II Chronicles 9:22 begins the last paragraph of this account of

tice what the Bible says: "And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart . . . for he was wiser than all men" (I Kings 4:29-31). Solomon's writings reflect his wisdom.

Notice further in verse 32: "He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five." A goodly portion of Solomon's proverbs are collected in the book of Proverbs.

Another wisdom book authored by Solomon is Ecclesiastes. The contents are highly autobiographical. This book is

to deeply realize the dangers of polygamy. He was moved to write: "Live joyfully with the wife [not wives] whom you love all the days of your vain life" (Ecclesiastes 9:9). The king advised monogamy.

Ecclesiastes 7:26 is a most interesting scripture in this regard: "And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be taken by her." Here Solomon nailed himself to the wall. He was speaking from bitter personal knowledge. He allowed his wives to turn him away from God.

Notice now how Solomon concluded Ecclesiastes: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). The old king advised submission to God.

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## The internal evidence of Ecclesiastes shows a wise old monarch, after a long reign, giving sage advice based on bitter human experience. But, many wonder, did Solomon sin willfully?

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Solomon's life: "So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart."

II Chronicles altogether omits the darker side of Solomon's reign. The writer chose the facts under divine inspiration. There was no need to repeat Solomon's problems in a summary account.

The author of I Chronicles also omitted David's two capital sins. Comments *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*: "The omission is perfectly in order since . . . the new David in the New Age would certainly not be guilty of such conduct, nor would a prophet have occasion to rebuke him" (page 518).

As an overall principle, I and II Chronicles tend to balance the material in Samuel and Kings. Take the case of Manasseh. He was one of the most evil kings in history. Only II Chronicles mentions his repentance. The parallel account in II Kings omits it.

### Solomon as biblical writer

Solomon wrote the wisdom books in the Old Testament. No-

largely based on his experiences as king of Israel. The text clearly indicates it was written in his old age.

Portions of Ecclesiastes do shed some light on the question posed in the title of this article. Notice chapter 1, verse 1: "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem." Solomon himself is obviously the author of this book.

Consider verses 12 and 14: "I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. . . I have seen all the works that are done under the sun." This is a king reflecting on a long reign. These are not the words of a novice. The internal evidence of Ecclesiastes shows a wise old monarch giving sage advice based on bitter experience.

### Advice about marriage

Notice more telling verses. Ecclesiastes 7:15: "I have seen all things in my days of vanity." Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them.'" This is a man speaking from personal experience.

King Solomon apparently came

### Did he or didn't he?

Did Solomon sin willfully? No human knows. God is the judge of all people. The secret things belong to Him.

Sometimes we think we know the answer. But do we? Have we examined all available evidence?

Jesus Christ said, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24). What has come to be known as the Sermon on the Mount tells us not to judge anyone in the sense of condemning (Matthew 7:1-2).

For more information on this whole question, send for our free booklet *What Do You Mean — "The Unpardonable Sin"?* Just mail the literature request envelope in this issue, or write to our address nearest you.

Many years ago I was told that a certain individual had indeed committed the unpardonable sin. There was no doubt in the minds of those who told me.

Then, many years later, I saw that person at the Feast of Tabernacles. He had returned to God's Church several years before.

Enough said. □

Here are three unusual tips to help you achieve your important goals in life: 1) don't work too hard, 2) if it's worth doing, do it badly and 3) always be ready to quit.

As I said, they are unusual. Perhaps I had better explain.

But first, a warning. This is *not* an article for people who *don't* have goals — who are content to drift along aimlessly, letting life happen, never knowing the temporary frustration of failure or the lasting joy of success.

But I don't think we have many readers like that — *The Good News* is read by people who are *trying*. They have many goals they want to accomplish — for themselves, for others and for God and His Work.

If that sounds like you, read on.

These three points, which seem rather negative, are actually very positive, and if you know how to use them they will help you be more productive and effective. They are particularly important once you have accepted the responsibilities that come with living a Christian life.

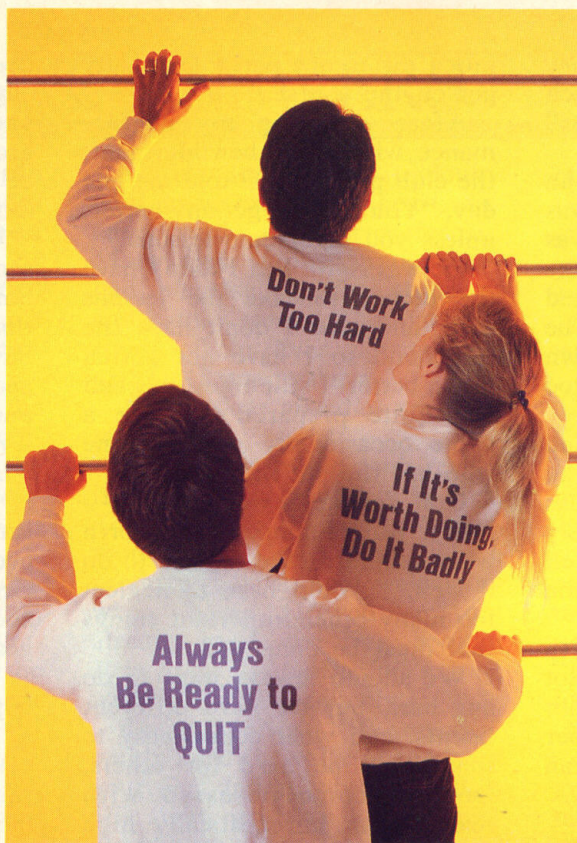
#### Don't become overburdened

Let's look at the first point: Don't work too hard.

To be a real Christian is to be busy. God has a *Work* — not a vacation plan. Anyone whose heart is in that Work will have plenty to do — praying, learning, serving, helping, supporting, growing.

But it should not be *too* full.

Some years ago I had the chance to travel to Alaska and visit the pipeline that brings oil



# FOR ACHIEVERS ONLY

*Are you applying these three important principles as you pursue success in life?*

By John Halford

from Prudhoe Bay to the southern port of Valdez. It was built at an enormous cost, and had to be used efficiently if the investment was to be recovered. The engi-

neers explained to me how they pumped the maximum flow of oil through the hundreds of miles of pipeline. You'd think they would pump at the maximum pressure, but the pipeline actually works best when it's filled to slightly less than full capacity. The oil flows better and thus more can be pumped.

It's the same in life. Have you noticed that there are two kinds of people who never seem to have any time — those who are *unorganized* and those who are *too organized*?

You'd think you'd get more done if you drove yourself full tilt all the time, planning and scheduling every waking minute. But people who do this usually get less done in the long run. They often have to leave some critical things not done, or at least not done properly.

Not everything that is important can be scheduled. This was a lesson that Jesus

had to teach a well-meaning but overburdened woman nearly 2,000 years ago.

The woman was Martha, and she had invited Jesus to a meal in her house. Her sister Mary, who lived with her, listened eagerly to Jesus as He talked before the meal. It was an opportunity that was too good to miss.

Meantime, Martha was busy running all over the place, preparing the meal, fussing over this and that, all the while casting disapproving glances at her sister. Eventually she'd had enough. She interrupted Jesus and said: "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me."

Jesus answered: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But

Photo by Hal Finch

one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38-42).

It is to be hoped Martha learned a lesson. Nothing she was doing was wrong, but her life was so filled up that she couldn't take time out from her self-imposed schedule to listen to Jesus. She had become a slave to her own timetable. She was working too hard.

Martha's problem is common today. Western industrial society worships efficiency. Many books have been written (you probably have one or two of them) that tell you how to manage your time and get more done.

There's nothing wrong with being busy and demanding a lot from yourself, but you should not fill your life too full. Remember Martha. Remember the Alaskan pipeline. Don't work too hard.

### **A sense of proportion**

That brings us to the second point: If it's worth doing, do it badly.

There's a lot of truth in the old saying, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Even the busiest person must leave some time for recreation.

Hobbies, sports and leisure-time activities are a necessary part of living a balanced life, but for a conscientious person who prides himself on never doing anything by halves, they can become a handicap.

I can play golf — sort of. I learned some years ago when my boss decided that he and I needed the exercise. He was quite good at golf, while I had always felt that it was an utter waste of time.

How wrong I was! After a few disastrous rounds I discovered that I enjoyed the game. I soon reached a reasonable standard where I could at least stay on the course most of the time, but then I stopped improving.

It was frustrating. I could score somewhere between 110 to 120, but there I stayed. I nearly killed our dog while diligently practicing my swing in the garden, but it didn't seem to make

much difference when I actually got on the course.

After watching my performance with some bewilderment, the club professional told me one day, "You'll never get any better, unless you take some lessons."

He was right. But I didn't have the money to take the lessons then, and now I don't have the time, and so I have not gotten much better. I still enjoy golf and I'm quite prepared to have a game occasionally with anyone who has the patience.

Golf, for me, is worth doing — badly. But it simply isn't worth what it would take for me to do it well. I would have to neglect too many other important things that must be done well.

