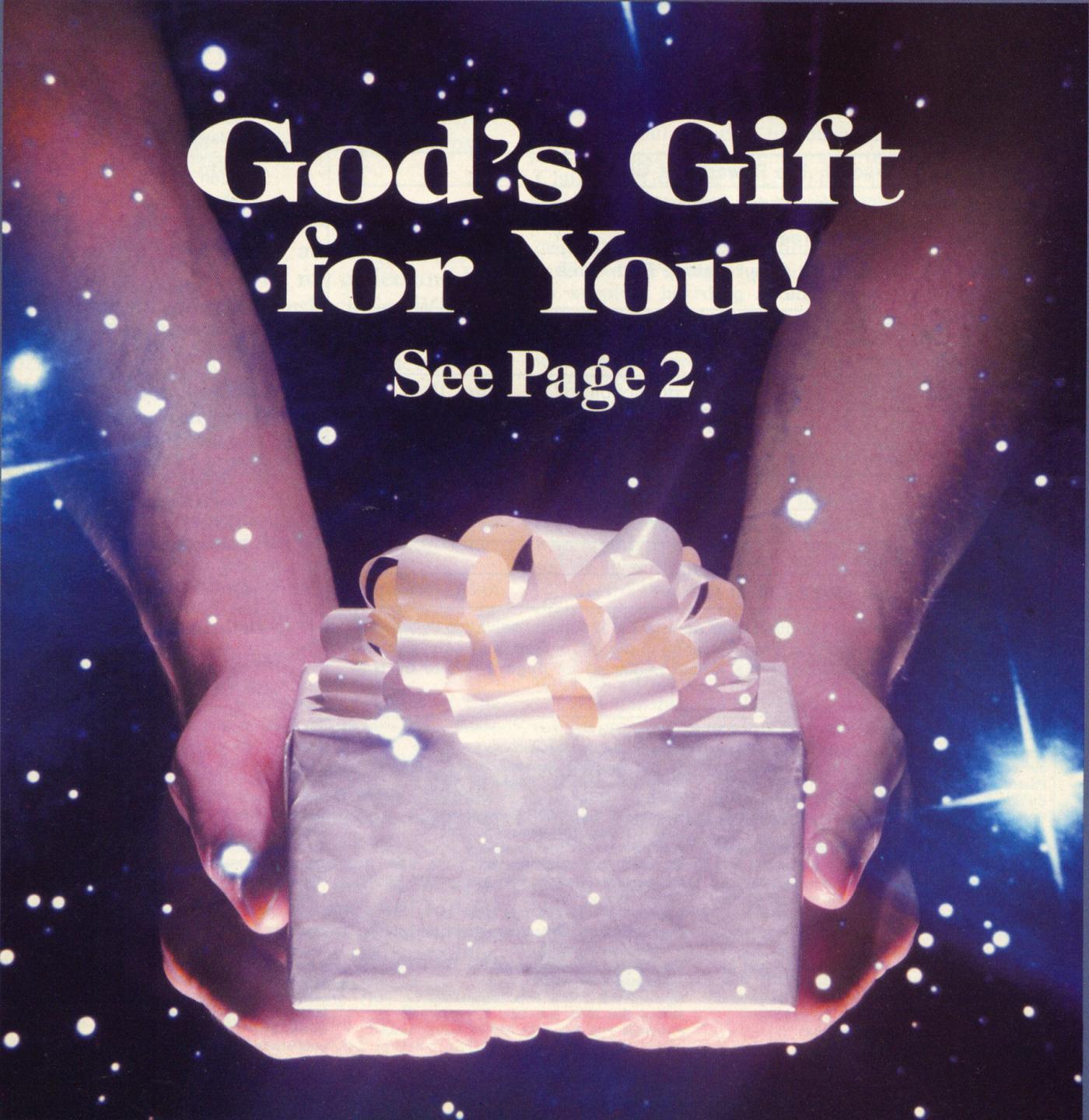


MARCH 1987

The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW



**God's Gift
for You!**

See Page 2

The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

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**So You've Decided
to Have Children
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COVER: God's Church has often been accused of teaching "salvation by works." But we teach nothing of the kind! Salvation is the gift of God, as Pastor General Joseph W. Tkach explains in the article beginning on page 2. Photo by G.A. Belluche Jr.

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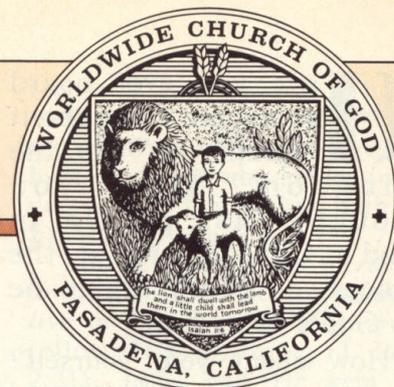
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The Rewards of Giving

In this month's "Good News Personal," Publisher Joseph W. Tkach asked Editor Dexter H. Faulkner to write about generosity and the give way of life.

This month's "Good News Personal" was inspired by an act of generosity. A friend stopped by my office and left a shopping bag on my desk chair. When I returned I found the biggest, most beautiful homegrown cauliflower I've ever seen.

I showed the cauliflower to my staff and bragged about my friend's generosity in sharing his abundance. I know he enjoys abundance because he practices giving — a biblical principle that bears fruit.

Sharing, or giving, comes in different sizes, shapes and packages. Sometimes the simplest act of kindness can be the most rewarding.

That reminds me of the following quote: "Man there was, and they called him mad; the more he gave, the more he had." The 17th-century writer John Bunyan well illustrated a principle God's Church has always taught.

The late Herbert W. Armstrong, founder of this magazine, used to explain that there are two basic ways of life: *give* and *get*.

Giving means outflowing love and consideration for the good and welfare of others. It means helping, cooperating, sharing, loving, promoting happiness and peace.

That is diametrically opposite from the way of *getting*, which is how most of this world lives. *Getting* means trying to take for one's self without any concern for the comfort or profit of anyone else. It means the way of jealousy, envy, strife, hostility, wanting only to acquire and receive.

God's Church lives and teaches the *give* way. Even this *Good News* magazine you are reading is sent free to all who request it. And unlike other

magazines in this world, *The Good News* is full of just that — good news! We can send you *The Good News* without any cost to you because of the tithes and offerings of the membership of the Worldwide Church of God and others. These valuable members and co-workers have voluntarily decided to *give* their support to this major effort to publish the true original Gospel to all nations.

The world's way of gaining wealth and security is by keeping, hoarding and trying to gain more for self. But what is the wise man's way to security?

The Bible tells us, "He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given" (Proverbs 19:17). "A generous man will himself be blessed" (Proverbs 22:9, New International Version). "There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty" (Proverbs 11:24-25).

The Bible makes clear that the most important aspect of giving is one's *attitude*. The man or woman who hoards everything is miserable and cheats himself or herself, and, unfortunately, many who *do* give forfeit the benefits and joys of giving because of their begrudging attitude.

In II Corinthians 8 the apostle Paul commends the believers in Corinth because they helped Christians in difficult straits in Jerusalem.

In II Corinthians 9:6 Paul reveals another spiritual principle concerning giving: "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."

Verse 7 deals with the attitude of the giver. Finally, verse 8 assures us that if we give generously we don't have to fear need ourselves: "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work."

Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone lived God's way of *giving*? Everyone will, in the wonderful world tomorrow! That is the message of this magazine.

Dexter H. Faulkner
Editor

Have you ever heard someone talk about “qualifying” for the Kingdom? Have you thought that people in God’s Church are in the process of *qualifying* to be in God’s Kingdom?

How about you, yourself? Are *you* qualifying for eternal life in the Kingdom of God?

I can tell you on the authority of Jesus Christ YOU ARE NOT!

I hope you are not surprised. But the absolute *truth* is that you are *not* qualifying to receive eternal life. Not *one* of us is qualifying to be in the Kingdom of God — and we *never will!*

Let’s *understand*.

Eternal life is a gift

Eternal life, and entrance into the Kingdom of God, IS A GIFT — a *free* gift. You do not and *cannot* earn it. You *cannot* qualify for it. It is God’s free gift to you — something you can never achieve, earn or in any way whatsoever qualify for.

Notice Romans 6:23: “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The only thing we have qualified for is *death*. We *all* have sinned. Romans 3:23 says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

The penalty of our sins is death. And no amount of commandment keeping, obedience or goodness on our part can *erase* those sins or remove that penalty.

Even if we never again sinned from now on, we are still under the death penalty for our previous sins — *unless* that penalty has been paid by someone else so we don’t have to pay it ourselves.

I wonder if we realize just how *great*, how **IMPORTANT**, the sacrifice Jesus Christ paid on our behalf is?

It is God’s good pleasure to give us His Kingdom. He loves us. We are His children. Jesus Christ is our elder Brother. Together they have prepared a wonderful plan by which they can share the glorious eternal spirit

You Are NOT ‘Qualifying’ for God’s Kingdom!

Here is clarification of a major truth many readers have misunderstood!

By Joseph W. Tkach

life they possess with others. We are a part of that plan.

We have been called out of a rebellious, hate-filled, God-rejecting world so that we can share with God the transcendent *joy* of giving eternal life to others during the Millennium and the White Throne Judgment.

God removed the rebellious attitude we had of rejecting His rule over us by leading us to repentance and placing within us a portion of His own divine *nature* in the form of His Holy Spirit. And He paid our death penalty for us. We have qualified for none of this! God, in His good pleasure, has *given* it to us.

Then what must we do?

So, then, what remains for us to do? We must now demonstrate

our appreciation for and acceptance of the calling God has given us. Our lives must now reflect God’s law, His values, His instruction and His way of life as we follow the example of Jesus Christ.

We must leave our old, sin-filled life behind and walk in *newness* of life with God’s help. And any time we fall short of God’s perfect way, we must recognize it, admit it and repent of it. We must put all our effort and strength into overcoming.

Yet we must realize that any good we perform is God in us. We must realize that any “righteousness” we have ourselves is nothing but filth. It is God’s Spirit working in us, His own divine nature, that is righteous.

When we sin, our “inward

man," as the apostle Paul describes it, should *yearn* to change, to rule over sin. We should come to *delight* in the law of God, because we are following the lead of the Holy Spirit in us.

As we remain in a continuous attitude of repentance, striving to overcome sin, GROWING to love God's perfect law, growing in love for God and one another, God applies Jesus' payment of the death penalty in our stead and keeps our name written in His book of life!

In no way do we qualify for it! *God Himself* does it in and through us as we submit to Him. But even our submission to Him does not earn it. It is His free gift to us.

Of course, God will not give this magnificent free gift to any who refuse to repent. The apostle Paul, when listing "works of the flesh" in Galatians 5:19-21, said, "Of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

God will give His Kingdom only to those who are *reconciled* to Him through the blood of Jesus Christ. And that reconciliation must be maintained through continual repentance, obedience and overcoming. Jesus said that those who do not bring forth *fruit* — fruit that demonstrates true submission to obey God — are worth no more to Him than branches of a tree that won't bear fruit, good only to be gathered and burned (John 15:4-6).

What we *do* qualify for

What, then, *does* a Christian qualify for? Let's notice Christ's parable of the pounds in the 19th chapter of Luke.

Here, beginning in verse 12, Jesus gave a parable explaining that the Kingdom of God was not to appear immediately in the disciples' lifetimes. He explained that, instead, He would be returning to His Father's side for a period of time, then would return to earth, bringing His Kingdom and its rewards with Him.

But in the meantime, His ser-

vants were to make use of what He left with them that it might *grow*.

Then, upon His return, each servant showed Him what he had accomplished. One had developed his gift five times over, another 10 times over. One had not done anything with it at all.

Then Jesus, the nobleman of the parable, rewarded each *according to his works*. The one who had developed more received a greater reward, the one who developed less, a smaller reward. But *both* were given the free gift of having a part in the Kingdom, only differing responsibilities. The one who had not developed at all, on the other hand, was not given *any* part in the Kingdom!

We are told in a number of scriptures that Christians are to be *rewarded* according to their works (Matthew 16:27). But nowhere are we told they will be *saved* according to their works!

The apostle John wrote in II John 8-9: "Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may



Eternal life, and entrance into God's Kingdom, is a *free* gift. You *cannot* earn it. You *cannot* qualify for it.

receive a *full* reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son."

True Christians are to *remain* in Christ. They are to *abide* or *live* in Christ. And they are to follow His example (I Peter 2:21). Jesus said He kept His Father's commandments (John 15:10).

John added: "He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (I John 2:4-6).

And how did Jesus walk? He *kept God's commandments!*

NO "salvation by works"

God's Church has often been accused of teaching "salvation by works." Nothing could be further from the truth! God's Church teaches salvation for what it is — the GIFT of God.

But God's Church emphatically *DOES NOT* do away with God's LAW! Jesus Christ didn't. He *kept* it! So did His apostles. They emphasized the need for true servants of God to follow Jesus' example and keep it, too!

The apostles also taught that Jesus is our High Priest and Intercessor. He has paid the death penalty for our sins in our stead! We do not have to carry the burden of sin, or the burden of *guilt*, around on our backs.

God is *quick to forgive*. When we come before His throne of grace with a repentant spirit, He applies the sacrifice of His Son to us and *removes* our sin. We must then carry on in FAITH, abiding in Christ, striving with His help to overcome that sin.

God's mercy is indeed marvelous! Let's thank Him daily for His wonderful plan of salvation and His Holy Spirit, which enables us to understand and grow in His love! □

Do you know what the largest living thing on earth is?

