

LOVE RUN AMOK

Attraction or Lust?

How Old Is Earth?

July–September 2010

Verticalthought[®]

a magazine of understanding for tomorrow's leaders

Infatuation vs Love

The ***Big Deal***
About Dating

Girls and
Romance Novels

In Defense of
an Ancient Universe

How to Make a Good
First Impression

Caught! On Facebook

God's Feasts, Part 2

Natural Attraction or Lust?

You are a guy, and a beautiful girl walks into the room. In a nanosecond you size up the situation: simple but modest clothing, a kind voice and a million-dollar smile. Yep. She's definitely a woman, and you are attracted.

You are a girl, and a handsome guy walks into the room. Your brain tells you that he's good-looking, but you tell yourself to be careful because he may also be a jerk. So you watch carefully as he treats everyone with respect, and then he begins paying attention to you. Oh, no. Now what are you going to do? You *are* attracted to this guy.

The above scenarios have been playing out for a long time. The reason they keep happening over and over again is because this is the way God created us. Normally we tend to be attracted to the opposite sex. Reflecting this understanding, God explained from the very beginning that "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife" (Genesis 2:24).

This natural attraction of a man to a woman and a woman to a man is what leads to marriage—the only sexual relationship approved by God. The apostle Paul described any other sexual union as being immoral and "against nature" (Romans 1:20-27).

We all know that it takes a man and a woman to have a baby, so it's no surprise that the husband-wife relationship is referred to as a natural union. These natural unions are God-ordained and intended to be pleasurable and, at the same time, sustain the population. Marriage is truly a priceless gift from our Creator that's good for us and good for society at large!

But sadly, this natural attraction for the opposite sex has also led to a great deal of sin. Not only is it sinful to have sex prior to marriage (1 Corinthians 6:18) and sinful to have sex with someone other

than one's husband or wife (Exodus 20:14), Jesus also said, "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

So what's the difference between lust and natural attraction? How do we control our minds when we see a beautiful girl or a handsome guy?

The answer is *boundaries*. Natural attraction can easily morph into lust if there are no boundaries. God's boundaries regarding sex keep us safe and

Normally we tend to be attracted to the opposite sex. The husband-wife relationship is a natural union that is God-ordained and intended to be pleasurable and, at the same time, sustain the population.

secure. They protect our hearts and our bodies for our future mates. After we are married, they protect our unions. They help us understand that seeing a beautiful girl or a handsome guy is not a sin. And they help us understand that we can't entertain sinful thoughts.

In this issue we examine the subjects of love versus infatuation, as well as dating and the popularity of romance novels. We hope these articles will help you learn where to establish your boundaries!

VerticalThought

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The Difference Between Infatuation and Love

In the heady world of male-female relationships, how can one know the difference between love and infatuation?

by Jeremy Lallier

“But I love him!”

Those four words (along with “But I love her!” for the guys) have probably served as the justification for more life-altering decisions than can be counted. But have we stopped to ask ourselves what those words really mean?

“What,” in the immortal words of Alexander Nestor Haddaway’s 1993 song, “is love?”

A tragic misunderstanding

Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* has often been hailed as the greatest love story ever told. Two young lovers, in their desire to be with one another against the wishes of their feuding families, ultimately take their own lives, each unwilling to endure the cold, hopeless wasteland of a life without the other.

And it’s all very touching and sentimental until you take a second look and realize that the whole story unfolds over the span of a whopping four days. Did the two teenaged “star-cross’d lovers” really have a chance to get to know each other? They marry the day after they meet, and two days later they are willing to kill themselves over the loss of a person who, to their knowledge, didn’t exist just five days before.

It’s hard to disagree that Shakespeare’s lines about love are beautiful: “With love’s light wings did I o’er-perch these walls; for stony limits cannot hold love out,” for example. But it’s even harder to argue that his leading characters ever understood what these statements really meant.

We should consider that the approach *Romeo and Juliet* took toward “love” in Shakespeare’s play bears a striking resemblance to the approach many take today, if slightly exaggerated.

The Bible’s love chapter

The apostle Paul, under inspiration from God, wrote a passage in a letter to the Christians in the city of Corinth that has come to be known as “the love chapter.” It provides an explanation of what true, godly love is at its core. Among other things, we are told, “Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ... Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance” (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7, New Living Translation).

Does that sound like what *Romeo and Juliet* had? Was *Romeo* really thinking about what was best for *Juliet* when he decided to secretly marry the 13-year-old? By the biblical definition, what they felt wasn’t love. It was something else.

“The direction of infatuation is *inward*. The direction of love is *outward*. Infatuation is most often temporary and depends on reciprocation to survive. Love stands alone, depending on nothing for its survival.”

How many real-life examples of the same thing have you seen? The words “I love you” are tossed around like a crumpled piece of paper and carry about the same weight for most people. All the expressions of love are there, but so many throw in the towel in a relationship when things stop going the way they want.

That’s not love.

Love “does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil ... Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:5, 8).

The disconnect

So it seems that what most people are calling love *isn’t* love. Just what is it then?

The simple truth of the matter is that our modern world has confused love with *infatuation*. Think about it: Almost every time we hear love referenced in popular culture, it’s something people *fall* into. Unexpectedly. Accidentally. All of a sudden your heart is aflutter and you feel an intense attraction to another person. That pounding in your chest sounds like “love at first sight” rather than “raging hormones.”

But the Bible makes it clear that godly love is a *conscious choice* one makes—an action, not an accident.

Jack Scruggs, a mental health therapist in the United Church of God with degrees from both the University of Oregon and Oregon State University, declares the dividing line between love and infatuation as simple as one word—*feelings*.

“Infatuation offers the possibilities of *feeling* good when affections are returned in kind, *feeling* bad when those affections are spurned,” Scruggs says. “Infatuation is mostly concerned with feelings.”

So what does this mean about love versus infatuation? Scruggs continues: “The direction of infatuation is inward. The direction of love is outward. Infatuation is most often temporary and depends on reciprocation to survive. Love stands alone, depending on nothing for its survival. Love is an imitation of God, while infatuation is a recognition of our attraction for the opposite sex. Love is a way of life.”

Time and place

Infatuation is, as Scruggs notes, a “natural attraction for a young person to feel for a member of the opposite sex.” In other words, it’ll happen whether you want it to or not.

The tough part we face, as Christians, is knowing what to do with that attraction. Experience has likely already taught each of us that such a feeling can easily blind us to reality, keeping us from seeing another person as he or she actually is and causing us to miss important warning signs.

It takes wisdom to be able to acknowledge an attraction to another person while at the same time keeping that attraction in check. (That’s another article for another time.) While there’s nothing wrong with being attracted to someone, we must be sure to handle that attraction responsibly, without giving in to its foolish desires or recklessness.

After we’ve taken the time to get to know the other person, to understand his or her values, personality and character as objectively as possible, to seek and consider God’s guidance as well as input from trusted friends and family members, and after we’ve come before God to commit ourselves to that person for the rest of our days, *then* comes the time to get swept up in mutual attraction.

The book of Proverbs contains these happy instructions for the married man: “Rejoice with the wife of your youth ... and *always be enraptured* with her love” (Proverbs 5:18-19). It’s worth noting that the Hebrew word translated “enraptured” can literally mean “intoxicated” as well. A husband and wife are then finally able to let their guards down completely, each *always enraptured* with the love of the other.

A time for love?

While being enraptured has a proper time and place within marriage, the Bible is clear that another type of love—that directed toward others—is to be timeless and without boundary. So important is true, godly love that Jesus Christ Himself emphasized it as the defining characteristic of Christians everywhere: “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

Our love—our outgoing concern for others—should be such a part of us that it *defines* us in the eyes of those around us. Love is not to be directed at just one individual or a select few, but the entire world.