We should always want to do our best, but we have different talents, and what comes easy to some may be hard for others. Don't become obsessed with reaching an unrealistically high standard in the nonessential areas of life. After all, it isn't a sin to be a mediocre golfer.

We need to keep a sense of proportion about our nonvital goals. Then we will have time to work on perfecting the things we cannot permit ourselves to do badly.

### **When quitting makes sense**

Now point three: Always be ready to quit.

Some years ago some young men who had been training for the ministry of a major church denomination faced their final exam. They were warned that part of the exam would focus on their understanding of the parable of the good Samaritan, as found in Luke 10. Their examiner was to be an elderly and cantankerous bishop who did not like to be kept waiting.

The students were told to wait in a room, and the bishop would examine them individually. When they got the word they were to go to the examining room without delay. To do this, they had to run the length of a corridor about 50 yards long.

As each man rushed to the examination room, anxious not to

upset the bishop, an actor stepped out of a doorway, clutched his chest and fell to the ground, groaning. Only four of the men to be examined stopped to help him. Only those four passed the test!

Usually, it is good to stick to something you have begun, and build character and determination by finishing it. Usually — but not always. Goal-oriented people can become obsessed, and push and punish themselves when it might make more sense to quit.

Ask yourself — is a goal that is occupying so much of your time really worth it? Our great overall goal of the Kingdom of God is always worth it, but what about some of those intermediate goals?

When you travel, you plan side trips to places of interest. But if a side trip takes you far off course, or is so time-consuming that you might not make the main destination, you obviously must forego the side trip.

Intermediate goals are like that. Review them from time to time. Do they still make sense? Are they really "on the way"? Or have they taken you so far off course that you might miss your main goal?

From time to time we must look at the things that we are trying to achieve as we strive for the Kingdom of God. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 tells us that there is a right time for everything. What may seem important at one time may become an encumbrance later. Then it makes sense to quit.

### **Set priorities**

So think about these three rather odd tips to achievement. It may be humbling to realize that you are never going to be a champion golfer, a famous artist, a world-renowned musician. It is difficult to accept that you are not Superman or Wonder Woman, and won't be able to do everything you want to right now.

One day God will give us spiritual bodies that never wear out. There will be all eternity to get things done. But right now God wants to see where our priorities are. □

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**Why are so many people sick today despite medical knowledge? Are we indeed suffering the diseases of Egypt (Deuteronomy 28:60) that God promised would come upon those who disobeyed His laws?**

What a paradox! Even with the most advanced medical technology, our generation is one of the sickest in history — plagued with hundreds of different deadly diseases and ailments.

Think this over: People today are still disobeying God's laws, just as they did in ancient Egypt. Therefore, they are suffering the inevitable physical punishment for physical sins — painful illnesses, mental agony, even death.

Notice God's warning in Deuteronomy 28:58-62: "If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book . . . then the Lord will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues . . . and serious and prolonged sicknesses. Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, will the Lord bring upon you until you are destroyed. You shall be left few in number . . . because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God."

God means what He says. Sickness is the result of sin. Because people will not obey God, He will deal with them as He dealt with ancient Egypt, despite anything medical science can do.

The diseases that plagued Egypt are all common today. The Egyptians suffered from malformations such as dwarfism, and birth defects such as clubfoot. Their pharaohs were smitten with poliomyelitis. Many were hunchbacks, their backs bent with spinal tuberculosis.

The Egyptians suffered from

arthritis, tumors, some undoubtedly cancerous, and heart diseases such as arteriosclerosis. Many died of pneumonia. They had pleurisy, kidney abscesses and kidney stones. They had cirrhosis of the liver, appendicitis, gallstones and malaria.

All of these maladies are common today.

What most people don't realize is that it's not natural to be sick. To be sick is to be out of harmony with God's laws, which produce health and well-being when obeyed. (If you have not already read our free booklet *Principles of Healthful Living*, write for it immediately.)

God promises: "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you" (Exodus 15:26).

God's promises are conditional — they depend on our obedience to His laws.

God says He is our healer (Psalm 103:3, James 5:14-15). For more information, write for a free copy of our booklet *The Plain Truth About Healing*.

**Ecclesiastes 7:2-4 says: "Sorrow is better than laughter . . . The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth." What's wrong with laughter? Does God want us to be sad?**

There is no scripture that says it's wrong to be happy. One of the fruits of a Christian life is joy, brimful and running over (Galatians 5:22).

Ecclesiastes 7:3-4 does not say laughter is wrong. It merely means that sorrow is better than this *kind* of laughter. The context shows us what kind of laughter is wrong.

"It is better to hear the rebuke

of the wise than for a man to hear the song of fools. For like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity."

That kind of foolish laughter is wrong.

Jesus came to give us abundant life, joyful happiness, filled with the right kind of laughter (John 10:10). That is life filled to the brim — but in the right balance. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11).

Yet this same Jesus also said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

God wants us to laugh and enjoy life, but at the same time to take life seriously. It takes both laughter and sorrow — that is, the right kind of sorrow — to make the whole person.

There is a wrong kind of sorrow just as there is a wrong kind of laughter. The wrong kind of sorrow is what prevails in the world today. This world's sorrow leads to frustration and anxiety, and often results in suicide.

II Corinthians 7:10 says the sorrow of the world produces death. But "godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation." This godly sorrow is better than laughter and mirth because it brings the right results.

"Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better" (Ecclesiastes 7:3). Godly sorrow leads to a change of heart!

The sorrow of the world brings discouragement and a feeling of hopelessness. Godly sorrow strengthens your will, your determination to overcome the problems that beset you. Godly sorrow feels compassion for the suffering that this world experiences for breaking God's laws, and longs for God's Kingdom to be established on earth as soon as possible. □

**D**avid was on the run from his son, Absalom, who had just made a bid to take over the rulership of Israel.

To prevent civil war from tearing apart the nation, the rightful king and a group of trusted followers left Jerusalem to wander like a band of fugitives through the desert regions around the capital.

After a few days of hard traveling, the group was weary and dispirited. Suddenly, as the group was approaching Bahurim, a man approached. He appeared quite excited, but as he drew nearer, David and his men heard that his shouts were far from friendly.

“Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue!” the man, whose name was Shimei, called out. “The Lord has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the Lord has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you are caught in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!” (II Samuel 16:7-8).

To make matters worse, as Shimei shouted, he threw stones at the king and his followers.

Let’s break into the story at this point and ask a question: If you’d been David, how would you have acted in this situation? You’re tired and frustrated. You know Shimei’s remarks are untrue — in fact, quite the contrary, you’ve done all you can to seek out Saul’s relatives to honor them as the previous monarch’s family (II Samuel 9:1-13). You’re aware, too, that you can order this disloyal subject to be killed for his words against the sovereign (Exodus 22:28).

So how would you act?

### Three alternatives

When you think about it, there are only three ways to respond to criticism.

First, you can ignore it. Perhaps as a youngster you chanted, “Sticks and stones may break my

bones, but names will never hurt me.” In David’s case, he received both hurtful words and harmful stones!

Second, you can retaliate with counter accusations or try to jus-

tify yourself by denying the charges.

Or, finally, you can accept what the other person says — even if it may be untrue — and determine that you will turn the

# Turning Criticism



# to Advantage

*None of us likes to hear criticism about the way we conduct our lives.*

*But there is a right and a wrong way to handle such comments.*

*Here’s what the Bible says.*

By Philip Stevens

whole experience around to your advantage.

So, let's now return to the story and see how David's followers, and the king himself, responded to this attack by Shimei.

"Then Abishai the son of Zeruah said to the king, 'Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!'" (II Samuel 16:9). Here's quite a violent reaction from David's lieutenant. All he was able to see was the rock-throwing individual who was insulting his master, and his answer was to retaliate in the strongest way possible — to kill the man.

Maybe you wouldn't go as far as to take the life of someone who criticizes some aspect of your behavior, but, mentally, do you have the same reaction as Abishai?

Do you feel resentment — even wish harm — toward a supervisor who makes an adverse comment about your work? How do you react when your mate expresses dissatisfaction with some aspect of your life-style? If you're a young person, how do you feel when a teacher finds fault with your schoolwork?

Do you respond like Abishai, with violent actions or thoughts, or, as we shall now see, like King David?

"And the king said, 'What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruah? So let him curse, because the Lord has said to him, 'Curse David.' Who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'" And David said to Abishai and all his servants, 'See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now may this Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the Lord has ordered him. It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day'" (verses 10-12).

### Correction from God

David realized that he was not perfect. Although he knew he hadn't taken Saul's kingdom by

force or deceit, or had knowingly done anything to harm his predecessor's family, David appreciated that his own life was far from being faultless. He could see that perhaps God had sent Shimei to teach him a lesson. (The New International Version makes this a little clearer when it translates the latter part of verse 10, "If he is cursing because the Lord has said to him, 'Curse David,' who can ask, 'Why do you do this?'" )

There was little doubt that Shimei was in a wrong attitude. Maybe he was upset, and was allowing his feelings to get the better of him. Perhaps he thought he'd missed out on some kind of inheritance when Saul's family lost the crown.

