

# *The* Good News

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

## Are We on the Threshold of a New Age?

Superdisasters: Growing Weather Danger? • The Cohabitation Generation  
St. Valentine, Cupid and Jesus Christ • Who's Winning the Battle of the Sexes?

## Will History Repeat Itself?

As we enter the year 2000, millions of people are making New Year's resolutions. Isn't it too bad that we can't simply resolve our way to world peace? Nevertheless, when we pause to take inventory of our lives with the onset of another year, will we collectively examine the carnage we have brought on ourselves over the past century—the bloodiest in history—and resolve to do better? Or will we watch history repeat itself?

*The Smithsonian* (July 1999) reported on mankind's perception of the year 1000. In those days some were prophesying cataclysms that would bring an end to civilization. As we enter 2000, thinking on the subject hasn't changed much. A recent cover of *Newsweek* (Nov. 1, 1999) trumpeted: "Prophecy: Millennium Visions, What the Bible Says About the End of the World." The cover articles noted that visions of the Apocalypse have fired the imagination of the Westerners for centuries. Forty percent of American adults, reports *Newsweek*, believe the world will end in a fiery holocaust reminiscent of the Armageddon of the book of Revelation.

Could those 40 percent be right? Does the Bible say that's how our world will end? *The Good News* reveals the amazing and comforting truth of the matter.

With technology phenomenally advancing (along with matching egos), and history tending, as always, to repeat itself, is it only a matter of time until the major powers precipitate the apocalyptic holocaust that many fear?

Who's to prevent it? The United Nations was meant to resolve international conflicts. Although it rightly denounces prejudice and war, it cannot stop either. Events of recent decades have shown that when a regional war develops it often takes the Western nations—the United States, Britain and others—to forcefully end the shooting. Kosovo is a recent case in point.

But how long will it be until another regional conflict expands into a continent-wide or worldwide conflagration? When will a rogue nation or a terrorist group settle its score with nuclear weapons or spawn a chemical- or biological-weapon epidemic? Can we save ourselves, or will history repeat itself?

The Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) defined peace as "not an absence of war; it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice."

Speaking before Congress, Gen. Douglas MacArthur pointed to a similar path to peace: "The problem basically is theological and involves a spirit of recrudescence and improvement of human character. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh."

The Bible pinpoints the cause of strife, including war: "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?" (James 4:1). God tells us our minds must be transformed (Romans 12:2). If such is the key to domestic and global peace, how will it happen? Who can change man's warring nature?

The Bible shows that God not only can bring this phenomenal change about, but that He will do it. He guarantees that mankind will experience world peace (Isaiah 11). Notice how He will accomplish this great thing: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a new heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you . . ." (Ezekiel 36:26-27). To paraphrase Gen. MacArthur, God will change our spirit, and God will save our flesh.

You hold in your hands a publication unlike others. It is a magazine of *spiritual understanding*. *The Good News* examines past, present and future events in light of the Bible. Read in this issue and every issue about mankind's future salvation from its destructive ways and how you can confidently resolve to change the quality of your life for the better.

Someday history won't repeat itself. This Almighty God guarantees.

—Jerold Aust

# Good News

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Publisher: United Church of God, an International Association  
Managing editor: Scott Ashley

Writer-researchers: Jerold Aust, Roger Foster, John Ross Schroeder  
Copy editor: Dixon Cartwright Art director: Shaun Venish

#### Editorial reviewers:

John Bald, Bruce Gore, Paul Kieffer, Graemme Marshall,  
Richard Thompson, David Treybig, Lyle Welty, Dean Wilson

#### United Church of God Council of Elders:

Gary Antion, Aaron Dean, Robert Dick (chairman),  
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#### International addresses:

**Australia:** United Church of God—Australia  
GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia  
Phone: 07 55 202 111 Free call: 1800 356 202 Fax: 07 55 202 122  
Web site address: [www.ucg.org.au](http://www.ucg.org.au) E-mail: [ucg@b022.aone.net.au](mailto:ucg@b022.aone.net.au)

**Bahamas:** United Church of God  
P.O. Box N8873, Nassau, Bahamas  
Phone: (242) 324-3169 Fax: (242) 364-5566

**British Isles:** United Church of God  
P.O. Box 4052, Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK13 7ZE, England  
Phone: 0181-386-8467 Fax: 01257-453978  
Web site address: [www.goodnews.org.uk](http://www.goodnews.org.uk)

**Canada:** United Church of God—Canada  
Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada  
Phone: (416) 231-9379, (800) 338-7779  
Fax: (416) 231-8238 Web site address: [www.ucg.ca](http://www.ucg.ca)

**Fiji:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 10577, Nadi Airport, Fiji  
Phone: 723-678

**French-speaking areas:** Église de Dieu Unie—France  
B.P. 51254, 45002 Orléans Cedex 1, France

**Germany:** Vereinte Kirche Gottes/Gute Nachrichten  
Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany  
Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637

**Italy:** La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita  
Casella Postale 187, 24100 Bergamo, Italy.  
Phone: 0039-035583474 Fax: 0039-035582140  
Web site address: [www.labuonanotizia.org](http://www.labuonanotizia.org)

**New Zealand:** United Church of God  
P.O. Box 22, Auckland 1015, New Zealand  
Phone: toll free 0508-463-763

**South Africa:** United Church of God  
P. O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East London 5205  
Phone and Fax: 043 748-1694 E-mail: [ucgrsaoffis@mweb.co.za](mailto:ucgrsaoffis@mweb.co.za)

**Spanish-speaking areas:** United Church of God  
P.O. Box 458, Big Sandy, TX 75755, U.S.A.  
Phone: (903) 636-4928

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- **Intelligent refrigerators** will record the inventories of butter, juices and other staples, then print out a grocery list.
- **Virtual aquariums** or scenic vistas will add variety, beauty and tranquillity to a family room.
- **Videoconferencing** for families on the go will keep family members in touch with each other.

This potentially utopian future sounds exciting, except for one potential problem: It offers no advice on how we can solve the dilemmas that have plagued humanity for millennia.

The much-anticipated year 2000 has arrived. As 1999 drew to a close, *Time* magazine (Nov. 8) presented a spate of articles directing our attention to the exuberant optimism of the next century: “Can I Live to Be 125?,” “Will Robots Make House Calls?,” “Can I Grow a New Brain?” and “Can I Replace My Body?,” to mention a few.

Media hype to the contrary, how do seasoned observers, journalists, economists and politicians expect the future to turn out? Based on their opinions, are we on the path of greater peace and prosperity, or should we expect something different?

#### Two scenarios

Let’s begin with advice from two respected sources.

