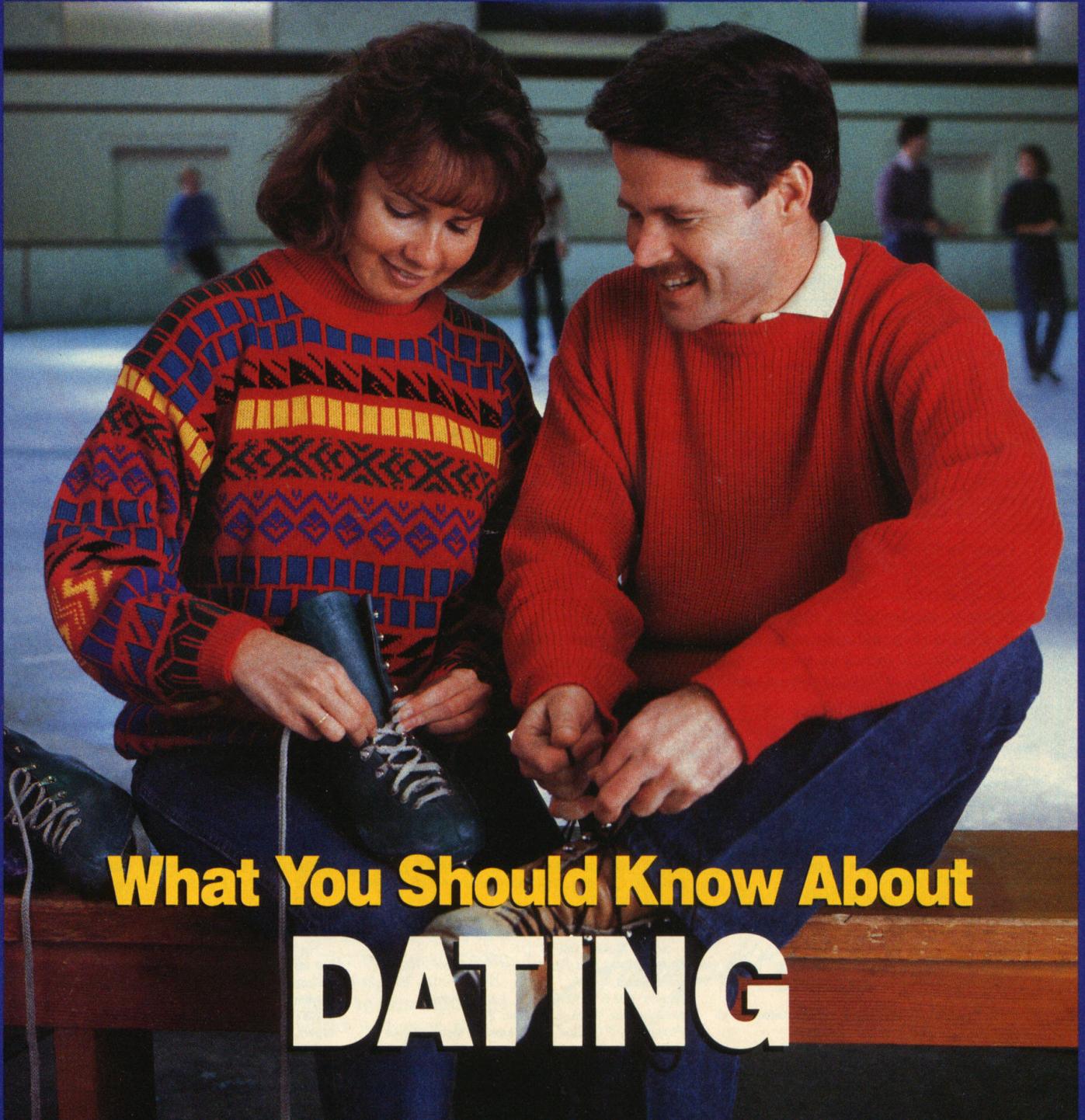


JANUARY 1987

The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW



What You Should Know About

DATING

The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

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COVER: Unmarried people in every age group face a bewildering array of choices in personal relationships. Yet few possess right knowledge about dating. The article beginning on page 4 is the first in a major new series of articles *The Good News* will publish about dating. Photo by G.A. Belluche Jr.

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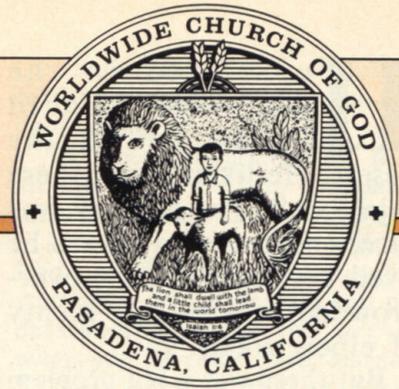
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God's Work Was His Life

Herbert W. Armstrong, the late apostle and pastor general of the Worldwide Church of God, died a year ago January 16.

On this first anniversary of his death, I thought it fitting to look back at the legacy Mr. Armstrong left.

When my father began listening to *The World Tomorrow* in Chicago, Ill., in 1953, I knew there had to be something to it. The powerful, sincere and unrelenting voice of Herbert W. Armstrong convinced my devoutly Russian Orthodox father that he should *repent*



Pastor General Joseph W. Tkach sharing a light moment with the late Herbert W. Armstrong, who died one year ago.

and change his life. It was not long before I was listening with him.

I first met Mr. Armstrong in 1957, when he came to Chicago to visit my father. Mr. Armstrong wanted to start a Russian-language broadcast, and felt that my dad would be the right man to do the program and to translate booklets into Russian.

Although my father translated a few booklets, God did not open the door to Russia at that time (though God may be preparing to do just that now, 30 years later!).

What an impact Mr. Armstrong had on my life! As God's servant, he brought the message of God's law and way of life not only to me, but to all those whose minds God would open. Because of his yield- edness, God was able to use him to proclaim the most important message the world will ever hear.

Mr. Armstrong was willing to obey God — to

keep his law. God saw that he was faithful. He was willing to obey God despite the criticism, despite the ridicule, despite the opposition. He led God's Church, under Christ, as a faithful servant. He refused to compromise with God's law. Yet, he was willing to change when proven wrong.

The apostle Paul told us to "recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (I Thessalonians 5:12-13). And what love, esteem and appreciation we had for God's servant, Mr. Armstrong.

Perhaps one of the greatest ways in which Mr. Armstrong set us an example was in the way he worked. Mr. Armstrong's whole life was sharply focused around one thing — the Work of God. He lived, ate, slept and breathed Christ's commission to the Church. All his conversations were either directly about or soon got around to God's plan, the Gospel, the Church, the Work or the Bible. The joy of his life was doing the will of God.

Mr. Armstrong truly gave himself to God, and in him God gave us an example of wholehearted devotion and faithfulness to our calling "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away" (I Peter 1:4).

Let that example motivate us, as God's people around the world, to run with endurance the spiritual race that is set before us! God is opening new and greater doors daily for us! There remains much work yet to do!

The greatest tribute we can give Mr. Armstrong is to do God's Work — to do the things that Mr. Armstrong's mind and life were continually filled with. We need to make sure that all of us are carrying out that specific duty.

Pastor General
Worldwide Church of God

Good News photo

Hank lived in the southwestern United States, out in the desert. He liked it out there fairly well. The scenery was nice, and the area where he lived certainly wasn't overcrowded. There was plenty of elbow room.

But there was a big problem with living in the desert, especially in the summer. That's right — the scorching heat!

During June, July and August, especially, the temperature could soar to more than 120 degrees in the shade. All summer it was insufferably hot (which is why there is plenty of elbow room in the desert).

Hank, fortunately, had an air conditioner to help him keep cool in his desert home. He really appreciated this blessing of modern technology. The air conditioner made things quite nice, in fact.

But Hank had another problem besides the desert heat. And when God began to call Hank several years ago, it was this problem he had to overcome first.

Hank's problem

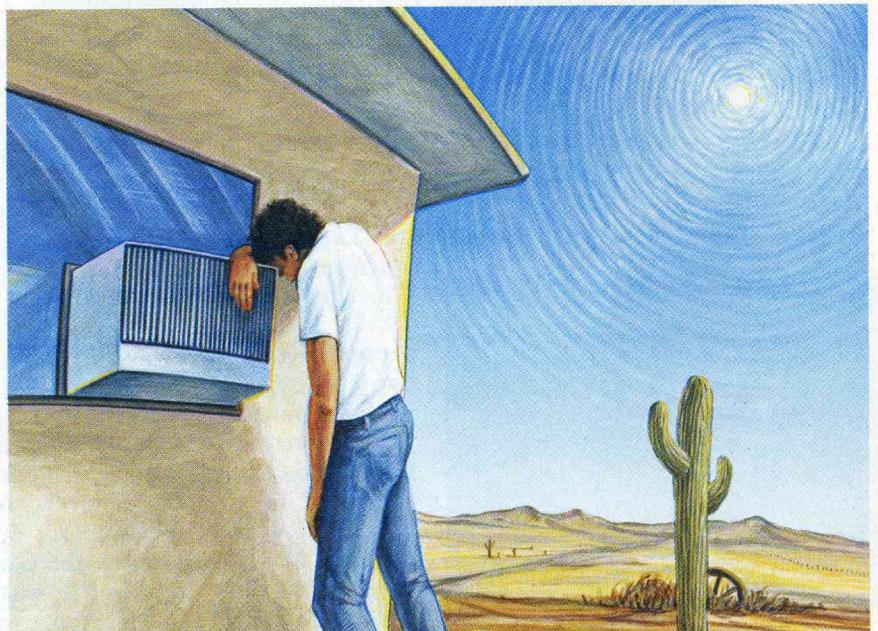
It seems Hank had a bad habit of using foul language. Venomous expletives, crude expressions and disrespectful twists of God's name seemed to roll off his tongue quite naturally. Hank had always talked that way, and it was hard to stop.

Hank had heard the *World Tomorrow* broadcast. He had begun to read the *Plain Truth* magazine. And Hank's eyes had been opened. He was learning amazing truths that no one else taught or understood! Yet he saw those truths proven right there in his own Bible.

Among those truths, sure enough, were God's commands about the type of language we should use.

Ephesians 4:29 commands, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." Colossians 3:8 plainly states, "But now you must also put off . . . filthy language out of your

It's Something You DO!



What are you actually doing with the spiritual knowledge you are learning?

By Norman L. Shoaf

mouth." Hank saw God's command that His name was not to be taken in vain (Exodus 20:7). Jesus Christ said God's name is to be hallowed (Matthew 6:9).

Yet somehow, Hank just had not yet been moved to *do* anything about it all. He didn't yet fully realize that what he was learning required him to take any kind of personal *action*.

The knowledge was in Hank's head, but there was no outward

evidence to make anyone within earshot notice that there was really anything different about him. He was just going right along as he always had, doing as he always had done — and all the while swearing and cursing like the proverbial sailor.

Then God began to work more actively in Hank's life.

A burning lesson

One day, right in the middle of

the hottest part of the summer, Hank's air conditioner quit working. Just like that — no warning. And for no apparent reason.

Hank checked the electrical outlet. There was power. The cord was plugged in. He unplugged the cord and opened the back of the air conditioner. All the components inside were in perfect working order, as far as he could tell. Everything was connected to everything it was supposed to be connected to. He plugged the cord back in. Again, nothing.

By this time the blazing desert heat was miserable, and Hank felt moved to describe his predicament in explicit terms that would have made that proverbial sailor not only blush but cover his ears and run! Don't laugh — it's true. And it's not funny to God!

Why was this happening? What was wrong with the air conditioner? Hank's language definitely didn't cool things off or help the situation at all.

Then Hank remembered God's commands about filthy language. He *knew* what he should and shouldn't be saying. He *knew* using foul language disobeyed and dishonored the almighty God who sees — and hears — everything that goes on on earth.

