

MAY-JUNE 1989

# The Good News

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## OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

# WHY THE SABBATH?

**Why You  
Need the  
'Other Helper'**

**Did Jesus  
Study  
the Bible?**

**PENTECOST:**  
A Celebration of Growth

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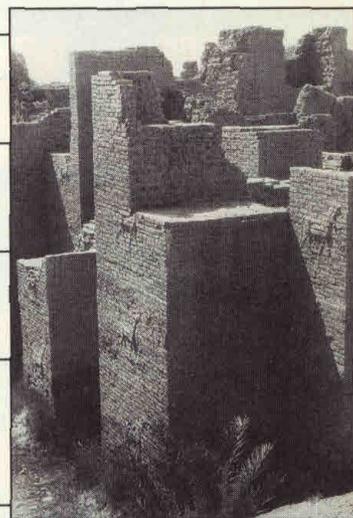
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**COVER**

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," says Exodus 20:8. The Sabbath is so important that God made keeping it one of the Ten Commandments. See page 23 for more of what the Bible says about this important day and how to keep it properly. Good News photo.

# GOOD NEWS PERSONAL



## Your Best Source of Help

**C**ould you use a little help coping with your problems?

Most people could. This world is not an easy place in which to live. But the best source of help with coping is the one most people don't use!

Remember the experience of the apostle Peter? You can read the story in Matthew 14:22-33. As long as he kept his eyes on Christ, Peter was able to do something that was humanly *impossible*. It was Jesus who had the power to keep him on top of the stormy water, and Peter had full confidence in that fact.

It was not until Peter began to look at the reality of his physical circumstances that he began to sink. He saw the very real waves. He felt the very real wind and spray. Only then did he become afraid.

That very real fear caused his faith in the One who made it possible for him to do the impossible to wane!

But the story doesn't end there. When he began to sink, Peter cried out to his source of strength, "Lord, save me!" Peter did not just go ahead and sink. He didn't try to start swimming or otherwise rely on his own strength. No, he knew where to go for help.

Sure, his faith wavered. But before he went under the waves he cried out to Jesus Christ for help—a good example for us to follow. "And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?'"

In the continual grind of daily problems we face as human beings, it is often hard to keep that important perspective. But keep it we must if we want real peace of mind and confidence about what



the future holds for us. Yes, God *is* still on His throne. And Jesus Christ is now, at this very moment, at the Father's right hand, *anxious* to give help to any who will earnestly seek Him. Read again Hebrews 4:14-16.

God wants to help you. But will you let Him? Will you *obey* Him? Are you committed to God or, as is

the case with so many today, committed only to yourself?

So many have been led to think that God's law is a law of bondage. But nothing could be further from the truth. God's law is a law of liberty. It points the way to peace of mind, to happiness and to faith in the One who holds your future in His hands. Jesus explained, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

The law of God is like a blueprint that helps those who keep it to better understand how to live in peace with fellow human beings. And keeping God's law demonstrates one's commitment to God.

Does obeying God earn you salvation? Certainly not. Salvation is God's free gift to you, made possible by Jesus' sacrifice. But, as Jesus taught, God will not give that free gift to any who refuse to obey Him. (That only makes sense, of course.)

But who obeys God any more? How many want to let this ancient book, the Bible, tell them how to live their lives? Even so, the Word of God stands as a powerful testimony against a society that has chosen its own way and rejected its Creator.

How about you? You do have a choice, you know. Will you walk on the water, or sink in the storm?

*Joseph W. Teach*

Pastor General  
Worldwide Church of God

# LETTERS

## God's Sabbath

I just today received my copy of *The Good News* (January-February). Have already read it from cover to cover and enjoyed each article very much, especially "Remember This Key to Spiritual Knowledge" by John R. Schroeder.

Besides being well written, it also helped open my eyes to why God commanded us to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy—also why it inspired the late Herbert W. Armstrong as it seems to have done.

Edna Cardin  
Leslie, Ark.

## Satan's battle plan

Bravo concerning the article entitled "You Can Thwart Satan's Battle Plan" (January-February).

I've been going through a period of spiritual decline, even though I study a lot, and have not been able to climb out of the pit I've been digging for myself. Your article helped me to see more clearly the real picture of my situation.

Reader  
Greenville, Ill.

## November-December issue

I had to thank Peter Moore for his timely and encouraging article "I Know You Can Do It—I've Seen You Do It!"

I had been slacking off spiritually and was feeling pretty bad about it. Then this past Sabbath, I turned to this article and after reading it, I was greatly moved. I got down on my knees and thanked God for inspiring it. Now I know I can truly say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Reader  
Portchester, N.Y.

Karl Karlov's article pointed out that you have to take the initiative before



Ken Tunell

God provides the power. The truth of it struck me immediately and the following article by David Maas showed me how to meditate on it.

Past experience has proved that God can provide muscle power, sometimes in the shape of other humans, and many other resources that are necessary after I have taken the initiative to pray and get started.

Kristina Ahlnaes  
Fairbanks, Alaska

## Artwork

Thank you to Dan Andreasen for the absolutely beautiful and detailed artwork he has produced for Dexter H. Faulkner's "Positive Child Training" section in *The Good News*. He succeeds in capturing the adults' and children's expressions superbly. Mr. Andreasen has a beautiful talent which he shares with us all.

Korie Mason  
York, England

## Good News helps readers

Thank you very much for sending me your wonderful *Plain Truth* and *Good News*. I have received them regularly and I would like to continue as a subscriber for another year. Each issue teaches me more and more. No doubt you have helped me to make the right decisions. No other magazine has opened my eyes and cleaned my mind as your two magazines have done. I wait anxiously for a new magazine each month.

Jose Waldir Silva de Jesus  
Brasília, Brazil

I have been a subscriber to *The Plain Truth* and *The Good News* for a long time now. I lack words to express how much I have benefited from these and your other publications, not only in biblical understanding but more so in my everyday dealings with fellowman.

Evanston K. Kariuki  
Thika, Kenya

Thank you for your free magazine *The Good News* which I recently received. It is always a pleasure to have some biblical literature on hand to make life a little bit more pleasant.

Rupert L. Debique  
Castries, St. Lucia

Thank you to all the writers of the wonderful articles in *The Good News*. It is so amazing! You know, sometimes I would like to know a little more about

certain doctrines, and when the next issue of *The Good News* comes, it covers that subject, or I see at the back of the magazine that it will be covered in an upcoming issue. God is truly using you all to feed us His sheep.

Yurick Williams  
Paramaribo, Suriname

I wish to renew my subscription to your *Good News* magazine because the evidence you give for the biblical quotes and factual statistics makes it such a wonderfully knowledgeable and inspiring magazine. There is no other free magazine of which I have ever heard that is so valuable.

Isabelo P. Manzo  
Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines

## More than she can accept

I read *The Good News* and can't seem to relate to it. I want the magazine and all printed literature I ordered canceled. I won't bother you again. It's more than I can accept.

Lulu Burrell  
Muskegon, Mich.

*The Good News* welcomes your comments. Letters for this column should be addressed to "Letters to the Editor." The editor reserves the right to use letters so addressed in whole or in part, and to include your name and edit the letter for clarity or space. Send all communications to our address nearest you:

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# PENTECOST

## *A Celebration of Growth!*

*The third of God's seven annual festivals points to our unique chance to be in the coming early harvest of humans into God's Family.*

By George M. Kackos

**W**hat a beautiful sight! A golden field of wheat, swaying in the gentle breeze of a sunny, summer day. Like a magnificent carpet, it stretched across the landscape, captivating my attention.

Later a huge combine rumbled through it, reaping a bounteous harvest.

The sight of that field of wheat was a reminder that the midwestern states and provinces are the breadbasket of the United States and Canada.

It was also a reminder of a harvest festival that God commands true Christians to observe.

### **The Feast of Harvest**

When God called Israel out of Egypt, He gave the people seven fes-

tivals to observe in the promised land so they would come to know and fear Him. Among those festivals was the Feast of Harvest or Weeks (Exodus 23:16, Deuteronomy 16:9-10, 16). In the New Testament, this one-day Festival is called *Pentecost*, meaning "fiftieth."

Grain was planted in the fall, then harvested in the spring, beginning with the wavesheaf offering during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Fifty days later they celebrated the Feast of Harvest, as we read in Leviticus 23:9-16, 21.

Everyone would gather at the Tabernacle for sacrifices. Two loaves of bread were waved before God; these loaves were called *firstfruits* because of their symbolic link to another harvest festival, the Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles, held in the fall (Exodus 23:16, Leviticus 23:34).

### **Meaning for us**

For Israel, the Feast of Harvest, or what we now commonly call Pentecost, was very important. Without a good harvest the nation could face food shortages, whereas an abundant harvest meant sufficient bread. Since God controlled their agricultural blessings, this Feast revealed God's blessings or curses upon them. It showed whether they were living in obedience to the covenant they had made with God.

For us as Christians,

the Festival of Pentecost takes on far greater meaning than agricultural blessings. It points to our ultimate purpose in life—to our potential to be born into God's Kingdom! It reveals to us what we must do to be harvested as members of God's Family.

How do we know? What proof shows that this millennia-old harvest festival points to our future destiny? Let's notice Jesus' parable of the tares. Here Jesus draws an analogy between harvesting and our entrance into God's Kingdom:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

"He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'

"But he said, 'No, lest

while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.

"Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn'" (Matthew 13:24-30).

In the parable of the sower, Jesus compares God's Kingdom to planting and harvesting (verses 1-23).

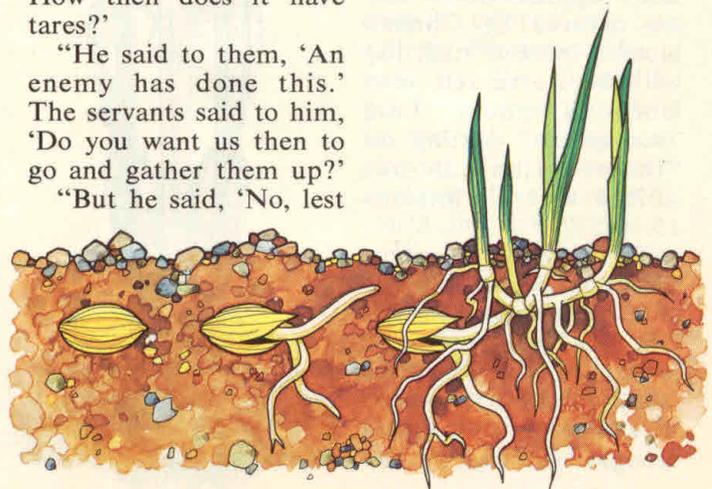
And Matthew 9:37-38 says: "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

Jesus' symbolism in these passages is clear: He is talking about the "harvest" of humans into the Family of God!

That spiritual harvest begins with the first resurrection, at Jesus' Second Coming.

Now understand the spiritual significance of Pentecost. Let's see what this Feast, which God gave to reveal part of His overall master plan, pictures for us.

As we've seen, the wavesheaf offering began the late spring/early summer harvest leading



to Pentecost. But exactly how does the Feast of Pentecost relate to God's plan of salvation?

### Spiritual symbolism

The wavesheaf offering in the Old Testament is connected with Jesus' resurrection in the New Testament (compare Leviticus 23:10-11 with Matthew 28:1-6). It symbolized Jesus' acceptance in heaven by God the Father after being raised from the dead (John 20:16-17).

Jesus' resurrection makes possible the harvesting, or resurrecting, of humans into God's Kingdom at Christ's Second Coming!

As Romans 5:9-10 tells us:

"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 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."

What about the two loaves of leavened bread that were offered on Pentecost? What do they represent?

Leaven is a type of sin. Sinners whose transgressions against God's law are covered by Christ's blood (Hebrews 9:12, 15) will be harvested into God's Kingdom. This "corruptible" putting on "incorruption" is described in I Corinthians 15:50-53.

The two loaves represent those people brought to salvation from both the Old and New Testament periods.

As James 1:18 says, "Of His own will he brought us forth by the

word of truth, that we might be a kind of *first-fruits* of His creatures."

But what is needed for us to become firstfruits? What does it take to enter God's Kingdom?

### What is needed?

Grain requires four major ingredients to grow to maturity and produce a crop—seeds, soil, sunlight and water. By analogy, we also require four major ingredients to enter God's Kingdom. Let's consider each one:

● *God's calling.* No grain can develop unless seeds are planted. The same is true for us spiritually. Unless God calls

us—plants the seeds of truth in our minds—we can't understand God's truth and begin to grow toward changing our sinful human nature. We must ultimately develop God's own holy, righteous character.