It's the General Sherman, a giant sequoia in California's Sequoia National Park.

This magnificent monarch of the forest towers more than 274 feet high. That's more than 45 times as tall as a 6-foot man! At its base, the General Sherman is more than 100 feet around, and its estimated weight is 1,385 tons.

It's an awesome sight to stand there in the forest looking up at a massive tree of that stature.

There's something uniquely humbling and inspiring about driving or walking through the sequoia or redwood forests of California — or through any forest or group of trees on earth. It's refreshing and invigorating to stand amid the trunks, drinking in the pure, fresh, fragrant air, listening to the rustle of leaves up above, perhaps the joyful chirping of birds in the branches, and feeling the dry leaves crackling underfoot.

Trees certainly are a glorious example of God's handiwork, and God has quite a lot to say about them in His Word, the Bible.

For instance, Psalm 92:12 says, "The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon."

God here and in many other places in the Bible compares a righteous person to a tree.

The life-giving seed

Every tree, of course, starts from a tiny seed. Even the seeds of enormous trees such as the General Sherman weigh only 1/6,000th of an ounce. They can increase in weight more than 250,000 million times as the tree grows to maturity.

But that tiny seed, insignificant as it seems, holds within itself *life*. It possesses the potential to become a mature tree. All it needs is moisture, warmth, air and light for germination to take place and growth to begin.

In the same way, our spiritual

'He Shall Be Like a TREE'

God's Word compares a righteous person to a tree. Read here some important spiritual lessons we can learn from the life and growth of trees.

By Rex J. Morgan

growth as Christians begins when God plants in our minds the seed of His Holy Spirit, which has life inherent in it — *spiritual life*.

John 6:63 shows us that it is "the Spirit" that "gives life." God has to call us first (verse 44). Then, when we repent and are baptized, He gives us His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit is like a seed, with life — eternal life — inherent in it. As we overcome, God gives us more and more of His Spirit, and we grow like spiritual trees.

Sometimes we compare ourselves to Jesus Christ, and become discouraged at how weak and incompetent we are. But a tiny, fragile seed lying on the



ground, although it doesn't look much like the adult tree towering above it, does gradually develop, adding growth rings year by year, until it becomes a mature tree.

So can we, slowly but surely, grow to the place where God can make us members of His very Family, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.

For a seed to grow into a healthy tree, certain conditions need to be fulfilled. And for us to grow as God's people (II Peter 3:18), certain spiritual elements are essential.

The water of the Spirit

Psalm 1 is a good example of

Photos: Good News: Ken Biggs, After Image; Mark Hibbard, Photobank; Tom and Michelle Grimm, After Image

the comparison between a righteous person and a tree. In verse 3, David says, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water."

A basic requirement for the growth of a tree is water. Water spells the difference between a desert and a forest, the difference between a dry, stunted stick and a massive specimen like the General Sherman.

Water determines the health and vigor of a tree. A tree planted by a river is in a good location, because its roots can seek out the water, so its leaves will not wither.

What does water symbolize spiritually? Jesus made the answer clear in John 7:37-39, where He portrayed God's Holy Spirit as rivers of living water.

Notice Isaiah 44:3-4: "For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring; they will spring up among the grass like willows by the watercourses."

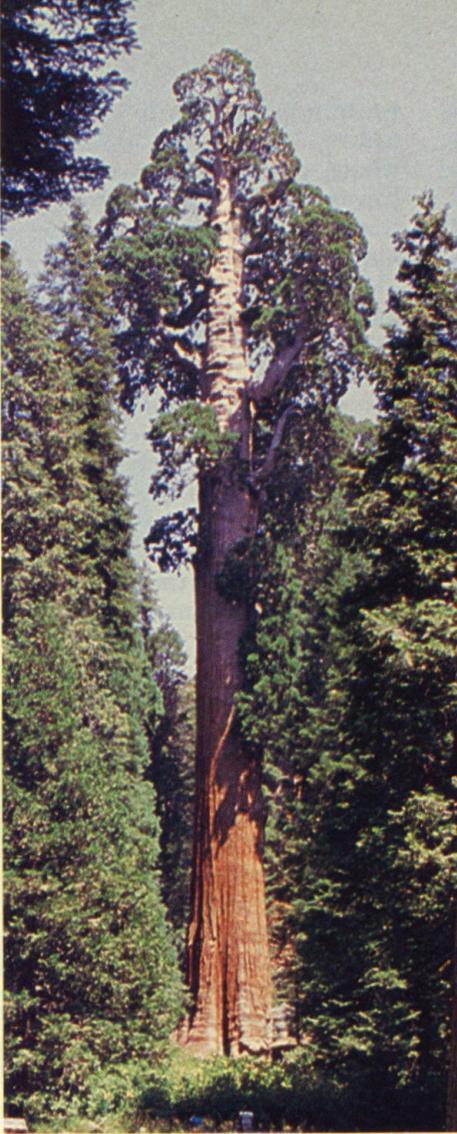
God's Spirit helps us grow spiritually just as water helps a tree grow physically.

It's interesting to consider what happens to the water a tree absorbs. Vast quantities of water are taken in by the roots, which spread out in all directions seeking moisture. The water then rises through the tree and is exuded from the leaves in the process known as transpiration.

Notice that the tree doesn't hoard all the moisture for itself. It gives it out through the leaves. This moisture, along with the discharge of oxygen, is what gives the forest atmosphere its fresh, pleasant fragrance.

Similarly, the Holy Spirit should flow into us in great quantities, as we seek it from God, and flow through us and out again as we give help, friendship, Christian love and good works to those around us.

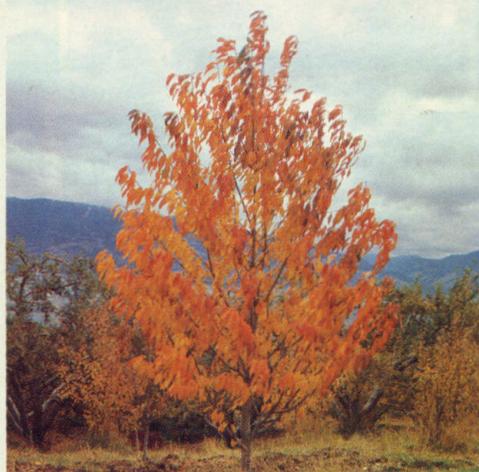
Did you know that a flourish-



ing tree may be 80 percent moisture? This shows how important it is that there be a continuous supply of water available to sustain its growth. We, too, should have our minds filled with God's Holy Spirit, crowding out the carnal nature that Satan injects into us.

Believe it or not, a large apple tree in full leaf may absorb as much as 95 gallons of water from the soil every day! Trees need vast amounts of water. And we need a vast amount of God's Holy Spirit.

How can we make sure we have plenty of the Holy Spirit? Luke 11:13 tells us we need to ask God to give us more of His Spirit. We need to ask Him to fill our minds with it — to soak and



saturate our branches and roots with it, so we can constantly grow as a vibrant, vigorous, blossoming tree.

The light of God's Word

Another factor vital to the growth of a tree is light. Through photosynthesis, leaves use sunlight to produce carbohydrates for growth.

You've probably noticed how, to better flourish, a leaf responds

to light falling on it by turning toward the light. Sometimes whole plants lean over as the leaves attempt to get into a position where they can receive as much sunlight as possible.

What does light symbolize in our Christian lives? Proverbs 6:23 shows that God's law is a light to our lives. We need it for our growth. We obtain more of this light through personal Bible study and by listening to messages from God's ministers in sermons and on the *World Tomorrow* television program.

Trees grow so that their every leaf or needle turns to the precise position where it will benefit most from the sunlight streaming down on it. Every leaf strains to capture the maximum amount of light. That's how we should act spiritually. We should strive for as much understanding of God's law and God's Word as possible, taking advantage of any opportunity to gain more insight.

This means setting aside regular, daily time for Bible study, constantly pointing ourselves toward the light of God's Word. In short, we should hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6), because that is our spiritual food that gives us spiritual growth.

If a plant is kept in a dark room, it soon becomes yellow and sickly and fails to grow. That's what happens to us spiritually if we don't take in as much spiritual light as we can. We become spiritually weak. We need to turn our minds toward God's Word wherever we can — to reach for it and use it to grow spiritually.

Warmth, weather, perils and pruning

Warmth is another factor necessary for growth in a tree. When trees grow in high, mountainous areas near the snow line, they become stunted by the cold. Trees slow down their rate of growth in the winter, but spurt ahead in warmer weather.

Spiritually, we need the warmth of fellowship with other Christians. We can know all about the Bible and God's true

doctrines in an academic way, but our growth will be stunted if we don't spend time interacting with others in God's Church, learning from them, helping and sharing our lives with them, enjoying the beautiful, growth-motivating warmth of Christian fellowship.

If you have not yet come in contact with any members of God's true Church, please feel free to write to us. We'll be happy to put you in contact with one of God's ministers.

Another force that influences the growth of a tree is weather. A tree can't pick up its roots and move away from the spot where it is growing. No matter what the weather is — rain or hail, sleet or snow, bitter cold or scorching summer sun — it has to stand there, silently enduring. Sometimes howling storms lash the limbs and strip off the leaves, and even break a branch here and there, but the tree has to stand there, solid and firm.

And so do we, as stouthearted spiritual trees, have to stand firm against the trials that assail us, and patiently endure, even though tempestuous storms sometimes shake our spiritual branches and knock off lots of leaves.

In Colossians 2:6-7, Paul tells us to walk in Christ's way of life, "having the roots of your being firmly planted in Him" (Weymouth).

The root system of a tree often exceeds, in size and scale, the total mass of the trunk, limbs and leaves that can be seen above the ground. It's not unusual for a tree to have literally miles of roots and rootlets. These roots anchor the tree to the ground and also search out and absorb available nutrients in the soil. We need to be deeply rooted and well-founded spiritually (Matthew 7:24-27).

Many perils can ravage a growing tree — storms, insects, diseases, forest fires. Whether the tree survives depends directly on the strength of its roots and the health and vitality of its inner life. If it is vigorous, strong and green, trials can make it even

stronger. They'll incorporate toughness and strength of character into the tree.

If you stand for a while under a tree, or under a group of trees in a forest, you are sure to notice a continual rain of cast-off fragments of bark, needles, twigs, dried leaves and so on. It's as if the tree is dying daily, with bits and pieces constantly dropping off it.

That might seem to be a debilitating process, but it is actually one of the tree's most beneficial growth activities. It's good in that it adds organic matter to the humus of the soil in which the tree is growing, thus contributing to the tree's future growth. Also, it removes parts that would otherwise become diseased.

Similarly, we as Christians need to die daily (I Corinthians 15:31), casting off our rough spots, weaknesses and sins, brushing off parts of our carnal nature that might afflict us with spiritual disease if they remain.

Sometimes this natural daily dying that a tree goes through is not thorough enough. Sometimes someone has to step in and aid the process by pruning a tree to improve its performance. Jesus talked about this in John 15:1-2: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."

Jesus was here talking about two types of pruning.

One type of pruning is to eliminate "dead wood" — to cut off branches that are not producing. Sometimes people appear to be Christians, but they just aren't growing. Spiritually, they're dead. Often it's hard to tell that a branch is dead just by looking at it, but when you hit it, it breaks off in your hand, dead and rotten. Sometimes branch after branch follows, and you find that the whole tree is dead.

Such trees won't last long in severe storms, troubles or brushfires. The rotten, dried-up trees are the first to break or burn. And trees like that will never

bear fruit — so they might as well be destroyed.

The other type of pruning is to judiciously cut branches even though they have fruit on them, or are capable of bearing fruit. God prunes us spiritually by correcting us, by testing us in trials that seem tough and severe at the time, but that result in better growth later.

That's the idea of pruning. It's a bit of a paradox, really, to cut back the tree to make it produce more, but good gardeners know it works, bringing forth bigger and better fruit!

Trials are a paradox like that, too, but they cause God's people to be able to bring forth more fruit in the future.

The importance of bearing fruit

In John 15:8, Jesus went on to discuss the most important aspect of our lives as spiritual trees — the overriding reason for our existence: "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." In verse 16, He added, "I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

What's the use of an apple tree if it doesn't produce any fruit? After a few years of no apples, you might as well chop it down. Every tree has fruit, even the sequoias of California. If they didn't bear their fruit, a cone, soon all sequoias would die out, because the fruit contains the seeds of future generations.

The fruits we are to produce — the fruits of the Spirit — are listed in Galatians 5:22-23. Be sure to read this list. It is crucial that we exhibit these qualities in our lives. Look at this list often, meditate on it, consider these qualities carefully and ask yourself, "Am I developing each of these attributes, and expressing them toward the people with whom I come in contact?"

If we aren't bringing forth these fruits, we are not God's people!

So God looks on us as spiritual trees. As He looks down from

heaven on you, what does He see?

What kind of tree are you?

God's creation contains many different types of trees, and we're certainly all different from one another. But the important thing is that we grow, that we be spiritually alive, active and vibrant,



drinking in of the water of the Holy Spirit and the light of God's truth, withstanding the rough storms of trials and bringing forth the fruit God wants.

"You will know them by their fruits," said Jesus in Matthew 7:16. "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire," He added in verse 19.

What's the use of a stunted, withered, fruitless tree? We need not be like that!

Notice Jeremiah 17:7-8: "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but her leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit."