What, then, is the real difference between love and infatuation? Infatuation is about pleasing the self. But love—love is all about becoming like God!

Jeremy Lallier recently graduated from Ambassador Bible Center in Milford, Ohio, and is currently working as a staff writer at the United Church of God home office.

The Big Deal About Dating

Some don't think it matters whom one dates. What about you?

by Whitney Smith

Every culture has its own unique approach to dating. Regardless of how traditional courting takes place, seeking to develop a relationship is a common practice throughout most of the world. As arranged marriages decline in some cultures, meeting and interacting with the opposite sex by dating as a means of finding a marriage partner is becoming more and more universal.

Dating is exciting! It provides opportunities for going out to dinner or to movies or other various activities with

was that their beliefs could influence mine. Then after dating the same guy for about eight months, he began to ask questions—questions that were challenges, not inquiries. In his view, my beliefs restricted our relationship.

I took time off from dating to focus on understanding what I believed. I didn't want to be in a relationship where I would be challenged and not have the answers.

Focused on beliefs

The Bible's words in 2 Corinthians 6:14 began to resound louder than ever: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" It became clear to me that not being "yoked" to another person means more than not marrying him or her. It also means that we should not seriously date someone with whom we have con-

beliefs and values are in conflict with yours, it shouldn't go further than that.

I've heard the complaints that there are "too few options in the Church" or that "the guys in school are just as nice." In the end, it comes down to knowing what is truly important to you. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus Christ tells us to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." God will provide for you if you truly are seeking His Kingdom.

Obedying God's instruction in 2 Corinthians 6:14 and then trusting Him to provide a relationship—and later a spouse, if it is His plan for us—takes faith. Dating a person who does not follow your beliefs is risky. On rare occasions this has worked out when the unbeliever has come to live God's way of life, but you cannot expect to convert somebody. Only God can call people to His truth (John 6:44). Dating someone who shares your spiritual beliefs is always the wiser approach.

When you choose this path, dating will still be fun, and you can have many opportunities to connect with those who share the same core beliefs as you do. This kind of dating produces such an incredible feeling and blessing! Coming to the realization that a relationship cannot continue because of conflicting beliefs will hurt an incredible amount if you have already developed an emotional attachment. Avoid putting yourself in that position by putting confidence in God and following His guidance to not date an unbeliever.

Whitney Smith, from the Louisville, Kentucky, area, attended Ambassador Bible Center in Milford, Ohio, this past year, and will be returning to college to continue her education



enjoyable company. While it seems most parents are wary of the question, "When can I start dating?" it's only natural for teenagers to want to begin this thrilling experience.

Testing the dating waters

I began dating when I was 16 years old—right around the time my family began returning to the Church of God. I wasn't ready to change the way I looked at dating simply because my parents had decided to follow a different path. But as I began to change my views about the Church, I started to seriously look at how my relationships influenced my beliefs.

I wasn't dating terrible, evil guys—just ones whose beliefs were different from my own. But what I didn't consider

conflicting spiritual beliefs, since dating is a gateway to marriage.

Looking back now on my experiences, I would recommend to younger girls (and guys, for that matter) to seriously consider how important your beliefs are to you before dating somebody with different beliefs. Relationships are built on having things in common. If what is most important to you is different from what is most important to your boyfriend or girlfriend, it will be very difficult to ever see eye-to-eye.

God knows best

Hanging out with friends from school in groups is a great way to learn about different personality traits and quirks that we might find attractive (or completely unappealing!). But since their

Girls & Romance Novels



Why is this genre of literature so appealing to women? Is it harmless fun?

by Amanda Stiver

We've all seen the covers—a couple, locked in a passionate embrace, surrounded by floral flourishes on a pink background. These books command their own section at bookstores and in libraries and are now more available than ever via digital reading devices. Although most men scoff at them, many women can't seem to put them down.

A 2008 statistical overview shows that the romance genre takes the largest share of the consumer fiction market. Romance Writers of America (RWA), a professional organization for authors, estimates that there are 29 million regular readers of romance novels in America, and beyond that 74.8 million individuals read at least one romance book in 2008 (“2008 ROMStat Report,” RWANational.org, 2010).

Romance novels aim for an adult female audience, which accounts for the pink covers and frilly flourishes. However, the target audience expanded when teen girls were perceived as an undiscovered market, and in the past few years the growth of young adult and teen romance novels has exploded. RWA reports that women read 90 percent of all romance novels.

“In love” or “in lust”?

Of course, romantic story lines aren't relegated to just romance novels. A romance thread is included in virtually every piece of fiction written or showcased in books, films, plays, etc. The human mind is attracted to love, so it's a key element in most stories. As one would expect, this impor-

tant subject is also found in the Bible!

Love is an attribute of God. Godly love sacrifices for others. Brotherly love is tender and kind toward others. Both of these extend into romantic love between a man and a woman and are required for a steady foundation on which to establish marriage and then sexual love.

However, modern romantic fiction tends to skip over the virtues of love and head directly for sexual lust, generally far outside the bounds of marriage. So what's the problem? The human mind creates images from written words. Graphic descriptions of sexual encounters in any kind of written fiction can have as devastating an effect on our minds as pornographic images.

“Garbage in, garbage out” applies here. What you put into your mind is what your mind feeds on. If such material regularly causes you to think impure thoughts, then what you are reading is causing you to sin in your mind.

Keep it clean

Not all fiction delves into inappropriate, graphic descriptions. Positive stories that uphold morals and standards and feature truth winning over evil can be beneficial.

Philippians 4:8 is a great litmus test (along with the rest of God's law) for analyzing a potential read. If the book is going to inspire you to think about things that are pure, lovely, of good report and praiseworthy, go for it!

Amanda Stiver works as a freelance writer in Columbus, Ohio, and serves on the *Vertical Thought* staff.



Love Run Amok

How can you know in advance whether someone will become an abusive mate?

by Ken Treybig

For thousands of years, poets have written about it, singers have sung about it, and researchers have studied it. Scientists have even recently identified the physiological events that occur when it happens. Still, no one fully understands how people grow to love each other. In describing four things that seemed mysterious and hard to understand, Proverbs 30:19 includes this in the list: “a man and a woman falling in love” (Good News Bible).

Almost as difficult to understand is how people supposedly in love can come to the point of seriously hurting one another. Yet according to the American Bar Association Web site, approximately 1.3 million women and 835,000 men in the United States are physically assaulted by an intimate partner annually.

It’s horrible to contemplate that someone who was once “in love” could come to the point of causing such terrible harm to his or her formerly loved partner! Is there anything you can do to help prevent becoming one of these statistics?

This problem could be the subject of whole books and research projects by a team of professionals, and we probably still would not have all the answers. However, God’s instruction manual to us about how to best live our lives can give us some insight into avoiding a future abusive mate.

Powerful chemicals

Scientists describe a powerful effect the chemicals released into our bloodstream have on us when we are attracted to someone. (See “What’s Going on Under the Skin: What Touch Can Trigger” at www.VerticalThought.org/vt/vt02/underskin.htm for more information.) So it should be obvious that it’s best to consider this topic well in advance of growing deeply attracted to someone—because once we are “hooked,” it’s harder to properly interpret the warning signs of future abuse.

Notice the strong warning given in the biblical book of Proverbs about merely having a *friendship* with a certain type of person: “Don’t make friends with people who have hot, violent tempers. You might learn their habits and not be able to change” (22:24-25, GNB).