William Strauss and Neil Howe, authors of *The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy* (1997), think the United States in particular is headed for social upheaval. Their theory is that sometime after the year 2000 America will enter a fourth-generational cycle, which they define as a great crisis.

Conversely, some experts suggest our lives will be more comfortable in the third millennium.

*The Futurist* (June-July 1998) provides samplings of anticipated lifestyle changes beyond 2000. It predicts community assistants who will drop by to offer their services for hire to communities and neighborhoods, charging fees for yard work and pool maintenance, picking up dry cleaning, and performing or overseeing routine home repairs. These services will provide what busier families will have less time to do.

Intelligent wallpaper, they say, will turn flat walls into an art gallery or television screen. Intelligent refrigerators will record the inventories of butter, juices and other staples, allowing a homemaker to print out a grocery list for her next trip to the supermarket.

Virtual aquariums or scenic vistas will add variety, beauty and tranquillity to a family room. Our consumer-oriented society is envisioned to give us ever greater ease and comfort.

For families on the go, in-home videoconferencing will keep family members in touch with each other in a world of wider family separation.

This potentially utopian future sounds exciting, except for one potential problem: It offers no advice on how we can solve the dilemmas that have plagued humanity for millennia. Our bloodstained, violent history proves that this problem can be a crucial factor in whatever kind of world lies ahead. Based on the record, the portent is ominous.

Great advances are expected in our ever-more-sophisticated technology, but few forecast improvement in human behavior.

Again, are we really on the threshold of a more humane and comfortable age, or are we stumbling headlong toward an abyss? Does Bible prophecy offer any answers?

Considering the historical record, what does biblical prophecy show will take place? You *can* know. The Bible specifically foretells the future of humanity. Amazingly, God guarantees humanity a utopian success even beyond its wildest dreams. But, before that new age dawns, storm clouds lie ahead.

#### A coming superpower

The Bible speaks of a coming superpower in Europe that will be established under the leadership of a great emperor. A great church and confederation of nations will combine their resources to establish the most powerful union this world has ever known (Daniel 2:31-45; 7:1-28; Revelation 13:1-18; 17:3-18).

In his visit to Spain a few years ago, Pope John Paul II encouraged Europeans to “return to their roots.” What might those roots be? In November the Roman Catholic Church extended the olive leaf to German Lutherans,

# Are We on the Threshold of a New Age?

hoping to heal the 500-year-old rift between Lutherans and Catholics. Together they signed the “Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith,” an open appeal to Lutherans to come home. Could this remarkable act be a part of the roots to which Pope John Paul II was referring?

History records that European emperors have declared their reigns to be revivals of the Holy Roman Empire, guided by the great church.

Originally, the ancient Roman Empire included both Eastern and Western Europe. With the lifting of the iron curtain earlier this decade, we can, for the first time in more than 1,500 years, see the way clear for Eastern and Western Europe to come together again. Could a final revival of the ancient Roman Empire end as it began, encompassing East and West?

The Bible describes a coming ruler in Europe who will dominate an economic, religious and military confederation of nations in the latter days. His initial intent to join forces will no doubt be for outwardly peaceful, logical reasons. But prophecy shows that that perspective will change—and suddenly.

## Two world governments

The prophet Daniel, referring to the end of the age of man, speaks of two coming new world orders. The first will be sculpted and led by human beings and will last for only a few years. The second is predestined and is guaranteed by Almighty God to last forever (Daniel 2:44).

In the sixth century B.C. Daniel interpreted a dream for the Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar. In his dream the ruler had seen a giant image of a man, with four sections of its body composed of four kinds of metals. With God’s inspiration and help, Daniel interpreted the image to represent a sequence of four powers that would dominate the civilized world. History shows they were, in order, the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian

Empire, the Greco-Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great, and the Roman Empire.

The great Roman Empire was to be “the fourth kingdom,” a kingdom “strong as iron” that would “break in pieces and crush others” (Daniel 2:40). History proves that great empire did just that, crushing and absorbing many smaller peoples and kingdoms before it fell in its own turn.

But Daniel pointed out some peculiarities about this fourth kingdom. Its two legs were of iron and its “feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron” (verses 33, 41). This kingdom would be divided, “partly strong and partly fragile” (verses 41-42), and the people composing it “will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay” (verse 43).

Daniel then adds: “. . . In the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (verse 44).

The final kingdom of which Daniel spoke—a kingdom that “the God of heaven will set up” and “which shall never be destroyed”—is none other than the Kingdom of God, the primary message of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:14-15).

## A puzzling prophecy

But how is that possible? Such a kingdom was never established during the days of the long-ago Roman Empire. Daniel makes it clear that the Kingdom of God is a literal kingdom, “an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away . . .” It “shall not be destroyed.” In that Kingdom “all peoples, nations, and languages” will serve Jesus Christ (Daniel 7:14).

This prophecy obviously hasn’t been fulfilled. So how could the Kingdom of God replace the Roman Empire?

The key is to understand that the Roman Empire *will rise again*. As past European

rulers have looked to the might and glory of Rome as a model for their power, another dictator will emerge to lead a modern-day revival of the Roman Empire.

Daniel’s puzzling prophecy then becomes much clearer. The mixture of iron and clay indicates that nations in the end-time alliance will be a mixture of strong and weak. Because of cultural and ethnic differences, they will not adhere to each other, just as iron and clay do not mix. As the image had 10 toes like a man, this alliance will apparently be comprised of 10 “kings” who are rulers of nations or groups of nations (Daniel 2:44). Daniel prophesied that “in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed” (same verse).

Revelation 17 describes the scenario with similar imagery. It shows 10 kings who “receive authority for one hour”—in prophetic terminology, a brief time—from a dominant ruler. The 10 kings “give their power and authority” to this ruler (Revelation 17:12-13). They also “make war with the Lamb”—the returning Jesus Christ, who will defeat them and establish the Kingdom of God on earth (Revelation 11:15; 19:11-21).

Your Bible describes a future great confederation of nations that will dominate the world scene economically, militarily and religiously. Jesus Christ instructs us to be aware of world conditions and Bible prophecy that we might be spiritually alert and not be caught unprepared when these things come to pass (Luke 21:34-36).

## Major changes to come

We may, in the immediate future, see dramatic technological advancements that make life more comfortable. We will likely witness a short time of relative world peace. At first it may seem that *that* peace may be the peace promised mankind by God (Luke 2:14). Don’t be deceived. It won’t be God’s peace, and it will be short-lived (Jeremiah 6:14;

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# A Quick Survey of the World Scene

Let's consider some current and recent news events that offer hints of dangerous world conditions yet to come. We need to be, and can be, prepared against such events prophesied in your Bible.