Jesus made it clear: "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44).

Right here is the point that most churches today totally miss!

God's calling in this age is limited to a comparative few who must grow in the adverse conditions of this world. The vast majority are deceived by Satan (Revelation 12:9). They are not being called now!

God has not yet begun to try to save most of the world. He plans to call them later, when conditions will be tremendously better for their spiritual growth.

Most of the world does not keep Pentecost. Therefore they miss this central point in God's plan of salvation!

Pentecost, or the Feast of Firstfruits, occurred at the time of the smaller harvest in Palestine, in late spring/early summer. The much larger, later harvest, in the fall, is pictured by God's seventh annual festival, the Last Great Day.

For more information on this subject, write or call for a free copy of our eye-opening booklet *Is God Trying to Save the World Now?*

● *God's law.* For seeds to grow to maturity, they must be planted in soil. For a Christian that soil is an *obedient mind* that obeys God's law. Jesus stated, "If you want to

enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17).

"He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him," reveals I John 2:4.

Like a seed that sprouts apart from life-giving soil, humans who live in disobedience to God's laws will never reach spiritual maturity.

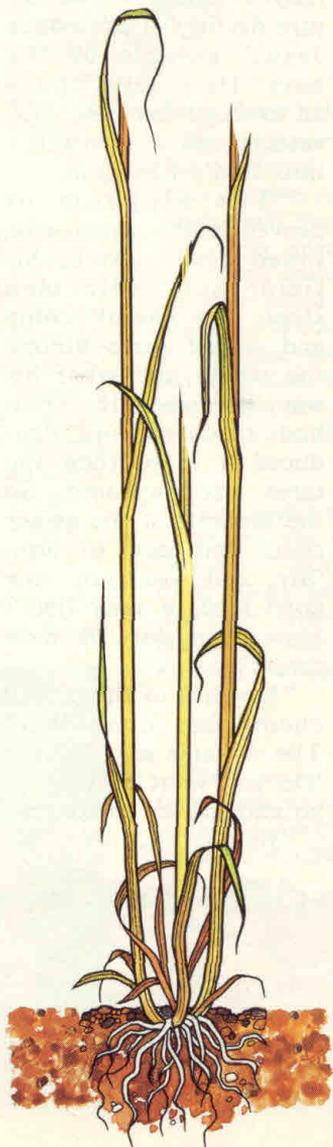
● *Jesus Christ.* Without light, grain cannot grow. The same is true for us. Without the true light, Jesus Christ, we are lost in darkness and live in deception and sin: "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life'" (John 8:12).

Through Jesus we have access to God the Father, the right way of life and forgiveness of our sins. Without these elements, we cannot grow to spiritual maturity.

● *The holy spirit.* Grain needs water. It is a matter of life and death. For Christians, living water—God's holy spirit—(John 7:37-39) is also a life-and-death matter. Romans 8:6 says, "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

The holy spirit gives us the power to obey God's law, and it is the power by which God will place us in His immortal, spirit-composed Family (verses 4, 11).

But first we must receive God's spirit. This requires real repentance and true baptism. People in religious circles talk a lot about these important steps in conversion, but



millions are still deceived. You needn't be. Write or call for a free copy of our booklet *All About Water Baptism* for more detailed information.

On Pentecost in the New Testament, God gave the holy spirit to His true Church. We must receive that spirit to become members of Christ's spiritual Body. Without it, we cannot be true Christians: "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:9).

Once harvested, what does the future hold for

**T**he holy spirit gives us the power to obey God's law, and it is the power by which God will place us in His Family.

us? What purpose will we serve in God's Family? Will we simply serve ourselves?

#### The purpose of firstfruits

Consider the analogy of grain. Is it harvested for its own benefit? No! It serves a far greater purpose—providing vital sustenance for the human family.

The same is true for us as firstfruits. We are destined to serve the human family as kings and priests in God's Family

(Revelation 5:10). We will provide others with the sustenance of God's Word and way during the Millennium—the first thousand years of God's Kingdom on earth. This will lead to their spiritual maturity and entrance into God's Kingdom.

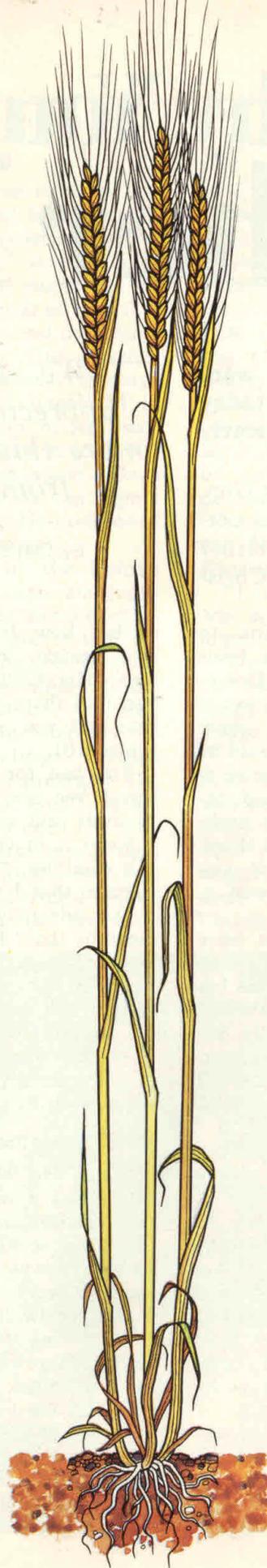
We celebrate this time in advance by keeping the Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles (Exodus 23:16, Leviticus 23:34). Through this fall harvest Festival, we picture the firstfruits of God's Kingdom helping produce an abundant harvest among humans.

Next comes the Great White Throne Judgment period, when those who were not called during the 6,000 years of man's life on earth apart from God are resurrected to physical life. They will then be given their first opportunity for eternal life:

"But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. . . .

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

"Then Death and Hades were cast into the



lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:5, 11-15).

The day after the Feast of Ingathering, or the eighth day, celebrates this time (Leviticus 23:39). In the New Testament Church, it came to be called the Last Great Day (John 7:37).

For an exciting explanation of the Holy Days of God and more details about the coming resurrections, request copies of our booklets *Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days—Which?* and *The Resurrection—Hope of Mankind*. They're free!

#### Appreciate your calling

Just as I enjoyed viewing that beautiful field of golden wheat, God enjoys viewing us—His special, begotten firstfruits. He enjoys seeing us mature toward the harvest, proclaiming His way of life to the world.

I Peter 2:9 tells us: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

This is why we must deeply appreciate our calling. We must take it seriously. We must diligently commit ourselves to the difficult task of obeying God and overcoming ourselves, the world and Satan.

We must eagerly look forward to that day when the Lord of the harvest returns to gather the fruits of His labors by resurrecting His faithful people into membership in God's Family! □

# Why You Need the 'Other Helper'

**W**hat if Jesus were still on earth today as He was nearly 2,000 years ago?

What if you lived near Him, saw Him frequently, had personal contact with Him? Wouldn't your life as a Christian seem a lot easier?

Have a tough decision to make? Next time you see Jesus you could ask His counsel. Downcast? Just being with Jesus would inspire you. Sick? Jesus could speak the word and you would be well. Puzzled about some verse in the Scriptures? Jesus could explain it. Have some other problem? Jesus would be right there.

All this from a Savior you could see and touch, as well as hear and talk to.

Yes, some may wish it were that way now.

But it is not. Instead, Jesus has left the earth. "I leave the world and go to the Father," He announced at the close of His ministry as a human (John 16:28). "I go away to Him who sent Me," He declared (verse 5).

He is gone. We now worship and serve a God who is not visible to us.

When we finish praying to Him, there is silence. We may have to wait for an answer to our prayers—perhaps even wait for a long time. We may be tempted to doubt whether our prayers have been heard, whether God cares, whether He still intervenes today, whether this, whether that.

All this tests our faith in a way it could not be tested if Jesus were bodily here among us. All this is for a purpose.

This first chapter of Acts de-

*We ought to  
appreciate much  
more this great gift  
from God!*

By Clayton D. Steep

scribes how Jesus ascended up into heaven, leaving His disciples—His Church—behind. He had told them, "I go to My Father and you see Me no more" (verse 10).

Too bad for us? To the contrary! We are better off. Jesus Himself said so!

Read it in verse 7. Jesus told His disciples, "It is to your advantage that I go away."

Our advantage? What did He mean by that? How could it be to our advantage that He left? Read on: "For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send it to you."

What is this "Helper" and why is it to our advantage that Jesus went away to send it to us?

## **What the other helper is**

When He was here on earth, Jesus was a limitless source of strength, inspiration and instruction to those who were with Him daily. He was a true Helper to them in every sense of the word.

But He dwelt with them only a short while, after which He declared, "I go to My Father." He quickly added, however, "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that it may abide with you forever" (John 14:12, 16).

This other helper, which remains forever with converted

Christians, is the holy spirit—the "Spirit of truth" (verse 17). It is the means by which God is able to be in one place and exercise His power, influence and omniscience anywhere else, no matter what the distance from Him.

Before Jesus left, He told His disciples "not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). That was another reference to the holy spirit, which Jesus would go to heaven to receive from the Father so He could send it to His disciples.

The momentous occasion when the holy spirit was sent was the day of Pentecost in A.D. 31. For the first time, the holy spirit was made available to more than a few individuals.

Accompanied by miraculous signs, its arrival inaugurated the New Testament Church age (Acts 2). Peter explained to the assembled crowd witnessing this marvel that Jesus, "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" (verse 33).

## **How God can be with us now**

Jesus did not desert His followers. He didn't forsake them. Not at all. He told them, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

"I will not leave you orphans," He proclaimed. He promised: "I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me" (John 14:18-19).

Further, Christ stated that if a person truly loves and obeys Him, "I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (verse 21),

and both Jesus and the Father “will come to him and make Our home with him” (verse 23).

How are we to understand this? Didn't Jesus say in this same discourse that He was leaving and that His disciples would see Him no longer (John 16:10)?

Jesus explained in John 14:25-26: “These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, it will teach you all things.”

That is the answer! It is through the holy spirit—the other helper—that God is now with us. We see Him not with our physical eyesight, but with the eye of faith.

The apostle Paul referred to this truth when he wrote that being “absent from the Lord,” as we now are, “we walk by faith, not by sight” (II Corinthians 5:6-7).

But we have to build that faith. We have to seek God daily. We have to study His Word. We have to spend sufficient time in prayer. We must resist Satan, defeat doubt, overcome ourselves and the world, keep our minds centered on God.

The Christian life is a struggle,

especially in today's world. We need all the help we can get!

### A different mind

We have all been ruled by our natural minds. The human mind, which the Bible sometimes refers to as the “heart,” is subject to selfish desires and passions.

It is in these minds of ours that we make decisions and determine courses of action. Our physical bodies just act or react accordingly. God is not interested in eternally saving our mortal bodies. Salvation centers around the mind, the human spirit. Once that is in order, God can supply an immortal, spirit-composed body in a resurrection.

The capacity of the human mind to make decisions and judgments is called free moral agency. It is a God-given ability that every person has. The crucial question is, though, By which guidelines or standards do we make our decisions? On what do we base them? Feelings? Prejudices? Lusts? Peer pressure? Or, on the other hand, God's laws?

This is why you need the holy spirit. Your natural mind must give way to a spiritual mind. You must be “transformed [converted—how?] by the renewing

of your mind” (Romans 12:2). “For to be carnally minded [which we all have been] is death, but to be spiritually minded [which we must become] is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).

At the beginning of our conversion, God begets our minds with His holy spirit, and we begin to grow into a new creation.

A converted person actually has two minds: the natural, fleshly mind and the spiritual mind. These two are in constant conflict with each other (Galatians 5:17). We are supposed to be subduing, stamping out, putting to death the carnal mind (Colossians 3:5, Galatians 5:24) and letting the spiritual mind flourish, increase and grow.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,” Paul urged (Philippians 2:5).

We can't accomplish this on our own. We need the constant “supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:9). This

*God's holy spirit was manifested in the appearance of a dove (Mark 1:9-10), fire and wind (Acts 2:1-4). Jesus referred metaphorically to the spirit as water (John 7:37-39) and oil (Matthew 25:1-13).*



Ken Tunell

is the helper He promised, through which He lives in us (I John 3:24).

### Christ in us

As one person here on earth, Jesus could directly influence only those immediately around Him. And even those, His disciples, with whom He had continual contact for 3½ years were, at

## **T**hrough our heaviest trials we can know that God is right there by our side.

the end of those years, still unconverted.