And now the thought came like a thunderbolt! Could the problem with the air conditioner have occurred, Hank thought, because he wasn't really trying to actively obey what God had showed him was right? Was the God he had been learning about more real than he ever could have imagined, and did that God really — gulp! — really mean business?

The air conditioner kicked on. Just like that — no warning. And for no apparent reason. It filled the room with deliciously cool air, driving out the boiling desert heat. It was — well, like an oasis.

James 4:17 says, "To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." That same James also wrote, "Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17).

The way of God is not just

something you *know*. It's something you *do*!

Hank learned that God's commands about language, along with all of God's other commands, aren't just interesting doctrines to be aware of and not do anything about. God's laws are mandatory, to be actively kept and obeyed by anyone who wants to fulfill the ultimate purpose of life!

Hank (not his real name) learned that he had to *do* something about what he *knew*. He repented of his sin of using foul language, as well as the other sins in his life, and began to obey God, with the help of God's Holy Spirit. He eventually asked one of God's true ministers to visit him. Today he is a loyal, faithful, valuable member of God's Church.

Stepping out

Deciding to quit playing around and *do* something with the knowledge God reveals to you through the Worldwide Church of God is the most difficult decision you will ever make. Taking decisive, right action, setting your ultimate course in life, is hard — life-changing!

That's what the process of conversion is all about — changing your life!

Do you right now "know to do good," as James said, in some area God has revealed to you? But are you hesitating?

A lot of people will react with any number of objections:

"But this is too hard for me!" Do you really think the almighty Creator God cannot give you all the help you need, if you really want to obey Him?

"But I would lose friends!" Why would you want the kind of friends who do not want to obey God?

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

Obedience brings blessings

After you begin to earnestly try to obey God's laws, you will learn another important point:

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

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

In other words, God will not lead you any farther, will not give you any more inspiration and understanding, until you act on what you already have learned. This is the stumbling block where thousands of listeners and readers have been stopped!

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

What are you afraid of losing — afraid of giving up?

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

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

That promise is absolutely guaranteed. Anyone in God's Church can verify it. God's people each have dozens of true, strong friendships — creative opportunities for learning, travel and personal achievement — exciting challenges — open contact with God — a chance to take part in the greatest Work in history — and, most important, the hope of being in God's soon-coming Kingdom!

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

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

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Dating

Unmarried people in every age group face a bewildering array of choices in personal relationships. Yet few possess right knowledge about dating. Beginning this issue, a major series of Good News articles will examine this subject.

By Greg R. Albrecht

Family life in the Western world is crumbling. Broken marriages, mate and child abuse, juvenile delinquency, sexually transmissible diseases, frustration and loneliness affect millions!

Yet the very foundation of any stable civilization is a solid family structure. Today's civilization, with its foundation disintegrating, is on the way out!

Why this crisis in family life?

Nothing in this world is more important than a happy home life, with father, mother and well-taught, happy children — a close-knit family. The human family was designed by God to picture God's own spiritual Family. We are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26).

But Satan the devil, the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4), hates God's plan and purpose. He does everything possible to thwart and pervert what God intends.

Thus, in this end time, the family is under attack from every side. The institution of marriage itself is no longer cherished as the basis of family life.

Where does that leave dating, which, in its proper context, is a basic key to success in marriage?

Most people today do not date for the right reasons. They have no idea what dating is supposed to accomplish. What do *you* expect

from dating? Why do people date? What is a "date"?

Whether you are a teenager, a younger single, a person re-entering the dating scene after previous marriage or the parent of a young person who needs to be taught the right way, it's time you asked yourself questions like this!

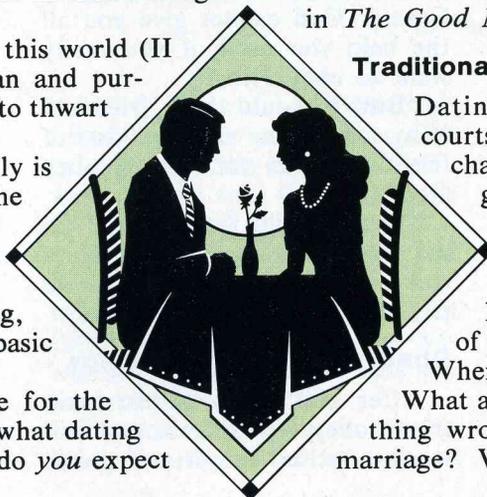
Dating should be a fresh, exciting, constructive activity that is mentally stimulating and physically upbuilding. It should lead to positive personality development. It should be, at the right time and in the right way, the basis leading to a strong, happy marriage. And dating should be plain fun — the kind of fun that is fun not only today but tomorrow, too.

*That kind of dating is what this series of articles in *The Good News* will be about.*

Traditional values discarded

Dating, traditionally a part of the courtship process, has undergone great changes in the past few decades. New generations of young people have redefined the concept and practice of dating.

These new directions in dating have produced a bewildering world of personal choices for the unmarried. When should young people start dating? What about "going steady"? Is there anything wrong with sexual experience before marriage? What about dating a member of



another race? What about age differences? Religious differences? What if parents don't approve? How does one go about choosing a good future wife or husband?

Today traditional values are discarded in favor of "modern," more permissive ideals of behavior. But look at the results!

Today's world is filled with widely differing alternatives, opposing forces and values. The teenager as well as the older unmarried single deal with a confusing blur of concepts, ideas and sexual choices.

One young adult put it this way: "You know the blender in the kitchen that we use to make juices, soups and mixed drinks? It's like all the beliefs I've heard about at home, in school and at church have been dumped in and blended together. I don't know what I believe."

Listen to a senior editor for a major magazine: "Conditions are changing so fast that the established moral guidelines have been yanked from our hands. No single authority rules our conduct. No church lays down the moral law for all. . . . We are heading into danger. We are in the midst of a moral crisis — because the majority . . . no longer can be certain what is right and what is wrong."

Coming — a time of reeducation

The Bible prophesies that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to the earth will usher in a time of renewal and restoration (Acts 3:20-21). What will be restored to the earth is the perfect government of God! At that time Satan will be dethroned and God's law will begin to be enforced around the world.

The Worldwide Church of God is actively involved in preparing for this "restoration of all things." We are commissioned to warn this world about where its evil ways are leading us, and to announce the good news of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:14).

This world has no greater need than right knowledge about family relationships — about dating, courtship and marriage (Malachi 4:5-6). Right dating is a rare art that must be recaptured.

Dramatic changes

Let's survey several dramatic changes in dating and courtship that have come in this 20th century. Until this time, limited mobility allowed greater parental involvement and family interaction. Most courtship took place within the home and family.

Modern transportation, namely automobiles, changed all that. Cars not only increased mobility, but removed dating from the home and parental involvement. Cars, sad to say, became bedrooms on wheels, with obvious impact on dating and courtship.

Thus, in one generation, technology supplied people with the ability to act out the revolution in morality that had been espoused by European scholars and philosophers during the 18th and 19th centuries. Young people developed a high degree of independence from parents, casting off traditional

restraints. Of course, other factors besides modern transportation contributed.

This 20th-century approach toward dating was made possible by a drastic change in the approach to God and His inspired Word.

While new technology — actually, the misuse of it — opened the floodgates, the free-thinking professors and scholars of permissiveness continued their assault on traditional values.

The assault on morality

Fundamental beliefs had been the target of liberal scholars and philosophers for centuries. The offensive against belief in God and God's authority was spearheaded by Charles Darwin and his followers, who popularized the myth of evolution. European "theologians" quickly fol-



lowed this onslaught by loosening yet another brick in the wall of traditional values. Building on the works of recent and contemporary philosophers, these men applied the scientific method of rationalism, and then positivism, to the Bible.

Previously accepted as the inspired word of God, the Bible was subjected to critical analysis based on the assumption that it was nothing more than the writing of men. Eventually the Bible was "de-bunked" and "de-mythologized" by the method of higher criticism. All statements that could not be proved by physical science were rejected. Healings, miracles, angels, demons and all supernatural events were discarded.

But the apostle Paul long ago predicted that this very rejection of God and God's authority would occur! Notice Romans 1:22, 28: "Professing to be

Illustration by Wendy Lagerström.
Photo by Nathan Faulkner

wise, they became fools . . . and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting."

These great "thinkers" rejected the fact that humans are made in the very image of God (Genesis 1:26) for the purpose of qualifying to enter the God Family. They reduced man, in their false teachings, to the level of the unthinking beasts, acting on nothing more than brute instinct, having nothing other than this physical life to look forward to, with no authority over them other than their own drives and desires.

Thus was the groundwork laid for the anything-goes, how-dare-you-judge-me, late 20th century in which we live!

The 20th-century slide

The 20th-century revolution in dating and courtship began with increased mobility, independence and greatly curtailed parental involvement. This movement was supported by attacks on the existence of God and the validity of the Bible.

The result of the attack against these two fundamental beliefs was an erosion of authority.

The end of World War I provided a further impetus for the rising mood of permissiveness. New voices began to speak of right and wrong in the area of marriage and the family.

Traditionally, religion teamed with the home as authorities on dating and marriage. But after World War I, psychology and sociology provided a respectable, scientific vehicle through which the new voices could publish and teach their ideals.

Millions believed and followed the teachings of Sigmund Freud, Margaret Mead and Alfred Charles Kinsey. These and other authorities continued the quest to replace God and His inspired Word as the authority in human conduct and in relationships between the sexes.

The eternal laws and principles of the Bible began to be replaced by studies and surveys that revealed what the practices of a "normal" individual were. Those who followed "arbitrary" standards of church and family were compared unfavorably to those who pioneered in changing public opinion and promoting public acceptance of the "new" morality.

Marriage was proclaimed obsolete. Trial marriages, open marriages and progressive and permissive monogamy were all advanced as acceptable alternatives. Dating as an institution designed to lead to lifelong marriage was obviously irrelevant if marriage itself was obsolete.

Thus dating began to be spoken of by the new "authorities" as primarily a socialization process between the two sexes. Dating came to consist of nothing more than "having a good time" — spending time together — rather than a broadening, constructive, educational, recreational, enjoyable activity designed to *improve the whole person*.

What people do on dates, and how they do it — where they go, and with whom, and why they go

there — all became secondary considerations to the mere expediency of "being together."

The rise of feminism

With the advent of the 1960s and 1970s, dating as socialization was redefined again by the feminist movement. Building upon earlier concepts that had promised freedom from marriage ("marriage is slavery," went one popular concept), feminism proposed a new agenda.

According to this agenda, women were seen both as victims and as self-styled saviors from their own victimization. Traditional male and female roles needed redefining. Women no longer would accept the leadership of men. Women were seen to need "liberation" and "equality," which, translated in the minds of many, meant that women instead of men would now hold the power (Isaiah 3:12).

It is this dilemma over male and female roles that affects dating and courtship. Both men and women are tentative. Homosexuality is celebrated. "Straight" men and women wonder how to act and react toward members of the opposite sex. Men have become more passive and women more aggressive.

And yet, in the midst of all this "enlightenment," the "war between the sexes" seems to be escalating. Men have been the most obvious casualties of the war. Single women plead, "Where are the men?"

Now — this generation

This world needs to be totally reeducated regarding the purposes of dating. Decades of wrong teaching have sabotaged our approach to this vital prelude to happy marriage.

Happy marriages don't just happen. They are prepared for and planned for like other major life decisions such as career choice. Ironically, young people are often given a great deal of education and preparation to help them toward the world of work, but little or no training in how to choose a mate!

Millions change marriages as quickly as others change careers. Millions find that they were ill-prepared for marriage. Millions find that they made their choice of a mate primarily on the basis of fantasy or emotional impulse, or because they were forced to by premarital pregnancy.

When man abandoned God and His inspired Word, this world lost its spiritual focus. God's laws lead to happiness and fulfillment. They provide a guide to help us chart the course through the troubled and confused times in which we live.