## Kosovo awaiting another spark

Last June NATO aircraft concluded a 78-day bombing campaign against Serbia. Although the bombing was designed to weaken communication centers and munitions depots, innocent civilians were killed in the nearly three-month pounding. A no-back-down strategy by NATO caused Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic to end his violent crack-down against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

But are the problems over for the Serbians and Kosovars? Hardly. NATO forces will have to remain to keep the fragile peace in Kosovo. Centuries of religious and cultural prejudices won't be erased overnight.

## A New Middle East accord?

In 1998 former Israeli president Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Jordan's late King Hussein signed an agreement to further defuse tensions in Israel. At stake was an additional 13 percent of West Bank territory, which would be exchanged for a Palestinian end to anti-Israeli terrorism. As a U.S. official put it: "If we don't get this, we are heading toward a train wreck."

Israeli voters have since replaced Mr. Netanyahu with Ehud Barak, an Israeli leader considered to be less hawkish and more conciliatory. President Clinton, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israel's Prime Minister Barak met in Oslo, Norway, in November to address such contentious issues as Palestinian entity, the status of Jerusalem, the future of Jewish settlements and the fate of millions of Palestinian refugees.

Mr. Arafat hopes to acquire a state for the Palestinians, virtually all of the West Bank and part of Jerusalem, while Mr. Barak seeks to resolve the 50-year conflict with the Palestinians. Culture-bound animosities and time will determine the effectiveness and longevity of the latest agreement.

To begin to understand where these tensions began, one must go back to the age of the patriarch Abraham and his two sons, half brothers Ishmael and Isaac (Genesis 16-17). Scripture tells us the deep-seated tensions between the Jews and Arabs, now nearly 4,000 years old, will be resolved, but only at the coming of the Messiah. In the meantime, strife is likely to continue between the Jews and Arabs, only occasionally inter-

rupted by well-intentioned peace accords.

## Regional dynamics

Regional economic dynamics have more than a ripple effect on other international communities. What if, for example, the ripples turn into a tsunami? Will events set the stage for a new world order, one that could manage the many regional problems mankind has faced throughout the 20th century?

William Greider, in his book *One World, Ready or Not*, writes of fickle regional dynamics playing on the international economy. He contends that no entity on the world scene, including the United States, controls or can control a "fictional global economy" (1997, pp. 17-19).

How will economic trends play out over the months and years? Many news reports focus on three regions whose economies affect virtually all nations. What is taking place in these areas, and how will developments there affect the rest of the world?

## Russia: a superpower's collapse

On Dec. 25, 1991, President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union televised his resignation speech. Before he returned to his office, the Soviet flag over the Kremlin was replaced by a Russian one.

Eight years later the American news media have almost forgotten the incredible dissolution of the Soviet bloc. The West may have won the Cold War, but a fire remains in the belly of Mother Russia, the dominant republic of the former union.

Consider: Russia turned to a parliamentary-style governmental system, but a democratic process doesn't mature overnight. (Consider

harsh Russian winters, difficult in the best of times. This means the basic needs of food and shelter are not always met. History teaches us that, under such conditions, nations often turn to leaders who promise food and comfort in exchange for the *carte blanche* of dictatorial power.

In late October The Associated Press noted that the former Soviet republics are united by their common violence. The article focused on the assassination of Armenia's prime minister, noting that violence has erupted between secular governments and religious movements as well as between political opponents. Growing political polarization threatens the hope of democracy in the former Soviet bloc, with radical groups taking root in the growing economic desperation since the 1991 Soviet collapse.

Besides Armenia, violent incursions have been undertaken by a radical Islamic group into Kyrgyzstan as well as a militant Islamic offensive in Dagestan (which drew Russia back into war with separatist Chechnya). Earlier in 1999, terrorists unleashed car-bomb attacks against several government buildings in Uzbekistan. The problems seem endless for the former Soviet countries.

Huge stocks of weapons have proliferated throughout the former Soviet empire, and soldiers, who have combat experience but are unemployed and feel alienated from society, try to make their living with the help of guns. Financially, Russia has come close to bankruptcy and still teeters on the edge of economic collapse. The United States and Germany have helped Russia, but not without vested interests.

Geopolitically, former president Mikhail

**The American news media have almost forgotten the incredible dissolution of the Soviet bloc. The West may have won the Cold War, but a fire remains in the belly of Mother Russia, the dominant republic of the former union.**

that the United States has practiced democracy for over 200 years, and its history is noticeably besmirched by major mishaps.) Habitually communist for 70 years, Russia faces enormous difficulties trying to make democracy work. Corruption is rife. Remarkably, the media appear to naively assume this former communist behemoth of a confederation must conduct itself democratically overnight.

Along with the corruption of some among Russia's leadership, few employers can pay their employees a fair wage (if any wage at all), a problem that penetrates to the heart of the Russian armed forces. Add to this the

Gorbachev lectured the West that Russia should be considered a part of a greater Europe. He has pointed out that, in centuries past, Eastern Europe stretched all the way to the Urals, the north-south mountain range in Russia.

What if the resource-rich western part of Russia is absorbed into greater Europe? Could the European Community eventually stretch from the Atlantic to the Urals, from the Baltics to the Balkans? How powerful would such a political, economic and military alliance become? This combine would surely dramatically alter the world's balance of power.

## Japan: linchpin of Asian recovery

The powerful island nation of Japan is one of the most industrious. Unlike North America, Europe or Russia, Japan has no more room in which to expand. There simply is no more wiggle room for this ambitious and industrious people.

After Japan's unconditional surrender in 1945, the nation was forbidden to maintain a standing army. This proved to be an economic boon. With America to protect them, the Japanese could focus their energies on their economy. For decades Japan experienced spectacular economic growth, but now its nationalistic tradition has contributed heavily to global financial problems.

*Newsweek* writer Elyn Spragins observed: "Having waited so long to take action, the country's leaders now face major political upheaval before they can address their dilapidated banking system. Some observers think Japan could veer into a depression. That would be a disaster. But even a less disastrous scenario—such as continued gridlock—will seriously hobble global growth and corporate earnings" (Oct. 5, 1998).

Still, as of late October 1999, Japan's economy was showing signs of life after suffering through the worst downturn in 50 years. The economy grew for two quarters before slipping in the third, and the jobless rate was easing from record highs. Japan's economy is still uncertain, but the signs are encouraging.

Keep an eye out on Japan's banking management. At stake is a stronger yen, which slows Japanese exports. The Bank of Japan's governor, Masaru Hayami, refuses to print money that could help prevent the yen from rising. Stocks have fallen to a record low, but production is rising. Some forecasters think Japan will stay in its recession until 2001 as Japanese companies shrink investment to more normal levels (*The Economist*, Sept. 11, 1999, p. 75).