Why? He was in their midst. True. But He was not *in them!* And that makes all the difference. For you to receive salvation, Christ must be formed in you (Galatians 4:19). "Christ in you [is] the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

The holy spirit is not separate from God. It is part of God (II Corinthians 3:17). That is how Jesus, while still in heaven, "absent" from us, can come and dwell in humans anywhere on earth, through the holy spirit, changing them, converting them. If you have the holy spirit, God is working in you.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians that God wanted them "to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith . . . that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:16-19).

To be filled with all the fullness of God should be the goal of

every Christian. It doesn't happen all at once. It is a process. We should be striving to reach "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Those who are yielding to Jesus Christ, letting Him direct their decision-making processes, allowing His mind to replace their own natural mind, "are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Corinthians 3:18).

By the end of this physical life, Christ's character will be formed in them so that in the resurrection they can be given a spiritual body and become members of the God Family (I John 3:2).

### Taking on the divine nature

The "works of the flesh," listed in Galatians 5:19-21, make up the carnal mind that all humans have to one degree or another. No part of that mind will carry over into eternity. Only that in us that reflects the fruit of the spirit (verses 22-23) is going to live forever.

It behooves us, therefore, to become as filled with the fruit of the spirit as we possibly can during this brief existence.

We need to put forth more effort to be "partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4). Consider the characteristics of the divine nature mentioned in verses 5-7: faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love. To what degree are these characteristics in you?

Seek them. Strive for them. Study and pray to attain them. Let Jesus Christ, through the other helper, come and live in you, filling you with these eternal, God-like traits.

"For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." You will, instead, be prepared to receive immortality!

"For he who lacks these things is shortsighted . . . Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election

sure . . . for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (verses 8-11).

### The precious gift

The holy spirit is not just a sentiment or a vague spiritual analogy. It is a literal, all-powerful force—a part of God. Consider just some of the advantages that are ours through this precious gift Jesus sends us from the Father:

The holy spirit begets us, making us God's children (Romans 8:15). It gives us access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18). It increases the effectiveness of our prayers (Romans 8:26, Ephesians 6:18).

It gives us wisdom, knowledge and understanding (Ephesians 1:17, Isaiah 11:2). It imparts to us power, love and a sound mind (II Timothy 1:7). It helps us obey God's laws (Ezekiel 36:27). It fills us with the fruit of righteousness (Galatians 5:22-23).

When we are going through our heaviest trials we can know that God is right there by our side. Through the holy spirit, God is "a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

Yes, it is true that we do not now see and hear Jesus with our physical senses. We do not have Him dwelling bodily with us. We are now absent from Him. We in this Church age have a unique opportunity to build faith. People in the world tomorrow, after Jesus has returned, will not have this same chance.

When it gets right down to it, whether or not we now have direct physical access to Jesus is not what matters. Thanks to the holy spirit, whether we are now present with Him or absent from Him is not important. What is important is that "we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him" (II Corinthians 5:9).

Be thankful for your calling in Christ, and for the other helper, given to you as a guarantee that you can make it into God's Kingdom (verses 4-5). □

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

## **What does the Worldwide Church of God say about Mother's Day and Father's Day?**

Neither Mother's Day (May 14 this year in the United States) nor Father's Day (June 18) is fundamentally religious in nature. They are secular holidays of comparatively recent origin.

In this world, parents are often forgotten and neglected in day-to-day living. This world tries to make up for this by dedicating a special holiday to the role of each parent.

The Bible, of course, teaches that parents should be honored at all times (Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 6:1-3).

Christians follow God's instructions by remembering and honoring parents. If one wants to send a card with personal best wishes or telephone parents on Mother's Day or Father's Day, there is nothing wrong with doing so.

## **I am interested in stage acting and drama. Would it be wrong for me to study these subjects?**

It is not necessarily the *thing* that is wrong, but the *misuse of a thing* that causes problems. This principle would apply to stage acting and drama.

Acting, as such, is not wrong. It depends on what is being acted out and whether it is beneficial and uplifting.

The students at Ambassador College sometimes perform skits and musicals. A drama class may teach certain public speaking skills that could be helpful.

Practically speaking, though, morality is rarely a concern in acting and drama classes. From time to time, drama students would likely be asked to portray thieves, murderers and the like, and to use foul language. They might also be instructed to act out adulterous or licentious situations. A person should also consider that performances of plays

often conflict with God's Sabbath. Because of these drawbacks, a person should carefully weigh all relevant factors when deciding whether to take drama and acting classes.

## **How did people live such long lives during the times the Bible talks about?**

The Bible reveals that people once lived for hundreds of years. Genesis 5 tells us, for example, that Adam lived 930 years (verse 5). Methuselah lived the longest of any person mentioned. He died at age 969 (verse 27).

Shortly after the Flood, though, we find people living much shorter life spans. Abraham lived 175 years (Genesis 25:7). A few generations later, Joseph lived 110 years.

The psalms tell us that 70 years is a good, long life (Psalm 90:10). David died at that age, being described as "full of days" (I Chronicles 29:28). That was about 1000 B.C.

Many people have speculated about the great shortening of human life spans. But the Bible does not directly explain how or why this came to be.

It is possible that God simply determined that about 70 years is enough time for a person to fulfill the purpose for human life.

In other words, those who are called can prepare in that length of time to receive immortality at the return of Christ. Those not yet called can learn that the ways of man do not bring lasting satisfaction or fulfillment. Thus, when they rise in the judgment, they will be able to choose God's way.

Our booklet *Is God Trying to Save the World Now?* examines what the Bible says about the resurrections. The purpose for human life is explained in our booklet *Why Were You Born?* Interested readers may write for free copies of these publications.

## **Why did Paul call himself a Jew in Acts 22:3? In Romans**

## **11:1 he said he was from the tribe of Benjamin.**

The word *Jew* came to be applied in two ways.

First, it referred to any descendant of the tribe of Judah. *Jew* is a nickname; it is merely a shortened form of *Judah*.

But the word *Jew* also referred to anyone who refused to join the rebellion when the 12 tribes of ancient Israel split into two separate kingdoms.

As it turned out, all of the tribes except Judah, Levi and Benjamin formed the northern kingdom under the rule of Jeroboam. Their national name became *Israel*. The three remaining tribes, under King Rehoboam, formed the southern kingdom, named *Judah*.

You can read about Benjamin's alignment with Judah in I Kings 12:21.

Paul descended from Benjamin. Nationally, however, he was a citizen of the kingdom or house of Judah. Thus, he was both a Jew and a Benjamite.

If you haven't already, request a free copy of our booklet *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*. It explains in greater detail the division of Israel's 12 tribes into two kingdoms.

## **What is the biblical identity of the peoples of Central and South America?**

The peoples of Latin America are of diverse origin, including European, Indian and some black African tribes. Those of European origin are primarily from Spain (except in Brazil, where the main element is Portuguese).

The Spanish people themselves are of varied ethnic background. Those who are primarily Spanish, not Indian or mestizo, can be traced back to Japheth, a son of Noah, through his grandson Tarshish (Genesis 10:2, 4).

In addition, there are Celtic, Germanic (Gothic), Arabic, Jewish and other Semitic elements in the Spanish population. □

# 'GOD, WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT ?'

**D**ozens of pairs of eyes peered through the dusty gloom at the rear of the cavern.

Like wide-eyed owls they anxiously watched the cave entrance, where only minutes before a breathless sentry had rushed in to announce that hostile troops were nearby.

David, a hunted man along with his followers, was confident that they were all hidden from danger.

Then they heard the sound of voices, hoofbeats and tramping feet. Soldiers came into view, passing by the mouth of the cave. Alarmed, the hiding fugitives saw the troop column come to a halt—right outside the entrance.

They would be trapped if they were discovered! What if cave bats were disturbed and flew out in alarm? What if a rock were dislodged and the sound echoed outside?

Then they saw the robed figure of King Saul silhouetted against the entrance as he walked into the cave, feeling his way through the gloom. Laying aside his garments, he attended to toilet.

With bated breath and pounding hearts, the hiding men were frozen—afraid that even the slightest sound, a sneeze, cough or hiccup, would become a cavernous echo and expose them (1 Samuel 24:1-3).

As David watched King Saul, his mind may well have flashed back over the years this king had troubled him. His thoughts might have gone back to boyhood days

when he tended his father's sheep.

## **An example of patience**

*It began like any ordinary day. By the time the sun rose over the hills of Moab, David was on his way to lead a flock of sheep to pastures laden with dew. As the day wore on, he took time out to play his harp.*

*Suddenly, a servant burst upon the peaceful, pastoral scene*

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**Are you impatient  
about something?  
Do you feel like  
taking matters into  
your own hands?  
Here is how to  
know God's will.**

By Graemme J. Marshall

*with the news that the prophet Samuel had arrived at Bethlehem, and that Samuel had refused to eat the hastily prepared banquet until the shepherd boy also joined the guests.*

*Never before had David been sent for like this! Till then he had been just the "lad who kept the sheep." What a pleasure to think that the great prophet Samuel wouldn't eat until David also sat down.*

*Excited, David left his sheep to run full-speed home, anxious to see up close this holy man of God.*

*David was shocked when the prophet took a vial of oil, poured it over his head and said God had directed him to anoint David the next king of Israel.*

*To be king! Strange, because the next day he went back to shepherding, and stayed there until King Saul requested he come to the royal court as a musician. David thought this must be God's way of training him—introducing him to the ways of the royal court.*

*And when Saul promoted him to commander of the army he was sure Samuel's prophetic anointing was being revealed.*

*What success he enjoyed—too much! He became compared in glory with the king. Things went badly after that. One day he was demoted to captain—without explanation. Even so, he still tried hard to be a good servant.*

*Then Saul offered David his daughter, Merab, in marriage. Now he was sure this was how God was working out his ascension to the throne. He would be*



son-in-law to the king! But at the final moment before the marriage, Saul switched brides! He gave David his other daughter, Michal. At least Michal loved him. They married, but, again, things went awry. Michal warned him of assassination plans and he barely escaped one night by her lowering him from an upper window.

For years David's life amounted to being chased from one stronghold to another, betrayed by informers, sought by bounty hunters.

Then, just today, David's scouts alerted him of Saul's bodyguard marching nearby. He decided to hide in the cavern and carefully covered all telltale footprints. He thought Saul would surely pass on by.

But would you believe it? Here was the king now in the cave! When would God work out His promise? Did God intend David to take over by force?

### God tests David

David's reminiscing was interrupted by a nudge in his side and voices whispering: "Now is your chance—kill him! God has delivered him to you.

With his mind dwelling on the hurts this king had done to him, David instinctively clasped his dagger, crawled toward Saul's laid-aside clothes and sliced off a piece of the royal robe (I Samuel 24:4).

Just then the king stood up, retrieved his garments and walked out of the cave. David's troops sighed with relief but also expressed frustration: "You had him. God delivered him to you and you let him go."

Was this a godly test to see whether David would take things into his own hands? Even though his counselors urged him to strike, David had reservations. It didn't seem right that the man God had chosen as king could be removed by any means other than God's doing.

David even repented of disre-

spectfully damaging the king's garment (verse 5). But he was frustrated from trying to convince Saul that he meant him no harm. Saul frequently behaved in a demented way now, and the king could not seem to understand that David was not a competitor for the throne.

It seemed to David that there was a time for courage—and a time to flee. With King Saul against him, he sought refuge in the wilderness (I Samuel 25:1).

### The test continues

Saul's army was encamped near David's new hiding place, a mountain retreat. High on a ridge, David watched Saul's men make camp, the king's royal tent protectively placed in the middle of his troops (I Samuel 26:1-5).

David announced to his men:



Basil Wolverton

"I'm going down there. Who will come with me?" Abishai volunteered. Together they crept down to Saul's camp late that night (verses 6-7).

Unbeknownst to them, God had prepared another test for David. He had caused a deep sleep to come upon the entire camp (verse 12). On finding the sleeping Saul, David was faced with the choice whether to solve his problems his human way, or to wait on God.

Again, David felt a nudge in his side and heard a voice: "Let me kill him. God has delivered him into your hand."

It must have seemed natural and lawful to Abishai that David should take the life of the man so infatuated with David's destruc-

tion. And if David was squeamish about it, why object to Abishai doing it? Abishai was not personally concerned with their feud, and surely God's will was being revealed (verse 8).

But God was testing David to see whether he'd usurp godly authority. God had placed Saul in a vulnerable position. He had decreed David to be Saul's successor. But when? And how?