Nevertheless, David was not prepared to overlook that God could have been using this individual to correct him. After all, could he, David, really criticize another person when his own family was, at that moment, in such disarray?

As the king continued across the countryside, he probably reflected on Shimei's words and considered how he had handled the situation with Saul's family, and how, perhaps, with the benefit of hindsight, he'd have done certain things differently.

### For our benefit

This episode is not recorded simply as a matter of history. It is in the Bible as instruction for us today (I Corinthians 10:11, II Timothy 3:16).

Some time after the incident with Shimei, Solomon, another of David's sons, wrote, "Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid" (Proverbs 12:1). He also showed that "poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, but he who regards reproof will be honored" (Proverbs 13:18).

Notice that Solomon didn't qualify where the reproof — the criticism — might originate or under what circumstances. Doubtless, Shimei was in a bad attitude when he threw stones

and hurled insulting comments at the king, but that didn't stop David from being willing to receive instruction. Nor must it stop us from using criticism to our advantage. Even if the comments are unjustified, we can still ask ourselves, "What can I learn from the way I handled the situation in question?"

For example, suppose someone unjustly criticizes you for a derogatory comment you're alleged to have made. Your natural reaction may be to retort angrily that the other person should get the facts straight and, anyway, who is he or she to tell you what or what not to say?

Based on the evidence of the story above, King David might have asked himself, "Now, what did I say that left my comments open for misinterpretation?" or, "Am I in the habit of making statements that could be construed as derogatory, and therefore people assume everything I say is like that?"

Or, again, what would your reaction be to someone who, although not employed in your particular trade, criticized the way you carried out your job? The natural response is, "Who does he think he is?"

A better response would be: "Well, maybe I'm so close to the situation that I can't see the forest for the trees. Perhaps I should consider what has been said." Even if, after examination, you find yourself to be correct, you can still go back to the other individual, thank him for the comments and explain why you will carry on doing your job in the same way.

### The way of life

The people of this world tend to hate criticism. The usual reaction is to justify oneself by retaliating with counter accusations. But, as we've seen, the biblical instruction is to take the comments and see what can be learned from the situation.

Again, as the wise book of Proverbs records, "Reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (Proverbs 6:23). □



# Woman...Wife...

*Widowhood is a life stage that many women will have to face at some time. It helps to know what to expect.*

By Joan C. Bogdanchik

**T**he thought of becoming a widow makes most women cringe!

A girl dreams of becoming a woman, then a wife and mother, then a grandmother. But a widow? Never!

Interestingly enough, in a soci-

ety where women generally outlive men, no real thought is given to preparing for what more than 10 million women in the United States alone now live in — widowhood. In a news article a majority of women complained that television, for example, doesn't adequately cover such topical is-

ssues as widowhood. Does this lack of information exist because the word *widow* in our minds is connected with death — and death is a subject we don't like to think about?

*Widow* has never been a desired word in any context. In a card game it is a hand or group





# Widow

of cards not dealt to any player. In printing it is a word or group of words constituting less than a full line, generally considered to be typographically undesirable.

Yet how quickly a woman can pass from wife to widow! With her husband's last breath, the transition is complete.

## Momentous changes

"And what relation are you to the deceased?" the mortician inquires.

"His wife," the bereaved solemnly intones.

"His *widow*," he writes, and

the former happy wife has to face the sad fact that her exciting and productive life as her husband's wife and sweetheart has ended. It is now one of seemingly unbearable grief. Her life has suddenly taken a major overthrow. It appears crushed — she feels as dead inwardly as her husband is physically.

Shock and deeper pain than she has ever known well inside her. The world looks so artificial. Concerns that loomed so large pale into insignificance.

Major changes are ahead. She becomes numb with emotional paralysis. She has become what she never wanted to be — a widow. Weeping comes like a continual flood. It is essential.

With all her being she fights to bring herself under control. She is the only parent now.

Lost instantly are the physical privileges of marriage, and added, also instantly, are multiplied responsibilities.

She is now, in a sense, both mother and father to her children. They need an explanation. They need comfort and love. Mommy must be ready to provide it. This is a facet of widowhood that must be faced squarely — and faced alone.

## Explaining to children

Death must now be explained. Feelings of extreme pain and loss must be handled. Mother must give reassurance to her children. She cannot protect them from this knowledge of death.

Death is hard for all of us, but the widow has to try to explain it without engulfing her children in her own grief.

She really doesn't want her children to have this knowledge — they are so young! They see and hear her weep, and this they must see. These are the emotions of life they are being exposed to.

As they see Mother weeping deeply over Daddy's death, they see their father's worth to his family and Mother's high tribute to him. In a family all share the experiences of the group. Now death, though unwelcomed, has entered. The life of that family is

changed. Children cannot escape the reality of life and death.

She must hold her children close and talk about Daddy's death. She must be careful not to give them too much information at once, depending on their age. Day by day more will be added as family discussions go on. This helps bring the fragmented family together in their affliction.

They must develop a plan of action and work on it. They must continue living.

A child reacts to grief differently than an adult. Some children will show differences in behavior. Remember, their security has been shaken.

Mother must reassure her family that they will not be abandoned, as some children fear. Daddy is gone. Could not the same happen to Mother?

She must talk to her children and comfort them. The widow's words will begin to help herself.

Under her own personal pressure, the responsibility is great. But God never gives us more than we can bear, even though for some time it may seem so. Staying close to Him in constant prayer is basic. The Scriptures are a widow's close companion. God, through them, gives her strength to carry on.

Physically, her most intimate confidant, her husband, who would know how to comfort her in such a situation, is gone. The widow needs to talk to someone who understands and will listen to her for extended periods of time. But rare is the person who can offer more than snatches of time for this.

If such a real confidant is not available (and it must be someone who understands), the widow will often find that writing down her thoughts and feelings genuinely helps. She wants to talk about her husband. Many people do not realize this, and become uncomfortable when she does.

## The financial aspect

Beside the emotional turmoil, the widow must face financial questions. Who is going to pay for the rent, the food, the cloth-

Photos: Hal Finch; Good News

ing and the multitude of other expenses the family faces? In many, many cases, Mother now will — it has fallen her lot! She was the dependent. She is now the depended upon.

Working through bereavement (and it must be worked at — the hardest work a widow has to do), she must also work at comforting her family while working physically to provide for it.

She returns to the work force or, in many cases, enters it for the first time, usually at much lower wages than her late husband's. She treks home exhausted from grieving and from her job.

Communication with government agencies becomes necessary. In the United States, the Social Security office and the Veteran's Administration can provide valuable assistance for the children of a woman now financially alone.

And, in addition to financial considerations, other responsibilities must be kept up: Shopping must be done, dinner must be prepared, the house must be cleaned, the clothes laundered and set out. She's exhausted, but . . .

#### **What about the children?**

Children can help the widow. They are also a tremendous responsibility that is now all hers alone.

Rearing children in this world is a great responsibility even when both parents are involved, helping and encouraging each other. Now the widow must do it alone.

But it is not an impossible situation. Children who lose one or the other parent can and do develop into well-balanced, successful individuals. (Two of America's greatest presidents, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, lost parents to death during their formative years.)

Helping children become balanced begins in the pattern set by both parents before the death of one of them, and by the remaining parent's guidance and example thereafter. The early years in a child's life set the stage for how

the child will handle future life experiences.

After the death it is best to stay put, keeping the rest of your child's life the same as it was, as much as possible, when Father was alive. The security of the same house, if monetarily possible, the same neighborhood and the same school help immediately after the death.

A widow soon learns there is no place to run to, anyway.

Whether the child realizes it or not, he or she is maturing through this sobering situation. A child can become more dependable and responsible. Death has touched his or her life. It can add a deeper understanding to living. The child can grow when the remaining parent makes a stable home. He or she contributes to the whole — is not merely a recipient. Jesus, as the firstborn, had this responsibility when Joseph died.

A parent, though now alone,

**A** widow must continually fight thoughts of self-pity as she deals with people whose lives continue as before — while hers is so changed. But she must display strength.

really is not "single." She cannot, and does not, return to what she was before she was married. She has all the responsibilities of marriage. She must see to her children's spiritual, physical, mental and social development.

Voraciously devouring God's Word at this time gives the widow the ability to cope — and hope. She finds that God is the God of the widow and the Father of the fatherless. Her reliance is now on God. Her husband is asleep, awaiting the resurrection.

The resurrection! The hope of the future! This is the vital reality that gives the widow strength. She *will* see her husband again. The hopes and dreams for their children that they mapped out early in their marriage will be viewed together in later time.

What will happen to their chil-

dren? Now one parent is left to see the results worked out. The bereaved has no power to change the situation. She has to come to embrace it. She has to.

#### **Accepting responsibilities**

Acceptance may come slowly. Grief and shock may hinder it, but it must come. Then the continuation of their children's development may properly resume.

The family becomes close, unified by the common enemy — death. Children, often more resilient than their elders, suddenly emerge with surprising strength, and offer positive, loving encouragement to their remaining parent. The strong, inner desire for life goes on. It is perpetuated by children. Their attitude can greatly inspire the mother, who may feel her life has ended along with her husband's.