Japan is seminal to future Asian financial markets. It can also have an immense impact on the West, especially the United States and Europe.

## Europe and the euro

Oldsters and the older baby-boomers remember the world immediately after World War II. Europe lay in ruins. The Marshall Plan helped lift a devastated Western Europe out of its post-war rubble. The European work ethic helped speed Western Europe's remarkable economic recovery. Not so for Eastern Europe.

The Soviet bear dug its claws deep into Europe's backside, spreading an iron curtain to hide and exploit the Eastern European nations. National identities, personal independence and religious freedoms were quashed.

Each Eastern European country had to put its back to the collective wheel and produce for the communist regime.

But from 1989 to 1991 the world witnessed the unthinkable: the seemingly impossible dissolution of the Soviet bloc and its governmental and economic systems. Freedom proved to be wildly contagious. Like falling dominoes, nearly every former Eastern European nation asserted its independence and right to self-rule.

Since then West and East Germany have united, but not without financial and economic differences and difficulties. Many Eastern European nations still struggle with the

## Does the EU's future bode well for America in 10 years and beyond? Europe, though now a friend of the United States, may find itself a foe, especially if a global depression or a trade war develops.

implementation of democracy, the production of essential goods, and money enough to provide even basic wages for employees. East Germans notice the difference between the affluence of West Germany and their own meager existence. Unified Germany tries to offset this by pouring money into what was once East Germany. One unpopular way of doing this was assessing West Germans a 5 percent surtax.

Other countries throughout Europe, especially those of the former Soviet bloc, look to the European Union for their economic salvation. Jane Bryant Quinn wrote on Europe's coming new legal tender, the euro: "[By] 2002, citizens will have to give up their francs, lire, Deutsche marks and pesetas in favor of Euro bills and coins. Prices will be quoted in Euros, no matter which of the countries you're in" (*Newsweek*, Oct. 26, 1998, p. 63).

Ms. Quinn expects Euroland will precipitate huge changes. Corporations will move to less-expensive countries. Prices might fall as consumers shop the Continent. Small banks and businesses might combine with larger or more-efficient ones. Factories likely will consolidate. A much broader capital market might encourage entrepreneurialism. "And by the way," she wrote, "don't worry that the Euro will undermine the dollar. A financially stronger Europe is better for all concerned" (*ibid.*). But are we speaking short or long term?

One year later *The Economist* (Oct. 23, 1999) published "Survey: The European Union." In this enlightening survey, Robert Cottrell writes that "the European Union will soon live up to its name, bringing in more countries of Europe and becoming more united." He shows that the European Parliament is slowly but systematically being replaced by the EU governments, in his view a good thing because they *do* things rather than mostly talk.

After World War II, France assumed the

leadership of Western Europe. Germany, crippled by war guilt, naturally took a back seat to France. All that has changed. Germany has grown rich over the decades, and since 1989 it has become the most populous among the European nations. Teutonic confidence has returned. Last August Chancellor Gerhard Schröder declared that Germany "has every interest in considering itself as a great power in Europe." Mr. Cottrell thinks that, if any country is to lead a future Europe, it can be only Germany.

Speaking of the inversion of the Franco-German balance in post-war Europe, the same

writer offers five recent fundamental shifts.

First, Germany has regained its national self-confidence.

Second, the recent NATO police actions in Kosovo caused Europeans (and especially Germany) to consider a pressing need for a European standing army (Europeans taking care of their own business).

Third is the introduction of a new common currency, the euro. In 2002, notes and coins will replace all national equivalents. This will encourage the formation of a single European economy and market.

The fourth shift concerns a weakening of the European Parliament, giving place to the European Council (heads of contributing governments) and a council of ministers (instead of ordinary ministers).

The fifth shift is the natural enlargement of the EU from 15 to 20 new members (or possibly more), most coming from Central and Eastern Europe. Of this Mr. Cottrell writes: "This will turn the EU from a rich-country club into a true European Union."

Does the EU's future bode well for America in 10 years and beyond? Europe, though now a friend of the United States, may, by unforeseen circumstances, find itself a foe, especially if a global depression should suddenly be triggered or a trade war develops. *U.S. News & World Report* (July 14, 1997, p. 34) reminds its readers that Europe's history is filled with dictators: from Napoleon and Bismarck to Mussolini and Hitler. In the 1930s economic turmoil brought on by the Great Depression helped propel Adolf Hitler into power in Germany.

Will Europe find itself an unwitting foe to the United States? Will Germany become the undisputed leader of a European superpower so great it could lead the free world? Finally, will this great superpower-to-be become the biblically prophesied final revival of the ancient Roman Empire? (See "Are We on the Threshold of a New Age?," page 4.) **GN**

# Morality in Government: A Worldwide Crisis

*What's at the heart and core of governmental problems?  
More important, what's the cure?*

by Melvin Rhodes

**R**ecent events in Pakistan have highlighted a worsening problem that affects many countries around the world.

It is difficult for people living in an affluent Western democracy to understand how people thousands of miles away can want their democratic government overthrown and replaced by military rule. Yet that's exactly what happened in recent months in Pakistan. It was a phenomenon my wife and I experienced in several African countries in the 1970s and '80s. Yet the fundamental problem of morality in government is far from confined to these areas.

The sad fact is that democratically elected governments around the globe can become casualties, often as a result of corruption permeating their societies. The checks and balances we take for granted in the West either are lacking or don't always work in other areas of the world. Of course, if we are honest with ourselves, they don't always work in our own countries either. The entire European Commission of the 15 democratic nations of the European Union had to resign not long ago after disclosures of multiple corrupt practices.

Corruption has always been a major problem, and no governmental system can fully protect its people from it. What leaders often fail to realize is that corruption in any system puts the entire system at risk, that the common people can take only so much before they overthrow those who exploit and abuse them.

What is the primary cause of corruption? It's simple: greed. Sometimes it's a lust for power. Whereas government should be oriented toward the benefit of those who are governed, often the emphasis is on *self*-service, with the leaders helping themselves first.

The Bible tells us "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10).

More than 3,000 years ago, when the Israelites rejected God's rule and wanted a king so they could be like the other nations around them, God warned them what that would mean. Through the prophet Samuel He gave them notice that they would have no end to the increased burdens the king would place on the people in the form of confiscatory taxation and wasteful, excessive government spending (1 Samuel 8:11-18). This has certainly been the case in recent times regardless of the form of government.

## The corruption cycle

Pakistan's democratic government was apparently overthrown for being so corrupt. Across Africa, in the four decades after independence from the colonial powers, democratic governments have often been overthrown by military forces because they thought there was no other way to bring the curtain down on the endless corruption of governmental officials. But, soon after taking power, the military itself often became corrupt, so the people demanded a return to constitutional government. Eventually yet more corruption followed, leading again to a military coup. The cycle never ends.