David passed the test. He refused to stoop to assassination. He refused the opportunity to pull the rug out from under his boss's feet. He refused the argument that rebellion in God's name is justified (verse 9).

David summarized his thoughts this way: "Either he will fall off his horse, get sick, die of old age or die in war. Whatever way it happens, God forbid that it be by

my hand" (verses 10-11).

Here the future king of Israel proved to God that he would not usurp godly authority—no matter how seemingly unjust was the exercise of that authority over him. He would not retaliate or avenge his wrong. He refused to accept the tempting argument that opportunity meant permission. He quieted his frustrations and elected to wait on the slow un-

folding of divine purpose.

David had come to see that he could not secure the kingdom by his own hand. God had promised and God had to perform. Whenever the moment came for him to sit on the throne, it would be from a divine act.

We can learn much from David's patient waiting on God.

In our modern age of military coups and overthrows, Christians must avoid taking part in any acts of rebellion or conspiracy. If getting your way results in a battlefield of slain, wounded or hurt people, then you cannot biblically claim to be fulfilling God's will.

### David's suffering

David didn't always wait on God. A dark side to David's life

emerges in II Samuel 11. Verse 1 says it was "at the time when kings go out to battle." But David hadn't gone! He was back in Jerusalem with idle time on his hands, eyeing another man's wife. He was allowing an evil thought to enter his mind—adultery.

What was God's will for David at this stage of his life? Certainly not the breaking of God's law. But David did break it. Bathsheba's pregnancy forced him to either seek God's will and solution or take matters into his own hands. He opted to work matters out himself. He tried to cover up his sin, failed and then resorted to murder.

What could David have done? He could have explored his lawful options. He was king. If his current six wives weren't enough, he had the power as king to have more. But taking another man's wife was sin.

He could have disclosed the problem to Uriah who, as an honorable, loyal man, might well have sought to protect the king's reputation.

Or, best of all, he could have repented and trusted God to preserve him as king. But he didn't. Caught up in adultery, he resorted to another sin—murder.

Oh, yes, it solved the problem and made marriage to Bathsheba possible. But adultery and murder are not God's ways. And though David got what he wanted, he also got more than he bargained for—a stiff penalty that would impact his family forever: "Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house" (verse 10).

You can gain physical rewards in this life by unlawful means. But it is the reward of righteousness that will endure eternally.

How, then, does a person come to know God's will?

### **God's will is revealed**

You are not left to grope in the dark. God wants you to know His will (Romans 12:2). You need to ask God to reveal His will, and then in faith wait for Him to show you through these ways:

• *Through Scripture, discover*

*your lawful options.* The Bible is a God-inspired handbook by which you can establish your life (II Timothy 3:16). A study of God's Word will show you God's mind and teaching.

You might want to use a concordance or topical Bible to easily study all the scriptures on a par-

**O**ne lesson we can learn from David's experience is that an opportunity to do something doesn't necessarily mean permission. Especially if the act is unlawful.

ticular topic. Put all the relevant scriptures together for a balanced, godly view.

But even after studying you may still feel "unskilled" in the use of the Scriptures (Hebrews 5:13), and will want to take advantage of this next way to know God's will.

• *Through an ordained minister of God, seek godly, lawful advice.* A true ministry has been established by Jesus Christ to help perfect and guide true Christians (Ephesians 4:11-12). For personal advice and needs, it is helpful to counsel with a man of God.

Be sure that any person teaching you from the Word of God does so faithfully and not deceitfully (II Corinthians 4:1-2). Scripture warns of some who minister for physical rewards, or for power over the flock (Ezekiel 34:2-4).

True servants of God do not promote their own opinions, prejudices, philosophies or solutions;

rather, God's ministers seek the Father's will—as did Christ.

• *Through prayer, seek God's direct answer.* God's will in your life in personal matters may be revealed through answers to your prayers. He can convict your mind, open or close doors and work out circumstances.

Be careful, though. Some people make decisions based on what they erroneously believe are signs from God. Before buying a car or home, or changing a job, some request a sign—like the sun shining through on a rainy day, an unexpected smile on a grouchy face or any number of other physical coincidences.

These signs can be misleading, even irrelevant to God's purpose for you. On the other hand, they may turn out to be the confirmation you wanted.

How do you discern the difference? Heed scriptural warnings of evil forces with the power to perform signs and miracles (Matthew 24:24). You would not want to be misled. Be sure that your decisions are based on the provable Word of God and sound, wise counsel.

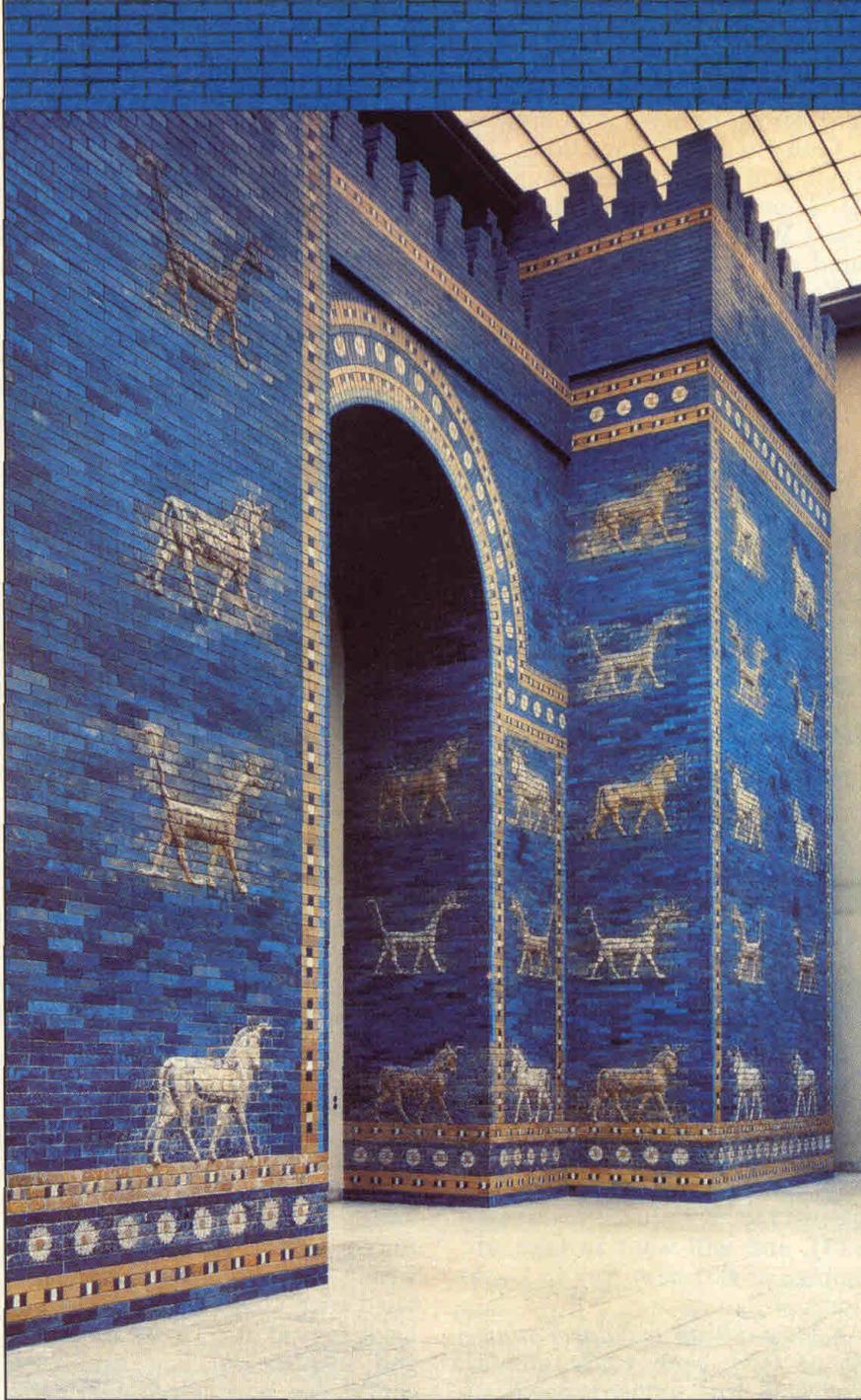
### **Then what?**

Once you have discerned God's will, *act* on it. Do not let fear or indecision hold you back. If you have studied God's Word and found that what you want is within His law, if you have counseled with God's ministry, if you have prayed for God's direction and inspiration, you can have confidence that God will back you.

Learning God's will requires submission to His laws and to His government. Often it requires the sacrifice of some desires, and lots of patience.

David learned to depend upon God as his deliverer. He knew God's will can only be accomplished His way and by His timetable.

In Psalm 27:14, David gave this positive encouragement: "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!" □



Babylon's Ishtar gate (above), now restored in East Berlin's Near Asian Museum, is 50 feet high by 90 feet wide. The bricks have been colorfully glazed to represent the original appearance. Note brown, white and yellow bulls and dragons, conventional heraldic figures of the time. Next page: Walls of Babylon at excavation site in Iraq.

Good News photos

**Whatever your weakness is, that is where Satan will attack you. Do you know how to resist?**

By John Siston

**C**ould you do it? Imagine yourself as the leader of an army. Your mission is a most difficult one: You are to capture the capital city of the greatest nation on earth!

You face imposing obstacles. The city is surrounded by a wall 300 feet high and 80 feet thick. Inside the main wall is a second wall surrounded by a deep moat. The walls even extend 30 feet underground. Two hundred fifty guard towers line the circumference of the main wall. Enough food is stored inside to withstand a siege of many years.

It seems impenetrable.

Could such a fortress be captured? History shows us the answer. The city is Babylon. The leader given the job of conquering it, Cyrus the Great.

#### **Babylon's fatal weakness**

Herodotus tells us the Euphrates River flowed through the city. Metal gates stood right in the river. These gates, combined with the swift current of the river, made access impossible.

But Cyrus ingeniously over-

**STRENGTH**

came this barrier. He diverted the flow of the river so that it was low enough for men to walk in. His Persian troops were then able to breach the unsecured gates, take the Babylonians by surprise and capture the city.

Cyrus found the city's weakness.

Locating weaknesses is a common tactic in military strategy. Once found, these weaknesses are exploited to vanquish the enemy.

No one knows how to use this principle better than Satan the devil. The Bible even describes Satan as the one who "weakened the nations" (Isaiah 14:12). He has used weakness in subtle and devious ways to destroy people throughout history.

### Overcome by weakness

Because he gave in to sexual temptation (Genesis 49:3-4), Jacob's firstborn son, Reuben, was disqualified from receiving the birthright promises. The desire for multiple liaisons with different women was the downfall of mighty Samson and wise king Solomon (Judges 14:1-3, 17-18, 16:1, 4, 6, 18-21, I Kings 11:1-4).

Korah's desire for power cost him his own life and the lives of many of Israel's leaders (Numbers 16:1-3, 32), while Saul lost his kingship over Israel because of his fear and lack of faith in God (I Samuel 15:24-26).

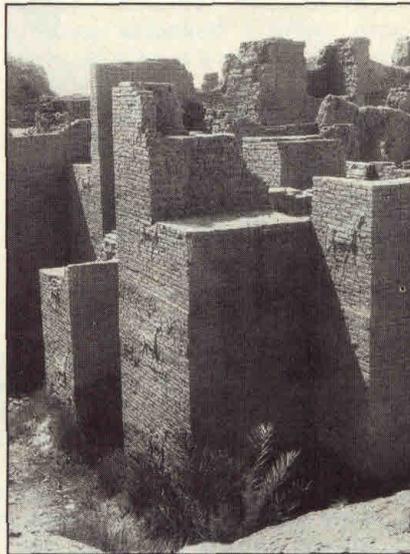
In the New Testament Church, Ananias and Sapphira's greed and desire to be looked up to by their fellow Church members were the death of them (Acts 5:1-10). Diotrephes' desire for preeminence caused havoc in

the Church near the end of the first century (III John 9-10).

In short, yielding to weakness causes misery and unhappiness. The eventual penalty of succumbing to weakness is the loss of blessings, the loss of character and, most serious of all, the loss of contact with God.

Unfortunately, the members of God's Church are still not exempt from weaknesses 19 centuries later.

God's people have been called



from many walks of life and from all kinds of situations. They bring with them weaknesses they have acquired in their former lifestyles. It is these very weaknesses that Satan continually uses in his attempt to destroy.