We can be like trees planted by the water — drawing on God's Holy Spirit and having it flow through us in power. We can stand firm in the heat and drought of the trials life brings us, if we draw on God's great source of nourishment and growth.

Let's use God's help to grow, mature and flourish as spiritual trees, bringing forth beautiful fruit in great abundance. □

Photos: Good News - Nathan Faulkner

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Dating

Getting to Know YOU

Before you can be ready to find that wonderful person who's right for you, you've got to know yourself.

By Sheila Graham

“You can live on love.” “Most marriage problems could be solved in the bedroom.” “Children hold a marriage together.”

Divorce statistics should have long ago dispelled these and many other common misconceptions about marriage. But in spite of the marital disintegration around us, marriage is still one of our most popular institutions.

Is there a way to choose the right mate? How can we tell if the person we are dating might be the one we would want to live with for the rest of our lives? Can a long-lasting and happy marital relationship be foreseen some way in advance, and a bad one avoided?

Of course, you and I both realize not everyone is too concerned about whether his or her marriage is long lasting. Some are repeating their wedding vows with their fingers crossed.

For those wanting more out of life than a succession of disasters, however, who see the value of the stabilizing influence of a long-lasting marriage, both on their emotions and their pocketbooks, let's go back to our original question.

Is there a way to tell in advance who we should marry?

Dating practices change

Dating practices reflect the society and what part of the world we live in. But in

Western society, your grandparents may have “courted” on the front-porch swing under the watchful eyes of Dad and Mom.

Many of your fathers had to go to their girlfriend's home to meet her parents before taking her to a dance or to the movies. And whether to kiss on the first date was a sizzling topic of conversation.

Today's singles are just as concerned, but about when to go to bed together for the first time. Times have certainly changed. All sense of what the real purpose of dating should be has been lost, or not understood in the first place.

Dating has become a competition between male and female to see how much each can get from the other, perhaps trading flattery and attention for sexual pleasure.

This selfish way of thinking is no way for two people to determine if each other would be the right lifelong mate. Divorce statistics prove it.

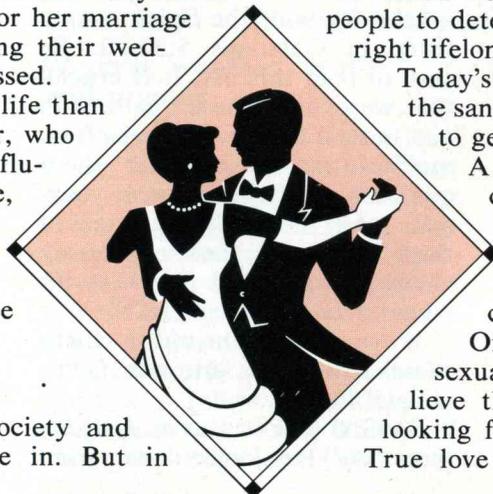
Today's habit of living together without the sanction of marriage is not a good way to get to know the other person either.

A relationship without a lasting commitment is playacting to the highest degree.

These short-term relationships lead people to a false concept of what real love is all about.

Once the passionate edge is off the sexual side of the relationship, they believe that their love is dying and start looking for someone else to “love.”

True love is much more than sex. Sex is



important, but a lot more is involved in long-lasting love. That's why the right kind of dating, uncomplicated by a premature sexual relationship, is so important to a happy marriage.

Proper dating gives both male and female the opportunity to see the other react under various circumstances, to find out what their hopes and dreams are, how they feel about certain subjects.

Choosing the right mate is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. Emotions are certainly an important factor, but if you allow your emotions to overrule reality in this decision, your fantasy world of the "perfect" marriage can come crashing down around you.

Dating should allow you to get the information you need to make this decision. Right dating eventually leads to a right marriage.

Getting to know you

But before you are ready to find that wonderful person, the one so right for you, you've got to know yourself. Do you really know who you are, what is most important to you in life, what you want from the marriage relationship?

No amount of dating toward marriage will be successful until you know *you*. Until you do, there's no way you can evaluate whether you could make another person happy in marriage or he or she could make you happy.

Let's get to know you.

You may think you are one of the most laid-back, flexible, easygoing people in the world, but even if you are, you are unlikely to change certain of your beliefs, no matter what.

One of those significant issues is children. How do you feel about having children? How many do you want to have? When do you want to have them? If you feel strongly about a large family — or no family — realize this belief is a key consideration in the happiness of any marriage.

How you feel about children is especially important to those of you considering a marriage to one who already has children. These children, as much as you might grow to care for them, have another parent who can make himself or herself a constant reminder that you are not the only one in your mate and children's lives. All are not as tactful and considerate of others' feelings as they should be.

Only the most mature and unselfish adult should consider a second marriage that involves children. There are extra challenges to be confronted in a second marriage, of course, even when both mates have children or when no children are involved.

It's not impossible to have a successful marriage the second time around, but be sure you are ready to make the special sacrifices involved.

Personal opinions count

How do you feel about religion? Is your religion important to you? Would you want your children reared in your religion?

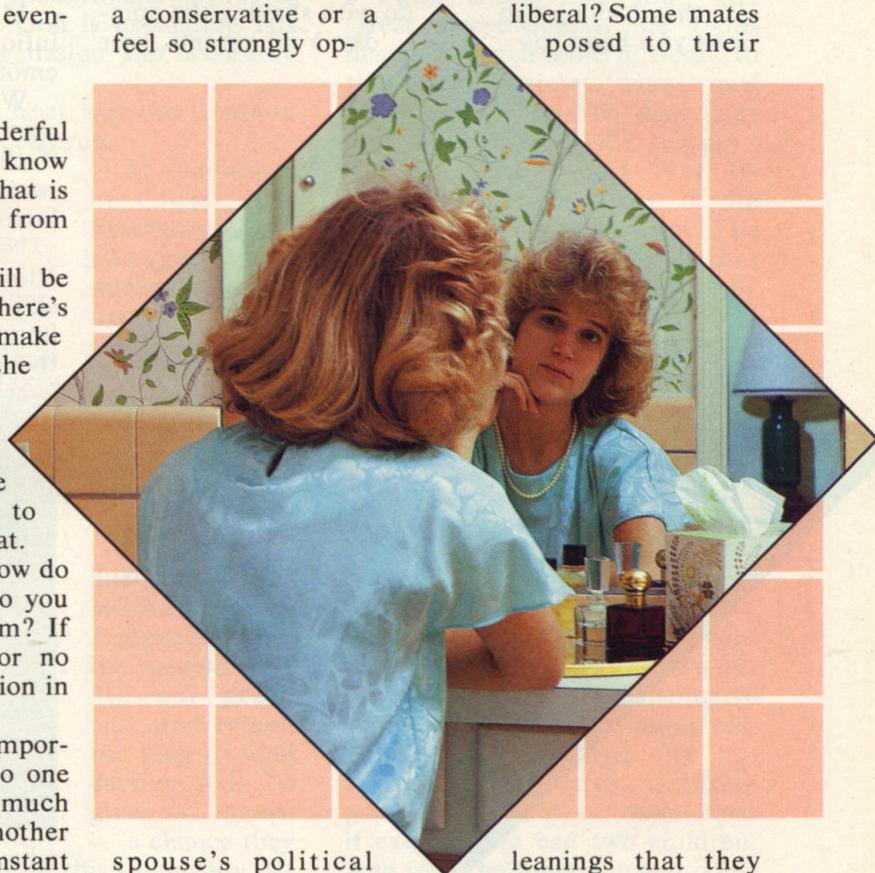
Religion can be one of the most unifying factors

in a marriage, and it can also be one of the most divisive.

Perhaps for some of you religion has not been much of an influence in your life up to this point, but if certain religious principles have guided you from childhood, you will usually feel strongly that similar guidelines should mold and shape your children's lives.

As you get older, your opinions solidify. Don't kid yourself that you can take religion or leave it. Also don't kid yourself that your mate will automatically see things your way. He or she, too, will most likely have strong feelings about religion in his or her own and your future children's lives.

How about your political views? Are you a conservative or a liberal? Some mates feel so strongly opposed to their



spouse's political leanings that they have been known to go to the polling places just to cancel out their mate's vote.

Whatever you may feel about politics today, just as with religion, your viewpoint is likely to become more important to you as time goes along.

What about your career? Does your job take up most of your waking hours? Would you be willing to give it up? If you had to make a choice, would your mate and family come first, or your career? Is your job a means to an end, or the end itself?

Are you a morning person or do you not really come alive until others are yawning and contemplating going to bed? Are you ready for a lifetime of pressure by your mate to conform to his or her totally opposite biological sense of time?

Are you an organized person, almost obsessed with neatness and order, or are you a slob? No one

Illustration by Wendy Lagerström; Photos by Hal Finch

should be a total slob, but think how frustrating two such differing personalities could be to one another.

Where do you like to live — in the city or in the country? Do you prefer warmer climates or colder ones? Could you adjust to living just anywhere? Some have had to.

How about food? Is food important to you? I mean really important to you? Do you envision three home-cooked meals a day, frequently accompanied by fresh, hot breads and pastries? If food is that important, you may be shocked to discover that not all people share your opinion.

How about your cultural background? How well do you really know your father and mother? Maybe now is the time to get to know them better. After all, they had a lot to do with shaping the opinions you have to-

day. Your parents, your

through several “significant” relationships and maybe even failed at marriage already. You know that something is wrong somewhere in the system.

What's wrong with the system?

Something *is* wrong. Sound moral principles have been left out of the modern dating scene. Why? Because human nature is selfish and wants to get all it can and not give any more than necessary.

God's way of give means that you must first look at yourself, examine yourself, know yourself, prepare yourself, before you begin to seriously consider marriage. Are you mature enough, unselfish enough to give your time, your money, your life to another? In other words, are you really ready for marriage?

Marriage is not for children, and the sexual revolution has made many of us children mentally and emotionally.

When singles worry that their virginity may be a sign they are sexual misfits, and the married wonder if their faithfulness to their mate shows they are somehow lacking in normal virility, something is intrinsically wrong.

Nobody wants to go back to the overly prudish Victorian age, but the sexual act itself and how skillfully it is performed has now become more important than the people involved. Those who thought they were freed are becoming prisoners — actual victims of the sexual revolution. What a travesty!

Get the right perspective

Look at dating in the proper perspective. Get to know yourself and then use dating as an enjoyable way to get to know the person you are dating. Keep dating casual and fun. Don't be pressured by this society and its media to complicate the relationship with sex. It's your life. You have a choice. Make the right one.

Go back over this article and candidly answer the questions listed. Write down your answers. Think of more questions that will show you what is really important to you and answer them. Read your answers over again. This is what you believe. This is who you are.

Talk to your parents and other relatives. Get their input. What kind of a mate have they always pictured for you? It's your decision, but you might be surprised how much help this information from those who love you the most can be.

For those of you who feel marriages are “made in heaven,” remember that like everything else in this life, God expects you to do your part first. Making right choices is part of character building.

The more compatible you are with your mate, the more successful your marriage will be.

Once you know who you are, you have taken the first vital step in preparing to choose a mate. Now you are ready to find, through right and proper dating, that special friend with whom you want to spend the rest of your life. □

(To be continued)



God's way of give means you must look at yourself, examine yourself, know yourself, prepare yourself, before you seriously consider marriage.

grandparents and your other close relatives are a real part of you.

In times past, relatives, especially parents, were a lot more involved in the choice of mates. It's wise to consider their opinions. Getting to know them helps you to get to know you.

Many of you have tried practically everything — and nothing has worked. Perhaps you have gone

So You've Decided to Have Children

There is no greater joy than bringing new life into the world. There is also no greater responsibility!

The decision to have a child — whether the first, third or sixth — is so important that it

very Family as immortal spirit beings.

That is the awesome destiny of man. But God is expanding His Family by design and according to plan.

Jesus Christ was the firstborn of many brethren.

At the return of Christ, the firstfruits will be changed by a miraculous resurrection from the dead.

Then an entire millennial society will be given opportunity to grow into God's Family.

After that, during the Great White Throne Judgment, all the people who did not grasp and understand the plan of God earlier will be given a chance — a chance they

didn't have in this satanically deceived world.

Use wisdom in planning

With God's example to follow, married couples should plan their own families. But in family planning there are many factors to consider.

In times past, families tended to be quite large. In my own family, my grandparents on my mother's side had 13 children. They lived on a farm in Missouri, and the children all grew up working and contributing to the

farm before setting out on their own.

Then times changed. The Great Depression of the 1930s made life much more difficult. In those trying times, many new families were smaller than families at the turn of the century.

Then came World War II. There was a terrible loss of life — especially of young men. The post-war years saw what has come to be known as a "baby boom."

Since then, world population has skyrocketed to more than five billion people.

Some of the great concerns today are overpopulation, overcrowded cities, food shortages, housing problems and how to employ the teeming millions who now need to earn a living and support their own families.

It seems a wise time to consider smaller families. Yet we humans have an almost instinctive desire to reproduce ourselves. Fortunately, even with five billion people on earth, a steady population would be maintained if each couple had two children. And with the economic and political problems of our age, that certainly may be a wise course of action in family planning.

To bring a child into the world and provide his or her living and education is no small task. Better to do it right with one, two or three children than have 10 or a dozen children and not be able to properly provide for them.

Childbirth — the beginning of new life

Of all the thrills one might have in a lifetime, none can com-



ought to be one of the most carefully planned considerations of life.

Unfortunately, planning is not always part of childbirth. Babies are frequently the result of blind time and chance.