This advice God inspired to be included in Scripture is helpful in any friendship, but it’s even more important in choosing a mate. Shocking as it may be, the American Bar Association Web site further states about domestic violence, “In recent years, an intimate partner killed approximately 33% of female murder victims and 4% of male murder victims” (new.abanet.org/domesticviolence/Pages/Statistics.aspx).

The point is that some tendencies are hard to control or

How a person relates to strangers, coworkers and close relatives in a wide variety of settings will give you insight into how he or she will eventually relate to you.

change, and from God's perspective people who have not learned to control their anger are a danger to you. If you add in the heightened emotions of an intimate relationship, you have a very volatile situation that can easily erupt into emotional or physical violence, which can even result in death. The wisdom of the verse in Proverbs shows how to avoid being a victim. Avoid even becoming a close friend with that type of person.

The difficult part of implementing the verse has to do with our emotions. It's hard to think logically when you seem to "hit it off" with someone you've just met. When you make an easy emotional connection, the excitement of the moment is likely to override the logic of staying alert to possible warning signs that this may not be a good relationship for you.

That doesn't eliminate the biblical instruction that tells us godly love will believe the best about others (1 Corinthians 13:5-7). While it may seem to be a contradiction, it is actually another example of using a sound-minded, mature approach to life. There are two factors that must be kept in balance: the principle of being willing to believe the best about each person we meet and the opposing principle of being alert for possible indications that the person should be someone to avoid having as a close friend.

Balancing principles

How does one identify the difference? How can you know which principle needs greater weight in a particular situation? God advises us to seek counsel from others when facing tough decisions: "Being wise is better than being strong; yes, knowledge is more important than strength. After all, you must make careful plans before you fight a battle, and the more good advice you get, the more likely you are to win" (Proverbs 24:5-6, GNB).

Advice from parents, a pastor or other counselor can often help you think through a situation in a more impartial manner to recognize which principle should have greater emphasis in a given situation.

Another point many books on relationships emphasize is taking lots of time in getting to know someone in many different situations before allowing yourself to get too deeply attached. Actively watch to see how a person handles his or her frustrations. How does he react when cut off in traffic? How does she handle disagreements with a boss or coworkers? How does he relate to his parents and any siblings?

How a person relates to strangers, coworkers and close relatives in a wide variety of settings will give you insight into how he or she will eventually relate to you.

And in considering a potential spouse, improperly controlled anger is not the only problem to watch for. There are many other warning signs that someone may turn out not to be the loving, supportive life partner you desire.

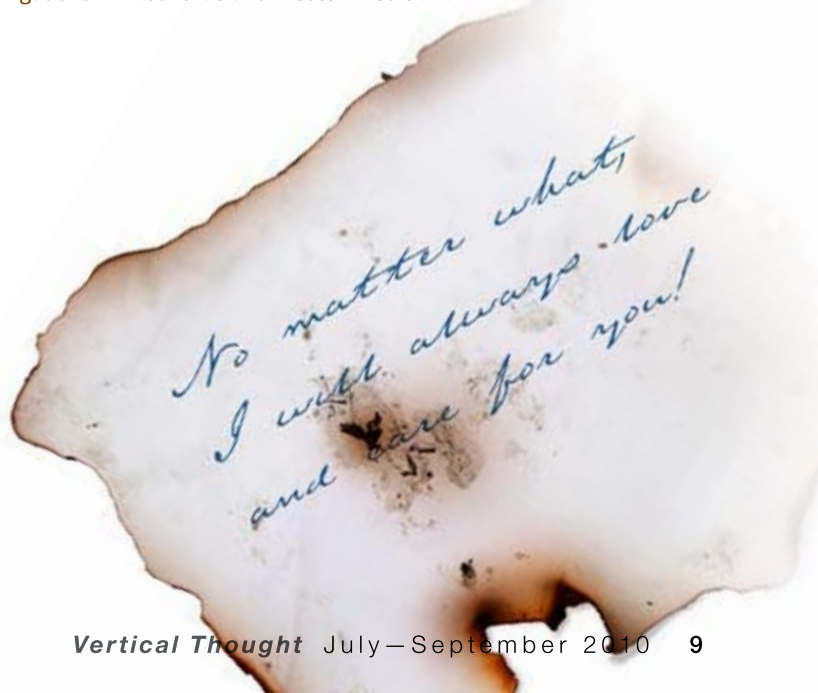
Numerous authors have written books trying to help people choose wisely. Is the other person controlling in any way? Is the guy a "mama's boy" with an unnaturally close attachment? Is the person deceitful, an addictive personality, self-absorbed, unwilling to grow up or ungodly? A person with any of these characteristics like the angry people God warns about in Proverbs 22, can bring grief to your life—but can also be identified by careful observation and wise counsel before committing to a close relationship.

Look ahead

Twice in the book of Proverbs we're told, "A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished" (Proverbs 22:3; 27:12). Don't be one of those who blindly ignores warning signs of bad things to come and pays a price for it. Become wise by learning what to watch for and by keeping your emotions in check until you have spent plenty of time getting to know what someone is really like.

That will not guarantee you will never have problems in a relationship, but it will help minimize the chances of serious and/or dangerous consequences that come from marrying a husband or wife who will become abusive.

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In Defense of an Ancient Universe

Why do we believe, contrary to young-earth creationism, that the heavens and the earth are significantly older than the 6,000-year history of man?

by Mario Seiglie

Presently, there are two main debates about the origins of the earth and the universe. One is the creation vs. evolution controversy being waged in classrooms, courts, mass media and even churches.

The second debate is among creationists themselves, although the discussion is certainly not as strident, since the identity of the Creator is not being questioned, the inspiration of the Bible is not being challenged, nor is Jesus Christ as Savior being doubted. Creationists are typically classified into two

groups—young-earth creationists and old-earth creationists. There are variations of creation models within each camp, yet the purpose here is not to discuss those differences, but rather to briefly lay out why we believe in what is labeled a form of old-earth creationism.

We believe that the physical evidence of the universe and the textual studies on Genesis 1 favor the universe and the earth being older than the 6,000 years man has existed. Our understanding is a logical, straightforward way of explaining Genesis 1 that is

NASA

consistent with what we find in the physical world.

A proper biblical framework

As explained in the accompanying article “How Old Is the Earth?” (starting on the next page), the earlier history of the earth and the universe can be understood to be compacted into the first two verses of Genesis 1. Namely, there was an original creation of the heavens (all the stars and galaxies) and the earth, at which time the angels shouted for joy at its beauty and majesty. Then there was a time when the earth was laid waste and became chaotic. Waters covered the earth, no continents were in view and darkness prevailed.

Here is one of a number of scholarly opinions about the meaning of Genesis 1:2 that reflect our understanding. Gleason Archer, professor of biblical languages, comments:

“It should be noted in this connection that the verb *was* in Genesis 1:2 may quite possibly be rendered ‘became’ and be construed to mean: ‘And the earth became formless and void.’ Only a cosmic catastrophe could account for the introduction of chaotic confusion into the original perfection of God’s creation. This interpretation certainly seems to be exegetically tenable” (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 1974, p. 184).

What follows in Genesis 1:3-31 describes the seven-day creation week of literally seven 24-hour days, wherein God sent forth His Spirit to “renew the face of the earth” (Psalm 104:30), creating a world habitable for humankind with the progenitors of the various life forms we see today. We can call this general explanation the “creation/devastation/re-creation model.” Others refer to it as the “gap theory”—in reference to the gap in time and information between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2.

Evidence from the natural realm

The vast universe around us displays evidence of great age. The fact that we see light from extremely distant stars and galaxies, for example, indicates a universe much older than 6,000 years. A light-year is the distance light travels in a year, and we can see celestial objects much farther away than 6,000 light-years—including galaxies that are millions and even billions of light-years away.