Paul identifies some prominent weaknesses that have ensnared mankind:

"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licen-

tiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like" (Galatians 5:19-21).

Quite an array of pitfalls that Satan uses to waylay mankind!

What about you? What is the big weakness that Satan could use to drive you from God? Sex? Alcohol? A loose tongue? Vanity? Selfishness? Your temper? Bitterness? Fear? Persecution? Whatever it is, you must identify it.

Herodotus mentions that if at any time the people of Babylon had noticed the water level receding in the river and discovered what Cyrus was trying to do, they could have taken measures to prevent their city from being captured.

We, too, must identify our crucial weaknesses. Once we do, these weaknesses must be overcome and eliminated. Paul goes on to tell us why: "Those who practice such things [the works of the flesh] will not inherit the kingdom of God" (verse 21).

In Matthew 5:29-30, Jesus Christ reveals how we are to home in on our specific problems:

"And if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell."

Christ is not telling us to phys-

# EN YOUR DEFENSES!

ically maim ourselves. But He is telling us to actively and vigorously eliminate any problem or weakness that can cause us to lose out on eternal life.

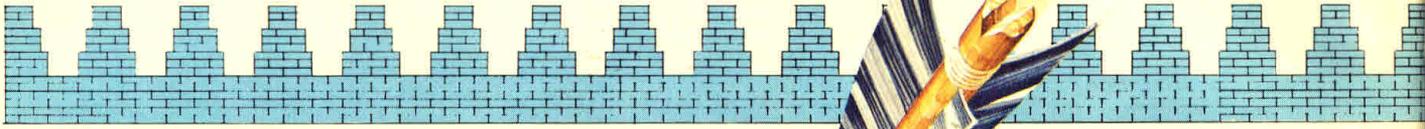
And Christ understands that the expelling of some deeply rooted flaw or weakness from our character could be just as traumatic for us as the loss of an eye or hand would be!

It will take a fair amount of effort, work and pain. It may involve changing physical and mental habits. And it most certainly will include strong resolve and help from God.

But whatever it takes, you must do it. Your spiritual salvation is at stake!

**You will be tested**

The examples above illustrate another important point: If you are weak in a certain area, the time will most certainly come when you *will* be tested in that



# Find Your Achilles' Heel

By Joel Rissingner

**A**chilles, according to Greek legend, was one of the greatest warriors of all time. Born as the son of Peleus, king of Thessaly, and Thetis, a sea nymph, Achilles had special powers.

Shortly after his birth, Thetis dipped Achilles in the magical river Styx to give him protection from harm. She held him by his heel to lower him into the water without touching it herself; thus Achilles' heel was left unwashed.

Achilles grew in stature and fame. As a young adult, he became a respected warrior and leader, but still had his secret fault.

Achilles' downfall came during the Greek conquest of Troy. There Apollo, who knew about Achilles' vulnerable heel, guided an archer's arrow straight to that one unprotected area. Achilles died from the wound.

## Satan finds our faults

Most of us have weak spots. Some have short tempers and lash out at others over the slightest thing. Others may have a problem with alcohol, or they can't stop lying. All of these faults must be overcome before we can enter the Kingdom of God.

The only good thing about this type of character weakness is that it is apparent. For example, if a person has a bad temper, nearly everyone around him will notice it eventually.

The trouble with faults like the

one mythical Achilles had is that they aren't so noticeable. Who would have thought of striking Achilles on his heel? He appeared indestructible otherwise.

The most dangerous faults—and those that eventually can do the most damage—are secret ones, flaws in character that constantly endanger our spiritual lives, even without our knowledge. We must discover these faults and rid ourselves of them before they do irreparable damage.

Satan the devil is certainly interested in our spiritual weak points! He wants to know our faults so that he may accuse us (Revelation 12:9-10). Just as Apollo shot at Achilles, Satan wants to "shoot secretly at the upright in heart" (Psalm 11:2).

## Job's secret fault

Remember ancient Job? Job was an upright man, but he had a blind spot. He was righteous in his own eyes. He didn't fully reverence God's authority and plan.

Satan knew Job was a good man. This made him want to destroy Job even more. Satan dared God to stop protecting Job so that he could discover Job's fault and do him spiritual harm.

Satan was allowed to tempt Job (Job 1:12, 2:6). As the trial progressed, Job began to blame God for his suffering (Job 9:17-18).

Job's friends were unable to see and point out Job's fault to him,

though they continually accused him of a host of evils (Job 22:6-7). Finally Job stopped listening to them and they stopped discussing his trials with him (Job 32:1).

Job couldn't see what he lacked in his spiritual character. He justified himself (Job 10:7). He didn't recognize God's supreme power and the fact that without God, anything humans do is worthless.

In chapter 38, God began to speak to and humble Job, showing Job His power and position as Creator.

Job finally answered, "I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. . . . I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:2, 6).

Job finally saw where he needed to grow because God showed it to him and granted him the ability to change.

## God knows the heart

Jeremiah 17:9 tells us, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

We all have at least one Achilles heel that even we and those close to us aren't aware of!

But notice verse 10: "I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways." Although we can't discover our secret faults alone, God knows them and can help us see them before Satan uses them to harm us.

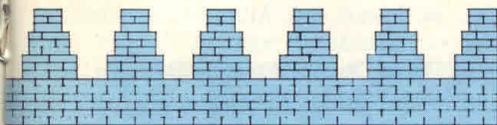
David wrote: "O Lord, You have searched me and known me. . . . Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:1, 23-24).

But how does God do this? Proverbs 20:27 answers: "The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his

area. God must know how well you have strengthened yourself against attacks from Satan, the world or your own human nature.

"Each one's work will become manifest . . . and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is," says I Corinthians 3:13.

We cannot deceive ourselves



heart." The spirit in man is like a cassette tape that records our character and personality—both the good and bad elements. God uses His holy spirit to search our hearts and minds—our human spirit—and find any flaws (I Corinthians 2:10).

David said, "Your word is a lamp to my feet" (Psalm 119:105). God discovers our faults and then uses His Word—the Bible—to reveal them to us.

When we see these hidden faults, we must: 1) Recognize them and acknowledge them before God, 2) repent—turn from them—and 3) seek God's will and find the steps necessary to replace our faults with God's own perfect character.

Once you see a problem, repent and determine what you need to do to change, you must take action! Don't procrastinate or ignore the warnings God gives you.

Avoid temptation. Even if we know the penalty involved, it's easy to forget if we continue to tempt ourselves with sin.

For example, Paul tells us to "Flee sexual immorality" (I Corinthians 6:18). If we know we are in a situation that's causing sexual lust, it's time to leave!

Alcohol abuse is another example. If you have a weakness in this area, it's a good idea to avoid situations where you might be tempted.

Unfortunately for Achilles, he couldn't overcome his hidden fault. It was out of his control. He could have avoided the situation that caused his death, but his weakness would still have been present.

This isn't true for you and me. We can see our faults and, with God's help, overcome all of them. By using God's Word to guide us we can take the necessary steps to remove our secret faults. We can avoid being fatally struck in our Achilles' heel! □

into thinking we can put off tackling our weak spots. Otherwise our enemy the devil will gain a foothold and destroy us (I Peter 5:8). He is constantly looking for weak members he may devour.

### How Jesus resisted

Even Jesus Christ "was in all points tempted as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). There were times when Satan viciously attacked Christ. Satan knew the best time and the best way to do it. Yet Christ remained "without sin."

Satan attacked Christ, especially, at Christ's crucifixion. Another time was at the beginning of His ministry, right after Christ had fasted for 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness. Satan was most insidious in this offensive. He repeatedly assaulted potential weak spots in Christ.

First, Satan tried to provoke Christ by appealing to the sin of vanity. Notice his inciting language: "If You are the Son of God . . ." (Matthew 4:3, 6).

By this time Christ must have been ravenous. Christ could have allowed Himself to lash back at Satan and show him that He certainly *was* the Son of God who had all power. But if He had, He would have sinned by obeying Satan. Christ did not succumb to this ploy, but referred to Scripture to deflect Satan's line of reasoning (verse 4).

Satan's second attack was even more subtle and devious. Christ had refuted the previous temptation by proclaiming His trust in God the Father. Now the devil used this very premise as the basis for his next onslaught.

Satan dared Christ, "If You are the Son of God [*if* you really do trust God], throw Yourself down [*off* a precipice of the Temple]," because Scripture said God would protect Him (verses 5-6).

As subtle as this deception was, Christ, with God the Father's help, was able to see through it. Satan twisted a passage of Scripture (Psalm 91:11) to try to seduce Christ. But Christ realized the proper context of the verse. He made it clear to Satan that no one, even

the Son of God, can force God to protect him if he purposely places himself in jeopardy (Matthew 4:7).

Finally, Satan offered to give Christ all the kingdoms of the world if Christ would worship him (verses 8-9). Think of how powerful a temptation this really was. Christ was seemingly being given the option to bypass His human suffering and crucifixion. Not only that, He was being offered the chance to rule the world 2,000 years earlier than God the Father had ordained.

Think of what this meant to Christ. Two thousand years of pain, agony and evil could be prevented from ever occurring on earth—the Kingdom of God could be set up two millennia sooner! What an attractive enticement for Jesus Christ.

But Christ was not fooled. His spiritual defenses were strong enough to withstand this brutal bombardment from Satan. He banished Satan from His presence (verses 10-11).

Christ was not defeated when His time came to be tested. On the contrary, He was made stronger by the experience (Hebrews 5:8-9). He qualified to replace Satan as the ruler of this world.

Satan knows exactly where to attack us. But with God's help, we can fend those attacks off and strengthen our weak spots. Jesus Christ and other heroes of faith attest to this fact.

You can overcome your weaknesses, with the help of God. Write for a free copy of our article "How to Be an Overcomer."

Remember this: God allows Satan's attacks on a Christian's defenses for a good reason. He is training His people to be like Him and eventually rule with Him. He cannot allow a crucial weakness to remain in a person's character. The holy character God wants will be without weaknesses of any kind.

So the spiritual fortresses that God eventually will create (that's us!) will never be able to be overthrown. We will be composed of perfect spiritual character that will last for all eternity! □

# POSITIVE CHILD TRAINING

## Helping Your Child Face Peer Pressure

BY DEXTER H. FAULKNER

PART NINE

**P**eer pressure is a monster parents must confront when their children enter the tumultuous teenage years.

So why bring up peer pressure in a child-training series dealing with *pre-school-age* children?

For two reasons. One, peer pressure begins much earlier than most parents realize. It is at the root of most teenage problems.

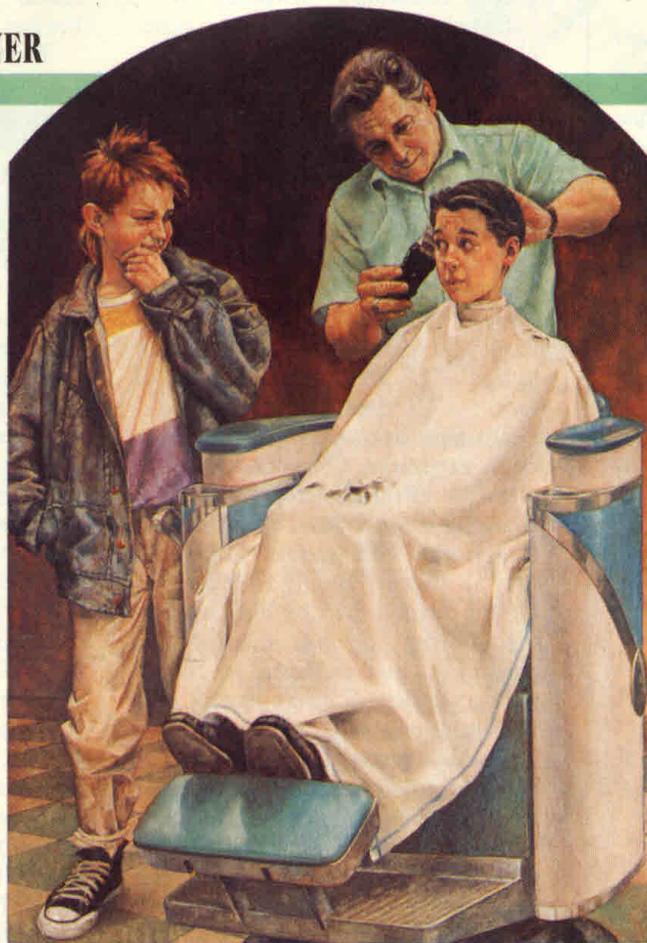
Also, if parents are to effectively counteract hurtful peer pressure, they must have a close relationship with their child. This relationship must be built over years and started early in a child's life.