Some countries in Asia and Africa are bywords for corruption. The endemic problem is difficult for Westerners to grasp. It affects every aspect of life. For example, withdrawing money from your own checking account might not be accomplished without a bribe to the bank teller; buying a postage stamp to mail a letter may require a gift to the postal clerk; a permit to conduct business requires bribes at every level; needed medical attention becomes available only when a bottle of whiskey is produced; a judge perverts the course of justice depending on which side gives him the most money.

It never ends. In some countries, it is

estimated, people lose up to 80 percent of their incomes to bribery and corruption.

Western democracies are far from perfect. Financial and sexual scandals afflict governments regularly, causing people to lose respect for their leaders and with them the governmental system itself, placing the nation at risk.

The lack of morality in government has become a worldwide problem. No nation is immune. Sexual and financial scandals plague many governments. In Britain, for example, as Paul Johnson wrote in the Nov. 22 *Daily Mail*: "Each time the public thinks that British politics have reached the slimy bottom of sleaze, there is always another cesspit waiting around the corner . . . British politics have reached perhaps their lowest point in more than 50 years."

Only two months earlier he had written: "The truth is that all politicians need watching all the time. When political morals are in decline, as at present, and politics is becoming corrupt, the need for invigilation [watching over] is more pressing" (*Daily Mail*, Sept. 22).

The only governments that don't *seem* to suffer from these problems are those that strictly control news, thereby covering up the immorality and corruption taking place.

## What will it take to end corruption?

What will it take to put an end to immorality and corruption in government? Sadly, it won't end until there is a change of heart in leaders.

People need to come to understand that government exists to serve the people, not to control and exploit them. God says leaders have a responsibility to serve, that governmental leadership exists for the benefit of the people (Romans 13:1-4; 1 Peter 2:13-17).

If we want a perfect example of leadership, we can find none better than Jesus Christ,

who set leaders everywhere an example of selfless service.

In Matthew 20:25-28 He contrasted the typical leadership of the unbelieving nations—including the Romans who ruled over Judea at the time—with the kind of leadership God expects: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

We see in this passage that professing Christians are to set an example of service when in positions of authority in government, that those who hold higher positions must set an example of service to those under them in authority.

Similarly, the one at the top must set the highest possible personal example in moral conduct. People are influenced greatly by their leaders. Presidents, kings and prime ministers set the trend for their peoples. The people should not expect perfection, because all have sinned (Romans 3:23), but leaders should set a much higher standard than the average person, since their positions give them influence over far more people.

Throughout the history of ancient Israel the Bible records that, when the people had a good king, they followed God; when they had a king who turned away, the people went right along with him. Nations suffered the consequences of sinful acts by those at the top.

One of the most familiar examples of this is Israel in the time of the first four kings, Saul, David, Solomon and Rehoboam. The sins of each ruler led to periods of violence and bloodshed. You can read accounts of this in the two books of Samuel and the first book of Kings.

Reading further, you will find that the peoples of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah repeatedly followed the personal example of their leaders. The result of their sin was the captivity of both peoples, taken as slaves into foreign lands.

Nations, like individuals, may postpone the consequences of sin. But eventually all will reap what they have sown.

### Lessons from ancient Israel

King Solomon, who later turned away from God, began his reign with promise. Recognizing his limitations as a man of about 30, he turned to God to ask for the gift of wisdom

to be a proper ruler. God was so pleased with Solomon’s attitude that He gave him both wisdom and material prosperity (1 Kings 3).

This would be a good place for any leader to start. In many Western nations leaders are sworn in or crowned in a nominally religious ceremony in which the Bible, the very Word of God, is used. Yet how many afterwards consult the Scriptures before making major decisions?

**The one at the top must set the highest possible personal example in moral conduct. Leaders should set a much higher standard, since their positions give them influence over far more people.**

The ancient kings of Israel were commanded to write out a personal copy of the law, the divine manual of ethical behavior, and to read and rule by it (see Deuteronomy 17:18-20). Of course, few really followed its advice.

Taking a Bible to church but never reading it, or neglecting to follow the counsel given in it, is of no profit to anybody. Is it any wonder that people lose respect for their leaders when they see such hypocrisy among them?

Solomon’s three biggest problems were overspending, excessive taxation (1 Kings 12:4) and his desire for women (1 Kings 11:1-6), which led him away from worshiping God. Things haven’t changed much. We often find the same weaknesses in leaders today: the love of money and the ardent pursuit of extramarital relationships.

These sins have brought declining respect for government employees and governmental institutions themselves. But leaders have only themselves to blame. Rather than admit their sins and repent, they blame political opponents or deflect criticism by asserting that virtually every leader has had similar problems.

Such excuses are meaningless. God holds each person responsible for his actions (Philippians 2:12). We are tempted by the same temptations common to humanity (1 Corinthians 10:13). If some in society manage to control themselves, then all can.

### Coming: a perfect government

The Bible predicts a time when the world will at last live under a perfect government, where bribery, corruption and sex scandals will be unknown. This prophesied era will see real justice when nations abide by God’s code of morality, living by His laws. This will bring fairness and righteousness for all people under ethical laws and government. The event that will usher in this time will be the second com-

ing of Jesus Christ, who will return to earth to establish His righteous rule over the nations.

Speaking of this era, Jeremiah 23:5 foretells a time when “a King [Jesus Christ] shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.”

This does not mean government cannot improve now. Beneficent rulership requires moral guidance and a willingness to accept a standard code of sound values that has a

proven record of effectiveness. The Bible has withstood the test of time, but few national leaders are willing to embrace the godly morality it teaches.

God’s Word is widely available. His laws have been in effect since the beginning of time. Breaking those laws leads to suffering and the many social ills we see around us. But, when people live by them, they reap the resultant good rewards.

As with individuals so it is with nations. People follow the example of their leaders. When the leaders set an example of immorality, greed and corruption, they can only expect the people to do likewise—with the terrible consequences for their nations and society. **GN**

### RECOMMENDED READING

What should be the fundamental guide for our behavior? Does a reliable standard exist that can produce peace and respect throughout society? Such a guide has been available for thousands of years, but many have misunderstood and neglected it. You need to understand the ultimate guide for human behavior. Be sure to request your free copy of our booklet *The Ten Commandments*.

To understand how the world will at last see righteous, just and serving leadership, also request your free copy of the booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Both are free from our office in your country (or the country nearest you) or from the literature library of our Web site at [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org).





# An Overview of Conditions

## Optimism reigns as 2000 begins

What do Americans expect in the next 50 years? According to a poll by Pew Research Center, most have an optimistic outlook based on faith in technology, science, medicine and education.