Some have argued that God created the light from these distant objects in transit to enable us to see them today, but astronomers have witnessed celestial events farther away than 6,000 light-years. This is a serious problem for those who believe the universe is only 6,000 years old. For it would seem to indicate that these celestial events never actually happened—that they are part of a fictional “movie projection” of sorts, essentially a grand hoax, which is inconsistent with a God of truth (see Psalm 31:5; Isaiah 65:16; Titus 1:2).

Some young-earth creationists have proposed some interesting hypotheses as to how distant starlight can

fit within their overall model, but these guesses, however well thought out, remain unconvincing.

Astronomer Hugh Ross points out regarding the universe’s age markers: “Specifically, God has scattered astronomical ‘clocks,’ time-bound astronomical phenomena (e.g., supernovae, Cepheid variable stars, neutron stars, black holes, etc.), throughout the universe, and they all agree. They do not reflect differences of rate or dimensionality” (“Avoiding a Dangerous Trap,” *Reasons to Believe*, Jan. 1, 1999, p. 2).

As to how old the earth itself is, that’s difficult to determine. While earth scientists generally date its origins to around 4.5 billion years, this assumes reliable radiometric dating, a uniformitarian past and an evolutionary interpretation of fossil strata. The reality is that dating methods have certain weaknesses and that the Bible indicates a more catastrophic past—as the geologic record also appears to. Nevertheless, the geologic record still seems to support an age rather older than 6,000 years. And we cannot *deny* an age in the millions or billions—nor do we *need* to in accepting what the Bible says.

Some have suggested that if the earth and moon are so old, the dust accumulation on their surfaces should be much greater. This was a common young-earth creationist argument, but most have now abandoned it. Initially, back in the mid-20th century, some calculations put the rate of dust accumulation at a much higher level than what has been carefully measured today. The older calculations were claimed to support a recent earth. But now, through more precise atmospheric and satellite measurements, the rate has been found to be consistent with what one would expect in an old earth and universe.

Even if some findings still suggest a young age for various celestial objects, scientists through continuing investigation may yet offer a credible explanation, as has happened before. Moreover, we should remember that, on behalf of God the Father, Jesus Christ exercises power to sustain the universe (see Hebrews 1:1-3). So some things could actually be older than they seem. There would be no deception in this, for Scripture tells us of Christ’s sustaining work.

Finally, without speculating on exactly how the universe developed from its initial creation to the time of Adam and Eve, here are several points of basic agreement between the Bible and the conclusions of scientists:

1. **Matter, energy and time have a beginning.**
2. **The universe began at a definite point in time.**
3. **The universe and the earth are quite ancient—predating the world of man.**
4. **The universe is finite and gradually decaying.**

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How Old Is the Earth?



by Paul Luecke

If you've explored this question, you've probably encountered conflicting messages—even among those who believe in the Creator. What does the Bible indicate?

How old is the earth? Some believe that God created the universe with a “Big Bang” followed by an evolutionary process over billions of years that eventually produced stars, planets and all life-forms—in the latter case, simpler organisms gradually giving rise to more complex ones. Others (like the United Church of God) believe that God created everything long ago, well before the time of man, but without using a macroevolutionary process in the development of life and its variety. People who believe either of these explanations are often lumped together as “old-earth creationists.”

Another group believes that God created the universe and all life in six days about 6,000 years ago. Proponents of this explanation are sometimes called “young-earth creationists.”

Young-earth creationists rightfully point out that if God could bring everything into existence in the blink of an eye, He didn't need an evolutionary process over billions of years to produce stars, planets and life. Yet as old-earth creationists point out, there are numerous scientific indications that the earth is older than 6,000 years, and a careful reading of the biblical account does not require us to fight against that evidence.

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Evolutionists often ridicule the stance of young-earth creationists. They argue that you can either believe the scientific evidence or hold onto the illusion that God created everything 6,000 years ago.

Does the Bible give any indications about the amount of time that may have passed between God's creation of the universe and His creation of mankind?

Before the six days of creation

"In the beginning God created the *heavens* and the *earth*" (Genesis 1:1, emphasis added throughout). "Heavens" refers to the galaxies, planets and stars, including our sun. We aren't given a date *when* this occurred. This verse does not restrict the time frame to either 6,000 or billions of years ago.

Verse 2 then says, "The earth *was* without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep." As with most of the Old Testament, this verse was originally written in Hebrew. And the Hebrew word translated "was" here can have the sense of *became*. The same word is used in Genesis 3:20,

where we read that Eve "*became* the mother of all the living" (New American Bible).

Next let's consider the phrase "without form." The Hebrew word for this phrase is *tohu*, which means formless, confusion, empty, wasteland, a place of chaos. The word "void" is the Hebrew word *bohu*, which means emptiness, void, waste or ruin.

Dr. Arthur Custance, in his book *Without Form and Void: A Study of the Meaning of Genesis 1:2*, states, "I am persuaded that there is, on the basis of the evidence, far more reason to translate Genesis 1:2 as 'But the earth had become a ruin and a desolation, etc.' than there is for any of the conventional translations in our modern versions" (p. 7).

Since Genesis 1:2 can either mean that the earth *was* or that it *became* "without form, and void," what do additional scriptures indicate?

Isaiah 45:18 says of the earth that God "did not create it in *vain* [*tohu*]," but instead "formed it to be inhabited." The

Creation Week: Light on Day 1 but the Sun on Day 4?

Genesis 1:3 tells us, "Then God said, 'Let there be light.'" If all the rest of the initial creation had to occur after this verse, then there would seem to have been *nothing to produce this light* (i.e., no sun). And we can't argue that the new light source was God, who *is* light (1 John 1:5), because He eternally existed *before* the introduction of the light described in verse 3. The account makes more sense when we realize that the earth and sun were both created at an *earlier* time, and that the earth *later became* a lifeless, ruined wasteland—its atmosphere choked with debris that prevented light from penetrating to the surface.

It's important to understand that of all the galaxies and planets God created, it is the *earth* that is the *focus* of God's greatest creative works, and therefore the events of the six-day account are described *from the perspective of the earth itself*, specifically from the vantage point of its *surface* (where all life-forms will

be brought into existence). R.K. Harrison's *Introduction to the Old Testament* says: "In explaining this phenomenon it must first be noted that the standpoint of the first chapter of Genesis is an ideal geocentric one, as though the writer were actually upon the earth at that time and in a position to record the developing phases of created life as he experienced them. From such a standpoint the heavenly bodies would only become visible when the dense cloud-covering of the earth had dispersed to a large extent" (p. 554).

Verse 5 says, "God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day."

Note that the cycle of day and night, or evening and morning, requires a rotating earth as well as an atmosphere allowing enough sunlight to come to the surface.

Through the next three days of the account, the process of *renewing* the earth continues. (It should be pointed out that

these are *literal*, 24-hour days.) God next separates water on the earth's surface from water in the atmosphere, with a breathable expanse of air between the two (the second day). Next God separates the surface waters from land masses and causes flora to spring up from the land (the third day).

Now we come to the fourth day: "Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night'" (verse 14). On this day the atmosphere is *further* cleared so that from the observation point of the earth's surface, the sun, moon and stars are now clearly distinguishable in the sky. "Let there be" is not a statement of the *initial* creation, but a statement of *appearance*. This passage tells us that these *celestial* objects were *allowed* to be *visible* so that they could serve people as markers of signs, seasons, days and years. Verse 16 then specifies that "God made two great lights."