God's Family as an example

Last month in this column we discussed the preeminent example of family planning — the plan of the eternal God to expand His divine Family. Mankind, now made mortal and in the image of God, can be born into God's

Photo by G.A. Belluche Jr.

pare to the joy and marvel of childbirth.

My wife and I participated in a marriage seminar a few years ago. One topic for discussion was: "When, in all your marital experience, did you feel closest together?" We were to write our answers on separate sheets of paper, not letting the mate see what we had written. Then we discussed our answers.

Both my wife and I wrote that we felt closest to each other "during the childbirth of each of our five children."

The joy of new life, of reproducing ourselves, is unexplainable. It ought to be shared as husband and wife.

When a young mother walks through the valley of the shadow of death to bring new life into the world, the husband should be there sharing every moment. Through the pains of childbirth, the love and emotion of husband and wife should be shared in touch and words. There is no other moment like the birth of a child.

Not many years ago, it was often difficult for husbands to participate in the birth of their children. For some strange reason, hospitals thought men should not be present. Mothers were hauled away to a room with the doctor in hospital garb and mask. Strange nurses and attendants hovered nearby. And at the very time she needed her husband the most, she went through this experience alone.

What a shame!

Fortunately, many in the medical profession have seen the value — even the necessity — of having the husband present.

Twenty-five years ago, at the birth of our first child, my wife and I had to spend weeks finding a doctor who would permit me to be in the delivery room. And how thankful we still are that we were together then!

We later had a friend who was an obstetrician in a large mid-western city. He established his practice on the belief that husbands ought to be present at

childbirth. But the medical profession in that city fought him tooth and toenail. He was close to being barred from all city hospitals. He even went so far as to build his own birthing clinic.

This was in the late 1960s. He was so convinced that husbands and wives should share the experience of childbirth that he put his entire career on the line to serve that important need.

He turned out to be a modern pioneer.

Now birthing centers are commonplace. Husbands and wives plan for childbirth together by attending classes, seeing films and listening to doctors and midwives explain the marvels of human birth and the joy of being together.

And that, at last, is the way it ought to be.

Bringing new life into the world should be the greatest sharing experience of all.

Child rearing is sharing, too

Somewhere along the line this modern society has taken many wrong turns. The mistaken idea has developed that Dad should go out and earn the living and leave the children to Mom.

While it is true that husbands usually provide the major source of economic support for the family, it is not true that wives and mothers are solely responsible for the children.

If a wife and mother has chosen to be a full-time homemaker, her duties are so varied and her life so busy that she cannot shoulder the entire weight of child rearing all by herself.

Research has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that parental love, care and touching — from fathers as well as mothers — are vital to the well-being of a child.

A few years ago, my brother-in-law and his wife bought a day-care center to operate as their profession. Our oldest daughter spent a summer working for them during her school vacation. It was a bittersweet experience. She loved working with the chil-

dren. But seeing those dozens of youngsters away from their parents seemed so wrong.

Saddest of all were the tiny babies. By state law, a baby had to be 6 weeks old before parents could leave it at the day-care center. But at exactly 6 weeks, mothers would return to the work force. They would drop their babies off at the center often before 7 in the morning, and not be able to come back till 6 in the evening.

The babies would lie in their cribs all day. Regulations required that one full-time adult worker care for no more than six babies. But that one worker had to feed, change, rock to sleep, supervise the naps and, with what little time was left, hold and play with each baby.

Those poor babies did not even know who their mothers were, much less their fathers.

Joyous moments

Psychologists have finally discovered what we ought to have known all along. The personality and temperament of a child is firmly established in the first few years of life. If there is ever a time when parents ought to spend the most time and effort with their children, it is during these precious early years.

And that does not mean Mom alone. Fathers have an equal responsibility in the care of babies and children. After all, what is wrong with a father changing diapers, rocking the baby to sleep and sitting up when the baby is sick?

For my wife and me, the years of baby diapers and walking the floor at night are past. We anxiously await the arrival of grandchildren. We'll help with all the duties. But the nice part about grandparenting is that you can give them back.

We look back on those joyous moments of childbirth, babies and little children and breathe a prayer of thanksgiving that we have shared so many wonderful moments together.

Having babies is indeed the ultimate sharing. □

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Just what is leaven? Which foods are to be avoided during the Days of Unleavened Bread?

Most professing Christians have never even heard of the Days of Unleavened Bread! Yet God commands us to observe this Festival, the second of His seven annual festivals, in both the Old and New Testaments (Leviticus 23:6-8, I Corinthians 5:6-8).

Readers who are unfamiliar with God's true festivals and Holy Days should send for a free copy of our booklet *Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which?* If you have assumed that Easter, Christmas and other traditional holidays are the days God tells us to keep, you are in for a shock!

God uses leaven as a type of sin (I Corinthians 5:1-8). Sin puffs us up spiritually just as physical leaven puffs up bread dough (verse 2). Unleavened bread is a type of an unleavened (sinless) life.

To understand exactly what is included in the leaven we are to avoid during the Days of Unleavened Bread, let's first notice some of the Hebrew words translated "leaven" in the Old Testament.

Mechametz refers to leavening agents — substances used to puff up or produce fermentation, causing dough to rise. Yeast, bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) and baking powder are such substances.

Another Hebrew word rendered "leaven" is *seh-ohd*. This literally means "sourdough," a naturally fermenting yeasty batter that was the most common leaven of the Israelites, and which still is often used to cause baked goods to rise and become light in texture.

These leavening agents cause foods to become *chametz*. This Hebrew word is translated "what is leavened" in Exodus 12:19. It is also translated "leavened bread" in a number of places. It

refers to all foods that leaven has caused to rise, including bread, cake, some crackers, certain cookies, some prepared cereals and pies. A few candies and other foods also use leavening agents. If you are in doubt about any product, check the list of ingredients on the wrapper.

Instead of eating leavened bread, God tells us to eat unleavened bread (Exodus 13:6). We may also eat unleavened pies and cereals together with all the meats, drinks, fruits and vegetables we normally eat.

Many stores carry a variety of unleavened breads. Always check the ingredients on the label to be sure. Or, you may enjoy making your own.

Some have asked about using egg whites in baking. Egg whites should not be used as a substitute for leaven in an attempt to get around the spirit of the law. On the other hand, beaten egg whites used in meringue on pies and other desserts are not a leavening agent. They have not been used to puff up any product baked of flour or meal.

Others have noticed the term "yeast extracts" on the labels of certain foods and have wondered if they should be avoided. These are derivatives of yeast that cannot be used as leavening agents. It would therefore be all right to use a product containing yeast extracts if the product does not contain any actual leavening agent.

Some people buy brewer's yeast from health-food stores. This form of yeast is totally dead and should not therefore be considered leaven.

It should also be mentioned that cream of tartar, by itself, is not a leavening agent.

Sometimes a question comes up about beer or other fermented drinks. There is no restriction in the Bible on the kind of beverages we drink during the Days of Unleavened Bread — no mention

of these being the "Days of Unleavened Beverages."

The fact is that in all cases where the Days of Unleavened Bread are mentioned, the reference is always to the example set by the Israelites when they came out of Egypt without any leaven in their dough (Exodus 12:39). There is no reference to the invisible yeast or result of it in beer, wine or other drinks.

Naturally fermented wine was customarily consumed by the Israelites at God's festivals. If God had wanted to ban fermented beverages during the Days of Unleavened Bread, He undoubtedly would have mentioned it. Yet the command adds no more than is found in Exodus 13:6-7: "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread . . . And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters."

If you are unsure about a particular food and cannot find the answer, you should not eat it, "for whatever is not from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

If partway through the Feast you find some leavened product that you somehow didn't see before, get rid of it. This is a type of those hidden sins that we don't always see right away when we are first converted.

We must keep on putting out sin (leaven) until the process is complete. This is shown by the fact that there are seven Days of Unleavened Bread. Seven is God's number of completion.

God intended the Days of Unleavened Bread to remind us that we are to be unleavening our lives spiritually by putting out the spiritual leaven of sin — not for several days only, but throughout our entire lives! As Paul wrote, "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Corinthians 5:8). □

The Resurrection

Just how important is the resurrection of Jesus Christ to you?

To the apostle Paul it was the hinge doctrine for the first-century Church: "If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain" (I Corinthians 15:14).

Strong words.

Yet this is a skeptical age. It is fashionable to question, conjecture, speculate and surmise. This supposedly educated society exalts ignorance as an accepted philosophy — agnosticism. And the Bible predicted it would be this way (II Timothy 3:7).

But many educated, objective researchers have been forced by a mass of evidence to accept Christ's resurrection as an historical fact.

Surprised?

Lord Darling, former Chief Justice of England, stated, "No intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true."

Lord Lyndhurst, Attorney General of Great Britain and three times High Chancellor of England, confessed in his private papers, "I know pretty well what evidence is; and I tell you, such evidence as that for the Resurrection has never broken down yet."

Many infallible proofs

Luke, the author of the book of Acts and a painstaking scholar in his own right, put the case confidently: "He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them [the disciples] during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

But how can you be sure?

Faith in the resurrection of

Christ is not, according to Paul, just an interesting sidelight of true doctrine. It is the foundation of the Christian faith itself (I Corinthians 15:17-18)!

With so much at stake, isn't it time we seriously asked: Just what is the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Did it really happen? Can it be solidly proven? Or is it, as some people believed in Peter's day, and some still charge today, a "cunningly devised fable" (II Peter 1:16)?

To demonstrate the factual evidence for the resurrection, we shall examine the main attacks *against* it.

Fact or fable?

Four cardinal ideas emerged to explain away the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here they are:

1) *The Swoon Theory*: Jesus didn't really die, but faked a death on the cross, rallied later on, conned His disciples and lived out His life elsewhere.

2) *The Theft Theory*: The disciples or other sympathizers stole the body and spread the rumor that Christ was resurrected. This is the oldest of the attacks.

3) *The Hallucination Theory*: The disciples were the victims of mass hysteria or some other psychological disorder.

4) *The Robber Theory*: A group of robbers plundered the tomb or pilfered the wrong one by mistake.

This is the end time, and many theological fables abound (II

FACT or Fiction

Christianity is based on the historical fact that Jesus Christ literally resurrected from the dead.

By K. Neil Earle

Timothy 4:3-4). We shall see that these four contentions are just that.

Consider what constitutes admissible evidence. Professor Ernest Kevan states, "For the establishment of an alleged historical fact no documents are esteemed to be more valuable than contemporary letters."

That is exactly what the four gospels claim to be: eyewitness testimony set to writing (Luke 1:1-4, John 19:35).

Now let us examine the four

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Resurrection of Christ

FACT

or

fiction?

Is it a historical fact that Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead. Are you convinced?

By K. Neil Earle

persistent arguments against the resurrection and learn the encouraging truth: Jesus Christ's conquest of death is one of the most well-attested and verifiable facts of history!

Did Jesus really die?

It is a bold question, and a dagger aimed at the very vitals of Christianity: Could Jesus Christ have faked a death on the cross? Could He, the greatest moral teacher who ever lived, have lived out a lie? Did Christ, by some

amazing cunning tactic, fool His fanatical antagonists during a public execution?

However fascinating this theory, upon serious study and analysis of all the evidence, it completely breaks down.

As Paul argued before King Agrippa, "This thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26). Mark 15:29 states the execution of Jesus Christ was a public spectacle. Christ's foes were the chief

leaders and officials of Judea (Mark 15:1). Pontius Pilate himself, the Roman procurator, double-checked to verify the death of Christ (verses 44-45).

John 19:23 and Mark 15:39 indicate that at least four Roman soldiers, including a veteran centurion, were in charge of the execution. Depend on it: Hardened occupation troops of the Roman period knew what death was.

Pilate's surprise that Christ had already died is not mentioned to show Jesus as a physical

weakling. Rather, it showed that the brutal scourging, which preceded crucifixion, was carried out most severely in His case. By some estimates only one in 10 people ever survived a Roman scourging.

"Although the Hebrews limited by their law the number of strokes in a scourging to 40, the Romans set no such limitation: and the victim was at the mercy of his scourgers," one authority tells us.

Indications are that the sol-

diers detailed to "prepare" Christ for scourging were a most vile collection (Mark 15:19). Undoubtedly Jesus had not slept the night before. No wonder He fell under the weight of the cross and may have had to be carried to Golgotha (verses 21-22).

Consider this: Would the bloodthirsty Jerusalem hierarchy, so eager to deal Christ and His disciples a smashing blow, allow Christ, once in their clutches, to "fake" death? Not likely.

British author John Stott demolishes the swoon theory with sheer common sense. He asks if we are to believe "that after the rigors and pain of trial, mockery, flogging and crucifixion, He could survive in a stone sepulchre with neither food nor warmth nor medical care? That He could then rally to perform the superhuman feat of shifting the boulder which secured the mouth of the tomb without disrupting the Roman guard? That He could appear to the disciples in such a way as to give them the impression that He had vanquished death? Such credulity is more incredible than Thomas' unbelief" (*Basic Christianity*, pages 48-49).

Taking all the strands of testimony into account, it is evident that Jesus Christ did die on the stake.

First-century propaganda

The oldest argument advanced against the resurrection still surfaces occasionally today. This is the intriguing theory that the disciples stole the body.

This thesis originated immediately after the event.

Why?

Because the one crowning blow to disprove Christ's resurrection would be for the chief priests to produce the corpse, to show the

dead body and end the "myth" Peter and the other disciples were propagating. Why didn't the Jewish rulers do that? It would have stopped Christianity dead in its tracks.