Now all the family must work together — helping, inspiring and encouraging each other. It

takes time for grief to lighten. Day after day must be experienced and built upon, and it is not always a smooth path. The widow will find that setbacks will occur over what to others would be insignificant occurrences.

A stranger wearing her husband's brand of after-shave passes her in the mall. A song that meant so much in courtship days wafts through the supermarket. She finds that she has set her husband's place at the table — or she rushes to tell him of an event that has just happened and then realizes . . . !

These are the things she must fight. The weeping returns. Then she picks up. She starts again, though her heart is breaking.

The family has worked harmoniously in the past. It must now, too, with one vital member ab-

sent. The others must recall the goals of the family and press on to achieve. Together they must unify and conquer this great family trial.

### **The needs of children**

Though she cannot physically be both father and mother, the widow must be responsible and reliable. It is to be hoped she has known her husband well enough to know his outlook on talking to, training and instructing their children.

She must oversee their academic growth. She must help them mix with their peers, some of whom will look at her children as different at first. She must be sure they have as much contact as possible with grandparents, uncles and teachers who can help supply the missing influence of their father in their lives.

Her children will be gaining balance by these necessary contacts. Just as both parents must control the environment of their offspring as much as possible, so must the only parent.

But now she has even more to watch for.

The widow must plan social development for her children. They must grow in happy times. She's the lone hostess now as she invites others to her home, as well as the sole parent and disciplinarian. She must continually fight thoughts of self-pity as she deals with people whose lives continue as before while hers is so changed.

Tending to want to relax rules of child rearing while grieving, a widow must work at not doing so. The guidelines the family had must not slip. She must display strength. The children should have long before learned to respond to the authority of both parents. Where would she be now in this situation if that were not the case?

### **A new life**

The widow must learn to plan and balance her time for all that is now on her shoulders. She must set the family budget, write the checks, keep the family car in

working order. Children must be transported to functions. Appointments must be kept. There are myriad other needs. Mother must now handle all of them.

And she needs time just to be with her children, to play with them, talk to them and shower them with love.

While a widow is supplying a social life for her children, she will find that hers is changed. She often will not be included in activities that she *and* her husband were in before. Living as a wife, she was established. Now she must make a new life as a widow.

The widow will find that looking at the beauty of creation, meditating and pondering on the purpose of God, will help her reduce the excess tensions that may build up.

A widow must in her busy schedule try to find ways of relaxing. Walking, walking, walking is one of the best physical releases of tension.

As her children grow, a widow must instruct her sons through boyhood and adolescence. She must provide the "father and son" talks, carrying out what she has learned from her husband, coupled with God's way of life. She must seek out this information if she has not known it. And she must not be afraid of it! A woman speaks from the opposite vantage point of a man — a wise son will heed.

Of note, too, is how often, when the Bible says a man was successful, his mother is mentioned. Mothers have a tremendous influence on their children. As the old saying goes, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world."

The widow's life is busy indeed. At the same time she is developing her children, she must not overlook her need for interests outside of the home. Eventually her children will be on their own and so will she.

The widow feels new emotions as different milestones of growth take place in her children's lives. She must go through these emotions alone, while thoughts of her

husband flood her mind, but on she goes. She is making it.

### **A message to women**

What can a woman learn from reading this — that is, if she's had the courage to read this far, since no woman wants to even contemplate becoming a widow?

She can learn to prepare for life in her formative years — and prepare well. She should become educated, building skills to use in her family, with others and in life in general. She must develop deep reserves of inner strength and quiet calm. She should develop vision for the future, and though she may never be a widow, she should know life has other challenges, turns, trials.

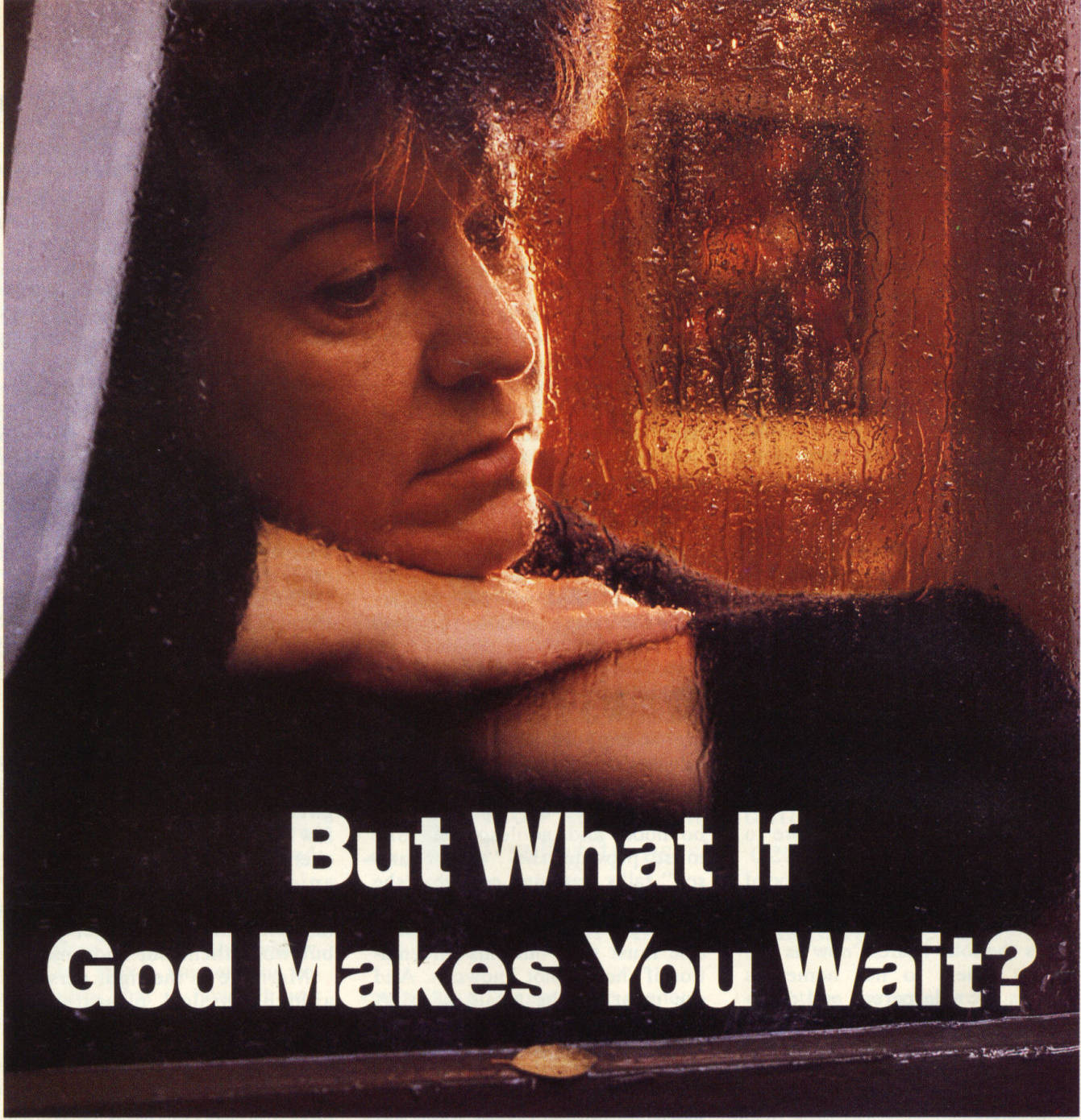
She should become thrifty, not throwing away money on unnecessary extravagances frequently, but buying necessities for family living. She should learn to care for possessions.

When she marries she should learn to love her husband and children. They are most precious gifts of God, given to her for so few precious years. She should cherish these wonderful gifts and enjoy every day and every minute. She shouldn't let little insignificant problems get to her, but work them out and enjoy!

Marriage to the right person is a high physical pleasure. She should rejoice with the husband of her youth and enjoy all that God has given her in this life. She should continually thank God for her husband, his love, tender care and wonderful qualities — be thankful that he is there to love, comfort, encourage, inspire, provide for, protect and make the final decisions.

Should a woman become widowed, the wonderful memory of her husband, his qualities of tenderness, unending love and devotion will far supersede physical death.

The Kingdom of God is ahead! Death and sorrow will be forgotten once and for all! Widowhood is a station of life for which no place will then be found. Over this no former widow will grieve. □



# But What If God Makes You Wait?

*What if your prayers about some problem or need  
are not answered right away?*

**I**t could be a personal need that you have. Or a situation that involves other people. Maybe it has to do with failing health or a lengthy illness. Or financial difficulties. Or employment problems. Or some other trying circumstance that just seems to drag on

By Clayton D. Steep

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and on. Perhaps with the passage of time it becomes even more complicated and difficult to bear.

You have prayed earnestly about it, maybe even fasted. You have exercised faith. You have, as far as you can deter-

mine, done your part. Still, relief has not come when you hoped it would.

“Oh, if only I had faith like the righteous individuals in the Bible!” some discouraged Christians have sighed. “Then I would see all of my problems quickly resolved.”