The Good News proclaims a return to biblical values in every area of life, and in coming issues we will look more closely at what the Bible specifically says about dating and courtship. We will cover basic instruction on dating, male and female roles, the problem of infatuation, singles and mate selection.

The good news is that dating and courtship customs will undergo a dramatic change at the return of Jesus Christ. But *you* can start now to practice the biblical values concerning dating. □

(To be continued)

Are YOU Coming Out of This World?

*Coming out of this world — completely out of its ways and attitudes
— is prerequisite to entering God's Kingdom.*

By Dibar Apartian

Do you really understand the meaning of Christian living? Do you know what it means to be *in* the world — but not *of* the world?

Just before His crucifixion, Jesus Christ prayed to God the Father for His disciples: "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one [Satan]. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:15-16).

Can you stand to live without being immersed in the satanic customs, practices, holidays, ways of thinking and ways of acting that make up this world?

Billions of people around the world cannot. Even some who call themselves "Christians" cannot. They compromise. They stumble — and sometimes give up!

How about you? Do you occasionally let your doubts and disappointments pull you down? Are you discouraged because your spiritual growth is slow?

Whether you are aware of it or not, the main reason is that God is not first in your life! You may think He is. You may even spend

much time with Him on your knees — or studying His Bible. But God is still not first in your life. And if He is not, you are not ready to enter His Kingdom!

Love your neighbor

Some go to extremes. They are not balanced. They either expect God to do everything for them, or they don't rely on Him when His help is readily available.

Do you realize that, often, you may pray for an answer when the answer is already at hand? You don't see it because it doesn't please you.

In His last prayer with His disciples, Christ said to His Father, "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world" (verse 11).

He wasn't only speaking to those who were with Him at the time, but to all His disciples — including you and me. We can't help being in the world, but we are instructed not to participate in its evil ways. Ask God to give you the discernment you need. Ask Him to help you set your priorities right.

When you put God first in your thoughts and in your deeds, you will have a totally different perspective on life — an altogether different viewpoint and understanding. You will begin to

love your neighbor as yourself because you will understand that God loves him or her as much as He loves you.

Dissensions and quarrels with your neighbor, jealousy and hatred against others, mean that you are not close enough to God. You are, as Christ said, leaving the weightier matters of the law undone, however "spiritual" your behavior may seem otherwise (Matthew 23:23).

Take time and think: Of what value are your prayers to God if you belittle your neighbor or do evil to him or her? What good will your prayers and your Bible study do if you don't first practice justice, mercy, compassion and love?

The apostle John wrote: "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (I John 4:20).

Imagine — God calls you a liar if you claim that you love Him while nourishing evil thoughts against your neighbor.

Christ and the rich man

Are you perhaps like the rich man who loved and obeyed God (at least, he thought he did)? One day, he ran up to Christ,

knelt before Him and asked Him what he should do to inherit eternal life (Mark 10:17).

Notice it. The man was respectful and sincere. In his own way, he was a decent and obedient believer. He must have been relieved when Christ told him that the way to eternal life was to keep God's commandments.

"Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth," he assured Christ.

In other words, ever since his childhood, he had learned to do what was right and lived accordingly — as much as anyone could do on his own. What else was there for him to do? What did he lack? Wasn't he fit for the Kingdom of God?

"One thing you lack," added Christ. "Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me" (verse 21).

What was that again? Did the man hear right? Was he told to give up all his possessions — everything he owned — to follow Christ? But why? Why such a drastic condition?

The man found the price much too high to pay. He couldn't accept the offer. He had not expected to have to fulfill that kind of a bargain to be worthy of eternal life. According to the Bible, his countenance fell and he went away sorrowful — terribly disappointed, because he had great possessions.

All of us are tested — or will sooner or later be tested — in like manner.

It may be in the area of our physical possessions or something else. We may have to give up family or friends for the truth of God. We may lose our job. We may have to endure being considered strange by people in the society around us. We will be tested on our weakest point.

Then, and only then, can we prove to God that we should be part of His Kingdom.

Now compare the rich man's attitude with Abraham's.

At age 75, Abraham, too, was asked by God to give up every-

thing. Abraham obeyed without murmuring. He left his country, his kindred and his father's house, to go to the land God would show him: "So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him" (Genesis 12:4).

This is the attitude all of us need at all times to prepare for the Kingdom of God. It leads to eternal life.

The rich man didn't really love God because he put a price tag on his love. Abraham truly loved God because he set no conditions whatsoever.

part of it. Christ didn't put a period at the end of the phrase "seek first the kingdom of God." He added "... and His righteousness."

David wrote that all of God's commandments are righteousness (Psalm 119:172). To seek God's righteousness is to live by His laws — to fulfill your responsibilities, to love your neighbor as yourself. If you seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness, you need not suffer from any form of worry or anxiety.

Study the parable of the good

When you set your affection on things above, you renounce your selfish desires. You cease to do the works of the flesh. You don't let this world dictate your conduct. You seek to please God no matter what happens.

Some don't understand Christ's teaching about not worrying. They think they can just let down because God has promised to take care of their needs. They don't seem to realize that specific conditions accompany all of God's promises.

Don't worry

Christ said: "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25).

What did Christ mean? Not worrying doesn't mean to be lazy or idle, or to neglect your duties. You can only stop worrying if you accept God's conditions and diligently assume your own responsibilities. God is always ready to help you, provided you strive to act like Christ did. Then — and only then — can you trust God without worrying.

Christ said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (verse 33).

Read the entire verse, not just

Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)! Why do you think the priest and the Levite passed by the wounded man without offering their services? What went on in their minds? Why didn't they help? Perhaps they each uttered a silent prayer and considered their task done.

Could it be that they considered themselves too busy with their important religious chores and engagements? Whatever the case, they didn't prove themselves to be fit for the Kingdom of God. The good Samaritan alone — a man who was not even an Israelite — acted like a true Christian.

The apostle Paul believed in God. He walked with Him — talked with Him — and never turned away from Him. Yet Paul's sufferings and trials were many.

What really made Paul remain firm? What made him hold fast to his faith when many others gave up? How can *you* hold fast when others give up today?

Under God's inspiration, Paul revealed how: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those

things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2).

When you set your affection on things above, you renounce your selfish desires. You cease to do the works of the flesh. You don't let the vanity of this world dictate your conduct.

Paul continued: "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (verse 5).

He further stated that to be fit for the Kingdom of God, you must "put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth" (verse 8).

Learn to rely on Christ. Let Him be the center of your relationship with others. Always know that God sees and appreciates your good works, even if no one else does. Seek to please Him no matter what happens.

Are you now ready?

Are you ready for the Kingdom of God? Some aren't because their attachment to this world is much too strong. It prevents them from coming out of this world to be ready for the Kingdom. Obviously, you can't come out of this world if you follow its ways.

Consider the excuses some people gave when Christ told them to follow Him. They were not fit for His Kingdom.

One person said, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." But upon hearing that Christ had nowhere to lay His head, the man went away (Luke 9:57-58).

Why, then, in the first place, did he say, "I will follow You wherever You go"? Did he really mean it? No. Like many people today, he would only accept the conditions that pleased him. He wanted an easy way — his own way — to be a Christian.

Another person, after expressing the desire to follow Christ, said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father" (verse

59). What was wrong with that? Why did his request disqualify him from being a disciple of Christ? Because it showed the man's lack of understanding of the value of the call! God didn't come first in his life.

"And another also said, 'Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house'" (verse 61).

Again, there is nothing wrong with wanting to bid farewell to those you leave behind when you go somewhere. The question is, What were the man's true intentions — his real motives? In all probability, he would have let himself be convinced by his friends and his close family to change his mind and not to follow Christ.

"No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God," explained Christ (verse 62).

In other words, when you look back and regret what you are giving up for Christ — if your love for the other members of your family, or for whatever you possess, surpasses the love you have for Christ — you are not worthy of His Kingdom.

As true Christians, we are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb — to the most wonderful wedding ceremony of all, and all the joyful festivities (Revelation 19:7). Are you looking forward to it? What will your own excuses be not to attend it when the time comes?

Strange as it may seem, Christ said in one of His parables that many would turn down their invitation to that marriage supper. "Then He said to him, 'A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready'" (Luke 14:16-17).

You would expect that all of the guests, upon receiving such an invitation, would have been delighted to accept it, wouldn't you? You would think they would have looked forward to it with great joy and enthusiasm.

It didn't happen that way:

"But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come'" (verse 18-20).

Can you believe it? Instead of being thankful and grateful to have been invited to this most wonderful banquet, they begged to be excused. They told Christ that they had other, more important things to do.

Notice again that the reasons given were not necessarily wrong, of and by themselves, but the timing was — and so was their sense of priorities. God didn't come first in their lives. Their eyes were set on things below — and not on things above.

Put God first

The world is filled with shiny but deceitful lights. Temptation is all around you, because the "god of this age" (II Corinthians 4:4) — Satan — wants you to put him first in your mind and in your heart. His goal is to destroy you! Turn quickly away from him — and look at the real God who loves you and wants to give you eternal life.

Satan the deceiver will offer you "the kingdoms of the world and their glory" — just as he did to Christ (Matthew 4:8-9). He will tempt you and make you lust after the flesh. He wants you to bow down before him and worship him.

Don't let him win! However attractive his worldly promises, your answer at all times must be, "Away with you, Satan!" (verse 10).

That's what Christ said to win the greatest battle in the whole universe — the battle for the right to rule over this earth. With Christ's help, you, too, can win and be worthy of His joyful and everlasting Kingdom, to live and rule and accomplish forever and ever with Him! □

People are called into God's Work from all walks of life. Their experiences are diverse, their tastes and temperaments varied. Some had strong religious convictions from the churches of this world; others professed no faith.

No two members or co-workers are exactly alike.

But no matter what our previous beliefs, there are always changes to be made in our lives after God opens our minds to see His truth and understand His laws! And depending on our past habits, some of these realignments are easy, others — perhaps most! — are hard.

Typically, we learn that God forbids a practice we followed. Sometimes, we find that a custom we had thought was wrong is allowed. Like drinking alcohol. Or eating meat, for example.

Different stages of growth

Some of the early converts to the Church in Rome were vegetarians. They had been brought up to believe that eating animal flesh was forbidden. After learning the truth, they realized that the doctrine of clean and unclean meats sanctioned the eating of certain animals. It was quite a shock!

(For more information, write for our free booklet *Principles of Healthful Living*.)

So ingrained was their previous conviction that, even with this new knowledge, the thought of swallowing meat was still abhorrent to some of the members at

Rome. As part of his letter to that congregation, Paul had to remind the members they should not look down on those who still found it difficult to throw off their vegetarian beliefs. The apostle admonished the congregation to be sensitive to the feelings of these people — in no way were newcomers to be made to feel belittled.

In the 14th chapter of Romans, Paul addressed the question of

Church in Rome — and is telling us today — is that we must be very sensitive to the feelings of others. Paul also expounded this same principle, with regard to meats offered to idols, in I Corinthians 8. His conclusion? "If food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat" (verse 13).

These instructions are recorded for Christians everywhere because it is so easy to become

hardened to the world around us that we forget other people have emotions, too.

We need to regularly ask ourselves whether we are really aware of how our words and actions affect other people or, on the other hand, whether we are actually being callous when it comes to considering the feelings and needs of our neighbors.

Remain sensitive

Consider this analogy: When a person first starts working in a garden, his hands may be soft, his skin

unused to the physical efforts of digging or weeding. After several hours of labor, blisters may begin to develop.

This can be quite painful, but after many days of work, the hands gradually become accustomed to the activity, and soon the skin is hardened, callous, and blisters no longer appear.

A similar process can occur in our minds if we are not careful about our approach to other people. Our minds can become hardened by continual exposure to acts of rebellion, ingratitude, sarcasm and violence. This world is filled with these evils! It is possible to get so accustomed to the sufferings of this world that we lose any feeling of compassion for

Don't Be Callous!