The Hebrew verb for "made" here (*asah*) could also be translated as "had made," denoting a *previous* action. Since the earth was *already* in existence prior to the first creation day, there is no reason to conclude that the celestial bodies were not also *already* in existence—since verse 1 states that in the beginning, God created *both* the heavens and the earth. However, the word *asah* also has the broader meaning of "set" or "appoint." This translation would not necessitate a previous action, for it appears that God set the sky in order on the fourth day and appointed the timekeeping role *already* mentioned.

Now that the atmosphere was fresh and *clean*, with light and warmth coming to the earth, we next see God putting life on the restored planet—fish, birds, animals and human beings. The *last* thing God created was the Sabbath rest on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3).

Hebrew word for “vain” is the same word used in Genesis 1:2. If God did *not* create the earth (originally) as a formless wasteland, then something happened that caused it to *become* that way, sometime *after* God created it. We’ll address what likely caused this state of confusion in a moment.

Genesis 1:2 continues, “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” Psalm 104 also describes some of God’s creative works. Verse 30 says, “You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth.” The word translated “renew” means to rebuild, renew or repair. This harmonizes with the understanding that the first two verses of Genesis show an initial creation of the heavens and the earth that was not in vain (*tohu*), followed by a catastrophic event that left the earth in ruins, followed by God renewing the earth by His Spirit.

Verse 3, then, actually begins the record of God’s creative work of *renewing* the earth and *preparing* it for His new creative masterpiece—human beings!

Now, how long before this destruction and renewal was the earth itself created? A day before? A year before? A million years or more before? The account simply does not say *when* the earth itself was created. What it says is that during the six-day period described in the verses that follow, God brought the planet into an orderly arrangement that would support life as we know it.

Angels and the biblical record

The creation of angels and the record of their activity best harmonizes with a creation that existed *prior* to the seven days of re-creation or renewing the earth for human beings.

In Job 38:4-7 God asks Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth ... when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

The terms “morning stars” and “sons of God” both refer to angels. They all shouted for joy when God first created the earth. All the angels—including Lucifer, who later became Satan—were in agreement with God and were ecstatic about what He had just made. When the earth was first created, Lucifer was not yet corrupted with iniquity. It certainly seems that *considerable* time must have passed between the creation of the earth, when Lucifer was in agreement with God, and his later appearance as the evil deceiver to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3.

We find more details in Isaiah 14:12, where God says: “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground.” Jesus Christ, who lived in glory with the Father from eternity past before becoming human, said that He saw Lucifer fall from heaven (Luke 10:18).

Isaiah 14:13-14 explains some of Satan’s motivation: “For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’”

In Ezekiel 28:14-16 God sheds more light on the story: “You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and

forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God.”

Something caused the beautiful earth—which all the angels were thrilled to see—to become a wasteland, choked with debris and incapable of supporting life. It seems likely that the rebellion of Lucifer led to this devastation.

Notice also Jude 6: “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.” These angels abandoned the domain God gave them, the earth, either by leaving it (perhaps in the attempt to take over God’s throne) or abandoning their responsibility to properly maintain it.

Summary of the scenario

So we don’t know how long ago God originally created the heavens and the earth, but the biblical account reveals:

- God first created the angels at an unspecified time in the past.
- He then created the earth and material universe—including the sun and other stars. At this time all the angels were still righteous and rejoiced.
- The angels were given a domain, which included the earth.
- The angels may then have spent hundreds, thousands, millions or billions of years active in this domain, which likely included plant and animal life on the earth. There is nothing in the Bible to prohibit the existence of life-forms such as the dinosaurs in this pre-Adamic world.
- Lucifer eventually deviated from God’s righteous way. He ultimately convinced one third of the angels to follow him in rebelling against God (Revelation 12:4).
- These angels became dissatisfied with their domain. Satan plotted to ascend into heaven and dethrone God.
- God cast Satan and the sinful angels down to the earth to await judgment. We find Satan already here to turn Adam and Eve against God soon after they were created.
- The result of Satan’s rebellion likely resulted in the devastation (whether suddenly or over a long period of time) of the beautiful earth God originally created.
- God renewed the surface of the earth to support life and be suitable for His new creation—human beings!

The Bible actually shows an existing creation—earth and universe—preceding the six-day account of Genesis 1:3-31. Based on this record of angelic activity before the preparation of the earth for humankind, we conclude that the earth is much older than 6,000 years. For additional study, we recommend our free booklet *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*

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CAUGHT!

On Facebook

by Carol Taylor

Intending to interview a promising young student, Ana Homayoun of Green Ivy Educational Consulting visited the girl's page on Facebook. She found explicit photographs and commentary about the student's sexual escapades, drinking and pot smoking. "I was just shocked by the amount of stuff that she was willing to publicly display," Ms. Homayoun said. "When I saw that, I thought, 'Okay, so much for that.'"

The wonder (as well as the potential danger) of the Internet is the ease with which anyone can find, download or publish information and pictures. Virtually all that is posted on the Web, whether protected or not, can be copied and reposted somewhere else.

And as Michael Sciola, director of the Career Resource Center at Wesleyan University, says: "People who use social sites should understand that any information that appears online is there *forever* and *cannot* be deleted. Even material that is withdrawn from the Web is cached by search engines and Internet archives. These things have consequences. Once you put stuff up, it is out there, and it is gone. You *cannot* get it back" (Diane Lewis, "Job Applicants' Online Musings Get Hard Look," *The Boston Globe*, March 30, 2006, emphasis added).

Andy Beal (coauthor of *Radically Transparent: Monitoring and Managing Reputations Online*) reveals that 78 percent of recruiters use search engines in their research when they screen new candidates. He adds that a startling 35 percent of recruiters say they have eliminated a candidate because of something they found on the Web.

Some of the postings that damage credibility are provocative or inappropriate photographs or information. Other problems include evidence of the candidate drinking or using drugs, showing poor communication skills, making discriminatory comments, lying about qualifications, sharing confidential information from previous employers, and bad-mouthing previous employers, coworkers or clients.

David Gerwitz, an author who specializes in technology and security issues, tells social networkers, "Every tweet, every post is being actively indexed by different search engines. It's going to be available in perpetuity" (David Phelps, "Imprudent Posts Online Can Sabotage a Job Search," *Star Tribune*, July 5, 2009).

Social networking sites can help us keep in touch and be a great place for networking. But they can also ruin reputations and careers—perhaps forever. Every comment, every link, every picture and even every friend's picture that you allow on your private site is a potential reputation killer. (You're known by the company you keep!)

Even if you remove material from a Web site, it is cached by search engines and Internet archives. Once you post a picture, a video or text, it is out there, and you cannot get it back. Ever!



And it's not just social networking sites that can get you in trouble. Any video, text message, e-mail, blog and picture can be found, uploaded or scanned into the computer and posted on the Internet for all to see.

There is great wisdom in Proverbs 22:1: "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches." With that in mind, realize that you can *ruin* your good name with just one sleazy picture or comment. As Ann Doss Helms of *The Charlotte Observer* says, "Never put in electronic form anything that you wouldn't want viewed by a million people, including your colleagues, students, and supervisors—and your mother" ("Teachers Disciplined for Facebook Postings," Nov. 12, 2008).

For further reading see:

"How to Protect Your Online Reputation" by Amanda Berlin, July 1, 2009 (Forbes.com/2009/07/01/online-reputation-protect-leadership-careers-networking.html).

"Is Facebook Your 'Permanent Record'?" by Sarah Perez, Feb. 4, 2008 (ReadWriteWeb.com/archives/is_facebook_your_permanent_rec.php).