Is that what you have thought? More importantly, is that what

the Bible really shows? Did God always grant His people instant deliverance from troubles? If you think the answer is yes, be prepared for a surprise!

### **God made them wait**

The truth is that, while God often intervened speedily in response to the needs of various persons mentioned in the Bible, at other times and in other cases He delayed delivering some of the faithful individuals.

In other words, He made them wait, tested them, for, "The Lord tests the righteous" (Psalm 11:5).

Think about that. God tests the righteous. When necessary for their own good and to accomplish His plan, God allows them to endure difficult, trying situations. No one is exempt.

Consider the prophets of old. They were righteous before God. We are told to regard them "as an example of suffering and patience" (James 5:10).

Obviously, then, they were not immediately delivered from every problem or trial they encountered. If they had been, they would not have been familiar with "suffering and patience." And yet these were not faithless persons!

Moses received numerous immediate and miraculous results after prayer (Exodus 15:24-25, 17:3-6). Nevertheless, he also knew what it was to experience affliction and trial days, yes, years in duration (Psalm 90:13-15). In many cases there was no instant deliverance. Moses had to wait, to have patience.

### **David's experience**

David praised his Creator, saying, "In the day when I cried out, You answered me" (Psalm 138:3). So David received prompt answers to some of his prayers. But not always. At times God made David wait — even wait a considerable period of time, as Psalm 13:1 indicates. There David asked: "How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?" And again he asked: "Lord, how long will You look

on? Rescue me" (Psalm 35:17). In numerous Psalms, David referred to prolonged suffering. He wrote of a debilitating plague (Psalm 38:3-10, 39:10-13), of a sickbed (Psalm 41:1-3), of enemies exulting in his condition and waiting for him to die of whatever had him bedridden (verses 4-8), of even his own friends and kinsmen keeping their distance (verse 9, Psalm 38:11). He prayed for healing (Psalm 6:2), for death was near (verses 4-5).

Eventually, it was David's turn to exult (verses 8-10), because God ultimately did heal him and bring him back from the edge of the grave (Psalm 30:1-3) — but only after David had waited (Psalm 6:3, 6-7).

### **They had to endure**

God's servant Elisha often received remarkable and quick results when he presented needs before God (II Kings 4-6). When he himself became ill, however, God did not heal him immediately. In fact, God let him die of his sickness (II Kings 13:14, 20). And so, after nearly 2,500 years, Elisha is still waiting — waiting in his grave to be delivered of his sickness in the resurrection at the end of the age.

In the early Church, Stephen, "full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6:8). Yet no sign or wonder, no divine intervention, prevented him from being the first Christian martyr. In faith he endured a painful death at the hands of an enraged mob (Acts 7:54-60). In his grave Stephen waits yet for his deliverance, as do thousands of other martyrs (Revelation 6:9-11).

Though many miracles took place as a result of faith among the early Christians, some of God's people had to cope with sicknesses and infirmities that did not go away immediately (II Corinthians 12:7-10, Philippians 2:25-27, I Timothy 5:23, II Timothy 4:20). They had to wait. Their faith was tried.

The apostle Paul was a man of great faith, but when he prayed for relief from one problem, God

spoke to him directly, telling him specifically that he would have to wait (II Corinthians 12:7-10).

The apostle Peter addressed Christians of his time who had faith (I Peter 1:5), yet who, for a period of time, were "grieved by various trials" (verse 6). The faith they possessed was "tested by fire" (verse 7).

These are only a few examples of how those with faith had to endure, had to wait for God's intervention.

The entire 11th chapter of Hebrews is devoted to a summary of the lives of many of those who have been called the "heroes of faith." In faith, they received immediate, miraculous answers to prayer on many occasions.

But also, starting with the very first righteous man, Abel, who was murdered in cold blood, many — in faith, mind you (verse 39)! — suffered severe trials, tests, deprivations, afflictions (verses 35-38). They had to wait for God to intervene in His time.

What this shows is that, while a lack of faith can certainly cause answers to prayer to be delayed, a delayed answer does not necessarily mean there is a lack of faith. It is not a reason for one who has given his life to God to become discouraged.

To the contrary, let it be repeated, "The Lord tests the righteous" (Psalm 11:5). The faith they have, He exercises, refines, perfects and increases. And to it, He adds patience.

Let us understand why and how.

### **Preparation for the future**

Jesus Christ will not accept us into His Kingdom "just as we are." We have changes we must make, lessons we must learn, character we must develop first. It is for this reason that God allows us at times to be in situations where our trust in Him and His faithfulness and love toward us is severely tried.

We know Jesus Christ could step in and deliver us immediately from whatever or whoever is afflicting us, for nothing is too difficult for Him (Jeremiah

32:27). But He doesn't always do it when and how we think He should.

Now, humanly speaking, that is hard to take.

And that is just the point.

It is contrary to our human nature to wait. We want results now. To wait for God takes patience. It requires faith that God is in charge and that He knows what He is doing.

We must develop that kind of patient faith, though, if we wish to find a place in Christ's coming Kingdom.

Why? Because those who shall rule with Christ are going to be given vast responsibility. They are going to be governing the universe! (Write for our free book *The Incredible Human Potential* for more information.)

Jesus is not going to take any chances that there will be confusion or rebellion in His Kingdom. He is not going to allow a situation to arise, for instance, where an individual ruling some far-off corner of the universe, billions of light-years from God's throne, decides he can only wait so long for results from doing things God's way, and after that it is time to do things some other way — some way at variance with what God has ordained.

Those who would rule with Christ must develop, through the experiences in this life, unshakable faith that God's laws are always right, that He always knows best. How about you? Are you convinced that He does? Are you sure of it?

### **Do you know God knows best?**

Think of what the patriarch Job affirmed. He had been greatly blessed by God. When God removed those blessings and allowed calamity to befall Job — for Job's own ultimate good — Job did not immediately understand it all. In fact, it took quite a while for Job to fully profit spiritually from the trials that came upon him.

Meanwhile, even as his mind groped for a reason for the trials, he uttered words that we should

ponder deeply. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him," he declared (Job 13:15).

Being able to affirm that and really mean it is the key to surviving and benefiting from the many tribulations in this life.

When the situation is beyond your control, put it in God's hands. Trust Him. Wait for Him. The answer may come right away. Or it may take days, weeks, even years if need be. And it may require personal sacrifice. But trust God to make it more than worthwhile.

If God makes us wait for something now, it is because it is for our own good. "It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord" (Lamentations 3:26).

Job survived his trials because he was patient (James 5:10-11). How important is patience! If we know how to be patient, God can teach us everything else we need to learn (James 1:2-4).

### **Wait on God**

Listen to the words of Isaiah. He praised the Eternal, saying: "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen any God besides You, who acts for the one who waits for Him" (Isaiah 64:4).

The true God is indeed different from all other gods. He does respond to all our needs. But He does it when the time is right.

Some Christians lose faith because they fail to understand exactly what God has promised for this life. Certainly, He has promised to deliver out of every affliction those who trust in Him, as Psalm 34:19 clearly states. But He does not promise *when* He will do so. Sometimes He does it right away. Sometimes He does not. Sometimes He doesn't even do it in the course of this life.

Whether God intervenes immediately or makes us wait, though, He has specifically promised Christians that they will not be tested with more than they can take (I Corinthians 10:13), and that all things will eventually work out for good

(Romans 8:28). Exactly how and when is up to God to decide. After all, the principal goal of our faith is not that we be totally free of every physical, material problem and difficulty in this life anyway. The main goal is salvation in the world to come (I Peter 1:9), receiving of the crown of life (James 1:12).

God says we should make all our requests known to Him (Philippians 4:6). Though He doesn't promise that we will receive them all immediately, He does promise us peace of mind (verse 7). He promises us His Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). He promises us joy, peace and hope (Romans 15:13). He promises us strength and might "according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy" (Colossians 1:11).

Does all this mean, then, that when Christians pray they should not expect God to answer immediately? To the contrary! We should never assume it will be necessary to wait for long.

We should do our part. We should be sure we are obeying God's laws and doing anything we may need to do to remedy the problem at hand. Then we should commit the matter to God in faith that He will intervene.

We can ask Him to answer soon. We should expect Him to answer soon, as He often does. But in case He doesn't answer right away for some reason, we must not despair. We must continue asking (Luke 18:1-7), believing and patiently waiting until He does answer.

"Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!" (Psalm 27:14).

God knows best. If you have committed your life to Him, He is working with you, perfecting your character, teaching you lessons you need to learn. The Master Potter is at work. Let Him work. This is a job He is not going to rush. It is not going to be slipshod and poorly done. It takes time, but God is going to produce a masterpiece.

Just you wait and see! □

# The Ultimate Sharing — Planning for Children

There is no greater opportunity to share than when a married couple decide to add to their family and have a child.

responsibility of becoming a parent. Whether planning the first or fifth child, one should know the joys *and* the responsibilities that accompany the arrival of a new family member.



There is also no greater responsibility!

Having children doesn't require a great deal of expertise. But becoming *qualified* parents does. Millions of people have become fathers and mothers. But many of those millions do not know how to be parents.