*Are you insensitive to the feelings
and needs of others? Callousness is a
prophesied hallmark of this end time!*

By Philip Stevens

what and when to eat, and in verse 13 he stated: "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore [regarding the practice of vegetarianism], but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way."

In other words, we should neither eat meat in front of such an individual nor force that person to partake of something that he or she finds offensive and repulsive. For, as Paul went on to say, "If your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died" (verse 15).

What the apostle told the

those who are experiencing any kind of anguish.

Such indifference is rampant today!

The media have played a major role in this desensitizing process. On television, for example, we are able to watch several murders each night. Little is shown of the mental turmoil that surrounds such a violent death. And so life becomes cheap.

We laugh at the antics of a divorcée with "cute" rebellious children, little appreciating the heartache that, in reality, accompanies a marriage breakup.

And how often do we see adulterous sex portrayed with little evidence of the suffering such behavior invariably brings?

And so it goes. This evil age constantly bombards us with situations that make it easy to become callous to the inevitable consequences of breaking God's law.

If we continually see wrong acts, or even carry a wrong act out enough times, we gradually

lose sight of the harm done to ourselves or others. For a callous heart is one that cannot display even a semblance of real concern for another individual.

But Christians should not be surprised at this condition in today's world. Jesus Christ Himself warned that when God's law is transgressed, the result is an attitude of indifference — especially in this age: "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12).

Yet despite this callousness all around us, it is imperative that we as Christians guard against such feelings in our own lives. As

Paul wrote, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

Important areas to watch

Knowing that callousness is something we must avoid, let us look briefly at some areas where God tells us to show concern for the feelings of others. From these guidelines, you will be able to evaluate your own reactions to



How concerned are you about people in various trials? Christians must not be callous about those who are in prison, or who are ill, or who have lost loved ones.

other situations where sensitivity is important.

• *The elderly.* "You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:32).

Older people are often ignored in the pace of today's society. They are frequently confused by modern technology and methods. So we need to be patient toward all senior citizens, but especially toward those who have reared us and given to our welfare. In the rush of life, let us not forget the feelings of the elderly.

• *The poor.* "And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you

gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger" (verse 10).

As Christians it is our responsibility to do what we can for those who are less fortunate than ourselves. If we have the ability to pass on material goods to someone in real need, it is our obligation to do so (James 2:15-16).

Of course, most people do not like to think of themselves as having to accept charity, so consider their feelings and give whatever you can in ways that do not draw attention and embarrass the recipient (Matthew 6:2-4).

• *Employees.* "Masters, give your servants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven" (Colossians 4:1).

Maintaining safety standards, paying reasonable wages and providing adequate training are all ways that a company can show sensitivity toward the needs of its workers.

Of course, no conscientious worker likes to feel that he or she is not being used and allowed to develop, so employers need to be aware of how staff view their contribution to the organization. Where appropriate, consultation with the work force over changes in conditions can help management avoid being regarded as callous toward employees.

• *Those in trials.* "The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary" (Isaiah 50:4). Perhaps you know someone who has lost a job, is enduring some kind of illness or has lost a loved

Photo by G.A. Belluche

one. While we need not be in utter despair about any of these situations, we must be alert to how the other person is feeling, and show encouragement with just the right amount of compassion.

We should never appear indifferent about the sufferings and trials of others.

• *The handicapped.* Most people who have some kind of disability do not want pity. But they do have feelings like the rest of us. And it is our responsibility to avoid doing or saying anything that draws undue attention to their difficulty.

Poking fun at a person who has some form of impediment or

handicap displays a callous and unchristian approach to his or her affliction. And, naturally, we shouldn't take advantage of someone in such a position (Leviticus 19:14).

In fact, God says that showing love toward those who cannot help themselves is one of the methods by which we can clean up our own lives and get rid of sin (Isaiah 1:16-18).

Show godly concern for others

These are just a few areas in which we need to have a special sensitivity about the feelings of others.

But, in reality, all of God's

laws, summarized in the Ten Commandments, teach us to be aware of the feelings of others — including God Himself.

It is, after all, callous to steal from another, to cause a family to break up or to offend the Creator who gives us life. That's why God calls it a sin to ignore the needs of others:

"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (I Samuel 12:23).

The society around us has, in large part, become anesthetized to the sufferings of fellow humans. Yet Christians must avoid that pitfall.

As God's true people, we must

Love in Action

By Graemme J. Marshall

Many people today are hard and impersonal! Human beings need loving relationships with others — they need hearty laughs and friendly physical contact. Sharing positive love is essential for our mental and emotional well-being.

Consider this shocking newspaper report: A man in his mid 20s, who was studying at a university but living in an off-campus apartment, died. And for two months — including the Thanksgiving and Christmas periods — *no one missed him!* Two eviction notices were attached to his door, and inside his apartment, the television was still on!

Newspapers daily give similar evidence of how cold this society is, and how isolated many people within the society have become. In this disengaged society, if you love, you are considered naive. If you whistle or sing at work, you are seen as frivolous and simple. If you are generous, you're an easy mark. If you are forgiving, you're weak — if trusting, a fool.

Yet Jesus Christ, commenting on how the world would know His true people, said this: "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

As loving people — as true Chris-

tians — we need to develop godly traits such as the ability to share, to listen, to praise, to care, understand and respect, to walk in others' shoes, to reveal true feelings, to state our fears, expectations and regrets.

What is a loving relationship?

In a loving relationship individuals trust each other enough to become vulnerable, but remain secure in the knowledge that the other will not take advantage. It is a relationship that neither exploits nor takes for granted. It requires sharing and tenderness. It is where you can be frank and honest without fear of being condemned.

You can, in short, be confident that you are each other's best friend and, no matter what, will stand by one another. You will follow the example of biblical friendships like that of David and Jonathan (II Samuel 1:26).

In job situations, bosses often seem to become entrenched in ivory-tower executive living, far divorced from the workplace and the average plight of workers and the poor. How many employers really care for workers? Some do, of course, but far too few.

Loving bosses will model themselves after the centurion who asked

Jesus to heal his sick servant (Luke 7:1-10). Today such an employee might be laid off. The centurion was wealthy and an authority figure, yet he was humble and outgoing. He must have been a good man to work for.

In families, there is often more interest in relatives after they have died and estates are being shared than when they were alive. And anyone who comes into some financial windfall suddenly rediscovers lost relatives who seem to appear out of the woodwork.

Loving relatives will act as Abraham did toward his nephew Lot. When their herds and herdsmen began to compete for space, Abraham solved the dispute by being willing to give Lot his choice of more land (Genesis 13:6-12).

Unfortunately, when money and benefits are involved, loving relationships often suffer today. How many really are willing to give up prestigious life-styles or take lesser jobs, pay or position because they love others? Paul addressed this attitude to the Corinthians: "Why do you not rather let yourselves be defrauded?" — instead of suing brothers (I Corinthians 6:6-8).

It takes much love to be able to do that. But doing so would solve today's litigation crisis!

In marriage, husbands and wives need to follow the example of love shown by Joseph, Jesus' human male guardian. Remember, Jesus was conceived supernaturally before Mary was married, but while Mary was engaged to Joseph. When this preg-

be aware of the tragedies going on all around. For unless we are deeply concerned about the way this world is going, we, too, will have to suffer the consequences of its actions.

That means experiencing the horrors of the coming Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21-22)!

Notice Ezekiel 9:4-6: "And the Lord said to him [to one of His angelic servants], 'Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.'

"To the others He said in my hearing, 'Go after him through

the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary.'"

Here a messenger of God is instructed to set apart those who "sigh and cry" — those who are deeply sensitive to the sufferings and feelings of this sick world, and whose hearts have not become hardened to the anguish of earth's inhabitants.

What's more, this messenger is to start this marking process right within the true Church of God — "My sanctuary."

So we can only qualify for

God's protection from prophesied calamities to come if we are truly moved by the hardships of our fellow humans — if we are really sensitive to the feelings and needs of others.

Pray for God's intervention

Satan has influenced this world in such a way that that kind of godly concern is difficult to feel and show. But feel and show it the Christian must!

Let's make sure, therefore, that the only calluses we have are on our hands — and on our knees, from long periods spent in fervent prayer for God's intervention in this world — not on our hearts. □

nancy was discovered, Joseph was faced with a dilemma in the society of his day. Even before he fully understood the divine plan, though, he was motivated by one concern — not to make Mary a public example.

Even though he may not have understood what was happening at that stage, he would not publicly embarrass or humiliate her. He decided to put her away privately (Matthew 1:18-19).

Yet how many husbands and wives today are unable to resist public put-downs of their spouses? How many can refrain from embarrassing or humiliating a mate in front of friends or family? This is a big test of love in action.

Developing loving traits

Here are some ways to help develop true, loving relationships in your life:

- **Communication.** People often wait until someone dies before openly expressing feelings for the person. If only we had said this or that before he or she died. On the one hand, there are positive things we fail to say. On the other, there are hurtful, negative, destructive things we say because we fail to appreciate the power of words.

Humans cannot read minds, so we have to let people know when we feel low and in need of encouragement, or when we feel misunderstood. And it is important not to downgrade what you hear. The problem is real — perhaps even painful — for the other person. "It's a bad day today." "Oh, go on, it's not that bad!" you

reply. Maybe for you it isn't, but for the other person it is.

- **Honesty.** Some surveys show that six out of every 10 people feel lying is justified at times — on tax forms, for instance. Some people lie supposedly to protect others from pain or hurt feelings. Yet this makes dishonesty a social skill and encourages deceit. When little children tell the truth and get punished for it, they quickly learn to tell "white lies."

We are prone to say "How nice to see you!" to people we would prefer to avoid. Or "We must get together sometime" to people we dislike and hope we never have to visit with.

At dinner in a restaurant we say "Order what you want" but inwardly hope our companions don't. This attitude echoes the sentiment of Proverbs 23:6-8: "Eat and drink!" he says to you, but his heart is not with you."

In everyday living, we wait till 5 p.m. for a call promised at 2 p.m. When the call comes, the party says: "Oh, I'm sorry. I got held up." And we say: "Oh, that's alright. It's OK" — when it isn't OK and we are plain angry about it. When we make arrangements, we ought to stick to them or advise people differently.

"How come you didn't make it to our party?" "Oh, I wasn't feeling well," you say, when in fact you can't stand their boring social flutters. We need to be able to live honestly and know that those we live with are honest with us.

We are confronted with sensitive questions like, "Do you like my new

coat (or hairstyle or dress)?" "Oh, yes, it's lovely," we say, when we think it's terrible and a waste of money. But this is a mine field in personal relations, isn't it?

We need tact and diplomacy. We don't have to be brutal. Part of loving others is to learn sensitivity. You learn to reply diplomatically: "Well, I'm not as fond of this outfit as your other one. But then again, it is only my opinion. Keep in mind I am not a fashion expert."

- **Forgiveness.** How desperately those who suffer need to be able to get past deep hurts. Consider the case of a woman who was raped, shot in the head, brutally mutilated and left to die. She survived, but the head wound left her blind. When a television interviewer asked if she had a lot of bitterness and unhealed scars, this amazing woman replied: "Oh, no, that man took one night of my life. I refuse to give him one more additional second."

Christ's attitude on the stake was, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). We must be willing to forgive what others do in hate toward us. Followers of Christ are required to forgive those who trespass against them.

Loving relationships are susceptible to injury from hurts and abuses. So overcome the temptation to retaliate against wrongs, by instead expressing love.

And remember, those closest to you should really be your best friends. You need to treat them that way! □



“Ya budu vas ob-sluzhivats” (“I will be serving you”).

Turning from the window, I saw a woman conductor. She would be attending our overnight train from Leningrad to Moscow.

At midnight our train pulled out of the station. Soon we were out in the open countryside, passing lakes, marshes and stands of birch trees. It's still daylight in late June at this latitude, which is the same as Anchorage, Alaska. Leningraders call this season of the year “white nights.”