### Starting early

One thing is certain: Your child is influenced by others—media stars, teachers, friends, relatives—from the moment he or she comes into contact with them. And this influence begins early in your child's life.

How can you prepare yourself and your child to effectively respond to this peer pressure?

Let's look ahead, for a mo-



ment, to a child's teenage years. First, we'll look at an example of a parent ineffectively dealing with what's really a peer-pressure problem. Then we'll see a practical example of how peer-pressure issues can be dealt with beginning in the earliest years of your child's life.

### Confrontation over dating

Daughter is 13. One day she comes home from school and an-

nounces that she's going on a date with this "oh, terribly cute boy."

Dad bolts up from the easy chair. With the television set blaring in the background, he screams, "No 13-year-old daughter of mine is going on a date!"

"But, Dad!"

"No ifs, ands or buts. No date. That's final. Go to your room," is Dad's verdict as he turns back to his television program.

The daughter may do one of several things. She may run to her room, slam the door and sulk. Or she might even try to sneak out that evening. More than likely, she'll see this boy on the sly.

What are some of the mistakes this parent made? First, he probably didn't take a real interest in his child's activities. He thought that a thunderous "No!" to whatever he didn't want his child to do was enough. (He could have suggested that the boy come over for dinner, for example.)

This parent overreacted. He saw the ogre of adolescence creeping up on his daughter and panicked. He really did love his child, but he wasn't showing it

very effectively. His severe reaction and punishment and his lack of trust and confidence in the young teenager probably reflected his own fears and inadequacies in dealing with the child's real problem—peer pressure.

### Take time to talk

This parent did not really communicate *with* his daughter. He talked *to* her, making his demands known. Period. Many parents react coldly like this, often feeling they must show their authority to preserve control.

As one teenager put it, "My friends listen to what I say, but my parents only hear me talk." Or as another said: "Dad's not the type who sits and listens. He sits and tells you how it is."

True communication involves a real understanding of what's in the other person's head, not just hearing the words coming out of his or her mouth. There's a need to learn to sensitively listen "between the lines," in a manner of speaking.

"We must work at decoding the underlying message, for the words and actual feelings of the person we are listening to may differ," as one sociologist put it.

You want to know what your child is thinking. What are the problems he or she is facing? What are the real fears, hopes, needs?

### Building bridges

As a parent, one of your most important responsibilities is to create a relationship of trust between you and your child. It must be strong enough to endure all the problems that he or she will have to face in the coming years. Somehow your child must learn to trust and respect your decisions.

When your child enters school, he or she will embark on one of the most potentially dangerous

phases of life. He or she will become exposed to the values and pressures of strangers—other children, television, advertising, other adults, the society at large. This happens at a time when children are most impressionable!

The toddler is almost totally dependent on its parents for information, knowledge and wisdom. But gradually, year by year, the child can become more influenced by other people and less by the parent. This often happens to the child's detriment.

As well, the child will be developing its own sense of self—morals, values, opinions, ways of thinking. At least, that is the hope. Unfortunately, in this society many teenagers take on the personality and thinking of *other people* who themselves are morally adrift.

Why does this happen? Humans are social beings. That is, we relate to people. We bounce signals off others and get reactions from them. From this communication we develop a sense of self—the values we hold, the ac-

***O***ne of your most important jobs is to create a relationship of trust between you and your child that is strong enough to endure all the problems your child will face in the coming years.

tions we take that people approve of and so on. Humans need to be liked by others and to be like them, as well as to be different. Every human faces this need throughout life.

It's important that parents guide this "sheep instinct" in the

right direction. That's where the monster of peer pressure comes in. The young, impressionable teenager, still not sure of himself, is dangerously open to the suggestion of peers.

### Facing "the monster"

Teenagers themselves cite peer pressure as a major reason why they engage in detrimental behaviors such as premarital sex. In many cases, they do have a sense that such activities are not in their best interest. But they don't have the personal strength of conviction to fight the crowd.

Children do need definite and uncrossable boundaries laid down with communication, understanding and love.

That's where a supportive, strong and open family relationship is vital to the teenager. It's a lot easier to buck peer pressure if family support is there. But that's the point: The time to begin developing an open relationship of love and trust with your child is at birth!

Parents must create an emotional, intellectual and spiritual circle that ties together all members of the family.

As the toddler grows and develops, parents must be sure bonds of love and understanding are being built. Children should be taught that they can trust their parents for love, for help and for sound advice.

And, that means that parents themselves must first set a proper example. A parent is not in a good position to teach his teenager about the evils of drunkenness, for example, if that parent is an alcoholic.

Parents should find ways to educate their preschoolers (as well as older children) about the pressures they will face. How? Let's take one example in detail.

### Educate your child

If you allow your child to see a certain television program, then sit down with the child. Let's say an advertisement appears in

which a realistic toy gun is being hawked. Your child's eyes light up. "Oh, Dad. Can I get one of those? Johnny has one." What's happening? Your child is already being bombarded by pressure—pressure from his peers and society.

He wants that toy gun because Johnny has one. And he wants it because the advertiser has cleverly made him feel that it's an object of great desire. That gun will be fun and exciting to have.

In principle, this situation is no different than a 13-year-old daughter wanting to date. The media have glorified romance and sex, and all her friends are doing it.

How is a parent to handle such pressure situations? Since this is an article about preschool-age children, let's look at the toy-gun situation.

Dad could say: "Son, I know that seems like fun to have that gun. But let me tell you a little story about guns like that."

You could relate how people have been mistakenly shot because they pointed these guns at others. This might be a good time, depending on your child's age and understanding, to use positive peer pressure and point out that other adults have tried to have these same guns banned from being sold.

"Why do you think some people say these guns are bad, Son?" you might ask. Get the boy to think about this situation and to express what's on his mind.

Explain to your child that because someone wants him to do something doesn't mean everyone else thinks it's a good idea. It's not just you, the parent, who's saying it's a bad idea.

Your child should also understand people's motives. You might ask him, "Son, why do you think they want you to buy this gun?" Ask him or her why people advertise. Get him to see the

real motive of the advertisers. Obviously, the advertisers are not interested in your child personally, but only in making money. Sure, it's OK to earn a

***Explain to your child that because someone wants him to do something doesn't mean everyone else thinks it's a good idea. It's not just you, the parent, who's saying it's a bad idea.***

living. That doesn't change the fact that these people are not concerned primarily about his best interests. Just because a product is lauded and advertised doesn't mean it's good for you.

The question of peer pressure can also be handled now. Your child might ask, "Why does



Illustrations: Dan Andreasen

Johnny have this gun if it's so bad?"

Your answer would be that we don't all have to do the same things or believe the same things

in this world. What Johnny's family does is its business. We have our own standards to follow.

### Teach family values

If the values are offered as family values that make sense and around which the family closes ranks to observe, the child can take great comfort during the teenage years. When pressures and doubts come, he or she can rally with the family around a strongly held value.

While denying your child this gun, you have also explained the situation by making him aware of the pitfalls of peer pressure. You've already implanted in his mind the seed of hard-nosed evaluation and picked out the weeds of blind acceptance.

Give your child a token of your love at this time. Help him see that there are alternative "fun" things. You might suggest something else enjoyable the child can have or do.

Of course, your ultimate goal should be to see that your child adopts the values and principles of God's Word in his or her life. That is the underlying premise of this whole series of articles, and should be the basis of all your training.

### In conclusion

I've taken quite a bit of space with this single example to show you how to develop a relationship with your child at an early age. It takes open and extended communication—the kind of communication that helps your child to think for himself and to base his thinking on strong values your family holds.

If you build trust, love and communication, and help your child understand the world in light of what God says about any subject, he or she will be much better prepared to deal with society's pressures when he or she reaches the teenage years. □

The two men headed for Emmaus, about 15 miles from Jerusalem. Engrossed in conversation about the puzzling events that had just occurred, they did not notice another traveler swiftly overtaking them.

The stranger joined the pair. He immediately noticed their sad faces, and tactfully inquired about their grief.

One of the men responded: Didn't this newcomer hear about the bizarre death of a mighty prophet at the hands of the Romans only a few days ago? This man of God, a personal friend of theirs, had been betrayed by His own people. Now there were reports that their friend's body was no longer in His tomb!

The stranger listened patiently, then began to chide the two travelers for their lack of understanding: "Oh foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things?" (Luke 24:25-26).

Next, beginning with Moses and all the Old Testament prophets, the stranger explained the full significance of the events surrounding the death of this mighty prophet of God.

The stranger, of course, was Jesus Christ. The story can be found in Luke 24:13-35.

This account of Jesus appearing to these two disciples on the road to Emmaus teaches us many important lessons. Here was an excellent opportunity for the res-

urrected Christ to do away with His Father's law and to downplay the significance of the Old Testament. Instead, Jesus used the full weight and authority of "all the Scriptures" to explain the meaning of the recent events (verse 27).

This example proves Jesus believed that the Word of God—

# Did Jesus Study the Bible?

*Did Jesus seriously study the Holy Scriptures?*

By Peter F. Grainger

which at that time consisted of scrolls—was inspired by God. It also proves that Jesus revered and studied the Holy Scriptures.

So should we!

## Why study Scripture?

Why is it important for Christians to have a good working knowledge of the Old Testament—and, of course, the New Testament as well? Why should Christians pursue personal Bible study today?

Here are three major reasons:

1) Jesus taught, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). When Jesus said that, the

only recorded Word of God was the Old Testament.

2) The apostle Paul wrote: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17).

3) About one third of the Bible is prophecy. A large portion of these prophetic scriptures, including many Old Testament prophecies, have not yet been fulfilled.

Therefore all Scripture is worthy of our study and understanding. Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we, too, should yearn to know what the teachings and principles of both Old Testament and New Testament mean for our day.

## Jesus knew the Bible

How conversant was Jesus Christ with the Bible? Did He study the Bible regularly?

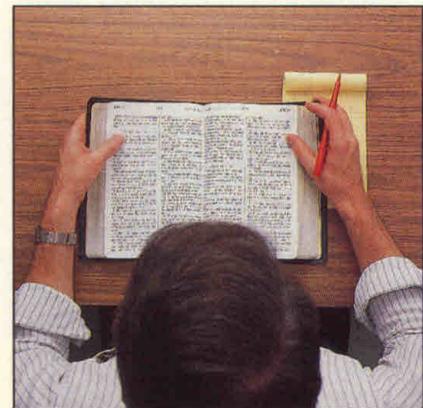
Let's consider several examples from the gospel of Matthew to gain an idea of Jesus' respect for and familiarity with the Holy Scriptures.

In Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus used three Old Testament verses to conquer Satan in the great temptation. He referred to Old Testament personalities such as Jonah (Matthew 12:40) and Noah (Matthew 24:37-39) to explain important future events.

Jesus even quoted Old Testament scriptures to explain the rejoicing and praise of little children (Matthew 21:16), as well as



Ken Tunell



Hal Finch

to predict the fearful behavior of His disciples (Matthew 26:31).

He taught about judgment (Matthew 12:41-42) and marriage (Matthew 19:3-9) by referring to specific Old Testament scriptures and characters.

In fact, we could say that Jesus employed the Scriptures with the same ease, familiarity and devotion as modern people discuss weekend football results or yesterday's soap operas! He expects us to take the same interest (II Timothy 2:15).

Why did God give us the Holy Scriptures (the Old and New Testaments)? Paul explained the major reasons in II Timothy 3:16: "For doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

### Major uses of Scripture

Let's notice how Jesus used the Holy Scriptures in His day for these major purposes. Again we will look at Matthew's gospel.

1) *For doctrine.* One of the major doctrines of the Bible is obedience to the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5). When talking to the rich young man (Matthew 19:16-22), Jesus confirmed the importance of keeping these commandments, quoting many of them directly from Exodus.

Over and over again Jesus stated that God's laws had priority over man's traditions. In Matthew 15:4, for example, He quoted from both Exodus and Deuteronomy to uphold the Fifth Commandment, "Honor your father and your mother."

If these Old Testament commandments were no longer in effect, Christ could have taken the opportunity to tell His audience to forget them. Instead, He reaffirmed them.

2) *For correction.* Sometimes Jesus used Old Testament stories to correct the wrong beliefs and practices of His audiences. He used the story of the prophet Jonah to chastise the scribes and Pharisees for seeking outward signs of His divine authority (Matthew 12:38-40).

In Matthew 19:5-6, Christ

quoted Genesis 2:24 to prove that marriage is a God-ordained institution and to correct the wrong impression that one's marriage vows can be taken lightly.