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How to Make a *Good First Impression*

You may have heard the warning, “You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.” Here’s how to avoid mistakes.

by Becky Sweat

I know a couple of high school students who learned the lesson about making good impressions the hard way. One day they discovered a substitute teacher in their chemistry class and immediately started high-fiving each other and roaring, “Party, party!” While the substitute introduced himself to the class, these two boys rapped out loud at their desks. When the sub turned on a video for the class, they started telling jokes. They kept talking even after the sub told them to be quiet.

Ten minutes into class, the sub sent the two boys down to the principal’s office. But that wasn’t the worst of it. The next month, the chemistry teacher resigned and the sub was hired full-time to teach the class.

“We wished we would have acted better when we first met the sub,” the two boys admitted. “He had us pegged as troublemakers, so he was extra hard on us. If we even said a word while he was talking, we got written up. If we

If you are genuinely concerned about other people, it will be obvious by what you say and do. If your heart is in the right place, others will like you, and you will make a good impression.

needed extra time on an assignment, he wouldn’t give it to us. We were on his bad side, and he wasn’t going to let us get away with anything.”

Their story underscores a vital point: First impressions *do* matter. Communication experts caution that we have less than 20 seconds of interacting with strangers before they form an opinion of us. In that short amount of time, decisions are made such as whether to hire somebody, distrust someone or become a person’s friend. In the case of these two students, they got labeled as being disrespectful and unruly. Once an opinion is formed, it’s very difficult to alter. That’s why it’s important to give each new encounter your best shot.

As a high school or college student, you will be meeting new teachers and students, college recruiters and potential employers in the months and years ahead. You may be



invited to parties where you hardly know anyone, or visit out-of-town friends or relatives and be introduced to their friends. All these people will form an opinion about you—based not only on what you say but also on your facial expressions, mannerisms, attitude and appearance.

Here are 10 ways to give them a good first impression:

1. Dress appropriately

The clothes you choose should be tidy, clean, stylish and modest. Avoid sexually provocative clothing. “A girl might think she’s just wearing something fashionable, but if it’s too tight or skimpy, it sets her up for being viewed as a sexual object and for guys to make inappropriate advances towards her,” warns Gary Hill, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist with the Family Institute at Northwestern University.



Guys, too, need to make sure they're not giving the wrong impression by the way they dress. In particular, avoid the super low-rise pants with your underwear showing or shirts with immoral messages (such as about getting high or drunk). "You may think these clothes send the message to your peers that you're cool, but it sends a very bad message to adults," Hill says.

2. Speak clearly

Do you say things like "gimme," "goin'," "wanna" and "Watchadoin"? Do you mumble? Do your words run together? If so, you are suffering from "lazy lips." People will be more likely to take what you say seriously if you speak clearly and distinctly.

Listen to how fast you talk. Some say the best rate for talking is between 120 and 160 words a minute. You might want to record some of your conversations, so you can figure out how many words you speak per minute, on average. If it's way above 160, make a conscious effort to slow down. "Speed talkers" often communicate little and appear nervous.

3. Make good eye contact

When you're having a conversation with someone, look directly at the person and make good eye contact. Try for eye contact that is gentle and relaxed. You don't want to turn it into a stare-down, nor do you want it to be forced.

This is especially important when going on interviews or meeting with college recruiters. If you're not afraid to look the interviewer in the eyes, you will stand out from the crowd. You will appear comfortable, confident and friendly.



4. Smile sincerely

A smile can do wonders if it's the right kind of smile. If you force a smile because you think it is expected of you or because you are just trying to be polite, you'll appear insincere. The best smiles are a lot more than just moving some facial muscles. They come from inside. You smile because you're happy to meet or be with someone. With a genuine smile, you will certainly make the people around you feel good.

5. Unplug yourself from technology

Put your iPod, iPhone, PSP and other handheld electronic devices aside when you're meeting new people. True, it may seem "acceptable" to your *friends* to listen to your iPod while you wait on customers, or to text at a dinner party. Yet "to people your parents' age and older, that seems like you are shutting them out and aren't interested in interacting with them," observes Patricia Leavy, Ph.D., associate professor of sociology at Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts.

The people you're with deserve your full attention. Anything less and they won't feel like they really matter to you.



6. Don't talk nonstop

Unless you are on a job interview, you should avoid talking on and on about yourself. I was recently on a cruise, and during meals I sat with a lot of people I didn't know. One woman talked about herself nonstop, mostly bragging about career successes and how well-traveled she was. Only rarely did anyone else get a chance to speak. After a couple of days, I noticed people avoiding her table. No one wants to be around someone who is self-absorbed.

Try to see the person you are with as the center of the conversation. Resist the temptation to tell all your funny stories or share everything you know about a topic. Avoid hogging the spotlight. Instead, try to come up with questions to draw other people out and get them talking. Most people enjoy sharing their perspectives, experiences and stories.

7. Listen actively

Just letting other people talk is not enough. Give whoever is speaking your full attention. This is how you show respect, courtesy and interest. Nod during the conversation and ask pertinent questions to let the speaker know you're listening.

Give positive verbal cues like, "Hmmm, that's fascinating!" "What happened next?" and "How did you feel about that?" Don't gaze in another direction, interrupt the speaker, twiddle your thumbs or keep checking your watch. If you do, you will give the impression that you are bored and disinterested in what he or she is saying.

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God's Feasts

Answer the Big Questions

by Ken Treybig

Part 2

Just as teachers prepare lesson plans for their students, God, through His feasts, provides a lesson plan for humanity.

What is man's destiny? How do we reach it? What is the future of our planet?

In the April-June issue, we saw how the first three of God's feasts revealed in the Bible (Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost) began answering these questions. We learned that God's plan involves giving each of us the opportunity to become part of His spiritual family (Hebrews 2:10).

Now we turn our attention to the remainder of God's feasts listed in Leviticus 23—those that come in late summer and autumn in conjunction with the end of a great harvest period in the land of Israel.

The Feast of Trumpets

The fourth feast is described as "a memorial of blowing of trumpets" (Leviticus 23:24). In ancient times, trumpets were used to announce things—to crown a king, to call people to an assembly and to serve as an alarm for war.

Jesus in His Olivet Prophecy, the lengthy prophecy He gave on the Mount of Olives shortly before His death and resurrection, stated that when He returns, a great trumpet will sound as His angels gather the saints (Matthew 24:30-31). Paul adds that the saints who have died will be resurrected to immortality "at the last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). In Revelation 8, we're introduced to seven angels with trumpets, each heralding global calamity. And when the seventh blows his trumpet, Christ's return as conquering King will be announced (Revelation 11:15).

The Day of Atonement

The next of God's appointed times, the Day of Atonement, is a day to "afflict" ourselves (Leviticus 23:27)—referring to fasting (Psalm 69:10; Isaiah 58:3, 5), through which we draw nearer to God. It was observed in the Old Testament by the presentation of two goats—one, representing the Lord, slain as a sin offering and the other driven off to bear away sin in banishment (Leviticus 16).

Returning to the panorama of end-time events, armies will attempt to fight against Christ at His return, but they will be utterly defeated (Revelation 17:14). The leading civil and religious figures at that time, called "the beast" and "the false prophet" respectively, will also be captured and consumed in fire (Revelation 19:20). The next thing that happens is that Satan, the spirit power behind those human leaders, is bound so he can no longer deceive human beings while the saints live and reign with Jesus Christ (Revelation 20:1-4). With this deceiving spirit removed, all people will be able to come to God and develop a personal relationship with Him to be "at one" with or reconciled to Him.

The Old Testament goat of banishment represented the coming banishment of Satan. And in that future time, the nations, beginning with Israel, will at last

accept the sin offering of Jesus Christ as atonement for their sins.

The Feast of Tabernacles

The next festival is the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles, observed by living in temporary dwellings. Also called the “Feast of Ingathering” (Exodus 23:16; 34:22), it celebrated the abundance of the great later harvest in Israel’s agricultural year.