So let's talk about the awesome

responsibility of becoming a parent. Whether planning the first or fifth child, one should know the joys *and* the responsibilities that accompany the arrival of a new family member.

There is a great deal of confusion in the world today about family planning. Because of ignorance and superstition — even erroneous religious beliefs — many do not know whether or how to plan for children.

### Then and now

For thousands of years, as human societies developed and populated the earth, families could have as many children as they desired. In fact, large families were actually desirable, since human labor was essential to development.

By the middle of the 1800s, world population had finally reached one billion. But in just over 125 years it has skyrocketed to five billion. Population experts believe it will escalate to eight billion by the first quarter of the next century. With the population explosion have come increased poverty, hunger, unemployment, crime and war.

Population alone has not caused this, but sheer numbers of

people have been partly responsible for the condition of the world we live in today.

It certainly seems like a good time to take a long, hard look at the value of family planning.

### God is planning His Family

Perhaps the most important point to address is the spiritual issue. Does the Bible prohibit family planning? Does God require married couples to have as many children as possible during the child-bearing years?

Looking at family planning from God's perspective is essential. Long-time readers of *The Good News* have read many articles about the great plan God is working out here on earth.

One Bible passage that perhaps summarizes that plan best is Ephesians 3:14-15: "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom *the whole family* in heaven and earth is named."

God is a family. God is reproducing Himself. When He created Adam and Eve, God set in motion the process whereby, in the course of time and according to His plan, the divine Family could be expanded.

But all at once?

No.

When God first created mankind, He made them male and female. Why? So they could marry, and in marriage reproduce themselves. There would then be an ever expanding human population. Each human would be made in the image of God. Each would have the awesome potential to be born into the Family of God.

However, throughout the past

Photo by Warren Watson

6,000 years God has only called those He has selected as firstfruits. He has not called all mankind now. Notice what James wrote: "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18).

In God's plan of salvation, the firstfruits will then be used to bring millions of others into the knowledge of God's Family — first in the Millennium, then, for the billions of people who never understood during their lives, in the Great White Throne Judgment. (For more information, write for a free copy of our booklet *Is God Trying to Save the World Now?*)

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The first act of sharing is love. And then, through the expression of affection and love, children are produced. They should be wanted, loved and planned for, just as God is adding members to His Family.

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God the Father determined in advance to bring children into His Family, and in what order. He then sent Jesus Christ to be His firstborn Son. But Christ was to be the firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:15).

Without doubt, God is planning a very large family. But the point is, He is *planning*.

And so should we. There is nothing wrong with having a large family if that is what a couple desire. But that desire should be evaluated in light of not only the burgeoning world population, but in light of a family's ability to provide and care for children.

So just as God is planning His Family, we should be planning ours. A young couple may decide to wait three or four or more years before having their first child to be better prepared for that child.

They then may decide to have

two or three or four or whatever number they feel best. But a couple should plan to have only those children that they can properly care for, nurture and give their time to.

Children should not be just numbers in a group, but individuals who are planned and loved by both parents.

#### **But why sex?**

If the planning and spacing of children is proper in God's eyes, some then wonder why God created human sexuality. Many have believed sexual relations are solely for the purpose of human reproduction.

But that is not so. There is a deep and even more important

to care and share with each other through the sexual relationship in marriage. The culmination of affection and attention to each other is expressed in the sexual relationship.

To violate that sacred relationship is so awful that God has labeled it sin! Two of the Ten Commandments deal with the subject.

But in marriage, and only between partners in marriage, sex is pure, clean and desirable. It is, first and foremost, designed to draw and hold a husband and wife God has bound together in love.

#### **And then come children**

And then, through that expression of affection and love, children are produced. But they should be wanted, loved and planned for, just as God is adding members to His Family.

That's the way it ought to be, at least.

The first act of sharing is love. The result of that love is a husband and wife devoted to each other, caring for each other, sharing with each other.

If husbands and wives became parents in that environment of sharing love, they would truly plan for their children. They would plan how many, and plan to give them all the love and time humanly possible. This is the ultimate sharing.

It would be a different world if such were the case.

We'll have much more to say about parenting and child rearing in future columns as well as feature articles in this magazine. Be looking for them.

And, if you haven't already, be sure to send for our free brochure *The Plain Truth About Child Rearing*. This informative brochure covers basic principles all parents need to know, from before the birth of a child on through adolescence and the teen years and into adulthood.

For your copy, mail the literature request card in this issue or write to our address nearest you. □



# LETTERS

## No subscription price

Thank you very much for the literature that I have requested throughout the few years that I have been associated with the Worldwide Church of God. (When I look at all the publications that I have received I still have a hard time believing that there is no subscription price!)

Anastacio V. Palisoc Jr.  
Mississauga, Ont.

I have been receiving *The Plain Truth* for a while now, as well as much additional reading, and *The Good News* as of late. Whom I am to thank I do not know. It impresses me to be able to receive all this literature for free.

H.H.  
Flieden, West Germany

*The free literature we provide is made possible by the tithes and freewill offerings of the membership of the Worldwide Church of God and others. We do not solicit the public for money. Contributions, however, are welcomed and are tax-deductible in the United States, Canada and New Zealand. Those who wish to voluntarily aid and support this worldwide Work of God are gladly welcomed as co-workers in this major effort to publish the true original Gospel to all nations.*

## Festival edition

We really appreciated the pre-Feast edition of *The Good News* (October-November). Out of our 12 pre-Feast preparations, I don't think I've ever seen such a concentration of solid, helpful, thought-provoking articles on God's plan for us, and for all humanity.

Kenneth Weeden  
Wilmington, N.C.

Thank you so much for the article on "Your Title Deed to the Kingdom of God." It was, in my opinion, the finest and most helpfully encouraging article I have ever read in *The Good News*.

Satan is spreading a tremendous amount of discouragement among God's people and this type of article is just what we needed at this time to keep us "up" about God's Work and our calling.

Paul Nowlen  
Jenkinsville, S.C.

Thank you so very much for the deeply moving article about faith entitled "Your Title Deed to the Kingdom of God." Truly, God's way is so simple and

clear, but the carnality that raises its ugly head in us constantly must be put down again and again.

I have been a baptized member nearly 15 years and I desperately need and do appreciate the recent article you wrote on faith. The "heat" was indeed fiery and the trial long and your article was in perfect timing. It gave me the courage to get "over the top" of my particular "mountain."

Mrs. Paul Nowlen  
Jenkinsville, S.C.

Thank you to Thomas Damour for his outstanding article "Are You Ready to Be Born Again?" I had no idea how much duality there was between our physical and spiritual births. As a mother myself, I have a small taste of the thrill God will experience when we're all born into His Family.

Mrs. Gregory Hilgen  
Cypress, Calif.

The article Norman L. Shoaf wrote in the latest Festival edition of *The Good News* was excellent. Reminding God's people where their priorities lie in the light of God's Holy Days is good. It keeps everything in the proper perspective. I know that God's people will benefit greatly from this article.

Reader  
Vancouver, B.C.

I am 25, a member of the Church for four years . . . I agree completely with all positive comments from readers about *The Good News*. It is a unique publication, second to none in the entire world . . .

As a member living in an outlying area from where it is not possible to attend regular Sabbath services, *The Good News* and other publications of the Church provide me with much needed spiritual nourishment. I hope all of us members would realize that these edifying and instructive articles are composed "on the knees" and therefore deserve to be studied and assimilated "on the knees" and practiced.

I hope you will be encouraged by the fact that your contributions are getting through and producing the expected results of rededicated lives for whom the Scriptures and God's Work take on added dimensions with each issue of *The Good News*. I remember you all on the staff of *The Good News* in my prayers.

Raymond N. Nkado  
Zaria, Nigeria

## Received Good News by mistake

I received a *Good News* in my mailbox Monday morning and wondered who had sent it to me. On reading about half of it, I discovered a label on the back cover. It was addressed to the lady in the apartment below me. The mailman had put it in the wrong mailbox. I was so interested that I finished reading it through before taking it to her.

I found your address in the magazine and would like to get a copy of August issue, also future issues. Let me know the cost and keep up the good work.

Mary Glenney  
Orangeville, Ont.

The *Good News*, like all the other publications of the *Worldwide Church of God*, is free.

## Thankful co-worker

Thank you for your recent issues of *The Plain Truth* and *The Good News*. It is wonderful to read of the huge increase of distribution of these marvellously instructive magazines. My thoughts are often with Mr. Armstrong's successor — a very trying and testing position. My prayers are with him and all involved in this wonderful project.

Mrs. O.M. Caine  
Nelson, New Zealand

## Informative and thought-provoking

Thank you very much for sending me the letter along with subscription renewal card for next year.

I found your previous issues highly informative and thought-provoking. This is a great service to humanity in general and to Christianity in particular by spreading around the world the good news from the Creator of this universe.

The articles in the magazine unravel many myths and clear doubts about the existence of God, creation of the world and all forms of life. Besides, it provides answers to unending problems facing the present-day human beings as a result of unimaginable scientific development. If these achievements are applied in a misguided way, the whole world could easily be destroyed in no time. Therefore, it is only through God's messages descended on His choicest prophets right from Adam that those scientific developments could be used for making this earth a comfortable, safe and peaceful sanctuary.