Four out of five Americans think we will probably see cures for cancer and AIDS, democracy will continue to spread around the world, and Americans will elect a woman president. Three of four expect a manned landing on Mars.

On the negative side, 56 percent of Americans think overpopulation will be a major problem, straining food and resources. Similar numbers expect crime rates to increase and an epidemic worse than AIDS will plague the world.

Almost two out of three think the United States will be victimized by terrorists using chemical or biological weapons. More than a third think the country will be involved in a nuclear war within 50 years. About half expect Jesus Christ to return to earth. (Source: The Associated Press.)

To better understand what Bible prophecy reveals about the coming years, be sure to request your free copies of the booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. They're available from any of our offices listed on page 2 or from our Web site at [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org).

## European Defense Initiative

Support in Europe gathers for the creation of a European rapid-reaction military task force to deal with peacekeeping emergencies. France and Britain are the prime movers, but for divergent reasons.

As *The Economist* put it: "The French present these ideas

*"The creation of a separate European defence, whatever the qualifications and reassurances, . . . poses a serious long-term danger to NATO's cohesion and effectiveness."*

in one way: as an opportunity to assert itself as a 'separate civilisation' from North America . . . The British have another view. European and defence forces, they reckon, will work best for tasks that are endorsed by the American administration, but fail to arouse enough enthusiasm from Congress to warrant direct American involvement."

Eyebrows have already raised across the Atlantic, and for good reason. *The Economist* continues: "Many French politi-

cians and businessmen, however, want to create not just a defence identity for the European Union, but also a *common front against the English-speaking world*" (emphasis added).

Obviously Britain is caught in the middle. One report on the response from the United States said: "America is insisting that NATO [which would automatically include U.S. participation] must be given the 'right of first refusal' to intervene in any humanitarian crisis in Europe, to block the European Union from launching a military operation without consulting Washington."

Former prime minister Margaret Thatcher, a longtime supporter of strong British-U.S. relations, came out firmly against the idea. Reported the *Times*: "Baroness Thatcher last night fiercely attacked plans for a European defence structure, saying it would threaten NATO and could help to create a European superstate . . . She put the drive towards a separate European defence on the same level as the single European currency. Both were aimed at 'the Utopian venture of creating a single European superstate to rival America on the world stage.'"

Mrs. Thatcher noted that "the creation of a separate European defence, whatever the qualifications and reassurances, threatens both those conditions, and so poses a serious long-term danger to NATO's cohesion and effectiveness."

Bible prophecy indicates that in the long run both America and Britain will lose the battle for these defense priorities. (Sources: *The Times* [London], *The Daily Mail* [London], *The Economist*.)

## Austria and Switzerland move right

Left-of-center governments dominate much of Western and Central Europe. There are, however, signs of a movement toward the far right in some European states.

Most alarming is the emergence last year of Jörg Haider's Freedom Party as the second-largest political force in the Austrian legislature. He is known for his alleged pro-Nazi pronouncements and qualified praise of Hitler. More recently Mr. Haider has been in London trying to silence alarm bells in the West in reaction to his controversial statements about the Third Reich. The response in Israel was immediate; Jerusalem threatened to sever diplomatic relations with Austria.

Three weeks after Austrian voters had boosted the ultra-right, neighboring Switzerland followed suit. Christopher Blocher's extreme Swiss People's Party made huge gains in the federal elections, which places him in a strong position to play a significant role in a coalition government. He is known for his highly controversial views about the Holocaust. *The Economist* called his party "Switzerland's most potent political force" and termed this rightward swing "a vigorous shift in the Swiss mood." (Sources: *The Guardian*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Sunday Telegraph*, *Independent on Sunday*, *The Daily Mail* [all London]; *The Economist*.)

## French schools offer morning-after pills

Public-school administrators' decisions to distribute free condoms and other birth-control devices in schools have





Albania

Zimbabwe

Bahrain

Cyprus

Burkina Faso

New Zealand

Jordan

Belgium

Argentina

Czech Republic

# ions Around the World

generated controversy in many Western nations. However, a recent French-government decision to offer teenage girls morning-after pills—designed to induce spontaneous abortions—shocked many parents.

Under the French government's plan, announced by Deputy Education Minister Segolene Royal, a socialist, the pills will be available to students through school nurses. Taken within three to four days after sexual intercourse, the pills cause a fertilized egg to spontaneously abort by preventing it from implanting in the mother's womb.

*Parents were outraged at this government action that, from all appearances, condones a dangerously cavalier attitude toward unprotected sex among teens.*

Some parents were outraged at this most recent round of government actions that, from all appearances, condones a dangerously cavalier attitude toward unprotected sex among teen students. After a fierce national debate, the plan was later scaled back to allow school nurses to prescribe the drugs only in exceptional cases and if a doctor or family-planning specialist could not be reached immediately.

Under the plan, parents not only have no say in whether their daughters have access to the pills, they aren't even notified if their children are given or use them. Many French teenagers welcomed the original program. "You can't talk to some parents about these things. Going to the school nurse will be like talking to someone anonymous," said a 15-year-old girl. (Source: The Associated Press.)

Where is the world headed when national and local governments institute policies that undermine family cohesion and parental authority? To better understand the factors and influences at work behind the scenes, be sure to request *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* This free booklet is available from any of our offices on page 2 or from our Web site at [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org).

## Anglo-Americans protesting again

You may remember the protest movements of the late 1960s. Students across the Western world took to the streets with devastating consequences. These ranged from loss of life to expensive property damage—not to mention the tragic spectacle witnessed by audiences everywhere. Protesters' intentions can be peaceful and idealistic, but rank anarchists integrate themselves into these movements to instigate almost certain violence.

The primary focus of the latest protests was against global capitalism, with Seattle and London as the main target sites. *The Daily Mail* summed up the events of early December in Britain's capital city:

"Anarchists brought violence and terror to the streets of London for the second time in six months . . . A demonstration against capitalism exploded into ferocious attacks on police which forced the closure of Euston station [one of

London's principal railway passenger depots]. Police were pelted with bottles, stones and poles from banners. The mob, many of them masked, surrounded an empty transport police van . . . [and] looted and overturned it and set it on fire. The crowd chanted, 'Burn it, burn it' and 'kill the pigs.'"

The scene shifted to Seattle, Washington, where world-trade talks were taking place. This particular protest movement was tarnished by ugly street violence and vandalism of buildings as police were forced to use tear gas to bring crowds under control.

Said *The Seattle Post Intelligencer*: "As the impassioned idealists in the army of protesters learned on Tuesday, there is nothing pretty about police power . . . Protesters do what they have to do and police do what they are ordered to do. And harsh things are certain to happen. What we can all be grateful for is that police power in this city is wielded by some very decent men and women who refused to let themselves slip out of control."