This Feast represents a new age of great blessing, when God through Christ will again dwell on the earth with human beings. With the deceiver gone, all nations will be drawn to God and Jerusalem to learn from Him. Nations will convert their military hardware to peaceful uses and war will cease (Isaiah 2:2-4). Isaiah 11:6-9 describes a beautiful time when the nature of animals will be changed back to what it was like in the Garden of Eden.

At this time deserts will become fruitful (Isaiah 35:1-2), and the knowledge of God will fill the whole earth (Isaiah 11:9). The scene will be set for a huge spiritual harvest or ingathering of human beings into God’s family.

The Eighth Day

The seven-day Feast of Tabernacles is followed immediately by an “eighth day”—a separate and distinct festival though obviously related to the previous seven days. This eighth day, now often called the Last Great Day, continues the celebration of the end-time harvest, but represents its culmination, when all humanity will at last worship the Lord.

Consider the billions who lived in prior ages when they were deceived by Satan. What will happen to people who have never even heard of Jesus Christ? Acts 4:12 states that the *only* name under heaven by which people may be saved is that of Jesus Christ. Would God just forget all those billions of potential children? No!

While the firstfruits of this age are raised to eternal life at the blowing of the last trumpet, Revelation 20:5 tells us “the rest of the dead” (those who died in deception) will come back to life after the thousand-year period. Verse 12 describes them standing before a great white throne with books (Greek *biblia*, from which we get the word “Bible”) opened to them and another book opened called the Book of Life.

This book was closed in their prior life, but is now open—they will now be given their first chance to have their names written in that book. They will be granted time to live once again as human beings (Ezekiel 37) and will be judged by how they live according to God’s laws at that time. This will be the ultimate harvest opportunity for eternal life in the family of God.

For more on how the biblical festivals present the progressive steps in God’s awesome plan of salvation, download or request our free booklet *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.

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Make a Good First Impression

Continued from page 17

8. Monitor your body language

Use your body language to project confidence and approachability. Sit and walk uprightly, without being rigid. When you walk up to a group of people, look up and smile as you greet them. If you’re sitting across from someone who is talking to you, lean toward the person slightly to show you are interested in what’s being said.

Avoid crossing your arms or legs. This makes you seem nervous or defensive. Don’t put your hands on your hips or clasp your hands behind your head. That conveys disapproval or arrogance to others. If you’re seated, don’t wiggle around too much, tap your feet or play with your hair. Excessive movement signals nervousness, impatience or boredom. If you slouch in your chair, or walk into a room with your shoulders hunched and your head down, you will come across as insecure.

9. Be polite and courteous

Always be polite, considerate and courteous toward the people you meet. Make it a habit to say “please” and “thank you.” If your teacher asks you to do something, do it without challenging him or her. If you’re doing something in class that’s annoying other people, stop the behavior.

10. Cultivate an easygoing, positive attitude

Nobody likes being around complainers and critics or people who are too outspoken and confrontational. I remember meeting my college resident assistant during my freshman year. She spent about 20 minutes making negative comments about the dorm and telling me how she “wasn’t afraid to tell people off.”

She may have had a lot of good qualities, but I never found out. After that first encounter, I avoided her as much as possible. I didn’t want to spend time with someone who was focused on the negative and all too ready to pick a fight.

Hold back any tendencies to criticize, complain or grumble. Instead, be approachable and positive, and look for good aspects even in the face of difficult situations. Having an upbeat attitude is another way to instantly attract other people to you.

These 10 tips will help you make better connections with the people you meet. Of course, you may not always handle every encounter perfectly. That’s okay. I had a friend who once spilled coffee on her blouse on the way to an interview, and she still got the job. Her new boss could see what kind of person she was deep down inside.

That’s what’s most important. If you are genuinely concerned about other people, it will be obvious by what you say and do. If your heart is in the right place, others will like you, and you will make a good impression.

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Preparation With a Purpose

Looking around the room, I saw others writing down their responses and thinking about the big question our minister had just asked us in the Bible study for young adults that Sabbath: “What qualities are you looking for in a godly mate?” The page in front of me stared back as I began to deeply consider all the characteristics I valued and desired in my future husband.

As my list grew, the minister surprised me with his next question: “Now that you’ve identified these qualities, what do you need to do *now* to develop these attributes yourself? Your lifetime challenge is to become the type of person that is worthy to be a godly partner with someone who possesses all of the qualities you have listed.”

The significance of this statement hit me like a ton of bricks. *How could I ask God to provide someone for me who is what I’m not ready to become myself?* I had been so focused on searching for someone who embodied everything I dreamed of finding in a husband that I had neglected to consider if he would recognize these same godly qualities in *me* once we met.

And even more importantly, does God find me to be a desirable and valuable member of His family? Instead of *finding the right person in my eyes*, I realized that I needed to shift my focus to first *becoming a righteous person in God’s eyes*.

God’s intentional design

I returned to my dorm room that evening deep in thought about what we had discussed in the Bible study and what I needed to do next. Like many of my peers in college, I wanted to be someone other people found attractive and fun to be around. Within my college environment, it was tempting to consider dating many of the great guys I met because we had many things in common.

Yet, until that night, I hadn’t reflected on which qualities were truly important to me in a future spouse or even in me as I developed a deeper, lasting relationship with God. Shifting my focus, I began considering how I could become the type of woman who would attract those who would enhance my existing relationship with God, not pull me away from my faith.

What do you stand for?

College provides a great time to begin thinking about who we are and who we want to become. We can start by examining our character, values, motivations and desires, and how these inner attributes are reflected in our lives. King David’s example of coming before God with a humble attitude and asking Him to search his heart is one of the most powerful demonstrations of seeking accurate understanding of oneself in the Bible (Psalm 139:23). Likewise,



Your lifetime challenge is to become the type of person that is worthy to be a godly partner with someone who possesses all of the qualities you desire in a mate.

we are also instructed to examine ourselves to see if what we are doing is in harmony with what God expects of us (2 Corinthians 13:5).

This process of self-examination, reflection and repentance of those things that are holding us back from having a deeper relationship with God is essential to our development as vertical thinkers. *We will know what we stand for* in a world of relative and shifting moral standards. As has been said in different ways, those who stand for nothing fall for anything.

Preparing for the future

The college years provide numerous opportunities to meet people and learn what types of personalities we “click” with. While the desire to be in a romantic relationship can be very strong (because God designed us that way), grounding ourselves with the purpose of developing the characteristics that will ultimately attract the right kind of godly friends and future spouses should be our primary focus.

So while you are in college, don’t just focus on what you desire in a future mate, marriage and career. Redirect some time and energy to figuring out what you need to become in order to please God and attract a godly mate. For additional information, see the back cover of this issue under “More on Dating.”

Student Voices

Developing Godly Relationships

Here's what other students and recent college graduates had to say when asked, "What did you do in college to prepare yourself for future godly relationships?"

"Spend your time in college getting to know a variety of people and enjoy what each of them brings to a friendship, and eventually you are likely to find someone God brings into your life to date. There are stories in the Bible that talk about patience, like the story of Jacob, Rachel and Leah. Jacob exhibited immense patience. We should strive for that also."

Male college graduate, Canada

"In college, I built a strong network of like-minded friends who helped me walk the straight and narrow through my college years and beyond. Through my interactions with them I learned the meaning of brotherly love—encouraging one another to do the right thing and make the right choices."

Female college graduate, Nigeria

"Getting involved in extracurricular activities and taking advantage of service opportunities (both in the educational realm and within the Church community) allows you to build relationships without the pressure of 'pairing up,' because the focus isn't just on the people participating, but on what they have come together to accomplish. This gives you the chance to build relationships and to learn the tools necessary to maintain them."