Because Christ's body couldn't be found! It had changed from flesh to spirit, and the religious leaders were confounded.

Enter the theft theory:

"Some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, 'Tell them, "His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept." And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure.' So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day" (Matthew 28:11-15).

But this is easily refuted.

In the first place, if the guards were sleeping, how did they know who had stolen the body?

Secondly, the guard was set to prevent this very thing from happening.

Christ's enemies actually overreached themselves. They took every precaution to stamp out Christ and His "movement." But their own stringent security measures became the most devastating blow against their own propaganda. Notice the sequence of events starting the day after the crucifixion:

"On the next day . . . the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, 'Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, "After three days I will rise." Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, "He has risen from the dead." So the last deception will be worse than the first.' Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how.' So they went and made the tomb

secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard" (Matthew 27:62-66).

Apparently this was a Roman guard, from the Jerusalem cohort. If so, based on Roman military procedure, it could have numbered between 10 and 30 men (Albert Roper, *Did Jesus Rise From The Dead?*, page 24).

And let's understand: Roman historians record that the penalty for quitting a post without leave was death. This explains why the guard went to the chief priests first, for protection from the Roman procurator.

What an amazing turn of events! When had a crucified man ever had the honor of being guarded by a squad of soldiers?

Also, as one scholar adds, "Soldiers cold-blooded enough to gamble over a dying victim's cloak are not the kind of men to be hoodwinked by timid Galileans or to jeopardize their Roman necks by sleeping on their posts." Exactly. The priests actually outsmarted themselves.

"Thus did the zealous enemies of Jesus unwittingly prepare in advance an unanswerable challenge to their subsequent explanation of the resurrection" (Roper, pages 24-33).

The hallucination theory

In this age of pop psychology, variations on this theme will no doubt continue to arise. None will stand the weight of the documentary evidence against it.

Even a casual reading of the gospels will point out that the disciples were caused to believe against their will (Luke 24:11). "Doubting Thomas" is a proverb of the English language.

The disciples of the four gospels revealed themselves to be rugged, practical men. Christ rebuked them often for their lack of sensitivity and slowness to believe (Matthew 16:21-23). The disciples displayed not one iota of the morbid excitement of the nervous system that causes mass hysteria.

The swirling events of crucifixion week didn't even leave them time for the psychological prepa-

ration necessary. Their moods varied: John was stunned but dutiful (John 19:26-27); Peter was torn by guilt and remorse (Luke 22:62); Thomas was skeptical (John 20:25); two were distracted and numbed (Luke 24:13-17).

How likely is it that two or more people would have the same hallucination? Not to mention 11 or even 500 (I Corinthians 15:6).

And why did the alleged visions stop so suddenly?

Christ's post-resurrection appearances were not fleeting glances of a phantom, but more like prolonged interviews, as both John 21 and Luke 24 bring out. On three occasions these "hallucinations" were not even recognized as Christ (Luke 24:16, John 20:15, 21:4).

Depend on it: The disoriented disciples of crucifixion week were light years apart from the daring dynamos who turned the world upside down a mere 50 days later. One can only call it miraculous. The witness of the disciples themselves attests to the most startling event of all history — the resurrection.

Thieves and grave clothes

It is tempting for some frustrated skeptics to fantasize about grave-robbers stealing Christ's body. But theory runs flat up against the documented fact of the Roman guard at the tomb.

And here's another point — an outstanding piece of evidence that completes the whole testimony. A little-studied aside by Jesus' most intimate confidant, the apostle John, disproves the robber theory and confirms Christ's resurrection.

When some brought news that the tomb was empty, Peter and John may have assumed the worst — that Christ's body had been stolen (John 20:1-2). John then relates how he outran Peter to the tomb and looked in. Bold Peter actually went straight in after catching up to John. Then John entered (verses 3-8).

In this amazingly lucid piece of first-century writing, as vivid and personal a memoir as ever penned, John relates that there

was something about the grave clothes that convinced him that Christ had been raised (John 20:8).

What did John see that morning that convinced him, even though he kept it to himself?

Of all the gospel writers, John is the most detailed about Jewish customs of the first century. His knowledge of Jewish burial customs is disclosed in the account of the raising of Lazarus in John 11. On that occasion John described Lazarus emerging from his tomb "bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Loose him and let him go'" (John 11:44).

This bears directly on what John saw in Christ's tomb.

One scholar showed that first-century Jews, in preparing a body for burial, did exactly what Christ's friends (John 19:40) did with His corpse:

"It was usually washed and straightened, and then bandaged tightly from the arm to the ankles in strips of linen about a foot wide. Aromatic spices often of gummy consistency were placed between the wrappings or folds. They served partially as a preservative and partly as a cement to glue the cloth wrappings into a solid covering... John's term 'bound' is in perfect accord with Luke 23:53 where the writer says the body was *wrapped* in linen" (Merrill C. Tenney, *The Reality of the Resurrection*, pages 116-117).

That is why Lazarus had to be helped out of his grave clothes. The one-foot strips of cloth and the spicy cement actually meant the corpse was almost in a soft body-cast, as we would describe it today. There were also 100 pounds of spices packed around Christ's linen "cocoon" (John 19:39).

And what does all this mean?

Just this: If Jesus Christ had revived to physical life, He would have had to remove the tightly packed bandages from around His body. The grave clothes would have been torn or at least unwound. But that is not what

John records. He is telling us in John 20:5-7 that the body clothes collapsed under the weight of the spices. The face-cloth the Jews wrapped around a corpse's head (John 11:44) was separate from the bandages. There was a gap between the linen clothes and the face-cloth. Exactly what you would expect — if the dead body of Christ had changed from flesh to spirit!

It was the undisturbed condition of the grave clothes that attracted John's attention that morning. There would have been little point in mentioning it so emphatically otherwise.

The plain truth was that Christ's grave clothes were left perfectly intact because He sat

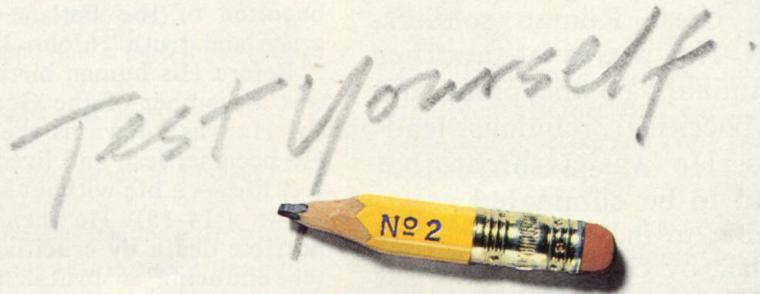
up through them and walked out of them! His body was no longer flesh but spirit (John 20:19).

No robber stole the body or the grave clothes. The way the grave clothes were *lying* (John used the word twice in chapter 20) convinced John that Jesus had been resurrected.

What an amazingly vivid eyewitness testimony we have in the four gospels! There is truly more going on in the gospels than at first meets the eye.

These four separate strands of testimony weave a scriptural snare for those who impugn the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

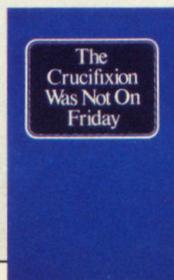
Jesus Christ rose from the dead. What will you do with that knowledge? □



- True or false: Jesus Christ was crucified on the Passover.
- Jesus said He would be in the tomb "three days and three nights" (Matthew 12:40). Can you count three days and three nights between sunset on Friday and sunrise on Sunday?
- If not, then which day was Jesus crucified, and which day was He resurrected?
- If professing Christianity accepted that Christ was in the tomb three days and three nights, which popular tradition would collapse?
- True or false: Jesus commanded His followers to celebrate His resurrection each year on Easter Sunday.

If you had trouble answering any of these questions, you need the information in our eye-opening booklets *The Crucifixion Was Not on Friday* and *The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday*. Send for your free copies now. You may get the

surprise of your life! Just mail the literature request envelope in this issue or write to our address nearest you (see inside front cover for a list of our addresses).



How Important Is the Sacrifice of Christ to You?

More than 19 centuries ago, Jesus Christ died a cruel, agonizing death in Roman-occupied Judea. But what did that death accomplish? Does it have any effect on you?

By George M. Kackos

To the arrogant and merciless Roman soldiers, He was just another criminal. To the pious and hypocritical religious leaders, He was a threat that had to be eliminated.

But to those of us who are called by God, He was and is something far different!

Today you hear a lot about the sacrifice of Christ. There is no lack of churches telling you that He “died for your sins.”

But what, exactly, does that mean? Is that all there is? What did the death of Christ really do? Could there be more to it all than you have realized?

The death of Jesus Christ has far more impact than even most professing Christians have understood (Hebrews 5:8-11)! It has crucial significance for *your* life!

Who was Jesus Christ?

To grasp the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ, let's begin by asking: Who was Jesus Christ? Was He simply a good person? Or was He something far greater?

The apostle John makes it clear: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld

His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1, 14).

Before His human birth, Jesus was a member of the God Family. He was known as the Word. He became flesh and lived a perfect life — a life without sin (Hebrews 4:14-15). He then died a horrible death by crucifixion, after enduring a brutal beating (Matthew 27:26, 35, 50).

But after three days and three nights in a tomb, He was resurrected — transformed from dead, decaying flesh to living spirit — to join His Father as a born-again member of the God Family (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

Soon His doubting disciples became believing apostles, and the New Testament Church of God began.

With this in mind, let's consider the benefits of the sacrifice of Christ. Let's grasp what His death means to us.

Justified by His death

God says that all have sinned, and that the wages of sin is death (Romans 3:23, 6:23). Is there a way for us to avoid this penalty? Can we be justified?

Clearly, there is no way for us to justify ourselves. The penalty for sin cannot be erased or forgotten. Even if we keep God's law perfectly from now on — which we can't — the death

penalty for our past sins remains (Romans 3:20).

So what hope do we have? How can we be forgiven? Listen to these inspiring words: “Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man [Jesus Christ] is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39).

But how is this possible? How can Christ justify us? Here is the answer: “For He [God the Father] made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (II Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus lived a perfect life so He could bear our sins by shedding His blood on the cross: “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His [Jesus Christ's] own blood [shed on the cross] He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. . . . how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:12, 14).

So it is the blood of Christ, representing His death, that pays the penalty for our sins. It recon-

The Day Christ Died

Time	Event
Sunset	Nisan 14 (Passover day) begins. (In A.D. 31, the year Christ died, Passover day fell on what we now call Wednesday.)
Evening	Christ observes Passover service. He introduces foot washing and New Testament symbols of bread and wine. He foretells His betrayal (Matthew 26:26-30, Luke 22:14-23, John 13:3-17, 21).
At Passover service	Christ foretells disciples' desertion and Peter's denial. He prays for God's Church (Mark 14:27-31, John 13:36-38, chapters 14-17).
Night	In Gethsemane, Christ prays. Disciples fall asleep. An angel appears and strengthens Christ (Matthew 26:36-46, Luke 22:43). Judas arrives with mob. Christ is seized. Disciples forsake Him (Matthew 26:47-56).
Early morning, before daylight	Christ is taken to Annas, questioned and sent to Caiaphas. Peter denies Christ (John 18:12-24). Sanhedrin, through false witnesses, tries to condemn Christ for blasphemy (Matthew 26:57-66). Peter denies Christ a second and a third time (Mark 14:70-72, Luke 22:58-62). Christ is mocked, beaten and spat upon (Luke 22:63-65).
"As soon as it was day"	Sanhedrin condemns Christ and sends him bound to Pilate (Luke 22:66-71, 23:1).
Morning	Judas, remorseful, hangs himself (Matthew 27:3-10). Pilate questions Christ, sends Him to Herod (Luke 23:1-7). Herod questions Christ, returns Him to Pilate (Luke 23:8-11). Pilate seeks to release Christ. The people reject Him. Christ is scourged and led to Golgotha (Matthew 27:15-26, Mark 15:21-22, John 19:1-16).
9 a.m.	Christ is crucified between two robbers (Mark 15:25-28).
9 a.m.-3 p.m.	Christ prays for His murderers' forgiveness (Luke 23:34). The soldiers divide His garments (Matthew 27:35). Christ is scoffed at and mocked (Matthew 27:39-44). Christ asks John to care for Mary (John 19:25-27).
Noon-3 p.m.	Darkness over all the land (Matthew 27:45).
3 p.m.	Christ is given sour wine and stabbed with a spear. He speaks His last words and dies (Luke 23:46, John 19:28-30, 34-37*).
Late afternoon-early evening	Joseph of Arimathea claims Christ's body. He and Nicodemus prepare it for burial. Christ's body is laid in Joseph's new tomb (Matthew 27:60, Mark 15:42-46, John 19:38-42).
Sunset	Nisan 15 (First Day of Unleavened Bread) begins. (First Day of Unleavened Bread fell on what we now call Thursday.)

*For a complete explanation of how Christ died, including the explanation of these verses in John, request our free article reprint "Did Christ Die of a Broken Heart?"

ciles us to God and eliminates the need for us to pay the penalty of our sins, which is the eternal death!

Besides paying this eternal penalty, the sacrifice of Christ also made possible the end of a temporal penalty, through the healing of our bodies in this life. Christ was viciously beaten before being crucified. Because His body was broken, we may be healed of physical illnesses and afflictions (I Peter 2:24). For a more complete understanding of this subject, request our free booklet *The Plain Truth About Healing*. Just mail the literature request envelope in this issue or write to our address nearest you.