Our conductor, who was about to serve tea, looked like she would be willing to talk, so I asked her about the homes and gardens that scrolled by. Soon we were talking about our backgrounds and families. She introduced herself as Ludmilla.

A warm people

Russians quickly warm up to someone who speaks their language. Inevitably they will tell

‘Why Do You Want War...?’

After a trip to the Soviet Union, a Good News correspondent offers a unique perspective on the Russian people — and on the ultimate peace that will soon grip this earth!

By Victor Kubik

you all about their families — especially their children. They are not embarrassed to speak affectionately about them. Ludmilla discussed her problems of caring for her teenage son while working on the railroad.

Our conversation shifted to the nature of the Russian people. In

her direct manner, Ludmilla instructed me about their generosity and, as she described it, their “wide-heartedness.”

I found this to be true in a number of personal contacts I made. One was with an editor for an art-book publisher. I saw this editor twice while in Leningrad;



she insisted that I take several beautiful books about Leningrad that she helped produce. Another contact was with a set designer with a prominent Russian ballet, whom I had met in the United States. While in the Soviet Union, he took my wife and me to dinner, and we spent an evening sharing our lives and thoughts. He proposed toasts to our friendship and the friendship of our children. We parted with the traditional Russian kiss of friendship.

Often Westerners have a preconception of what Russians are like because of media reports about continuing international tensions. But when you visit the Soviet Union and talk to Russians, you learn not to equate their political system with the people.

The search for peace

Ludmilla wanted to find out something from me. She looked me right in the eyes and asked: "Why are Americans afraid that the Russians want to attack the United States? Why do you want war when we want peace?"

Ludmilla wasn't the only one

who expressed these fears. Many Russians are convinced that Americans will accidentally start a nuclear war.

Before she let me answer, Ludmilla went on about how much the Russian people want peace, and how much her people had suffered in the last World War, which the Soviets call the Great Patriotic War. Being a native Leningrader, she recounted the horrors of the 900-day siege by the Nazis, and how more than one million from her home city perished.

The Soviet Union indeed suffered unlike any other nation during World War II. To this day the Soviet mind is traumatized from the horrors of the carnage and destruction of more than 40 years ago.

Twenty million people died. One half of all housing was destroyed. Living space still hasn't caught up with demand. Hardly a family was untouched by suffering and death. My own parents were displaced persons who after the war found their way to the United States.

Peace slogans, banners and

posters abound in the Soviet Union. The government touts peace as the key word in its propaganda. The Russian word for *peace* and *world* are the same, and slogans often play on the similarities of these words.

It was now my turn to speak. I told Ludmilla that Americans do not want war. Like the Russians, Americans want peace for themselves and their children. Instead of blaming our governments and leaders for manipulating and stirring public sentiment, I simply told her that mankind in general *does not know the way to peace*. Thousands of wars and billions of dead have proven that. And until man finds that way, he will not have peace.

Man does not know the way

Throughout history man has tried almost everything to bring peace. Man has fought for, bargained for and prayed for peace.

But what man calls peace is usually only a deterrent to conflict, maintained by precariously balanced powers. Should the balance tip — watch out! War!

In a speech delivered just be-

fore coming to power as Communist Party Secretary, Yuri Andropov said, "Peace can only be defended by relying on the invincible might of the Soviet armed forces." Ludmilla herself was convinced that the only reason the Soviets maintained an army was to protect their borders.

Everyone wants peace. But when you name one boulevard "Peace Street" but another "Uprising Street," and a central plaza "Revolution Square," it is obvious you will not have peace. When the Nobel and Lenin Peace Prizes are given to champions of "peace" working in opposing directions, you will not gain peace. One side makes the world safe for democracy, the other a hegemony of Marxism-Leninism. So much for peace.

Is there a way to achieve lasting peace? Is there hope when you look at man's dismal record? Is there anything that *you* can do? The answer is yes!

There is a big difference between *wanting* peace and *making* peace. Jesus began His public ministry by listing essential qualities that make one a Christian. In Matthew 5:9 He said one of those attributes was being a peacemaker.

Isaiah, in the eighth century B.C., wrote, "The way of peace they have not known" (Isaiah 59:8). In the 20th century, man still doesn't know the way.

But lasting peace is coming.

In the sixth century B.C., the prophet Daniel interpreted a vision for King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The contents of the dream were targeted for the "latter days" (Daniel 2:28), in which we live. Daniel explained the mountain that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream: "The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people" (verse 44).

The root of the problem with the peace process is people. Man's nature and spirit is contrary to peace.

Notice this prophecy about the returned Messiah: "And the government will be upon His shoul-

der. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, *Prince of Peace*. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Scripture makes it so plain. Only world government administered by God will bring peace.

In His Olivet prophecy concerning the events at the end of this age, Jesus declared that unless God actually intervenes in man's affairs and overcomes man's inability to rule himself, man will surely destroy himself (Matthew 24:22).

What you can do

In the meantime, what can you do? You have plenty of opportunities to make peace. But it won't come by your signing disarmament petitions, nor by marching in peace parades, nor by joining peace movements.

Christ not only began His ministry with a call to peace, He also ended it with a similar message. In John 14:27 Christ said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you."

Christ gives a peace that is not available or known to the world. Where can you find it?

Paul describes this peace as a product of the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22). Since man is cut off from God's Spirit, he doesn't know the way to peace. This is why the world's greatest intellects cannot find it.

The peacemaking process begins when there is peace between God and man: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

Being justified means to be forgiven for our wrongdoing — our breaking of God's law. When we are at peace with God, we become at peace with ourselves.

The peace process continues as we abide in God's law: "My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and *peace* they will add to you" (Proverbs 3:1-2).

Then we continue by making

peace with our mate, children, employer and neighbor. We, then, truly live by Christ's statement, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9).

Just as war is the magnification of individual bickerings, arguments and dissension, so world peace results from the combined efforts of those who are at peace with God.

Peace is coming

The time is soon coming when God's Spirit, which is His nature and His mind, will change the spirit and nature of man. In the context of the "Day of the Lord," which is the time God intervenes in world events, God's Holy Spirit will be poured out on all people (Joel 2:28). The peace process will be completed on earth.

Then God can go on to bring His peace to the entire universe! "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:7). "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Daniel 7:27).

The Soviet people donated the statue of a man beating a sword into a plowshare that stands in front of the United Nations building in New York. Inscribed are words from Isaiah 2:4: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Before turning in for the night, I couldn't help asking Ludmilla about her faith in God. Considering the godless society she lives in, I was curious about her thoughts.

As far as believing in God, she said, it was like listening to politicians — sometimes you believe and sometimes you don't. We both chuckled. We both knew what it's like with humans.

But with God it's different. Soon His government will bring lasting solutions for our down-to-earth problems. Lasting peace will finally be a reality. God will not allow man's natural course to destroy him.

We can believe that! □

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What are the "groves" mentioned so many times in the Old Testament?

At first glance, the impression most people usually get from reading about the groves is that they were merely clumps of trees on a hillside where pagans went to worship idols. Yet the Bible mentions in II Kings 23:6 (King James Bible) how King Josiah took a grove out of the house of the Lord, burned it and stamped it into powder. How could he do that to a clump of trees?

Notice II Kings 23:6 speaks of the grove in the singular tense. It was something Josiah could pick up. And he hated it so vehemently that he burned it and ground it into bits.

In every instance except for one, the Old Testament Hebrew word for "grove" is *asherah*. This word refers to an image or symbol dedicated to the ancient pagan goddess Astarte.

The one exception where *grove* doesn't mean "asherah" is found in Genesis 21:33. Here the Hebrew word is *eshel* and simply means "tree." Abraham planted a tree. But that had nothing to do with the *asherah* or groves mentioned elsewhere. There was no religious meaning attached to the tree. Beersheba is a hot, dry place. The tree was for shade.

The various other scriptures always mention these groves in connection with idols, images and pagan worship. A few examples are II Kings 17:16, 21:7, Exodus 34:13, II Chronicles 14:3, Isaiah 17:8 and Jeremiah 17:2.

These groves, or *asherahs*, were symbols of a pagan goddess called Astarte. The groves were posts, pillars, images or denuded and stripped trees dedicated to the worship of this woman.

All of the heathen nations worshipped Astarte through these images. When the Israelites came into the land of these pagan peoples, they soon adopted this prac-

tice in their worship, also. This was idolatry, which God condemned. To honor Astarte, men and women practiced prostitution, and roused themselves to spiritual frenzy through wild dances and self-mutilation. Not only did the people bow down to the symbols of the queen of fertility, but they carried on a virtual orgy before these images.

That is why Josiah smashed the grove he brought out of the Temple. He knew it was an abomination to Almighty God in heaven.

It may surprise you to know that millions of people carry on this satanic worship today!

The *asherahs* or groves were symbols of fertility used in pagan idolstrous worship of Astarte. They have been brought down through the generations until now, by millions who have knowingly or ignorantly been duped into worshipping her.

Astounding as it may seem, you may have many of these symbols or groves right in your hometown. They have spread the world over, and stand in mute dedication to the "queen of heaven" — the great whore named Astarte.

They are simply obelisks, or upright towers, representing the male sex organ.

In ancient times, they were usually erected on a higher rise of ground, called in your Bible a "high place" (I Kings 14:23, II Chronicles 17:6). They were put at the place of worship.

Today they are still used at places of worship in churches of the world, in the form of steeples perched on top of the church buildings themselves.

We find the following in a book titled *Pagan and Christian Creeds* by Edward Carpenter: "As to the lingam as representing the male organ, in some form or the other — as upright stone or pillar or obelisk or slender round tower — it occurs all over

the world, notably in Ireland, and forms such a memorial of adoration paid by early folk to the great emblem and instrument of human fertility, as cannot be mistaken" (page 183).

Sometimes at the very peak of the steeple a cross is attached, supposedly in commemoration of Jesus Christ's death on the cross. However, the truth is that the cross, too, represents the male member. The well-known T-shaped cross was in use in pagan lands long before Christianity, as a symbol of the male member.

The Bible nowhere tells us to use crosses in worshipping God. On the contrary, the Second Commandment forbids the use of any graven image in worship of God (Exodus 20:4-6).

Think how deluded and deceived the world is! People enter the "church of their choice" every week, believing they are worshipping God, when they are merely sitting in a "high place" with an *asherah* or grove poised over their heads as the symbol of the "goddess of fertility." They do not know what they are worshipping (John 4:22).

Satan is a clever deceiver and liar who has blinded the entire world (II Corinthians 4:4, Revelation 12:9). You have been shown the truth, and instead of worshipping a false god with symbols, steeples and groves, you can worship the true God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23).

You need to know more about how the false religions of this world have deceived millions! Send for our free booklet *Your Awesome Future — The Missing Dimension in Knowledge*. Just mail the literature request card in this issue or write to our address nearest you. Also, request our free booklet *The Ten Commandments*. It thoroughly explains God's commandment against using graven images in worship, as well as the other nine commandments in God's basic law. □

LETTERS

Prayer

We would like to thank Norman L. Shoaf for the article in the September *Good News*, "Yes! God Will Answer Your Prayers." It contained so much detail. It seemed that questions that came into our minds were answered as we read through.

We know through experience that God does answer prayers. The more specifically we pray, the more specifically God answers. He has answered prayers sent up to Him regarding providing the right mate, granting children to those who have been childless, providing a place to live and jobs to those who have been without. And though our prayer list for the sick has grown quite long, we could make quite a list of those we have prayed for who have been healed.

Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Linkous
Morristown, Tenn.

A while back I wrote to you to ask you to pray that my husband would find a job. I want to thank you and all who have prayed for us. My husband started a new job yesterday. . . . We will not have to move south now and leave our families and children.

I am overwhelmed with gratitude and appreciation. God is in His heaven. All is well. But I just knew in my heart that He would come through for me, as when I prayed about a job for my husband, I did so in all faith, and I hastened to add that His will be done. God and Jesus came through for me once again.

Ruth Ann Farley
Linesville, Penn.