Female college graduate, Wisconsin

"I learned that if you want to build godly relationships, merely spending time with and talking to other people isn't going to be enough. You have to take those conversations to the next level and open up to your friends spiritually, talking about the things that really matter in life."

Male college student, Missouri

Leslie Schwartz, M.Ed., loves working with college students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to foster their leadership development. She attends the Bloomington/Normal United Church of God congregation. Have a question, comment or idea for a future topic for this column? Contact Leslie at VTLifeOnCampus@gmail.com.

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More People Online for News

According to a recent Pew Internet and American Life Project finding, more Americans are getting their news from the Internet than from newspapers or radio. Of those surveyed, 92 percent said they get their news from more than one platform, 61 percent get at least some of their news online, 54 percent listen to radio news broadcasts, and 50 percent read a national or local print newspaper.

The survey also found that social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter have turned news into a social experience. Users are likely to post a news item that interests them and then comment on it. Online users also tended to review news items from more than one source rather than rely on a single news outlet.

Interestingly, the most common topics searched for were weather, followed by national news, sports news and celebrity and entertainment news, in that order (Doug Gross, "Survey: More Americans Get News From Internet Than Newspapers or Radio," CNN.com, March 1, 2010).

60%

The portion of TV viewers who, at least once a month, browse the Web while watching TV, according to a Nielsen report.

—"TV and Internet Use Together Growing," Reuters.com, March 22, 2010

Living Together Before Marriage Increases Likelihood of Divorce

A recent study by the National Center for Health Statistics finds that couples who live together before marriage are more likely to divorce. The chances for a marriage to endure beyond a decade decrease by 6 percent if the couple cohabited before marriage. It's become common to believe that cohabiting before marriage helps determine compatibility, but experts say that this will in reality detract from a lengthy, successful marriage (Sam

Roberts, "Study Finds Cohabiting Doesn't Make a Union Last," NYTimes.com, March 2, 2010).

As our Creator, God knows what is best for us, and His instructions regarding sex—wait until you are married and then have sex with only your spouse—continue to be the optimal choice for those who desire to please God and enjoy a happy, lifelong marriage.

Walk Your Way to Health

Research by the Appalachian State University's Human Performance Lab finds that taking a 45-minute walk five times a week over a period of 12 to 15 weeks helped study participants to experience fewer upper respiratory tract infections and reduced their number of sick days.

A steady habit of exercise weekly can also reduce risk of stroke, diabetes, various cancers and depression, among other things. Experts also believe that an emphasis on activity rather than solely on weight loss will help decrease obesity



(Laura Landro, "The Hidden Benefits of Exercise," Online.WSJ.com, Jan. 5, 2010).



Baby, Can You Dance?

A recent study by the University of York in the United Kingdom has determined that babies automatically move in response to music, particularly to the beat rather than to the melody. The babies studied were only five months to two years old.

Researchers found that the young study participants smiled more when they were most accurately synchronizing their dancing to the music. For the study, professional ballet dancers were asked to analyze how well the babies matched their movements to the music (Richard Alleyne, "Babies Are Born to Dance to the Beat," Telegraph.co.uk, March 15, 2010).



Etiquette and Ethics

Modern-day etiquette books make the assumption that all teens will inevitably lose their virginity. This disturbs columnist Meghan Cox Gurdon, who worries about the message it sends, since these books create “a moral framework, a matrix of what is reasonable and acceptable.” These books instruct youth on how to behave politely, but when it comes to a life-shaking decision like when to have and not have

sex, they take an it’s-going-to-happen-anyway approach rather than giving sound advice to abstain.

Quoting from the 1922 book by Emily Post, *Etiquette*, Gurdon draws attention to the strict advice to keep hands-off and pay attention to decorum: “In such environments [dances], modesty and public decorum had been required ‘because people were on exhibition, where now they are unnoticed components of a general crowd’” (“Emily Post Would Be Rightly Appalled,” *Online.WSJ.com*, Feb. 4, 2010).

God’s law makes His followers stand out from the “unnoticed components of a general crowd.” Don’t be afraid to stand out, as your example may lead others to God.

Wait! There’s More ...

If you’d like to see more articles and our weekly commentaries, jump over to our Web site. There, you’ll also have access to all of our back issues and answers to commonly asked questions.

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Information Overflow

Experts estimate that the people of this planet created 150 billion gigabytes of data in 2005 and that they will create 1.2 trillion gigabytes this year.

When analyzed as business intelligence, this data is employed to tailor online marketing to your likes and dislikes, based on your online habits. Likewise, credit card and insurance companies scrutinize giant amounts of information for trends that help identify card theft and fraudulent claims.

However, all of this data has a downside. Information databases become objects of theft—stolen laptops and disks sometimes putting large numbers of people at risk. Online privacy is also an issue of ethics, with users wanting more control over their personal information (“The Data Deluge,” *Economist.com*, Feb. 25, 2010).

Amazingly, this increase in information or knowledge was foretold well over 2,500 years ago. A brave Jewish refugee named Daniel, inspired by God, recorded this statement from his Maker: “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and *knowledge* shall increase” (Daniel 12:4, emphasis added).



Cloak of Invisibility

German scientists recently found a way to cloak a small bump on the surface of a piece of gold. The bump was enshrouded in a layer of photonic crystals that bend light waves. The process distorted the ability of the bump to reflect light itself, and thus it became invisible!

Scientists feel that though the experiment was small-scale, it can theoretically be replicated at any size. However, the amount of time to create even a human-sized cloak would be, at this point, prohibitive. So, dashing hopes for Star Trek–like advances, there will be no Romulan or Klingon cloaking devices for the moment (Kate Kelland, “A Real Life 3D Invisibility Cloak? Scientists Make Gold Disappear,” *Reuters*, March 20, 2010).

Credit Card Complexities

Recent legislation in the United States means that credit card companies will be changing how they do business. Some elements of the Credit Card Act of 2009 will benefit cardholders, such as generous time for delivery of credit card bills, 45-day advance notification of changes in accounts and policies, and required cosigners for those under 21 if they can’t prove they are able to make payments.

However, the Credit Card Act is also likely to negatively impact some consumers. In order to pay for lost revenue from the above policies, some companies will impose mandatory yearly fees and printed statement fees, among others. Interest rates will also be changed from fixed rate to variable in many cases (Amber Dakar, “Credit Card Changes Looming for 2010,” *MoneyandMarkets.com*, Jan. 22, 2010).

Having a credit card in your name is an important responsibility. Credit cards aren’t free money. If you are going to use a credit card (some financial advisers recommend not using them because people tend to spend more with a credit card than they do with cash), always be sure to pay off the entire amount every month. With the new changes in policy, check out a potential credit card company very carefully and know beforehand exactly what you will have to pay.



More About Dating

Question: As a vertical thinker, how can you avoid dating disasters? Where can you go for timeless advice?

Answer: The *Vertical Thought* archives at www.VerticalThought.org/issues

Here are some previously featured articles:

- **The Friendship Formula**—Doug Horchak (Oct.-Dec. 2006)
- **Marry the Right Person: Key to a Successful Life**—Larry Greider (April-June 2009)
- **The Dating Debate**—Ken Treybig (Jan.-March 2004)
- **Sexual Myths, Sexual Reality**—David Treybig (July-Sept. 2004)
- **A Touchy Subject: Hand-Holding, Hugging, Kissing and More ...**—David Treybig (Jan.-March 2004)

Do you have suggestions for future articles? Send us an e-mail or leave a message at our Web site. We always appreciate input from our readers!

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