A way of righteous living

Through His sacrifice, Christ made it possible for us to live as He lived. Before He died, He promised to make the Holy Spirit available to those God would call (John 14:26).

On Pentecost, at the beginning of the New Testament Church, He fulfilled this promise: "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

What those people saw and heard was a power that began to transform the carnal minds of Christ's disciples into spiritual minds, enabling them to take on the very nature of Jesus Christ.

As Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ [he accepted Christ's sacrifice and way of life so his carnal nature would no longer control him — see Romans 6:6]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me [through the Holy Spirit dwelling in him — see Romans 8:9-11]; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

What a wonderful blessing! We have the chance to have the character of Christ develop in us

by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our minds.

An example to follow

When you feel discouraged, when life is unjust, do you consider the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? Do you look to Him for encouragement?

You should! No other example can have such a positive effect: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls" (Hebrews 12:2-3).

The way Jesus responded to His tormentors should help you control your urge to strike back in anger. It should lead you to trust God, not your carnal responses (I Peter 2:21-23).

Christ died for you. Because of that selfless act, you can understand true love and be motivated to express it (I John 3:16).

Having this powerful example before your eyes can put your life in proper perspective and help you radiate right attitudes.

An intercessor

By dying for you, Christ qualified to be your heavenly High Priest. He now sits at God the Father's right hand, listening to your prayers, intervening on your behalf as you go before God. He knows what life in the flesh is like, and is willing to explain to God with firsthand knowledge the trials you suffer, the sins you struggle against.

Before His death, Jesus said: "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24).

Think about that: Because of the death of Christ, you have access to God the Father. No one else in the world, unless called by

Christ qualified to be your heavenly High Priest. He is at the Father's right hand, willing to explain to God the trials you suffer, the sins you struggle with. You can come boldly before Him.

God, does! Actually, most of the world ignores God the Father.

Not only do you have access to God, you also have a High Priest who feels for your problems and intervenes for you: "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

Knowing this ought to motivate you to seek contact with God and receive the blessings He can give you through answered prayer.

The ultimate benefit of the death of Christ is life! Consider that: Because He was resurrected, you can gain entrance into eternal life through Him. He is alive today at the right hand of God the Father, and is in the process of saving those who the Father calls: "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10).

Through death, Jesus gained eternal life. That same eternal life will be imparted to all those who serve God (I Corinthians 15:22-23). This process of salvation will ultimately extend to all humanity and bring billions into the God Family!

But make no mistake: Even though salvation is a gift (Ephesians

2:8), you must obey God's law. God will have no one in His Kingdom who refuses to obey Him. Those who teach otherwise are wrong. They ignore what the Bible plainly says (I John 2:4-5). (For more information, write for our free booklet, *What Do You Mean . . . Salvation?*).

Appreciate Christ's sacrifice

Think about it: Where would you be without Christ's sacrifice? Would you have a means of justification? Would you be miraculously healed of your sicknesses? Would you, as a mere human, be able to build godly character? Would you have a perfect example to follow? Would you have access to God the Father? Could you be born into God's Family?

In each case, the answer is no!

But in Christ, each answer is yes. Yes, you can have all these wonderful benefits!

Continually focus your attention on Jesus Christ. His cross, symbolizing His death and all it means, is a symbol of glory, not shame (Galatians 6:14).

But as you focus on Christ, don't make the mistake so many millions today make by overlooking God the Father. Jesus didn't. He stated, "My Father is *greater* than I" (John 14:28). God the Father is in supreme authority in the government of God, and in carrying out the plan of God.

Think about Christ. Talk about Christ. Act like Christ. Be like Him in every way (Ephesians 4:13). If you are ashamed of Him, He will be ashamed of you (Mark 8:38)!

We should especially focus on Christ as we approach Passover, the first of God's seven annual festivals. (For more information, request our free booklet *Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which?*) Take the time to devote much thought and thanksgiving toward Christ's sacrifice, commemorated by the Passover (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

Let Christ's tremendous sacrifice motivate you to emulate Him in every way. As Paul said, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21)! □

Jesus Christ was observing His last Passover on earth as a human.

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins’” (Matthew 26:26-28).

Jesus then went on to make this specific statement: “But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom” (verse 29).

Jesus was quite clearly saying that this was the last time He would drink the “fruit of the vine” until some future time in the Kingdom of God.

Now notice what happened after Christ received the terrible scourging, and was on His way to be crucified. “And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it” (Mark 15:22-23). Jesus remembered His words not to drink wine.

Jesus takes a drink

But, a little while later, while Jesus was suffering on the cross, another incident took place that seems to throw doubt on Christ’s ability to keep His word.

“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ . . . Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink” (verses 34-36).

Did Christ Break His Word?

When Christ took a drink on the cross, did He go against an earlier statement He made?

By Philip Stevens

If we now pick up the account of the same incident as recorded by John, we read: “Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit” (John 19:29-30).

From this account in John, it is clear that Jesus *did* take a drink, and therefore seemingly went against His word. If that is so, can we trust anything that Jesus said during His lifetime?

What Jesus meant

As with all such apparent contradictions, there is a simple explanation for this incident. In this instance, it is necessary to delve into the Greek language.

When Jesus was offered a drink from the container in John

19:29-30, the word translated “sour wine” is *oxos*, and can be better rendered “vinegar.” This is how the word appears in the King James Bible and some other translations.

But, is not vinegar also considered ‘fruit of the vine’? After all, the name itself is *vinegar*.

The answer to that legitimate question is that while vinegar is truly a “fruit of the vine,” it is not the same kind as used in the Passover meal.

The wine that Jesus and His disciples used for that meal was of the finest quality. Nothing else was appropriate, especially at that particular Passover, since that was the first time that the special symbolism linking Christ’s shed blood to the wine could have been understood. The Greek word used for such wine is *oinos*. So we could render Matthew 26:29, “I will not drink of this *oinos* from now.”

So when Jesus said during the Passover meal, “I will not drink of *this* fruit of the vine,” He was being quite accurate. He was not saying that He wouldn’t drink *any* kind of wine or similar liquid, just that He wouldn’t be having that particular kind of fruit of the vine — wine used as a symbol of His blood at Passover. He would not again be observing the Passover as a human. He was about to be crucified!

When we understand the difference between the Greek words used in these accounts, it is obvious that Jesus Christ didn’t make an untrue statement during the Passover meal. Nor did He, of course, at any other time.

As the Scriptures clearly tell us, “It is impossible for God [and that includes Jesus Christ, as the second member of the Godhead] to lie” (Hebrews 6:18).

For more information, request our free reprint article “Is Drinking a Sin?” Just mail the literature request envelope in this issue or write to our address nearest you. □

LETTERS

"A Model for Christian Fathers"

If we fathers had fulfilled our duties as Christian fathers, as stated in the article ("A Model for Christian Fathers" — December, 1986), 90 percent of our problems we face today would not exist.

The opening statement, "The fact that humans can produce children does not mean that parents are automatically capable of raising those children properly!" — how true and sad.

I just wish every father and prospective father could read this article, stop and think of what it could have been like instead of what it is like in all of society.

Ted Wood
Vermilion, Ohio

Pagan origin of Christmas

I have just read, searched the Scriptures and proved for myself by the Bible the facts concerning the article by Philip Stevens: "No Room at the Inn? No Way!" (December).

I have for several years now known the true facts concerning Christmas and its pagan origin. This article has opened my mind to even more insight of this truth.

Delmar F. Hess Jr.
Belpre, Ohio

Correction

With regard to the answer that was given to the question in the December, 1986, issue, concerning the non-celebration of Christmas by the early American colonists, I feel I should point out a historical error.

When you say "Henry [VIII] proscribed the festival [Christmas] for 12 years," and that it "was restored in 1554, after Mary, Queen of Scots, a zealous Roman Catholic, took control," you seem to be implying that he (Henry) reigned for 12 years more, and was somehow replaced by Mary Queen of Scots. . . .

Protestant Henry VIII of England died in 1547 and was succeeded by his son Edward VI, the offspring of his third marriage, to Jane Seymour. When Edward, also a Protestant, died in 1553, the crown was offered to Lady Jane Grey by certain Protestants who feared a Catholic succession. But Jane was queen for only nine days before she was overthrown and eventually executed, and Mary Tudor (Bloody Mary), the Catholic offspring of Henry's first marriage, to Catherine of Aragon, was proclaimed queen of England that same year.

Mary Queen of Scots, who is not to be confused with Mary Tudor, was the

Catholic daughter of Scottish king James V. Ensuing civil war within Reformation Scotland forced Mary, after 25 years' reign, to abdicate in 1567 in favor of her infant son James, who was subsequently brought up in the Calvinist faith. Mary fled into England, but was imprisoned by Mary Tudor's successor, Protestant Elizabeth I (offspring of Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn), who feared Catholic sympathizers might attempt to steal her crown in favor of the Scottish queen.

These fears of Elizabeth's were eventually substantiated when Mary was implicated in a plot to assassinate her. The Queen of Scots was tried, found guilty and, in 1587, beheaded.

It is ironic that, had she remained sovereign queen of Scotland, and outlived Elizabeth, Mary might have ascended the throne of England in 1603, by right. But it was to be left to her son, James VI of Scotland, who was to become James I of England, to do so.

Alexander Kirk
Cardenden, Scotland

It was most interesting and delightful to learn that King Henry VIII, presumably as an Anglican, proscribed Christmas celebrations for at least a dozen years. . . .

Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, never actually occupied the English throne. Instead, it was Mary Tudor, also a zealous Roman Catholic, who brought about the 1554 restoration of the damnable "festival." She was the first daughter of Henry VIII and elder sister of Queen Elizabeth I.

Following the demise and burial of Queen Mary in 1558, had the Roman papacy refrained from referring to the newly crowned monarch as a bastard queen, Elizabeth also might have continued to impose Roman Catholicism upon the English as sort of a compromise with, or concession to, Mary Stuart of Scotland. Nonetheless, religion was not one of Elizabeth's primary interests. After re-establishing the Anglican Church, she did nothing further during her long reign to disassociate pagan Christmas from Church liturgy.

Years later, upon Oliver Cromwell's assumption of power, Christmas was abolished and, here again, it was for another 12-year period. But after restoration of the monarchy (which many of us Israel-identity Christians — erroneously called Gentiles — regard as the perpetuation of David's throne), Satan's work

began anew. (Has it ever really ceased?) Yule once more became part and parcel of the English fabric. Not only are the English infected, however. Other British — Irish, Manx, Scots and Welsh — seem to carry the germ in varying degree. May God forgive us all, Charles Dickens to the contrary.

Observing and celebrating the late-December and early-January "holy days" bring no spiritual benefit or blessing to anyone in the Christian-professing world. On the other hand, much profit-reaping and increase are fully admitted by the men and women of commerce.

Kevin O'Malley
Arlington, Va.

We would like to thank all the readers who pointed out our error.

"You Can Break That Bad Habit!"

Thank you! In the December issue of *The Good News*, I read an article titled "You Can Break That Bad Habit!" At the time I was smoking marijuana every day and always wanted to quit. I tried and failed many times. Reading that article did it. I haven't smoked it for over two weeks. That's the longest I've gone in five years. The bad habit was really starting to depress me.

Reader
San Bernardino, Calif.

Coming to understand

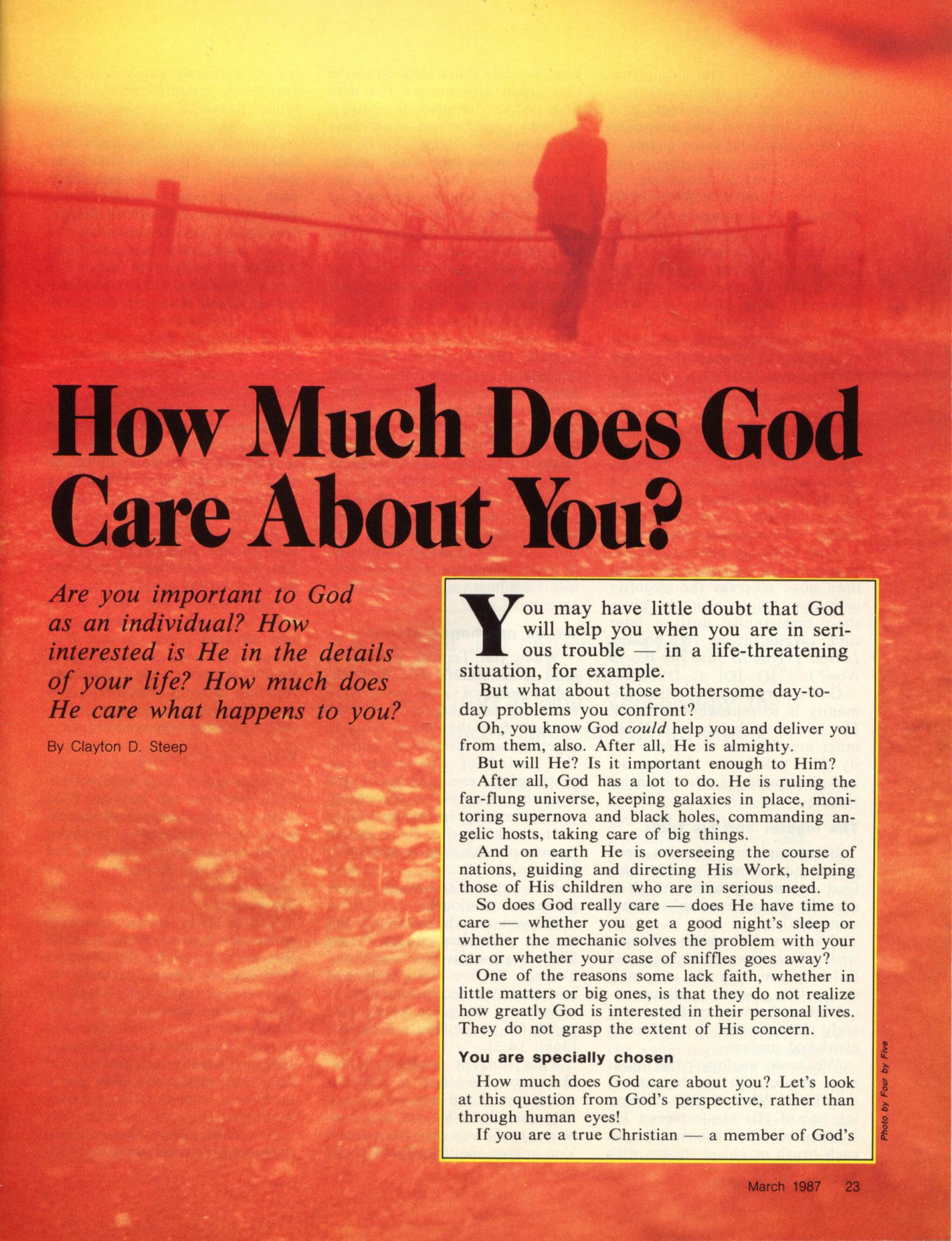
Please continue to send me the *Plain Truth* and the *Good News* magazines. I read them cover to cover and understand what's happening in our world. Before in my life, I never gave a hoot as to what was going on in the world, but now, I have come to understand that we are to "watch and pray always," which means to watch world affairs as never before. It was more or less a command to do so. So like it or not, I am now paying attention to the news.