The Bible is far from silent about protest movements that get out of hand. "You shall not follow a crowd to do evil," says Exodus 23:2. No one should allow himself to be led into wrongdoing by a mob, no matter how just he may think the cause to be. (Sources: *The Seattle Post Intelligencer*, *The Seattle Times*, *The Daily Mail* [London], *The Sunday Telegraph* [London], *The Independent on Sunday* [London].)

## Russia rattles nuclear sabers

Lest anyone think the potential nuclear nightmare is over, "Russia is a great power that possesses a nuclear arsenal," stated Russian president Boris Yeltsin in response to U.S. criticism to Russia's handling of the current conflict in separatist-minded Chechnya.

Equally troubling was that Mr. Yeltsin gave his blunt reminder while visiting Communist China to shore up support for his handling of the crackdown in Chechnya. The Chinese announced their support for Mr. Yeltsin's military

*"Some nations are trying to speak in the language of force. We are not used to such language, since Russia has a nuclear shield."*

actions, which include the announced intention to pound to rubble cities that house separatist forces.

The next week Russia successfully tested the Topol-M, its next-generation intercontinental ballistic missile. The rocket, launched from a missile base in northwestern Russia, streaked across Russia, striking its target on the Kamchatka peninsula 3,400 miles away.

Lest anyone miss the point, Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir declared: "Some nations and blocs under cover of international organizations are interfering into affairs of independent states, and trying to speak to them in the language of force. We are not used to such language, since Russia has a nuclear shield."

—John Ross Schroeder and Scott Ashley



Ukraine

Mauritania

Slovenia

Barbados

Angola

Malta

Jamaica

Lebanon

Djibouti

Greenland

Cambodia

# From *Father Knows Best* to 'No Father Is Best'

*Some psychologists have asserted that fathers are not essential to the healthy development of children. Do fathers do more harm than good?*



by Cecil Maranville

**F**ather *Knows Best* was a television program in the 1950s. At that time the father was widely viewed as the necessary and fixed head of every family. But times and families have changed. In June the American Psychological Association published an article asserting that just the opposite is true—that fathers are not an essential factor in the healthy development of children. In fact, it claimed, fathers do more harm than good.

*The American Psychologist* ran as its June lead article a piece titled “Deconstructing the Essential Father” in which the authors argued that fathers are nonessential.

Psychologist Wade Horn, in his *Washington Times* column of July 6, 1999, takes issue with the APA’s reasoning and conclusion. “The authors begin their first argument by stating that their ‘research experience has led us to conceptualize fathering in the way that is very different from the neoconservative [read: anyone who thinks fathers matter—Dr. Horn’s comment] perspective.’

“While acknowledging that ‘the presence of a father may have positive effects on the well-being of boys,’ two paragraphs later the authors come to the conclusion that ‘the empirical literature does not support the idea that fathers make a unique and essential contribution to child development.’”

The premise of the APA article appears to be that many of today’s fathers do such a poor job of rearing their children that their children would be better off if they were absent from their lives.

“The authors warned, for example, of ‘the potential costs of *father presence*,’ and especially [fathers’] propensity to fritter away family resources on ‘gambling, purchasing alcohol, cigarettes, or other nonessential commodities’ thereby ‘actually increasing women’s workload and stress level.’”

## Should *family* be redefined?

What is so wrong with the *normal* home of the *Father Knows Best* era? The parents of today’s parents were born and raised in that environment. Why haven’t the values of yesterday passed along to today’s parents? Should *normal* be redefined to suit our era? Or should today’s world seek to redefine itself?

Joseph Califano says it’s the latter. Mr. Califano, a former secretary of health, education and welfare, is president of the National Center of Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. His group found, like the psychologists mentioned above, that a teenager who has a poor relationship with his

father in a two-parent household is at a higher risk for smoking, drinking and illegal-drug use than one with a strong relationship with a single mother.

But his group's study went further and reached a different conclusion. It found that fathers are irreplaceable in helping children to become and stay drug-free.

"We want fathers to wake up tomorrow morning, whether their kid is 3 years old or is 17 years old," said Mr. Califano. "Parent power [fathers and mothers working together] is the most important weapon we have in dealing with substance abuse with our children. This problem is going to be solved across the kitchen table" (William P. Bulletin, "Relationship With Fathers Affects Teens' Use of Drugs, Study Finds," *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 31, 1999).

"Every father should look in the mirror and say, 'How often do I eat meals with my children?'" Mr. Califano declared.

### Fatherless boys and their morals

Michael Gurian, author of *The Good Son: Shaping the Moral Development of Our Boys and Young Men*, concluded after studying 30 cultures in many lands that "American boys have the least moral development of any boys in the world."

Mr. Gurian attributes this discouraging phenomenon to the breakdown of family, which he defines as a threefold system: the nuclear, expanded and communal family. He notes that our society causes us to end up "with kids being raised with one parent, no extended family, and going to a school with 2,500 kids. That means less chance for moral development" (Brad Knickerbocker, "Mapping the Journey From Boy to Man," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Oct. 13, 1999).

"Boys are really hungry for male attention. That's primal, and that's natural. I find it in every culture. As a boy hits puberty, he starts looking to men, and it's the culture's job to provide him with men. That means his dad, but it doesn't just mean his dad . . . A boy can become a male adult, physically and socially, but he isn't a man until he has become loving, wise, and responsible."

When asked what boys need to become good sons, and eventually good men, Mr. Gurian responded that the most important factor is "the bond or attachment between the primary caregiver and her son—I say 'her' because it's generally the mom. We would cut down on a lot of [school shootings] if in the first two years of life we had better attachment between our infant boys and their caregivers . . ."

He added: "All sorts of studies show us what happens when a boy is not attached to his dad, how he's more likely to live in poverty, more likely to end up in jail, do drugs, and so on. So we just have to say, 'Look, if we want moral sons we've got to have fathers.' And by father I also mean the 'second father,' . . . an uncle or a grandfather."

### Daughters need fathers too

What Mr. Gurian says about the need for fathers in the life of boys is no less true for the development of girls. "It is said that the best thing a father can do for his daughter is to love her mother," notes syndicated newspaper columnist Kathleen Parker. "A girl lucky enough to observe her 'first man' [her father] demonstrating affection and respect for the woman with whom she most strongly identifies [her mother] grows up with confidence and high self-esteem. More likely than not, she'll set her standards high when seeking her own mate.

"Now, new research published in the August issue of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* suggests that there's more fathers can do: Be there" ("A Father's Best Gift? His Presence," Oct. 3, 1999).