After reading your article "Yes! God Will Answer Your Prayers," I find myself wondering how an omnipotent Deity sat in heaven and permitted the murder of millions of His innocent creatures in the Holocaust. . . .

You write: "God stands ready and willing to dramatically and miraculously answer your prayers." Well, I am afraid your motive is good but something is dreadfully wrong in this whole scenario.

Jerome L. Starr
New York, N.Y.

You are absolutely right! Something is dreadfully wrong in this world! It's the fact that humanity in general has chosen to reject God and God's ways. Thus God has cut the vast majority of people off from contact with Him for 6,000 years, so man can see once and for all the painful results that disobeying

God brings. Satan the devil, who now sits on the throne of the earth, is ultimately responsible for all this world's evils. So why are people so quick to blame God? God at this time is working with only an infinitesimally few people whom He specially calls. For more information, request our free brochure Why Does God Allow Suffering? and our free booklet A World Held Captive.

"Is It Worth the Gamble?"

I know personally the hurt and damage that can happen when someone is possessed by the gambling "demon" . . . most gamblers have parents that encourage gambling or were alcoholics. My mother-in-law is a compulsive gambler (bingo) and my father-in-law died because he couldn't stop drinking.

My husband earned \$49,500 last year, but there were days when we only had bread to eat for a week at times. Why? Because he thinks giving his money to the rich people at tracks and other places is more important than anything else. He laughs at my idea that we should pray about the matter and says that he will do what he wants and when he wants to.

A gambler cannot tell anyone the truth because he lies so much to himself, and he wouldn't know the truth if it were a truck that ran over him.

P.D.J.
Pontiac, Mich.

Very good article, but you forgot to (or should have) put in statistics on depression and suicide.

Once . . . there was a lottery for, I think it was, \$10 or \$11 million. I never really bought tickets for this type of thing, but I couldn't resist. It looked like easy money, so I bought two tickets at a dollar each. I didn't really expect to win.

I found out in the paper I lost. Then this strange feeling came over me. I got really depressed. It seemed as if I would not be happy again. I'm glad it only lasted about one hour. I played maybe once or twice after that but never again. So I got to thinking: If I got depressed over one loss, I wondered what some people were like after lots of losses. Now I just wondered, after reading this article, how many people have killed themselves over this greed of easy money.

Ken Houghton
Toronto, Ont.

"Just What Is the Holy Spirit?"

I want to express my appreciation to

the staff of *The Good News* and especially to Mr. Bernard W. Schnippert for his excellent article explaining about the Holy Spirit (August, September). I've . . . had many questions concerning God's Holy Spirit. The article was a thorough explanation of just what it is and what it is not, as well as clarifying many of the difficult scriptures used by trinitarians to support false doctrine.

David B. Whitney
Goffstown, N.H.

"Just What Is the Holy Spirit?" is now available in reprint form by that title. Readers may have a free copy by mailing the request card in this issue or by writing our address nearest them.

Mexican independence

In your October-November issue of *The Good News*, article "Seven Holidays of the World Tomorrow," you mention that May 5 — Cinco de Mayo — is Mexico's Independence Day.

Mexico celebrates Cinco de Mayo as an important turning point in its history — also called the Batalla de Puebla, Battle of Puebla, which took place in the city of Puebla May 5, 1862, when General Ignacio Zaragoza and his army beat the then-great French army and their plan to invade Mexico.

September 16, 1810, at 5 a.m., Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla — father of the country — shouted the declaration of independence from Spain.

Raquel Arizmendi
Address unavailable

We regret our error.

Always a learning experience

I just finished reading your short letter in the August *Good News* entitled "Are You Dull of Hearing?" I found it very interesting that anyone would find *The Good News* lacking in "meat," as they called it.

As I read it and thought upon it, however, I came to realize a few things. There are those who are satisfied too easily and therefore never realize their full potential, and then there are those always seeking some exotic mystery or truth that doesn't exist and therefore are led away as Eve into a deception. For those who are truly called and faithful, the word and teaching in *The Good News* should always be an inspiration and learning experience.

Emilie M. Stafford
Kalamazoo, Mich.

'!... (Gulp) ... Sorry'

Let me start with an embarrassing story — embarrassing for me, that is, but it serves to illustrate the point.

A few years ago I was traveling in India with some friends. One morning we received a phone call at our hotel in New Delhi informing us that our flight to Calcutta had been delayed and would not leave until later that evening.

We decided it would be best to spend the day in the hotel. Since checkout time was 11 a.m., one of our party went off to ask if we could extend our reservations until the evening.

He came back a few minutes later and told us that the management would be pleased to allow us to stay longer since the hotel was not fully booked.

"How much extra will it cost?" I asked.

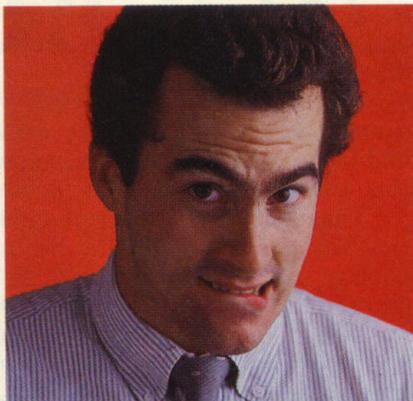
"Oh, he didn't say, but he wrote down something on our bill."

We looked at the piece of paper he'd brought back. It said "1800."

"Eighteen-hundred rupees?" I was horrified. "That's outrageous! The full room rate is only 900 rupees a day. He is charging us *double* the daily rate for just a few hours?!"

We were all indignant, and I suggested to my friend that he go and renegotiate for something more reasonable.

So off he went again, while we sat around thinking some very negative thoughts about India in general, and Indian hotel managers in particular. Did they think we were made of money? ... typical of the greed in the



*Do you ever jump to conclusions?
The Bible warns against
misjudging people and situations.*

by John Halford

world today ... shan't stay here again ... we'll tell our friends not to either ... might even write to the Indian tourist office when we get home.

A few minutes later my friend came back. "It's 1800 hours," he said sheepishly.

"What?"

"The '1800' stands for 1800 hours, or 6 o'clock. They go by the 24-hour clock here. The management has extended our reservations until 6 o'clock this evening. They understand about the postponed flight, so there'll be no extra charge."

Suddenly we felt stupid and embarrassed. We were angry at ourselves for so hastily misjudging the well-intentioned management and jumping so quickly to the wrong conclusion.

Now that isn't my favorite travel story, but it does illustrate the point. We often misjudge our fellow humans and bear hard feelings toward them because we have been too hasty in judging

their actions or words. On that morning, the only thing that got hurt was our pride. But sometimes jumping to the wrong conclusion can lead to far more serious consequences, like the time the people of Israel nearly became involved in a civil war — over a misunderstanding.

You'll find that story in Joshua 22.

A close call

The tribes of Israel at this time were well established in the promised land west of the Jordan River.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh had many years before asked Moses for permission to settle on the east side of the Jordan (Numbers 32). They had been allowed to do

so on condition that they continued to support the other nine-and-a-half tribes in gaining the promised land.

Now that that was accomplished, Joshua told the men from the two-and-a-half tribes that they were free to return to their homes and families. Before they left he reminded them that, although separated geographically, they were still a part of the confederation of Israelite tribes. They promised to remember (Joshua 22:1-6).

But as soon as they arrived home, they built themselves an altar (verse 10). When the nine-and-a-half tribes living on the west side of the Jordan heard this, they were outraged. They immediately assumed that the two-and-a-half tribes were planning to turn to paganism, thus bringing down the wrath of God on the whole nation.

They planned a military campaign to teach the erring tribes a lesson. Meeting a delegation from

Photo by Nathan Faulkner

Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, they forcefully made their accusation.

The eastern tribes quickly explained that their western brethren had completely misunderstood the situation. The eastern tribes said, in effect: "We have not built this altar in rebellion against God or to be independent from you. We have built it so that we will remember the altar of God, and His Tabernacle in Israel. We are afraid that future generations of our children will forget that we are one people, and the eastern and western tribes will drift apart" (verses 22-29).

There must have been a few red faces as the truth was explained, but a bloody civil war was avoided (verses 33-34).

But it isn't always this way. Friends have fallen out, families have broken up and nations have gone to war because some people jumped to conclusions, before getting the facts.

God's instruction Book, the Bible, was given to teach us how to live together in peace. It gives us plenty of advice on how to avoid the embarrassment, the hurt and the chagrin of jumping to conclusions.

Condemning others

In Matthew 7:1 we are told, "Judge not, that you be not judged." But does this mean we must not under any circumstance make evaluations?

Hardly. In this verse, Jesus Christ was warning about a spirit of *condemnation* rather than evaluation. It is inevitable that some of us from time to time must evaluate our fellow humans. Otherwise society couldn't function. There would be no leadership, no growth, no basis for promotion and no progress.

However, it is all too easy to form a negative opinion according to what *you* think, based on your own personal and sometimes hastily gained impression. But this "gut reaction" is often unfair and inaccurate, tempered as it is by your mood at the time.

In John 7:24 Jesus commanded, "Do not judge according

to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." Things are not always what they seem to be.

An example of righteous judgment is the story of the woman taken in adultery, who was brought to Jesus by the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees (John 8:3).

The woman was actually caught in the act, so these men had not jumped to the conclusion that she was an adulteress (verse 4). They had, however, prejudged that she was worthy of the death penalty, as indeed she was according to the letter of the law (verse 5). There was (and still is) an important aspect of God's law that these men had overlooked. That is mercy.

Jesus used this incident to teach a lesson about jumping to conclusions. He stooped and wrote with His finger in the dust (verse 6).

Exactly what He wrote we don't know, but it may well have been the names of some of those who were accusing the woman. Then He rose slowly and, eyeing them, said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first" (verse 7).

Then He continued to write on the ground, as the group of scribes and Pharisees slowly drifted away. Obviously the woman who had been caught in the act was not the only one guilty of sin in that group.

Jesus then looked the woman in the eye and said: "Where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, Lord," she replied quietly, wondering what would happen next.

"Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more," Jesus said (verses 8-11).

Jesus didn't condone the sin, but He knew that sometimes mercy can be more effective than condemnation and punishment. Not always — it depends on the attitude. But that day in Jerusalem Jesus discerned a repentant woman who would try not to make the mistake again.

"He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who

is impulsive exalts folly," advised wise King Solomon (Proverbs 14:29).

In other words, whereas someone who judges carefully can solve problems, the impulsive only add to the sum total of stupidity, hard feelings, resentment and injustice — and we have quite enough of that in the world already.

Judging carefully

If you have the responsibility to judge, take the time to think things through, look at all the angles, analyze where you may have been mistaken or have misunderstood and be sure to get all the facts. You will save yourself a great deal of embarrassment, and others a lot of pain.

The person who is prone to jump to hasty conclusions is destined to make a fool of himself over and over again.

King Solomon also observed, "Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:9).

Nobody respects the individual who is always "popping his cork." We all know people like that. At the slightest provocation they lose their temper and rant and rage. We may fear them, but we never really respect them — and deep down, everybody wants to be respected.

So it is important that a Christian develop the capacity to "be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19).

Not just for this life, either. The people God has called now will rule with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God. They will be responsible for teaching, guiding and evaluating hundreds and maybe even thousands of people who will inevitably make some mistakes.

How will we help these people? We must learn to be patient, tolerant, understanding and compassionate, to look for the best and to be absolutely sure of the intent of each person's heart before we judge.

The time to start doing that is now. □

'Please Talk to Me!'

Since we started the "Family Sharing" column in *The Good News* a few months ago, we have received hundreds of letters from our readers. Some people appreciate confirmation that they have been on the right track; others tell

the comments of several of our readers:

"In *The Good News* you always seem to picture marriage so ideally. Yet I have never known of such ideal or perfect marriages. While some marriages are better than others, there are always problems to solve. Please, could you now and then address

if you apply God's laws about marriage, you will improve your relationship as husband and wife.