Myrtle Conner
Streator, Ill.

I would like to thank you for the *Plain Truth* and *Good News* magazines. It seems that every time I am puzzled about something from the Bible your magazines arrive in the mail with the answers. It is really amazing.

I am a new reader of the Bible and I find all the articles have helped me greatly in understanding it.

J. Thompson
Auckland, New Zealand



How Much Does God Care About You?

Are you important to God as an individual? How interested is He in the details of your life? How much does He care what happens to you?

By Clayton D. Steep

You may have little doubt that God will help you when you are in serious trouble — in a life-threatening situation, for example.

But what about those bothersome day-to-day problems you confront?

Oh, you know God *could* help you and deliver you from them, also. After all, He is almighty.

But will He? Is it important enough to Him?

After all, God has a lot to do. He is ruling the far-flung universe, keeping galaxies in place, monitoring supernova and black holes, commanding angelic hosts, taking care of big things.

And on earth He is overseeing the course of nations, guiding and directing His Work, helping those of His children who are in serious need.

So does God really care — does He have time to care — whether you get a good night's sleep or whether the mechanic solves the problem with your car or whether your case of sniffles goes away?

One of the reasons some lack faith, whether in little matters or big ones, is that they do not realize how greatly God is interested in their personal lives. They do not grasp the extent of His concern.

You are specially chosen

How much does God care about you? Let's look at this question from God's perspective, rather than through human eyes!

If you are a true Christian — a member of God's

true Church — you didn't just stumble into the truth.

It was not an accident or a stroke of luck that you happened to be turning your radio or television dial and came upon the *World Tomorrow* broadcast, or that you found a copy of *The Plain Truth* or some booklet put out by God's Church, and that you began to understand.

God the Father — the Supreme Being, the one who is above all, who knows all, who rules all — looked down at the hearts of individual human beings as He has the power to do (Psalm 11:4).

Millions, yes, hundreds of millions, of people God left in darkness. But you He chose. Individually. By name. Yes, your name was mentioned in the heavens, pronounced by God the Father in the hearing of angelic beings and Jesus Christ: "I want [your name] to be one of my firstborn."

Your eyes He opened. He selected you to be one of His children now, whereas the majority of human beings won't be given their opportunity until a later time. (Write for our free booklet *Is God Trying to Save the World Now?*)

God's purpose in creating humanity is to reproduce Himself. He wants to bring into being other members of the God Family. That will be the supreme accomplishment of His creative skill.

The master and his tools

If you are one who has been given understanding at this time, God is working with you. You are His "workmanship" (Ephesians 2:10).

Compare the skill and care with which God is forming and finishing you with that of a master potter, painter, sculptor, architect or diamond cutter, or any truly skillful artist at work on a cherished project.

Whatever analogy you might wish to use, you can be sure of one thing: When God is fashioning one of His masterpieces, He is infinitely more concerned with each brush or chisel stroke, with

each delicate touch applied to the clay, than any human has ever dreamed or dreamed of being!

God is concerned with anything and everything — no matter how seemingly small or insignificant — that could in any way affect the quality of the final work of art.

When God does something, He does it well — in fact, perfectly. That's why Jesus described our destiny as that of becoming perfect (Matthew 5:48).

When God has accomplished His will in us, there shall not remain the slightest "spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Ephesians 5:27). We shall be "holy and without blemish" (same verse), "conformed to the image" of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29), "filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).

Can you begin to comprehend why God is interested in more than just the major events in your life? Why He is deeply interested in every circumstance that may influence how you and your character turn out?

We as preshaped stones

When the Temple was being built in Solomon's day, the individual stones of God's house were fashioned and shaped to fit perfectly before they were brought together and assembled. During the period of quarrying and preparation, every blow of the hammer, every cut of the chisel, was extremely important. Once at the building site, there was to be no more chiseling or hewing (I Kings 6:7).

And yet the stones all fit together harmoniously.

Do you see the analogy? We are, as individual stones, being fully prepared as God's spiritual Temple. We are being fashioned now to fit perfectly and harmoniously in the place being prepared for us in God's Kingdom (John 14:3).

This concept explains a lot. Have you ever had a trial for which you could not understand the reason? "Why did this happen to me?" you may have asked. You prayed about it. But God did

not immediately deliver you. He just let the trouble continue for a while. Maybe for a long while! Why?

You don't have to know the full answer in this life. God is the architect. He knows what shape each stone needs to take to fit perfectly into His overall design. He knows how to knock off the rough edges, how to smooth and polish the surface to make the whole "building fitly framed together . . . an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21, Authorized Version). Have confidence. God knows what He is doing.

You may have seen the thought-provoking picture of a little boy standing amid signs of extreme poverty. His clothing is tattered, his hair disheveled. Dirt is smudged on his face and on his bare feet, and he is clutching a worn-out teddy bear, but he is grinning nonetheless.

Across the bottom of the picture is the statement: "I know I'm worth somethin', 'cause God don't make no junk!"

You, called and chosen by God, are worth much to Him. He has invested a lot in you. You occupy the most prominent place in His attention. He is forming, molding, shaping, fashioning you into His highest workmanship. And God does not make junk!

God is all-knowing

Nothing you do is hidden from God. Nothing can be kept from Him. To illustrate God's omniscience, think for a moment about what was involved in the slaying of the firstborn of the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus.

For God to know whom to smite, He had to know who all the firstborn were. That means God had to know the order of birth of every individual in Egypt, from "Pharaoh who sat on his throne to . . . the captive who was in the dungeon" (Exodus 12:29). Among all humans in Egypt, old and young, God had to know who was the first in each family.

You think that was an accomplishment? There was more to it

yet. That night God also slew the firstborn of the Egyptians' beasts! So He had to know the birth order of all the animals in Egypt included under the death sentence. No telling how old some of the animals may have been or under what circumstances they were born. God knew which ones were the first to have come out of their mothers' wombs.

Do you think God knows the intimate details of your life any less than those of beasts in ancient Egypt?

Or what about the life or death of a single sparrow? It didn't stretch Jesus' imagination that God could be aware of the well-being of a tiny bird (Matthew 10:29). "Do not fear therefore," declared Jesus to His followers. In other words, don't be anxious and worried about your life. He said, "You are of more value than many sparrows" (verse 31).

Of course, because you are a potential immortal member of the God Family! You are of such intense interest to God that "the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (verse 30).

Is it reasonable to think that God could be concerned about how many hairs are on your head and at the same time be indifferent to details of your day-to-day life? He is concerned about anything and everything that could affect your growth.

Not long ago, a man and his wife living in the eastern United States were considering whether or not to move across the country to an area where the husband could better use his skills.

For this family it was a major decision. Several children and their schooling were involved. There were friends and relatives to leave behind, not to mention all the trauma and problems of packing belongings and moving furniture — pulling up roots and settling down in a new environment thousands of miles away.

No doubt the family spent much time discussing the pros and cons of the move, as well as praying to seek God's will.

What really stunned this couple was when they mentioned to

one who claimed to be a minister that they were considering such a move and trying to find out what God's will was. "Frankly, I don't think God cares one way or the other!" was the reply.

Contrast that answer with what James wrote. He specifically said that a Christian ought to be concerned about God's will when considering a move to a different city, a business transaction or any other plans (James 4:13-15).

Why be concerned about God's will if God doesn't care about such matters?

The answer is that God does care. If anything is a problem or a potential problem to any of God's people, He cares.

Are you familiar with the scripture that says: "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of many of their truly serious troubles; but the rest of their problems they must needs struggle with on their own strength"?

There is no such scripture!

Listen to what the Bible says:

You, called and chosen by God, are worth much to Him. He has invested a lot of time and effort in you. You occupy the most prominent place in His attention.

"The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of *all* their troubles" (Psalm 34:17).

"*All* their troubles" means just that. Big ones, little ones, in-between ones — all of them. Of course, we have to do our part, but then God steps in and supplies everything we lack to give us victory and make things work out right.

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them *all*" (verse 19)!

Anybody who doesn't take advantage of God's willingness to help in every situation is missing out on a lot of peace of mind, is making unnecessary mistakes, is being defeated because he is

trusting in his own strength. If something bothers you, it is a problem, no matter how insignificant it seems. And no problem is too small to take to God. Nor is any problem too big.

God really cares

You do not need to face life's problems by yourself. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

"Commit your way to the Lord," instructs Psalm 37:5. More exactly, the Hebrew states, "Roll your way upon the Lord." Just take all of your problems, all your trials, all your weaknesses, all that you want to change, all that burdens you, weighs you down. Gather it all together, roll it all up and lay it on the Eternal. His back is strong and His shoulders are broad. "Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (same verse).

Certainly you have to do your part. You have to seek wisdom and counsel, exercise persever-

ance and resourcefulness, apply all the laws of success. But when you take the matter to God, He will supply what you lack.

Take advantage of the tremendous privilege that is yours as one of God's chosen. Seek God's help in all situations, "casting *all* your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (I Peter 5:7). God really cares about you. Share your life with Him and see!

Experience what moved David to exclaim: "Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from *all* my fears. . . . Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" (Psalm 34:3-4, 8). □

How to Remember Scriptures

Remembering key verses from the Bible greatly helps in putting God's Word to work in your life!

By Norman L. Shoaf

Quick! Where in the Bible would you find a complete list of the Ten Commandments?

Where does the Bible record Jesus Christ's "Olivet prophecy" — His major prophecy about conditions that mark the end of this age?

Which chapter of the Bible is known as the "baptism chapter"?

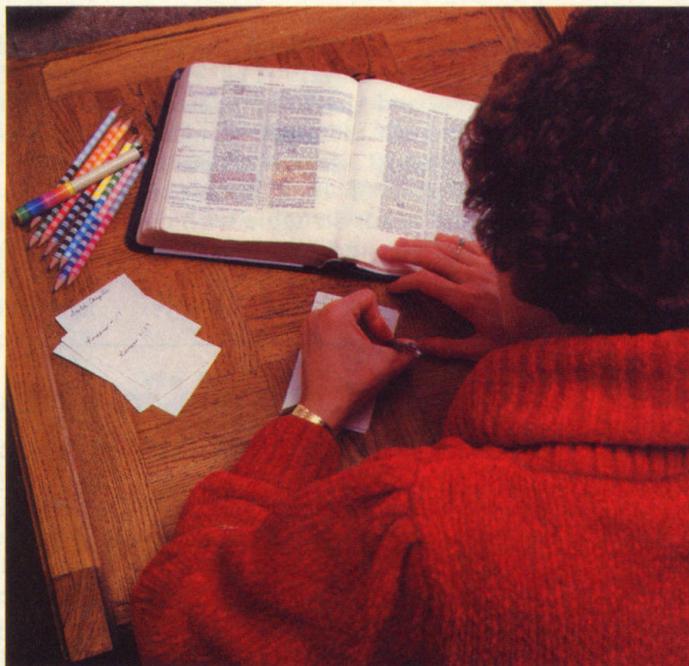
Where would you find a list of the basic doctrines of the Church of God?

Can you name the Bible chapters and/or verses corresponding to these and other main areas of Scripture? How important is it to remember certain Bible passages? And how can you improve your memory when it comes to the Bible?

Be ready to give an answer

I Peter 3:15 tells us: "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

Regular readers of *The Good News* know that the Bible's most



basic truths directly oppose the traditions and beliefs of this world. As servants of the true God, we are required to know what the Bible really says, and what actions the Bible really requires of us.

So, if someone had asked you about the Ten Commandments, would you have been able to refer them to Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:1-21, the two places in the Bible that list the Ten Commandments?