Mir Hasan Ali  
Jubail Industrial City, Saudi Arabia

# Here Is PROPHECY FULFILLED!

## PART TWO

*Remarkable reports from Scripture and history show how Christ's Olivet prophecy and the seals of Revelation have been fulfilled, in type. The ultimate fulfillment of these prophecies is now just ahead of us!*

By L. Leroy Neff

**A**mazing events followed the incredible prophecies of Jesus Christ.

Last month we saw how Christ's Olivet prophecy was fulfilled, in type, in the first century, leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Before the final siege of Jerusalem, possibly when the voice in the Temple said on the day of Pentecost, "Let us remove hence," those of God's Church in Jerusalem fled to Pella, about 50 miles northeast.

### **The Jerusalem Church moves to Pella**

The theologian and church historian Eusebius, who lived during the fourth century, wrote: "But the members of the church in Jerusalem were instructed by a prophecy, revealed to the leaders,



to abandon the city before the war and to take up residence in one of the cities of Perea which was named Pella. From Jerusalem the followers of Christ migrated to Pella, and thus the royal capital of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were abandoned by holy men" (Eusebius, III, 5:1-7). The Church followed Christ's in-

structions about what to do when they saw Jerusalem surrounded by armies (Luke 21:20-21).

Remember that after Cestius Gallus first surrounded Jerusalem, the siege was lifted. This allowed God's Church to leave the city and escape the holocaust that followed. It was more than three and a half years later when the final siege started.

By A.D. 70 the Gospel had been preached far and wide, possibly all the way from the British Isles to India. It seemed that Christ's prophecy had come to pass, except that He had not returned to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Some who waited for Christ's return may not have known about the principle of duality in prophecy. They may not have noted that Christ actually foretold two major events: 1) The destruction of Jerusalem, and

2) His return. If any were confused in this way or became discouraged, they would have had to wait for more than another generation for clarification.

It was about 25 years more, or about A.D. 95, before the apostle John, on the Isle of Patmos, experienced the vision he recorded in the book of Revelation. Remember that John was one of the four disciples who had heard the Olivet prophecy by Christ about 65 years earlier. Of the four, James was dead, Peter was dead (according to tradition) and Andrew probably was dead by then. John apparently was the only one of the four still alive.

John may have had some questions about exactly what Jesus meant by each phrase and sentence so long before. Now God filled in all the details in a remarkable prophecy that covered the time from John's day to the end of this age to the world tomorrow and the new heavens and new earth. The same Jesus now showed him the same sequence of events, but in the form of mysterious seals on a written scroll.

Previous to this time, it may have appeared to some that the Olivet prophecy related only to the Temple, to Jerusalem and, to an extent, the Middle East. If John understood that the earth was a sphere consisting of other vast areas, these new prophecies were obviously global in scope.

And all of it, including the messages to the churches, included a long period of time. One event alone, which is referred to as the Millennium, was to last a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6).

Consider now what happened in succeeding centuries as fulfillment of the prophecy. The seven seals outlined the same major events.

### First seal — counterfeit Christianity

The first six seals are mentioned in Revelation 6, and the seventh is mentioned starting in chapter 8. For more details about these seals and about the rest of the book of Revelation, please

write for our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last!*

This first seal (Revelation 6:1-2) was symbolized by a rider on a white horse, similar to the returning Christ, who also is to come on a white horse (Revelation 19:11). But in this case the white horse represents, not the real Christ and His Work, but the counterfeit! This is clear from the Olivet prophecy (Mark 13:5-6).

Counterfeit ministers, with a different gospel, had come about 60 years before, but the new prophecy was not a record of the past but a foretelling of the future. The false message of this counterfeit Christianity has continued unabated even to the present time. From the time of the revelation to John by the head of the Church, Jesus Christ, this false message about the *person* of Christ, which ignores what Christ actually *said*, has increased.

### Historical summary

Here is an overview of what happened:

False teachers, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes and unusual occurrences had come from time to time. There was a great change in the visible church from about the middle of the first century to the middle of the second century.

An entirely different church was now seen by the world! This period is sometimes appropriately called the "lost century," as few historical details have remained for the period.

Certain important events, however, are known:

"A school for priests was established at Alexandria in the second century. Its teachers (Origen, ca. 182-251) helped define Christian doctrine and promote the faith in Greek-style philosophical works. Pagan neoplatonism was given Christian coloration in the work of Church Fathers such as Augustine (354-430).

"Christian hermits, often drawn from the lower classes, be-

gan to associate in monasteries, first in Egypt (St. Pachomius, ca. 290-345), then in other eastern lands, then in the West (St. Benedict's rule, 529). Popular devotion to saints, especially Mary, mother of Jesus, spread.

"Under Constantine (ruled 306-337), Christianity became in effect the established religion of the Empire. Pagan temples were expropriated, state funds were used to build huge churches and support the hierarchy, and laws were adjusted in accordance with Christian notions. Pagan worship



was banned by the end of the fourth century, and severe restrictions were placed on Judaism.

"The newly established church was rocked by doctrinal disputes, often exacerbated by regional rivalries both within and outside the Empire.

"Chief heresies (as defined by church councils backed by imperial authority) were Arianism, which denied the divinity of Jesus; Donatism, which rejected the convergence of church and state and denied the validity of sacraments performed by sinful clergy; and the Monophysite position denying the dual nature of

Illustrations: Nick Leaver, Ken Tunelli; photo by Hal Finch

Christ" (*The World Almanac and Book of Facts*, 1986 edition, page 493).

There was an explosive increase in the number of false teachers on the world scene. Many ministers preached that Jesus was the Christ, and claimed to be His representatives. But they preached a different message than Christ did — a different gospel.



### Second seal — wars

The second seal (Revelation 6:3-4) opened to reveal a red horse, symbolizing war.

There have always been wars. It could be said that if a war is not going on at a given time, one recently occurred and recovery from it and preparation for the next is occurring.

From the time of John there have been thousands of wars. The casualties from each of those wars generally were not large, from our perspective, until the present century. Casualties were in the thousands, sometimes tens of thousands, rarely more than that. But what has happened in this century?

"It is estimated that in the 800 years from the beginning of the

Twelfth to the end of the Nineteenth Century, 14 million casualties were produced by war. In the first half of the present century, better equipment made it possible to push the figure to 75 million. In other words, in the past 50 years, war killed four and a half times as many people as were killed in the previous 800 years" (*The Carpenter*, June, 1959).

"The number of man-made deaths in the 20th century is about 100 million. Men, women and children each make up a substantial proportion of that total.

"A more accurate figure would depend on the particular definition of 'man-made death.' But in any reasonable meaning of the phrase it cannot be less than 80 million; it is unlikely to be much more than 150 million.

"To set such a figure against a scale of violence in previous times involves the difficulties of comparing like periods and of allowing for population increase. However, every attempt to do so shows the 20th century to be incomparably the more violent period" (Gil Elliot, *Twentieth Century Book of the Dead*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1972).

There was a great change in casualties of all kinds starting with World War I. The casualties then were numbered in the tens of millions! And World War II brought many more casualties by far than World War I.

Again we could say there was an "explosive increase" — this time in human casualties, and in the number of wars and rumors of wars. Since World War II there have been scores of wars.

### Third seal — famine

The third seal (black horse) (Revelation 6:5-6) pictured famine.

It is important here to distinguish between famine and drought. A drought is a prolonged period of dryness or lack of rain. As a natural cycle of nature, there are periods of drought, some worse than others.

A famine is a time of extreme

scarcity of food. Various causes produce famine, including drought, but not just drought.

A recent news report concluded, concerning the famine in parts of Africa, that "famine is man-made." Factors producing the African famine include overgrazing, overpopulation, improper farming methods and politics. Drought may or may not be a factor, depending on the specific area involved.

In the United States, the way food is supplied is quite different now from the way it was a few decades ago. We have developed large food growing regions in the United States. Grain is grown mostly in the midwestern states, while vegetables are grown mostly in the San Joaquin and Imperial valleys of California. From there the food is shipped by truck and train to the nation.

In the past, most people produced their own food, or it was grown nearby. Now almost everyone is totally dependent on a very



few agricultural regions. Any problem with transportation or weather could quickly create food shortages for the whole nation.

In the past, other areas of the world, such as Argentina and

Russia, produced great amounts of grain. Now Russia, as well as a lot of the rest of the world, are dependent in large part on U.S. foodstuffs.

Just one season of crop failure in the United States would create a shortage of food that would affect not only the United States but all other areas receiving food from America. Succeeding crop failures would quickly turn this into a major problem for a considerable part of the world.

A condition of surplus could become a condition of famine in a few months' time.

#### Fourth seal — pestilence

Pestilence (the pale horse — Revelation 6:7-8) is a natural outcome of drought. Of course, terrible pestilence has been caused historically by other factors. There was the terrible "black death" or bubonic plague of the Middle Ages. At times from 35 percent to 65 percent of the urban population perished. Rural areas fared better.