As we have been pointing out in this column, the great Creator God has not left us without instruction on how to have a happy marriage. The Bible is God's instruction Book for life — including how to have a happy family.

But throughout human history few have understood and applied the laws of happy marriage. It is our desire to help you, the reader, strive for those high ideals made possible by understanding God's instruction Book, and have the happiest marriage possible.

But along the way there will be many problems to solve.

The most important key to success in marriage is how well a husband and wife handle the rough spots. And the solution to problems is far more basic than many would believe.

Do you realize a vast majority of marriage problems involve improper communication? Usually the problem is no communication at all. Or sometimes it is misunderstood communication.

Many couples believe their problems are about money or about sex or about children. And no doubt problems may involve all these and many more aspects of married life.

But many times money, sex and children are not really the problem at all, but rather, the couple has never been able to communicate about those and other subjects.

That doesn't even necessarily mean there have not been words about them. But there has been no *communication*.

The communication problem can be illustrated by this exam-



plastic stories of shattered marriages and cry out for help.

Without a doubt, family life is one of the most important subjects of the 1980s.

But perhaps in our zeal to improve marriages, we have sometimes tended to talk more about the ideal than the real-life, down-to-earth problems couples have.

One letter well summarized

the difficult times many couples face in marriage?"

Point well taken.

No perfect marriages

Since there are no perfect humans, there are also no perfect marriages. Even the happiest couple will have a few rocky moments along the way.

It is easy to get a bit carried away as writers. We always want to reach for the ideal. We know

ple: A wife may feel the family needs a new couch. One evening she may say, "Honey, I would like to buy a new couch for the living room."

The husband quickly responds: "No! We don't need a new couch."

A week or two later, the wife may again bring up the subject: "Dear, could we talk about that new couch for the living room?"

The husband may then irritably look up. "We've already discussed that. We don't need a new couch."

Wait a minute! Already *discussed*? There was no discussion. She asked a legitimate question. And without real communication,

Little wonder when problems then arise, there is practically no way to come to a solution. Families who have spent years grunting strange noises at each other will not be able to resolve conflict.

So months, or even years, go by. Problems build. Finally an explosion occurs. In the heat of anger, hurting words are shouted. That's no way to live in marriage. Yet it is probably the way most people live.

It's never too early to communicate

If you are not yet married, one of the most important things to find out about a possible mar-

riage partner is how well you communicate with each other. That's why a young couple should spend time getting acquainted. They should be together in different circumstances so they can know as much as possible about each other.

Here's where it all comes down to the kind of relationship a husband and wife have. If each understands the other's needs, if each wants to give the other the best help possible, they will solve the problem.

In the case of the above example, the most obvious solution is to understand the need for a time of quiet relaxation at the end of Dad's hard day, but set aside equal time for meaningful adult conversation for Mom.

Sounds simple. But it isn't.

The husband and wife who can talk over *everything* are rare.

Get started now

If you both see the need for improvement in this aspect of your marriage, you have made one giant step toward solving your problems. But often only one mate sees what needs to be done. When the other can't or won't see it — won't even talk about it — the problem remains.

But when both see the importance of improving conversation and communication, the slow and steady march down the road of progress begins.

Rome wasn't built in a day. And communication problems won't be solved in one evening. But you have to get started somewhere. So why not get the whole family together and lay out a plan of building communication between husbands and wives, between parents and children?

It may be one of the most difficult things some of you have ever done.

But every one of us could improve. Family life can only get better with communication! Literally millions are crying out, "Please talk to me!" If you haven't been communicating like you should, do something about it. Talk to your mate. You'll both be better for it. □

Many couples believe their problems are about money or sex or children. But often these are not the problems. Rather, the couple has never communicated about these subjects.

the husband made a decision, without hearing the reasons why the wife felt a new couch was necessary.

Children often fall victim to the lack of family communication. Your teenage son may ask, "Mom, can I go over to John's house?"

Many a parent responds, "No, not this time."

"But why?" the son wants to know.

"Because I said so," Mom says.

There was no communication. There was a conclusion, but there was no communication.

Often families spend years muttering short, one-word retorts to each other in nearly meaningless conversation — if it can be called conversation.

At the end of the day a wife may ask, "How'd your day go?"

From behind the newspaper, the husband may respond, "Fine."

That's it — end of conversa-

riage partner is how well you communicate with each other. That's why a young couple should spend time getting acquainted. They should be together in different circumstances so they can know as much as possible about each other.

If he doesn't talk much on dates, it's a pretty good bet he will not talk as a husband. If she doesn't give you her opinions and ask questions while you are riding in the car before you are married, she won't change later.

Here is a frequent scene in many households: Mom has spent the entire day in the company of small children. Now, of course, mothers love their children dearly. But at the end of a tiring day keeping up with an active 5-year-old and changing several sets of diapers on the baby, Mom needs some adult conversation. She needs to talk about the problems of her day. She needs appreciation and encouragement.

But Dad often has been talking

Here Is PROPHECY FULFILLED!

Did the first Christians see Christ's Olivet prophecy fulfilled? What happened concerning these prophesied events? What about the predictions of the book of Revelation? Here are remarkable reports from Scripture and history.

By L. Leroy Neff

Imagine, if you can, that you lived in the first century A.D.

In particular, imagine that you were in Jerusalem on the 11th day of the month of Abib on God's sacred calendar, in what we call A.D. 31. And imagine that you were one of four disciples of Jesus named Peter, James, John or Andrew.

Earlier that day someone mentioned to Jesus how beautiful the Temple and its stones were. Jesus responded: "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Mark 13:2).

As you four disciples later had opportunity, you asked Him, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" (Mark 13:4).

Jesus' answer, in brief, as recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, was: 1) Religious deception by those claiming

to represent Him. 2) Wars and rumors of wars. 3) Famines and earthquakes. 4) Pestilence (called "troubles" in Mark). 5) Persecution of Christ's disciples, and tribulation for Israel. 6) Remarkable signs in the sun, moon, stars and sky. 7) The desolation or destruction of Jerusalem, and Christ's return in the clouds of heaven.

Consider the events that followed Christ's incredible prophecy.

First-century events

Christ's prophecy was passed on by word of mouth to the early Church of God. It was possibly two decades before the details of this remarkable prophecy were written down for the Church and for posterity.

Strangely enough, the details were not written down by those who heard what Christ said. Instead, Christ's prophecy was recorded by a former tax collector who became the apostle Matthew, by the evangelist Mark and by a beloved physician

named Luke. John did not include the Olivet prophecy in his gospel or in his three epistles. Neither did Peter mention it in his two letters. There is no record that James or Andrew, the other two disciples who were witnesses, wrote about it. James was killed (apparently beheaded) by Herod Agrippa I about 12 years after Christ gave the prophecy. Andrew disappeared from the scene of Scripture after Acts chapter 1.

With this prophecy in mind, consider the events of the next four decades.

There was a great increase of believers at and following the Feast of Pentecost in A.D. 31. As the years came and went, the Church grew considerably.

False teachers

It was not long before false teachers came on the scene, just as Christ warned. Probably Simon Magus (Acts 8), in A.D. 33, was the foremost. Within about 20 years, false teachers were even upsetting the faraway Galatian churches. The book of Acts and



RELIGIOUS DECEPTION

the letters by the apostles show that false teachings and opposition to the Church were rampant.

There were other false religious leaders, some even claiming to be the Messiah. Acts 5:36 mentions Theudas, who is said to have claimed to be a prophet. He led a multitude to the Jordan River, promising to divide it so they could cross over. Verse 37 tells of a man named Judas. An Egyptian is mentioned in Acts 21:38; he led about 4,000 people into the desert, of whom most were apparently killed by Felix, procurator of Judea.

Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, describes a man named Dositheus, a Samaritan who claimed to be the Messiah. During the reign of Nero, Josephus says that religious impostors were killed almost every day.

Truly, Christ's warning of false ministers and religious leaders came to pass.

Wars and rumors of wars

The second point Jesus men-

tioned related to wars and rumors of wars.

In Caesarea, Jews and Syrians had a disagreement that ended in the expulsion of the Jews and the slaying of about 20,000 of them. This caused a great deal of trouble, ending in the death of about 20,000 more in nearby areas.

In Alexandria, about 50,000 Jews were slain, and in Damascus 10,000. During this time the Roman Empire also waged wars.

The worse was yet to come, however, during the years of A.D. 66-70. More on that later.

Famine

Jesus also foretold famine. One such famine is recorded in Acts 11:28, which came to pass in the years 45-48 during the reign of Claudius Caesar. Josephus also mentions this famine and says that many people died in Jerusalem for lack of food.

There were also several other famines in the Roman Empire during the reign of Claudius. Adam Clarke, the Bible commen-

tator, mentions four that occurred about this time.

Pestilence and earthquakes

Pestilence often follows famine, though no special note is made of pestilence during this period of history except for events before the fall of Jerusalem.

Adam Clarke lists earthquakes at Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Rome, Laodicea (which destroyed the city), Hierapolis, Colosse and Campania. These earthquakes were reported by various historians of the period.

Persecution of the Church

Anyone who has read the book of Acts knows that the Church of God was persecuted from the very beginning. This is also apparent from many comments made in the various epistles. Stephen and James were martyred. Saul himself caused many Christians to be put to death before his conversion.

“Not one stone upon another”

Remember Jesus clearly said, in effect, that the Temple would be destroyed.

In about May of 66, Gessius Florus confiscated 17 talents

As time passed, the Church grew. But, as Christ predicted, false teachings and opposition to the Church were rampant.

from the Temple treasury. He was said to be an evil and oppressive ruler, a procurator, or principle agent, of the emperor from 64-66. His action caused an uproar and riot by the Jews. Gessius then allowed his cohorts to plunder part of the city of Jerusalem.

A multitude of Jews reacted by setting fire to palaces and public buildings. After two days' siege, the fort of Antonia was captured,



set on fire and the garrison slain. Thus began the war that ended in the destruction of the Temple and a second captivity of the Jews.

In September of 66, the high priest, Ananias, was murdered. In about November, Cestius Gallus, president of Syria, took the Roman 12th legion and began a siege of Jerusalem that lasted about six days. He apparently could have taken the city if he had held on just a little longer. But a strange thing happened. Josephus writes about it:

“It then happened that Cestius was not conscious either how the besieged despaired of success, nor how courageous the people were for him; and so he recalled his soldiers from the place, and by despairing of any expectation of taking it, without having received any disgrace, he retired from the city, without any reason in the world” (*Wars*, Book II, chapter XIX, section 7).

In the process of withdrawing his forces toward the coast, Ces-

tius suffered a resounding defeat at the hands of the Jews.

It was not yet God’s time for the destruction of Jerusalem. The Church of God at Jerusalem had to have a chance to leave the city.

About February of 67, Nero appointed Vespasian to carry on the war, and by June Vespasian had upwards of 60,000 men in Galilee. Fighting continued through late autumn and then stopped while Vespasian resided in Caesarea during the winter months. In the spring of 68, he began the attack again with a wide encirclement of Jerusalem.

Vespasian prepared for the final attack in June of 68, but on receiving news of Nero’s suicide he withdrew for about a year to await instructions from the new emperor.

In June, 69, he once more took to the field, reoccupied Hebron and restored order throughout Palestine around Jerusalem. The war was soon interrupted again while Vespasian returned to Rome to himself receive the reins

of the Roman government. Vespasian then sent his son Titus to resume the war. This occupied the year from June, 69, to the spring of 70.

The final siege

On the Passover of 70 the final siege of Jerusalem commenced. It lasted 134 terrible days.

On the 84th day, in late summer, the Temple sacrifices were stopped, as there were no more animals to sacrifice. On the 105th day, which has been called the “ominous 9th of Ab,” the Temple was set on fire and, in time, the whole city was burned. On the 134th day, the remainder of the city was taken.

During this siege there was just about as much trouble from within the city as there was from without. It seems that it was every man for himself. There were several warring factions, each with their own interests, fighting against the others. Of particular note were the “zealots,” who were cruel and ruthless.