Would you have known that Jesus Christ's Olivet prophecy about the end time — the pivotal prophecy in all the Bible — is recorded in three places, Mat-

thew 24:3-51, Mark 13:3-37 and Luke 21:7-36?

Romans 6 is often referred to as the "baptism chapter." It explains the understanding a person must have at baptism and what baptism pictures.

The basic doctrines of God's Church are listed in Hebrews 6:1-2.

How valuable it is to know exactly *where* the Bible talks about these and other basic points of truth!

Psalm 19:8, 11 reveals: "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart... Moreover by them

Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward."

Doing what the Bible says produces great reward. Disobeying God's statutes produces death (Romans 6:23). So we need to know for sure what the Bible says — and where!

Memorizing is a tool

Knowing exactly what the Bible says about various subjects will help you to successfully handle every challenge you face in daily life.

Should you yell back when your boss screams at you about something? No! Proverbs 15:1

says, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Should you eat that ham sandwich a friend offers you? You would know the answer if you were familiar with Leviticus 11:1-47 and Deuteronomy 14:3-21. Here God lists the types of meat humans should and should not eat.

Would it be a mistake to tell a "white lie" to spare someone's feelings? Yes! Revelation 21:8 says that all liars are headed for the lake of fire!

You can't go wrong by memorizing a few basic passages from the Bible.

But know this: Memorizing the entire Bible verse by verse is *not* a requirement for salvation. If it were, none of the great men and women of the Bible — Abraham, Sarah, Moses, David, Deborah, the prophets, the early apostles — would be saved.

Why? Because when they were alive, the entire Bible had not been completed yet. And the Bible wasn't divided into chapters and verses until the 13th century.

But those servants of God definitely will be in the coming Kingdom of God. Hebrews 11, the "faith chapter" of the Bible, says so.

Some have almost made a fetish out of how many scriptures or passages of scripture they can quote from rote memory. Many times such memorization is merely an exercise in plain, old vanity, because they don't realize what the Scriptures mean and they don't apply them in their lives.

James wrote, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers [or memorizers] only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22).

On the other hand, there is much to be said for a true Christian's ability to remember passages of God's Word. There is nothing wrong with developing an excellent memory. And after all, the Bible contains the words of life. To put the Bible into action in our lives, we've got to know what it says.

Here are four keys to help you

develop your ability to remember basic scriptures from the Bible.

Four keys

1) *Get an overview of the Bible.* If you have not read all the way through the Bible, do so. Get to know basically how the Bible is laid out. Understand the overall story flow. Learn the order of the books of the Bible and know what each book is mainly about.

Sometimes you can discern where certain information may be found by knowing the subject or style of the different Bible books.

For example, nearly all of the quoted statements of Jesus Christ are found in the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) or the book of Revelation. Most of the Bible's poetry is found in Psalms or the prophets. Certain Bible books are devoted to history (the story of David's life, for instance, is found in I and II Samuel).

2) *Study the Bible by subject or chapter.* Many of the Bible's chapters were made into chapters because they cover certain specific subjects.

For example, what has become known as the "Sermon on the Mount," containing foundational instruction from Jesus Christ to His disciples, is found in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. I Corinthians 15 is known as the "resurrection chapter." The history of God's true Church, showing its development through seven time eras since the first century, is found in Revelation 2 and 3.

3) *Meditate on what you study.* Concentrate and reflect on what you read in the Bible. Associate what you study with real-life situations.

When you read prophecy, think about current world events. Surely no one with an open mind could read Matthew 24 or II Timothy 3:1-5, which foretell conditions to mark the end time, and not see that these Bible passages are bluntly describing the world we live in right now.

Take chapters or passages and put your own name in them as you read. For example, I Corinthians 13 is known as the "love chapter." As you read this

chapter, substitute your own name every time the word *love* (or, in the King James Bible, *charity*) appears, and see if what it says is true of you.

Think about what the Bible says whenever you have a free moment, such as when you wake up at night and can't sleep. Such meditation will ingrain the Bible's meaning into your mind and character, and help you act on it naturally in your daily life.

As David exclaimed: "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97).

4) *Use repetition.* Just as repeating an exercise over and over helps build physical muscle, studying important Bible scriptures over and over will help you retain them in your memory.

An enjoyable family activity might be to spend time with your husband or wife and children fellowshiping and quizzing each other on basic scriptures, such as those used to explain and prove subjects covered in *The Good News*. Some have found flash cards helpful.

Some excellent scriptures to begin to memorize would be those listed at the end of the "Prove All Things" column each issue (see pages 28-29). These verses explain the basic truths of God's Word.

Remember — and apply

In the soon-coming world tomorrow, God's people, then made immortal spirit beings in the Family of God, will be responsible for helping Jesus Christ teach God's way to all humanity (Isaiah 2:2-3). The main textbook we'll be using is the Bible! We're going to need to know this Book well. That means we need to be studying it now.

Remember: Understanding and applying God's Word in your own life is the main goal of the Christian life. Fearing God and keeping His commandments is, the Bible says, the whole duty of man (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

But by applying the keys in this article, you can also greatly improve your ability to remember scriptures! □

God's Gift of Grace

“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.”

So begins a well-known American hymn. And although the words and mood of the song leave some false impressions, it is certainly correct to say that God's grace is amazing.

But what is equally amazing is how few people really understand what the Bible doctrine of grace is all about! Yet our very salvation depends upon God's grace, for “by grace are ye saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8, King James Bible).

Certainly those whom God has called to salvation must not remain in ignorance of this basic Bible doctrine!

The basic doctrine

In a general sense, the word *grace* in the Bible merely means favor, and usually refers to God's favor toward those who love and obey Him. But, especially in the New Testament, it is used specifically to refer to God's greatest act of favor — God's calling of a sinner to repentance and the extension of God's forgiveness, which leads to eternal life.

The usual teachings of this world

Numerous false concepts about grace circulate through the turbulent waters of this world's religious dogmas.

For one, some people have never bothered to distinguish the subject of grace in their minds

from the related but nonetheless separate subjects of faith, justification and sin. When they think of grace, therefore, they confuse it with one of these other subjects and thus miss the meaning of grace altogether.

Others believe that God will extend grace without repentance, or without obedience to the law (which they invariably view as “done away”).

All of these conceptions are wrong. To be sure, the word *grace* does show God's love. But the meaning of grace, when examined, is far different from the false concepts mentioned above.

The Bible teaching

In general, the word *grace* simply means favor, and can be used of favor shown by God or man. Thus we see how Esther found grace or favor in the sight of her husband, King Ahasuerus (Esther 2:17). Noah found favor (“grace”) in the eyes of God, who as a result saved him and his family from the Flood (Genesis 6:8).

But in the New Testament the word *grace*, through repeated association, refers to a special act of favor by God — the act of forgiving the sins of those He calls, and

giving them the promise of eternal life. Romans 5:14-17 makes this plain.

Read John 1:17. Here we are told that grace came through Jesus Christ. Christians know that through Jesus we receive forgiveness and reconciliation to God. And in Romans 5:21, Titus 2:11 and Titus 3:7, we are told that the end result of God's grace is eternal life!

Now *that* is indeed a wonderful gift — an unmerited and unearned act of favor from God to man!

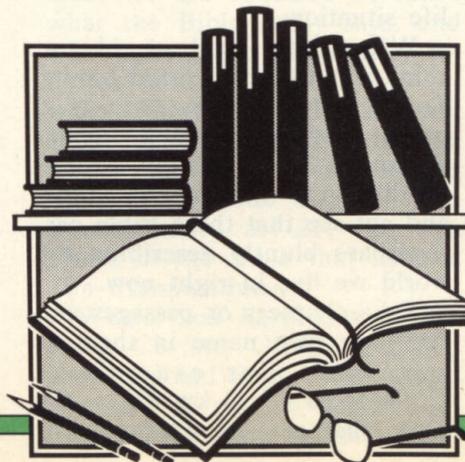
Most professing Christians would agree with the plain statement that “we are justified by grace.” Yet it is at precisely this juncture that the Bible parts company with the beliefs of men about grace.

To be sure, the Bible does indeed teach that we are justified by grace. Read Ephesians 2:8: “For by grace are ye saved through faith” (KJB). And Romans 3:24 declares we are “justified freely by His grace.” See also Romans 4:16 and Titus 3:7. But what does it mean to be “justified by grace”? Few really understand.

Read these verses just cited in your own Bible. They speak of at least four different, but related, areas — faith, justification, works and grace.

Today, religious people are confused by these words and tend to lump them all together as one subject with some meaningless and incorrect statement like “The law is done away,” or “All you need is grace,” or “Just believe, that's all.”

A complete discussion of each of these areas is beyond the scope of this article; we are concentrat-



ing here on grace. But here are some brief definitions of these terms: *Justification* is the process and result of having your sins forgiven. *Works* are things you do yourself — like charitable acts, rituals or even, in some contexts, acts of obedience to the law. *Faith* is belief in God (backed up by action) and is the necessary ingredient God looks for before He forgives a sinner. Finally, *grace* is the favor that God shows when He grants forgiveness and eternal life.

Therefore, to be “justified by grace through faith” (as in Ephesians 2:8, for example) means to be forgiven by God (justified) not because of our goodness but because of God’s favor (grace) if we believe Him (faith). Now that is simple to understand!

When God says we are justified by grace, He means we are justified because of the unmerited and unearned favor God shows us and *not because of anything we have done*.

It was not our goodness that resulted in our calling, but God’s goodness. It was His kindness, love and favor — His grace — and nothing more! We did not earn the calling, and we cannot earn forgiveness or eternal life. These are all gifts — examples of God’s unmerited favor, His grace.

Still, the false concept that humans can somehow earn salvation has persisted. In Paul’s time, for example, Paul had to explain that we are justified by grace and not because we happen to be the physical descendants of Abraham, to whom the promises of forgiveness and salvation were originally made. The Jews of Paul’s day took great pride in being the descendants of Abraham, but were clearly told their ancestry had nothing to do with their justification. Read Romans 4:16-18.

Further, the Bible reveals that we are justified by grace and not

because of our works. “And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace” (Romans 11:6). In this context, “works” are anything a person may do in an attempt to please God and earn salvation because of it. But such things do not earn us forgiveness or eternal life. Salvation is a gift given because of God’s favor (grace).

In Christ’s time, the “works” spoken of here were usually understood to be rituals or charitable actions, but might include even some parts of the law still binding today, *if* the motivation was to *earn* salvation. Thus we are told quite plainly that we are justified by grace through faith and not by the works of the law (Galatians 2:16-21, 5:4).

But good works are not wrong, and neither is the law. It is just that we are not justified by them. We do not earn salvation by doing them.

So again: We are justified by God’s grace, and not because of race, works or the law. (Of course, God does demand our living faith in Him, since we are saved by grace, but through faith — Ephesians 2:8).

Few professing Christians would subscribe to the false belief that we can earn salvation by works or law-keeping. But an opposite falsehood prevails — that since God is indeed a loving God, full of forgiveness due to grace, we therefore need not keep the law any longer.

To support their theory they often quote such scriptures as Romans 6:14: “You are not under law but under grace.” But how can anyone believe that this statement means we need not keep the Ten Commandments, for example? Does such a one believe it is OK to steal? To murder? To lie or covet? Of course not! And why do they not read the next verse? It says, “What then? Shall we sin because we are

not under law but under grace? Certainly not!”

Remember, sin is the transgression of the law (I John 3:4). When Paul says we should not sin, he is saying we must not transgress the law! Clearly, being under grace does not mean the law is done away. It merely means we are forgiven because of God’s favor, and not because we keep the law.

The Bible plainly states that grace requires us to go on and obey the law. We are to follow righteousness (I Timothy 6:11), and righteousness is defined by God’s commandments (Psalm 119:172).

In Romans 3:8, Paul soundly condemned the false teaching that grace means you can sin at will. And Jude labeled those who “turn the grace of our God into licentiousness” as “ungodly men” marked out for “condemnation” (Jude 4).

Key verses

Here are some important scriptures about this topic: Esther 2:17, Genesis 6:8 — the word *grace* merely means favor. Romans 5:14-17 — in the New Testament, the word *grace* refers to God’s favor shown in our calling and forgiveness of our sins. Ephesians 2:8 — we are saved by grace. Romans 4:16-18, Romans 11:6, Galatians 2:16-21 — we are not justified by race, works or the law. Romans 6:14-15 — being under grace rather than under the law does not mean we can sin. Romans 3:8, Jude 4 — the doctrine of grace without law is branded as heresy.

Few people — even professing Christians — understand the biblical doctrine of grace in its full import. But when we do — when we come to understand the enormity of our sins and the enormity of God’s forgiveness because of His love — we can truly praise Him for it. His grace is indeed amazing. □

COMING

IN THE GOOD NEWS

◆ Four Great Mandates

The time for this world's society is drawing very short! The April-May issue of *The Good News* will focus on four major areas of Christian living that every one of God's people must now emphasize in his or her personal life. These great mandates are:

◆ Come Out of the World

This is probably the most basic of all Christian instruction. Yet how difficult it is to do! What does it mean to "come out of the world"? Are you following this command?

◆ Simplify Your Life

The quest for material success has become an all-consuming goal for many in this society — maybe even you. Do you know what the real values of life are?

◆ Prepare to Teach

God's true people will be responsible for teaching God's way to the rest of the world in the wonderful world tomorrow. Are you learning everything you can about that way now?

◆ Emphasize the Family

The human family is supposed to picture the Family of God! Yet the family is under attack today. You need to know how to strengthen yours.

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