In Christ's Olivet prophecy, the fourth major point He mentioned was "pestilences" (Matthew 24:7) or "troubles" (Mark 13:8). The fourth seal in Revelation adds more facts.

"When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, 'Come and see.' And I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth" (Revelation 6:7-8).

Notice that war, famine, death (the result of pestilence) and the "beasts of the earth" cover a "fourth of the earth."

#### Fifth seal — tribulation

This seal (Revelation 6:9-11) primarily affects the modern nations who descended from Israel, not just Judah or the Jews. For more details on this subject, write for our free book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*.

This period of tribulation is



elsewhere referred to as "Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7), and includes a multinational captivity of Israel. It is a time of Satan's wrath, first toward the Church and, second, toward Israel. The following texts refer to Satan's assault on God's Church.

"Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child" (Revelation 12:13).

This refers to a persecution of the Church. The length of time and severity are not stated. You may wish to compare the first three plagues of Egypt, which apparently affected Israelites as well as Egyptians, as found in Exodus 7:14-25, 8:1-19.

Revelation 12:14-16 speaks further about those "counted worthy" (Luke 21:36), who are taken to a place of refuge and protected from this time of Satan's wrath.

"And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17).

This verse tells of the war waged by Satan against those of the Church who are not worthy

to escape and who thus are not protected.

#### Sixth seal — heavenly signs

The heavenly signs are described in Revelation 6:12-17. It is beyond the scope of this article to comment and give details about this and some other aspects of this large subject.

#### Seventh seal — the seven trumpets

The seven trumpets, described beginning in Revelation 8, mark the "great day of His wrath" (Revelation 6:17) — that is, the Day of the Lord.

At the last trumpet of the seven, Christ returns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to take power on earth and re-establish the government of God.

#### Watch and pray

This two-part article has offered a brief overview of Christ's Olivet prophecy and the seals of Revelation in their historical and prophetic setting. Many related prophecies, obviously, have not been included.

Jesus Christ has still not returned. The time has been longer than some thought. Has Christ delayed His coming? Can we now take it a little easier for a while?

Notice the warning in Luke 21:34-36: "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

The events relating to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 were only a type of a far worse time that is yet to occur!

We must not be overcome by this world and its ways. We must watch and pray always. If we do these things, we can qualify to be protected from the holocaust that is soon coming on the earth. □

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## PROVE ALL THINGS

# You Must Be Born Again!

**M**illions of babies were born to millions of proud parents last year. But as incredible as it seems, all of these babies must be born again!

At least that is what Jesus Christ said in John 3:3!

Do you know what Jesus meant? Some think they do. Further, some think that they themselves have been born again.

Are they correct? You must know, for Jesus said that unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God!

### The basic doctrine

To be born again means to be changed from mortal flesh to immortal spirit as a son of God at the resurrection. In its broadest sense, it is a process begun now by our begetting with God's Spirit, continuing through a life of spiritual growth and culminating in a spiritual rebirth into God's Kingdom at Christ's return.

### The usual teachings of this world

That simple definition bears scant resemblance to the common understanding of the phrase *born again* in the mind of the average professing Christian.

Many equate being born again with the experience of conversion. They believe, therefore, that being born again occurs at baptism or at the receipt of the Holy Spirit or at the time of a certain religious experience, such as when they professed Christ either publicly or privately. Thus they feel they are born again *now*, and

believe the phrase to denote their inner change to a new person committed to Christ.

But it takes little effort to refute this misconception, and to refute it with the very verses such believers would most likely turn to first to support their well-intentioned but erroneous ideas — John 3:1-10.

### The Bible teaching

In John 3 we find a summary of a conversation between a certain Jewish leader named Nicodemus and Christ.

Jesus stated the following: "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (verse 3). What He meant will be described shortly.

But Jesus decidedly could *not* have meant what modern religionists assume — that being born again is merely one's conversion to Christianity. For in verse 6 Christ stated, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." He further showed that one who is born again is like the wind — powerful yet invisible (verse 8)!

Is a Christian actually com-

posed of spirit? Is he like the wind — invisible? Of course not. Therefore being born again cannot mean simply being converted to Christianity.

Actually, this false concept of what being born again means is rooted in a number of erroneous assumptions. One is the false belief that the Kingdom of God is right now on the earth as the church, or is set up in the hearts of men. But the Bible shows that the Kingdom of God will not be set up until the return of Christ (Revelation 11:15), and therefore is not here yet to be born into.

Another false concept is that Christ's demand that we be born again is a mere metaphor — that is, a figure of speech to describe poetically how one feels at conversion. But we will see that Christ meant what He said literally. We must indeed be born again! Even Nicodemus, who was on the spot and heard His exact words, took Christ literally (although he did not understand Jesus' statement).

To know what it means to be born again, we must first understand what it means to be born the first time. All would agree that a person is born upon leaving the life support of the mother to become a separate but equal creature, equal in type but not knowledge or authority, with life of his or her own.

Someone who has been born again, therefore, must have gone through the process of birth twice!

But how?

The Bible records that there is a second birth, and we may look at what happened to Christ Him-



self to see what this term means for us. Romans 8:29 and Colossians 1:15 call Jesus the firstborn. Clearly Christ was not the first-born of human parents to mortal, fleshly existence, so this must mean that he was the first to be reborn — born again!

Colossians 1:18 and Revelation 1:5 both declare Christ to be the “firstborn from the dead.” And Romans 1:4 says it was through the resurrection from the dead that Christ was declared to be the Son of God — that is, that he was born as a spirit-composed son of God.

The simple truth is now made plain. Every Bible reader knows what happened after Christ’s death. He was resurrected from the dead — not back to fleshly human existence, but rather to a glorified spirit body as God’s Son, on God’s plane of existence. He thus was changed from mortal to immortal, from dependence on the flesh to a separate, spirit being with eternal life within Himself. He was born again!

And we must be born again just like Christ. As Paul stated, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (I Corinthians 15:50). And as Christ made plain, unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God (John 3:3). Therefore we must be changed. And this change occurs at the resurrection.

Those who espouse the “born-again-now” error have neglected the 15th chapter of the book of I Corinthians. This section of Scripture clearly shows that Christ’s resurrection was a type of our resurrection to immortal life at His return (not now). It says that even as Christ became the firstfruits of God by the resurrection (verse 20), so also must we be changed at the return of Jesus Christ at the resurrection from the dead (verses 50-54, I Thessalonians 4:13-17).

Even as a human baby must be conceived, so also is the receipt of

God’s Spirit at conversion a type of spiritual begetting (not a type of being born, however). See I Peter 1:23 and James 1:18 in the King James Bible, and Romans 8:9, 14. Even as a human baby must grow in the womb (the period of gestation), so also must we grow spiritually under the watchful eye of the Church and of Christ and God.

Even as a parent considers the yet unborn son or daughter to be already his child, so also God considers Christians, begotten and growing but not yet born, to be His children. And, finally, even as a human baby gains life of his own through birth, so also do we become separate spirit beings upon being born again.

Now, at last, Christ’s words in John 3 make sense.

Christ knew Nicodemus feared that Christ might start an insurrection against the Romans by proclaiming Himself the Messiah and trying to set up God’s Kingdom in first-century Judea. Christ therefore told Nicodemus that the Kingdom was not to be set up until the resurrection, when man is born again.

He showed that to be born again meant to be changed from flesh to spirit (“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” — verse 6). And He showed that when we are born again we will have the power a spirit being has — a power invisible but unlimited, like the wind (verse 8)!

How simple — how amazing!

Yet, some will certainly point to a number of verses that, at first glance, seem to speak as though the converted Christian is already born again now (see John 1:13, I John 2:29, 4:7, 5:1, 4). What about these? The explanation is simple and can be clearly proven.

Remember, the New Testament was not written in English, but in Greek. In Greek, the word

translated “born” in the verses above carries a broader meaning than the English word *born*, and, depending upon the context, can be translated “born” or “begotten.” This fact is demonstrated by I John 5:1, for in this one verse the translators chose to translate the same Greek word as “born” and “begotten.” See the American Revised Version for the correct rendering of this Greek word in many of these verses.

Once we understand Christ’s plain words of John 3 (something the translators themselves did not understand), we can see how John, in the verses in question, was speaking of Christians as now “begotten” of God, not “born.” There is therefore no contradiction here, but rather a powerful confirmation of what Christ meant.

#### Key verses

The most important verses explaining this subject may now be summarized: John 3:1-10 — we must be born again, and one so born will be composed of spirit and clothed with power. Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:15 — Christ was the first to be born again. Revelation 1:5, Colossians 1:18, Romans 1:4 — Christ was born again from the dead through the resurrection. I Corinthians 15:20, 50-54 — we, like Christ was, will be changed into spirit (born again) at the resurrection of the dead. I Peter 1:32 (KJB), James 1:18 (KJB) — although born again at the resurrection, we are begotten now, so being born again is a process.

Yes, incredible as it seems, all of the new babies born last year must someday come to understand — along with us all — that their birth has taken them only halfway to the Kingdom of God. For, as Christ stated, if they — or we — are ever to see the Kingdom of God, we must be born again! □

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