Are we conversant with scriptural principles and examples and able to give biblical explanations to those who question our personal Christian conduct?

3) *For reproof.* The supreme example of Christ's use of reproof occurred just before His public ministry. In Matthew 4 we read about the fiercest and most dramatic spiritual battle ever fought between a human and the devil. Jesus completely conquered Satan in this encounter.

Of all the resources available, including God the Father's heavenly army and spiritual presence, which Christ certainly could have called upon for help (Matthew 26:53), guess which spiritual tool Jesus used to overcome Satan's temptations? Scriptural reproofs! He repelled the adversary with simple, direct statements from Old Testament law—Deuteronomy chapters 6 and 8!

4) *For instruction in righteousness.* This refers to teaching right living based on keeping God's commandments. As Psalm 119:172 reveals, God's commandments *are* righteousness.

Consider, for example, the important characteristic of mercy. Christ explained that all Christians must develop and use mercy (Luke 6:36).

When the Pharisees condemned His disciples for picking and eating corn on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-8), Jesus took the opportunity to quote Old Testament examples of David and the Levites to show that His disciples were blameless.

### Follow Jesus' example

Space limitations prevent a more thorough study of Jesus' reverence for and use of God's word. Your own personal Bible study will uncover many other instances throughout the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

We know Christ studied the Bible regularly. The Bible at that

time consisted of the Old Testament. Jesus was able to turn to the exact scripture necessary on any occasion (Luke 4:17-19).

Likewise, Jesus expects Christians to diligently and reverently study their Bibles. Today, of course, our Bible study should include knowing the key examples and principles of all of God's Word—both the Old and New Testaments. God asks us to live by His every word (verse 4) and, when called upon, to be able to answer others with a "reason for the hope that is in" us (I Peter 3:15).

Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we, too, should yearn to understand more about God's Word, His prophecies and plan of salvation.

Diligent personal Bible study benefits us in the following important ways:

- *We develop greater faith in God.* By studying God's Word, we learn what God has to say to us. We strengthen our spiritual lives by understanding and believing how God protected, saved and nourished His people throughout the Bible.

- *We learn valuable lessons* from the lives of those who obeyed—and disobeyed—God's commandments (I Corinthians 10:6-11).

- *We become more knowledgeable teachers.* God has given parents, for example, prime responsibility for training up their children in His way (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Personal Bible study furnishes parents with a wealth of information to do this job. And all of us should be preparing to become teachers of God's way in the world tomorrow. We have to know what we are going to teach.

Should Christians be involved in regular, personal Bible study? Yes, we should!

Then we will be following Jesus Christ's example. We and others will profit from the Word of God.

This is the only way we will be able to live "by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4)! □

# WHY THE SABBATH ?

*Here's what you need to know  
about the day God commands  
His people to keep holy.*

By Sam Kneller



Good News photos

**W**hat was the first Feast kept by mankind?

Immediately you might think of the first Passover celebrated by the Israelites at the time of the Exodus (Exodus 12:1-14).

But we need to go back in time even farther.

Just a few hours after their creation, Adam and Eve observed this very first Feast: the Sabbath! Read about it in Genesis 2:1-3: "Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

Why did God command people to keep the Sabbath (Leviticus 23:2-3)?

The Bible indicates that the Sabbath is an identifying sign (Exodus 31:13, 17). But how does it identify? Who is identified? Why the need for anyone to be identified?

Almost everyone has heard about the Sabbath. Many opinions exist about the validity of observing it on the seventh day, Saturday. Only a very few know why God gave us this day. You can be among that enlightened minority who understand the transcendent purpose of God's true Sabbath!

## **What does rest mean?**

On the seventh day of creation week, God instituted the Sabbath. "He rested," we are told in Genesis 2:1-3. The Hebrew word translated "rested" is *shabath*. Keep this in mind.

Did God rest because He was tired? Isaiah 40:28 says that God "neither faints nor is weary." So God didn't rest because He was tired. This word must have another meaning.

In Isaiah 14:4 we find *shabath* again, this time translated "ceased." Now look at Exodus 31:17, where *shabath* also ap-

pears. The King James translators rendered it "He rested," while the Amplified Version says "He ceased."

No, God didn't rest because of tiredness. He *ceased* from the work of physical creation. He finished restructuring the earth and forming new life on it. He terminated the physical creation.

But does this mean God did nothing on the seventh day? Quite the contrary!

### Refreshed on the Sabbath

Notice the end of Exodus 31:17: "On the seventh day He rested and was refreshed." This Hebrew word for "refreshed" here is *naphash*. It is found only three times in the Old Testament. The other references are in II Samuel 16:14, where King

David was "refreshed," and in Exodus 23:12, where God advised that the Israelites' employees were to be "refreshed" on the Sabbath.

Solomon Mandelkern's Hebrew-Latin concordance gives two meanings for the word *naphash*. The first refers to respiration (as in artificial respiration) or to breathing. The second meaning is to re-create.

God established the Sabbath for: 1) ceasing from physical works and 2) accentuating spiritual re-creation.

In other words, Saturday is a "spiritual breather." It is the day of divine rejuvenation and refreshment. We are to cease our mundane activities and spiritually re-create our minds in the image of God (Romans 12:2). This day

refreshes us from the previous six days of the week and prepares us to face the six days ahead.

On the original Sabbath, God taught Adam and Eve how to live, how to develop holy, righteous character. He prepared them for the challenges of the upcoming week.

But when confronted with those challenges, Adam and Eve failed! We must not.

### Sign of spiritual creation

God ordered His people to keep the Sabbath forever as a sign that He is the Creator of all things (Exodus 31:17, 20:11).

But remember, the Sabbath is also a Feast (Leviticus 23:2-3). Colossians 2:16-17 says the "sabbaths . . . are a shadow of things to come." In other words, they

# GOD'S SABBATH A Family Delight

By Dexter H. Faulkner

**N**ot long ago I received a letter from parents asking about proper activities for their children on the Sabbath. Through careful planning, parents can make God's Sabbath a delight for the whole family!

In Mark 2:27 we find that God created the Sabbath for man as a blessing. The Sabbath fulfills man's needs for physical and spiritual rejuvenation.

On the Sabbath we set aside our cares and spend time with our Creator and our families.

### Positive purposes

What does God tell us to avoid on the Sabbath? A main principle is found in Isaiah 58:13-14:

"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor

speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord." God instructs us to put aside our own ways, pleasure and words. What does He mean?

First, we should not be involved in our normal work around the house, farm or office.

Our own pleasure includes sports or other pleasures that take our minds off the Sabbath and what it means.

What about our own words? "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34).

What we talk about reflects what we think. This doesn't mean we can't say anything about physical things, but we should put our minds on the positive purposes of the Sabbath and get them off our own ways and pleasures. It is an especially good time for God's people to encourage one another.

Now we know what we shouldn't do. What should we do? Here are

some suggestions to help make the Sabbath a delight for your family.

### Make the Sabbath a delight

• *Preparation.* Have most preparation done before Friday afternoon. Don't leave chores until the last minute. This will only make you crash, exhausted, into the Sabbath and you won't be able to enjoy it.

• *Family meals.* The Sabbath, particularly Friday night, is an ideal time to get the family together for a relaxing meal. Your meal might be a formal occasion or casual—whatever style suits your family.

A Sabbath brunch or lunch is a possibility, depending on what time you attend Sabbath services.

Uplifting music sets a peaceful mood for conversation. On occasion, invite a widow, widower or single person to join your family meal.

Use your special family meals to talk to your mate and children. Share events, opportunities and anecdotes that happened during the week. Each person could discuss a lesson he or she learned, or why you and your family look forward to the Sabbath and what the Sabbath pictures.

Many people enjoy occasionally going out for meals on the Sabbath—sometimes with other



Church families. This also gives Mom a break.

●*Special activities.* The Sabbath should be a day of family unity. It is an ideal time to teach children about God's way of life.

Play games with your children, such as naming Bible books or characters, or have them draw pictures of biblical events.

It is OK for a child to be a child. We should not expect children to behave like baptized adults on the Sabbath.

Read to children from the Bible and teach them to pray. Family prayers should be short so children don't become restless.

The Sabbath can also be a good time to observe God's creation. Take a walk or visit a botanical garden, a park or the mountains, if they're not too far away. Occasionally pack a picnic lunch.

A staff member remembered he and his brothers and sisters acting out Bible scenes for their mom and

dad, and the whole family taking turns reading aloud from Church literature.

In your family Bible studies, let your children ask questions, suggest and discuss the topics. They will be more interested and learn more when they participate.

#### **Other suggestions**

Call or write relatives or update a journal.

To help children look forward to the Sabbath, have special toys or books they play with only on that day. They should be taught to read or play quietly so that you and your mate have time for Bible study and prayer.

And husbands, make sure your wives have enough time for these important activities.

When your young child wants to play early Sabbath morning, put together a weekend toy box. With your child, fill the box with interesting toys and keep them out of

foreshadow events of the future. Hence the Sabbath is not only a sign of *past* creation, but also of *future* creation.

What is this future creation? It is no less than the creation of spirit beings with God's own righteous character.

How is our Creator bringing this about? Partly through the Fourth Commandment, which tells us to cease from our worldly works and, during the Sabbath, to create, in their stead, divine character. To become the first-fruits of His creatures—God's spiritual creation—we must cease from all filthiness and be re-created in conformity to God's Word (James 1:18).

In the all-important Sabbath covenant in Exodus 31, God clearly reinforced the point of

daily circulation. After the child is asleep on Friday, set out the box for play the next morning. When you wake up, help your child put away the toys for next week. Change toys every month.

When our sons were small they had a special activity they looked forward to every Sabbath. They would awaken early and play quietly until I walked into the living room. Then they would get excited, both talking at once, and run to get their Sabbath building blocks. We would build towers, bridges, houses or anything their imaginations could dream up.

I remember how we all looked forward to that joyous time.

Plan activities for before and after services to help children burn off the energy they store up. Consider cutting down on sugary, high-energy foods; give them those that break down more slowly, such as complex carbohydrates. Even young bodies need to rest and rejuvenate.

The Sabbath shouldn't be a burden or a day of abstinence from all that is enjoyable, but just the opposite! Use wise judgment when deciding what should or shouldn't be done, or ask your minister for his advice.

Use this time to draw closer to God and to your family, and the Sabbath will be a delight. □

spiritual creation in verse 13: "It [the Sabbath] is a sign . . . that I am the Lord who sanctifies you."

*Sanctify* means to set aside for a special purpose. Even more specifically, Ephesians 5:26-27 speaks of sanctification in line with cleansing by the Word of God so that you have neither spot nor wrinkle in your character. The Sabbath is further evidence that God is cleansing us of our worldly ways and creating His perfect character in us.

For the true Christian, the Sabbath overflows with important spiritual works that help us develop divine character and draw closer to God: extra prayer, Bible study and meditation, attending Church services (Hebrews 10:25), being fed by God's ministry and fellowshiping with those of like mind.

When God thundered the Ten Commandments from Mt. Sinai, He revealed the Sabbath as a reminder that He brought Israel out of Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). Egypt is a type of sin (Revelation 11:8). For spiritual Israelites today, the seventh day focuses our attention on working actively in the spiritual realm of coming out of sin and being filled more fully with God's righteous character.

This day reminds us that we are to come out of this world (Revelation 18:4)—to separate ourselves from that which is unclean spiritually and to prepare to join the Family of God (II Corinthians 6:17-18).

### **Is the Sabbath still in force?**

Saturday is sometimes called the "Jewish Sabbath." But is it only the Jews who are to create divine character? Of course not. All humans fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), hence all need the Sabbath.

That's why Christ said the Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27). We all need the Sabbath to grow spiritually. Even Christ grew and learned and was made more perfect by obedience to the laws of God (Hebrews 5:8-9). Yes, the Sabbath is for all

people everywhere at all times. Some insist that God's commandments, and particularly the Sabbath, were "nailed to the cross" at the time of the crucifixion. But just the opposite is true. Christ's death and resurrection were the starting point, leading to many more than ever before being called to spiritual understanding and conversion (Acts 2:37-39).

After the resurrection, Jesus said He'd always be with His followers—those who are observing and teaching God's commandments and growing toward spiritual perfection (Matthew 28:19-20).

Elsewhere Jesus revealed: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17-19).

The fact is, the Sabbath is *more* binding since Jesus died than in Old Testament times!