The shortage of food was so bad that some resorted to cannibalism, as Moses had prophesied in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. Josephus (*Wars*, Book VI, chapter III, section 4) gives one such account of a woman who ate

Jesus also mentioned wars. During this time the Romans waged wars. The worst was yet to come, however, during A.D. 66-70.

her own baby. The inhabitants of Jerusalem suffered terribly during this siege, almost beyond description.

During the Passover season, people from far and near were in the city to observe the festival. This made the siege far more terrible than if it had occurred at some other time.

Those Jews who tried to escape (at times 500 or more a day)

Illustrations by Ken Tunell



were captured by the Romans and crucified in sight of the walls of the city. Many sought sanctuary in the caverns under the city, but all ultimately either died of starvation or by the sword, or were taken into captivity.

Records state that 1,357,660 people were known killed and 97,000 taken captive. Most of the captives were sent to work in the mines of Egypt; 11,000 of these died, many from starvation.

Seven remarkable signs

We need to go back now to some other remarkable events that took place during this approximately four-year period.

Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, wrote the following details in *Wars*, Book VI, chapter V, section 3:

1) "Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year."

2) "Thus also before the Jews' rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war,

when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus, [Nisan,] and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day-time; which light lasted for half an hour."

3) "At the same festival also, a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple."

4) "Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner, [court of the temple,] which was of brass, and had been with difficulty shut by 20 men . . . was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night. Now those that kept watch in the temple came hereupon running to the captain of the temple, and told him of it; who then came up thither, and not without great difficulty was able to shut the gate again."

5) "Besides these, a few days

after that feast, on the one-and-twentieth-day of the month Artemisius [Jyar,] a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armour were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities."

6) "Moreover, at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, 'Let us remove hence.'"

7) "But, what is still more terrible, there was one Jesus, the son of Ananus, a plebeian, and a husbandman, who, four years before the war began, and at a time when the city was in a very great peace and prosperity, came to that feast whereon it is our custom for every one to make tabernacles to God in the temple, began on a sudden to cry aloud, 'A

Jesus also foretold famine. Many died in Jerusalem for lack of food. There were also other famines in the Roman Empire.

voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!"

"This was his cry, as he went about by day and by night, in all the lanes of the city. However, certain of the most eminent among the populace had great in-



PESTILENCE

dignation at this dire cry of his, and took up the man, and gave him a great number of severe stripes; yet did not he either say anything for himself, or anything peculiar to those that chastised him, but still he went on with the same words which he cried before. Hereupon our rulers supposing, as the case proved to be, that this was a sort of divine fury in the man, brought him to the Roman procurator — where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare; yet he did not make any supplication for himself, nor shed any tears, but turning his voice to the most lamentable tone possible, at every stroke of the whip his answer was, 'Woe, woe to Jerusalem!'

"And when Albinus (for he was then our procurator) asked him, Who he was? and whence he came? and why he uttered such words? he made no manner of reply to what he said, but still did not leave off his melancholy ditty, till Albinus took him to be a madman, and dismissed him.

"Now, during all the time that passed before the war began, this man did not go near any of the citizens, nor was seen by them while he said so; but he every day uttered these lamentable words as if it were his premeditated vow, 'Woe, woe to Jerusalem!' Nor did he give ill words to any of those that beat him every day, nor good words to those that gave him food; but this was his reply to all men, and indeed no other than a melancholy presage of what was to come.

"This cry of his was the loudest at the festivals; and he continued this ditty for seven years and five months, without growing hoarse, or being tired therewith, until the very time that he saw his presage in earnest fulfilled in our siege, when it ceased; for, as he was going round upon the wall, he cried out with his utmost force, 'Woe, woe to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house!' And just as he added at the last, 'Woe, woe to myself also!' there came a stone

out of one of the engines, and smote him, and killed him immediately: and as he was uttering the very same presages, he gave up the ghost."

Destruction of Jerusalem

Following the capture of the city by Titus and his soldiers, Jerusalem was destroyed:

"Now, as soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder . . . Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne, and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side. This wall was spared, in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison; as were the towers also spared, in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valour had subdued; but for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited.

"This was the end which Jerusalem came to . . . a city oth-

**Pestilence follows
famine. Numerous
earthquakes occurred.
And the Church of God
was persecuted from
the very beginning.**

erwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind" (Josephus, *Wars*, Book VII, chapter I, section 1).

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. □

(To be continued)

Salvation — How God Will Rescue Man!

“Save me!” shouted the little boy. Wind-whipped lake waters had just capsized his small sailboat, and he was in peril of drowning.

And the boy *was* saved, by the skills of a quick-thinking lifeguard.

Yes, this little boy knew that he needed saving, but today a lot of adults aren't quite so sure about whether they need to be saved, at least not spiritually. They don't even know what salvation is, let alone whether they need it. Therefore, they stand in potential peril far more terrifying than the little boy above did. They stand in peril of not obtaining eternal life!

This must not happen to you. You must understand the Bible doctrine of salvation.

The basic doctrine

Salvation is God's rescue of man from eternal death, which man has earned by sin, to the safety of eternal life at Jesus Christ's return. Salvation is a process made possible by the life and death of Christ.

The usual teachings of this world

Often it is taught that salvation is the saving of man from ever-burning hell fire to eternal bliss as an angel in heaven. Others believe that our salvation is totally, absolutely and completely guaranteed at baptism, and that once baptized you are forever saved (or, as it may be stated, “once saved, always saved”). Still others don't even require baptism, but

teach that if a believer will just “give his heart to the Lord” or call upon or profess Christ's name, he will be saved. Some equate being saved with being “born again.”

But what is the truth? What does the Bible say?

The Bible teaching

To begin, even a simple dictionary definition of the word *salvation* reveals that to save someone means to rescue him from some sort of evil or undesired fate. But in the case of our Christian calling, we must ask, what is it that we are saved from, and why? Further, we must find out how we are saved, and when, and by whom.

It doesn't take much thought to see that man's greatest enemy is death! Ecclesiastes 9:5 says, “The living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.” Paul adds in I Corinthians 15:26, “The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”

And why do we die? The Bible records, simply, that death (that is, the second death — death

with no hope of life again) is the penalty for sin, “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). The Bible further states that into the world came “death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).

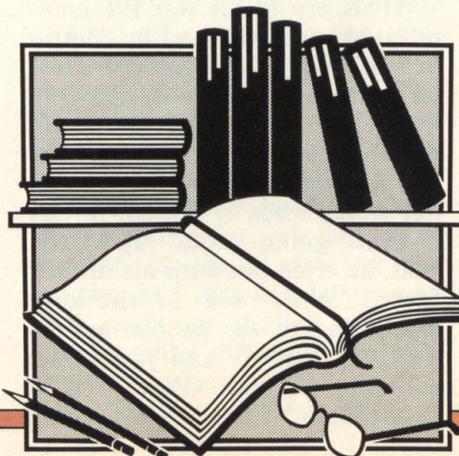
Thus we need to be saved from death because of sin, just like the little boy above needed to be saved from death because of drowning. See also Romans 7:13 and James 1:15.

This truth — that death is the penalty of sin — will shock those who have been falsely taught that the wages of sin is eternal life in a forever burning hell fire. Such teachings are untrue! Both the false concept of an ever-burning hell and the false teaching of an immortal soul have been exploded previously in the pages of *The Good News*.

But if salvation means being saved from death, to what are we saved? Romans 6:23 supplies more of the answer when it says, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Hence we are saved, logically, from death to life — to eternal life! Yet other scriptures go on to show that this eternal life is not eternal physical life, but spiritual life.

Notice I Corinthians 15, especially verses 12 to 58. The whole point of the last part of this chapter is to show that saved man is composed of spirit and not flesh, and has eternal life. In that light, Paul, speaking of the change that one who is saved goes through, from flesh to spirit, states that one starts out with a physical



body, but at the resurrection "is raised a spiritual body" (verse 44).

Other verses show that our level of existence will not be merely that of angels, but that our bodies will be transformed so they conform "to His [Christ's] glorious body" (Philippians 3:21), and that we will be members of God's own Family (I John 3:1-2, John 1:2-13).

But understand this: Nowhere does the Bible promise heaven as salvation. Instead, it says no man has ascended to heaven except Christ (John 3:13), and specifically includes even righteous David among those *not* in heaven (Acts 2:34).

But how does God save man? The wages of sin is death. Therefore for God to save man requires that He remove this penalty by forgiving sin, and further, that He replace man's nature with a new nature that will not sin.

Numerous verses prove beyond all doubt that the forgiveness of sin is possible because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Virtually every Christian denomination would agree with that statement.

Acts 2:38 states that all (because all are sinners) must repent and be baptized in an outward show of the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for our sins. Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13 make clear that salvation requires one to believe in the sacrifice of Christ and all it entails. Romans 5:10 states plainly that we are justified from our sins through the sacrifice of Christ, and then saved by His life. And Ephesians 2:8 tells us that salvation is not something we earn, but a gift of grace from God, through faith in Christ.

It should be obvious that our salvation is accomplished finally only at the resurrection, when our mortal bodies are changed into immortal bodies with eternal life as God's sons. Yet many in traditional Christianity persist in

the notion that once a person is baptized, or once a person has at least "accepted" Christ verbally or called upon the name of the Lord, that he is *now* saved (Romans 10:3). Clearly, this is not the teaching of the Bible. None of us is yet finally saved or lost!

Numerous verses prove that one can be disqualified from eternal life even after baptism or professing Christ. Christ plainly taught that only "he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22). Therefore salvation is in the future — after the end of a person's physical life — and requires enduring during this life.

Paul himself confirmed that it was possible even for him to lose out on salvation, saying he fought to keep himself under spiritual subjection to Christ, "lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (I Corinthians 9:27). Certainly he did not teach that we are saved now, nor did he teach that we cannot lose out on salvation no matter what we do. Thus the so-called "once saved, always saved" teaching evaporates!

Those who believe such misconceptions usually do so based upon an incorrect understanding of some Bible verses. They, for instance, look to Acts 2:21 or Romans 10:13, which both state, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." See also John 1:12. They take these verses to mean that all one must do is make some sort of verbal profession of acceptance of Christ — either publicly, as in a tent meeting, or perhaps privately to oneself — to have fulfilled all the requirements of Christianity for all time!

But the Bible shows what it means to call upon the Lord — that it takes knowledge, understanding, obedience, overcoming, faith and enduring.

Even as the saving of a drowning victim has certain stages

(such as the throwing of the life buoy, the victim's reaching for it, his being towed in and, finally, his reaching dry land), so also is salvation a process begun with repentance, baptism and forgiveness of sin, continuing through a life of overcoming and culminating at the resurrection. But it is only then, at the resurrection, that we can say we are truly "saved" in the final sense.

To be fair, however, we must look finally at II Timothy 1:9 and Titus 3:5, which both state that God has saved us. In light of what we have already proven, it is clear what Paul means. Those on the road to salvation are in a special category — they are the *saved* as opposed to the *lost*. Paul phrased these statements this way not because our salvation is now complete, totally assured or perfected (for remember, Paul himself stated that even he could fall away and lose out), but because our salvation is sure *if* we continue faithfully in the category God has called us to.

Key verses

Here are some verses to remember about this important subject: Romans 6:23 — we are doomed to die because of sin, but can have eternal life if saved. I Corinthians 15:12-58 — eternal life comes through a change from a mortal body to a spiritual, immortal body at the resurrection. Acts 2:21, 38 and Romans 10:13 — to be saved we must profess Christ. Matthew 10:22 — to be saved we must endure. I Corinthians 9:27 — we can lose out on salvation after baptism.

Whether we are a drowning boy or a man or woman full of years, we all know that we are, apart from God's salvation, doomed to death. But the good news is that our God stands ready to rescue those He calls, who come to Him in obedience for forgiveness, with a cry of "Save me!" □

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