Let's understand. When the holy spirit was given on Pentecost, God established His Church. Since that time He has given His called-out people the opportunity to embark on His spiritual creation process that leads to eternal life.

That is the full meaning of keeping the seventh day holy.

According to the Sabbath covenant in Old Testament times, a person who voluntarily and willingly defiled this holy day could be put to death (Exodus 31:14). Sound cruel and harsh? God is giving us an important warning—that's why the events of the Old Testament were recorded (Romans 15:4)!

Individuals who consciously and ultimately reject God's plan of salvation—those who will not cease from the ways of the world

and who will not develop righteous character—are warned by God. They leave God no choice but to put them to the second death in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14-15).

God gave His commandments to be kept. There are immense blessings if you do keep them. But a frightful fate awaits you if you don't. God's way is to be taken seriously.

### **A Sabbath psalm**

"Song for the Sabbath day" is the heading of Psalm 92. You can now begin to grasp the relevance of this extraordinary Sabbath-day message.

"O Lord, how great are Your works!" (verse 5). These are not only the physical works of the six days of creation, but the works of the spiritual creation summed up in the Sabbath command. This Psalm reveals what the ultimate outcome of human life will be.

The wicked, having willfully rejected God's way of life, will be destroyed forever (verse 7). This is the fulfillment of Exodus 31:14—the second death.

The righteous—those who have ceased from worldly ways and who have had created within them God's own divine character—shall flourish and be planted in the house of the Lord (Psalm 92:12-13).

They shall be transformed into spirit beings and enter God's Temple, His Family, at Christ's Second Coming!

"They shall still bear fruit in old age" (verse 14). They will live eternally, producing and radiating the fruits of the holy spirit, the traits of holy, righteous character.

The Sabbath commandment demonstrates you can become a perfect, divine being!

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

For more background on and proof of this important doctrine of God's Church, write for a free copy of our booklet *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?* Just mail the card in this issue or send your request to our address nearest you. □

“Come on, kids! Put your shoes on and get in the car. We’re going to Common Street.”

“Oh, nooooo!” My father’s announcement was met by groans from us children.

“Common Street” referred to the latest apartment building he had bought and was now renovating. I knew it was useless to fake sudden illness.

When the car pulled up, we emitted more moans and groans from the back seat. The sight of a huge pile of shingles that had been ripped from the roof was disheartening. I remember thinking, Why doesn’t he just tear it down and start over?

“Be very careful of nails and make sure you keep your shoes on,” Mom would warn as the car doors slowly opened and my siblings and I reluctantly got out.

“I think I’ve got a rock in my shoe,” someone would mumble.

“Mom! I have to go to the bathroom first!” another would whine.

Then the inevitable, “I’m thirsty!”

“All right, kids, I know it looks like a lot, but if we all join in and work together, it will be finished in no time.”

*Teamwork* is my father’s motto. Dad is a businessman, and an industrious one at that. Although I did not appreciate it then, I am so grateful now that he and my mother gently forced us to work hard and to work together.

### Starting early

One of my parents’ teaching methods that I appreciated most was the club they began when we were still very young.

The ELTCT Club (which stood for “Earn and Learn Today for College Tomorrow”) was a way of getting us together to talk about school, vacation plans and goals we had as a family.

It also was a time to talk about the ideas my father had for a possible family business in which

we could all play a part. He stressed good work habits and doing the best job possible.

My father would conduct the meetings in a businesslike way, and there was an air of importance when he would call the meeting to order. He would call upon my oldest brother, Mike, who was 14 years old at the time, to read the minutes from our last meeting. Next, the oldest daughter, Jeanne, 12, would report on how much money we had in the family fund. At each meeting we paid her our 10-cent dues, which

# The ELTCT Club

*The club my parents  
instituted in our family  
of 10 accomplished  
its purpose.*

By Arlene Dion

she recorded in the small black notebook we called our “shares.”

Soon after these meetings were initiated, my parents bought a piece of property that included eight log cabins, which we rented throughout the summer months. My father and brothers cleared some land and the following year we built a campground. After each one of us had finished our chores around the house, we would then help my parents with the campground.

My first job was one I shared with my sister Diane. At 6 and 7 years old, we were responsible to clean the campground “facilities.” Most likely, *facilities* was the first big word I learned. “Come on, Diane, it’s time to go clean the facilities.” Really, all

that meant was that we had to clean the bathrooms.

Today I marvel at the patience my mother exercised while teaching four young daughters how to change sheets, neatly make beds and clean bathrooms.

The most exciting club meeting we had was the one held at the end of the summer. Each child would bring the sheets of paper on which had been recorded the number of hours we had worked around the campground. After adding up our hours we would multiply them by our wage for that summer.

My sister would then dutifully record the figures in the “share book.” To us it was like having hundreds of dollars in a bank account.

When we went shopping to buy new clothes and supplies for school, we were excited to spend our own hard-earned money. Of course, our mother always guided us in making decisions.

Once we got home, we would add up the store receipts and find out how much we spent. The next step was to list “school supplies” in the share book and subtract it from our balance.

Not only did this teach us about the value of money, but we learned how to manage our own finances.

### Learning for life

Working hard and doing our best were just a few of the principles my parents taught us as children. Following instructions, distinguishing between needs and wants and money management are all positive qualities they formed within us by taking the time to work with us from the time we were young.

I admire and appreciate the example my parents set for us, and hope to imitate it with my own family in the future.

I reflect back now, and it seems like so long ago when we used to sit around the table and talk about our goals. Today, when faced with a major project, I hear my father’s words: “Just jump right in and begin. It will be finished in no time!” □

Vienna, Austria, is home to the Lippizaners. These magnificent horses are proud and noble in appearance, with a lively temperament.

The words *courage*, *endurance* and *perseverance* accurately describe the Lippizaners. Carefully bred since the 16th century, they combine power, flexibility and beauty (especially as seen in their attractive, expressive eyes).

Audiences marvel at the Lippizaners' precision. The young steeds are "enrolled" in "school" near age 4. Rigorous daily training sharpens natural ability.

Two years are required to teach the horses just to walk properly. However, they are not fully trained until nearly age 8. Shortly thereafter, on graduation, they may join performances. Their grace and beauty of movement are now fully prepared and fully controlled.

The performance varies from a walk to almost ballet-like movements. The stallion and rider are so in harmony that the rider "disappears" and the horse seems riderless. The seemingly effortless performance pays tribute to acquired self-control. It is beautiful to behold. The unity of control in rider and horse anchors the show.

Here we find an important illustration of the value of self-control.

### The anchor

All the traits discussed in this series of articles on the fruits of God's spirit amplify *love*—what God is (I John 4:8). This final trait, self-control (or temperance), anchors God's love—and your salvation. Do you understand this anchor? Are you using it?

Is self-control the least important fruit of God's spirit? After all, it appears last in the list. No. In fact, none of the fruit is "least." Each is vital. When this safeguard of self-control is missing or neglected in life, people frequently stumble into folly and shame.

Why is this anchor so important? The apostle Paul explains for us: "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached

## Fruits of the Spirit

# Last— But Not Least!

*Our series concludes  
with a look at the ninth  
quality in the list in  
Galatians 5:22-23:  
self-control.*

By James E. Kissee

to others, I myself should become disqualified" (I Corinthians 9:27).

How did Paul bring himself into subjection? Notice Romans 14:21: "It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak." Paul is not discussing a temperance movement. He is discussing self-restraint. He is explaining obedience to law—outgoing concern for neighbor that exceeds and rules over one's own self-interest.

You see, Paul realized that self-control is not for self alone.

How many catch and understand this important truth? Paul, with eyes wide open, realized that even lawful acts might on occasion cause a brother to stumble or to be made weak. Self-control provides the ability to resist

that which may cause pain to others.

Self-control is thus exercised *for others*. As a result, love is made personal. Self-control is active self-mastery. A truly converted Christian isn't ready for God's Family until the anchor—self-control—is in place.

### Israel was castaway

When God called the children of Israel out of Egypt, they "passed through the sea, [and] all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (I Corinthians 10:1-2). By all outward appearances, it seemed they would enjoy the privileges of being God's people.

Tragedy soon trampled the hope. Why? Carnal excesses marched over the law and love of God. Self-interest overran concern for others. The "it's my right" attitude moved to the front. The miraculous deliverance from Egypt was forgotten. And all the Israelites above 20 years of age, with few exceptions, were overthrown in the wilderness!

So Paul warns, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (verse 12). Here is an important lesson in the development of self-control. The Israelites assumed they were special (and they were). But their assumption led them along a road where they didn't consider the need for self-control. The result was a whole nation castaway.

In the world today it appears most people are concerned about little but themselves and their

personal interests. Paul states, in fact, that lack of self-control will be common in the last days (II Timothy 3:1-5).

A fate similar to Israel's awaits us!

### **Self-mastery is of utmost importance**

Jesus Christ's mastery of self is the premier example. He suffered for us. He was reviled. Yet He committed no sin.

Peter explains clearly the character of our Savior, "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten" (I Peter 2:23).

Christ's self-control was remarkable as He faced His excruciatingly painful death. His restraint and outgoing concern for others—for you—instead of for Himself, when He could have called down great heavenly power, forces one to marvel.

What a powerful example! All humans fall short in showing concern even to loved ones, let alone

with individuals seeking to personally harm them. This mastery was the fruit of God's spirit in the life of His Son Jesus.

How did Christ obtain such mastery?

Consider the Lippizaners again. These stallions are reshaped. They are trained by established, successful standards. The commands of training are supported by a long history of success. It would seem strange for trainers to forget past success and choose a new approach with each stallion.

### **Christ controlled Himself**

Early in His ministry, Christ revealed the basis of His self-mastery: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17).

Christ knew these valuable commands, standards and teachings came from a long line of

success. God's laws are righteousness (Psalm 119:172). Thus Christ amplified God's laws. He was a light. He learned and walked by God's standards (John 12:49). John calls Him "Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1). Though He never sinned and therefore didn't need to be reshaped,

Christ did have to master the corruptible flesh He lived in. He had to resist temptation and submit to God's law (Hebrew 4:15). That mastery wasn't easy.

Christ, "being found in appearance as a man . . . humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). Paul admonishes, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (verse 5).

How can we come to have Christ's mind? Through Ezekiel, God says, "I will put a new spirit within them." Why? "That they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God" (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

God clearly states that we need to be reshaped. In other words, self-control doesn't come naturally. Jesus, God's Son, fought and struggled against the natural, corruptible pulls of human flesh. In this He set the example.

John says, "He who says he abides in Him [in Christ] ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (I John 2:6). Walking as Christ walked means to consider, in every situation, "What would Christ do here?" Ask yourself, "How do I apply God's law in this situation?" Remember: Self-control is not for self alone.

### **Say no to self**

Attaining self-mastery requires daily dedication to and walking in God's law. Christ walked this way to establish mastery and control over potentially lustful and destructive thoughts and actions.

Likewise, we must be "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:5).

Finally learn to say no to self! Learn to say no even to things that, though they may be lawful, might cause offense to a brother.

Temperance anchors harmony between God's law and human actions. The fruit of God's spirit, including temperance, unifies God's begotten children to Him in much greater harmony than the rider experiences with the Lippizaner stallion.

The marvelous grace and beauty of self-control almost defies description. Its guarded step and total giving, out of concern for others, is invaluable. The tongue, feet, eyes, hands, temper, tastes, desires feel its curbs. The man and his neighbor both receive remarkable benefits.

Remember what Paul said?

"Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection" (I Corinthians 9:26-27).

The unifying fruit of God's spirit is thus borne, the person producing these fruits reshaped. Each fruit contributes to the whole—to the development of God's own holy, righteous character. "Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:23)! □



**A**quired self-control gives grace and beauty of movement to the Lippizaner stallions. Spiritually, self-control anchors the fruits of God's spirit. Photo courtesy of Austrian National Tourist Office.

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# COMING

## *IN THE GOOD NEWS*

◆ **A Christian in Name Only?**

Could you be laboring under false conceptions that will destroy you spiritually?

◆ **The Last Lap of the Race**

We all know that one day we will die. Yet death can be hard to accept. Often the terminally ill must struggle to die with grace and dignity. How does one comfort and encourage someone close to death?

◆ **Archaeologists Uncover Bethsaida**

The discovery of Bethsaida, where Christ performed a number of miracles, settles a century-old debate.

◆ **Positive Child Training:  
Teach Honesty Early**

Would your child steal or lie? How can you instill right values and character in your son or daughter?

◆ **Are You Merciful?**

Countless times we ask God to forgive us. Yet how often do we grant mercy to others?

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