The research found that girls who had fathers as active caregivers entered puberty later and therefore were slower to develop sexual interests—and attendant problems. "Apparently, girls' biological clocks are tuned not only to their physical environment but to the emotional atmosphere as well."

It is good for children, sons and daughters alike, to have fathers! That is not to ignore the reality of our present dysfunctional society. Fathers who are cruel, abusive, immature and selfish do serious harm to the development of their children. But the solution is not to excise the fathers from the lives of their children.

Fathers need to be godly men, aware of their profound responsibility to their children, and to conduct themselves accordingly. "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord," wrote Paul (Ephesians 6:4). He added, "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (Colossians 3:21).

That it was necessary to inspire this instruction tells us that adult males are not inherently sustaining fathers, rather that they need to *choose* to become such. Further, we—our society—need to train boys in the qualities of fatherhood. An invaluable part of that training, of course, is regular contact with exemplary adult males, especially their own fathers.

### A solution

Many people can see that our families face serious problems. Responsible people wrestle with possible solutions. The proposal by some people to redefine families without "a father presence" is put forward as a plausible solution because they are convinced their concept is better than the present reality.

There is, however, a proven solution, one that is avoided by many professionals because they are used to distancing themselves from the words of God. They, like so many parents who have not absorbed the values commonly embraced by the past generation, have decided to live without the God of the Bible.

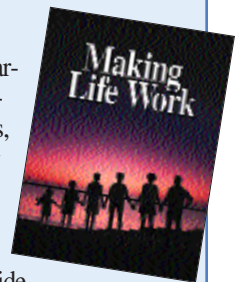
A prophecy of a world so degenerate and corrupt that God warns He may be forced to eradicate it entirely enjoins us to "remember the law of Moses, My servant" (Malachi 4:4).

A key component of that law is to "honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16). One cannot carve the position of father out of the home and think that has solved the crises assaulting our society. How dangerous, considering that the Creator finds it necessary to contemplate the destruction of a society that fails in its relationships between fathers and their children (Malachi 4:6).

Thankfully, the dark cloud of Malachi's prophecy has a silver lining, foretelling a spiritual work in the end time that will "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:6). *The Good News* is pleased to have a part in it. **GN**

### RECOMMENDED READING

You may not realize it, but you probably already own the best self-help book ever published, one that's loaded with practical, down-to-earth advice to help you be successful in your marriage, family relationships, career, finances, friendships and every other major aspect of life. That book is your Bible. We've prepared a special guide, *Making Life Work*, to help you discover its many principles for success. For your free copy, contact our address nearest you listed on page 2 or visit our Web site at [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org).



# Superdisasters

## *Growing Weather Danger?*

*Recent massive storms have brought dramatic increases in deaths and damages. What's behind this deadly trend?*

by Mario Seiglie

**I**n a dramatic message, the International Red Cross recently admitted its statistics showed an alarming rise of unusually large natural catastrophes it calls "superdisasters." A combination of horrific storms and increasing numbers of people and property in harm's way has made recent years some of the deadliest on record.

"Everyone is aware of the environmental problems of global warming and deforestation on the one hand and the social problems of increasing poverty and growing shanty towns on the other," said Dr. Astrid Heiberg, president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. "But when these two factors collide, you have a new scale of catastrophe. At the Red Cross and [Red] Crescent alone, we have a huge increase in the number of people needing our assistance due to floods and earthquakes. In the last six years, it has risen from less than half a million to more than five and a half million" (International Red Cross and Red Crescent Society press release, "The World Disasters Report for 1999").

A large part of the problem is the increasingly large number of people crowding into packed, poorly constructed housing in areas at great risk in major storms. When disaster threatens, there is little infrastructure to evacuate people beforehand or to help them when it strikes. Consequently the toll of injuries and deaths is much greater than it otherwise would be.

### **Dramatic rise in damage**

The first chapter in "The World Disasters Report for 1999" ominously stated: "Compared to the 1960s, the past decade has seen the number of great natural catastrophes triple, costing the world's economies nine times as much—the bill for 1998 alone was over US\$90 billion . . . From tsunamis and earthquakes to floods and famines, humankind is increasingly threatened by the forces of nature. With almost a billion people living in unplanned urban shanty towns, deforestation wrecking ecological defenses against catastrophic natural events, and global warming making the forces of wind, rain and sun even harder to predict and counter, the world is at risk as never before."

A Red Cross press release adds: ". . . The report shows compelling evidence of a trend towards weather-triggered super-disasters . . . The developing world will continue to be hardest hit by the cascading effects of human-driven climate change, environmental degradation and population pressures . . . Already 96 percent of all deaths from natural disasters occur in developing countries."

Cynthia Long of the U.S.-based Disaster Relief Organiza-

tion commented on the Red Cross report: "The report found that human-driven climate change and rapidly changing socio-economic conditions have and will continue to set off chain reactions of devastation leading to more behemoth catastrophes . . . By analyzing the massive hurricanes, droughts, floods and epidemics that plagued the planet last year, the organization discovered a dangerous trend toward 'super-disasters' . . .

"Declining soil fertility, drought, flooding and deforestation drove 25 million 'environmental refugees' from their land and into vulnerable squatter communities of crowded cities. Fleeing from weather-devastated homes, the group represented 58 percent of the total refugee population worldwide" ("International Red Cross Predicts More Global 'Super Disasters,'" Disaster Relief Organization, June 25, 1999).

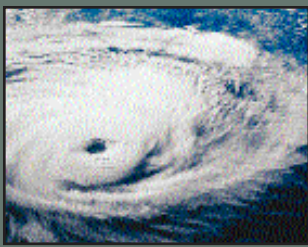
Doug Rekenhaller, managing editor of the U.S. Disaster Relief Organization, stated: "Indeed, the clear-cut lands of the developing world and the negligent environmental policies that make them that way increasingly are being implicated in natural disasters around the globe . . . These barren hillsides send rainwater, rocks, and mud racing into lowland areas where unsuspecting villages often are entombed in their homes. Thousands of people have died this summer as the result of such flash floods and mudslides unleashed by monsoon rains" ("Loss of Trees Leads to Worsening Disasters in Developing World," Disaster Relief Organization, Sept. 22, 1998).

### **Worst year for natural disasters on record**

According to the 1999 Red Cross report, 1998 was the worst year for natural disasters since it began keeping records (comparable 1999 statistics have not been released). "More major natural disasters occurred in 1998 than in any other year on record," the agency stated.

A representative of the reinsurance company Munich Re, which has monitored the frequency and scope of natural disasters for a quarter century and advises the insurance industry, stated: "Comparing the figures for the 1960s and the past ten years, we have established that the number of natural disasters was three times larger [in 1998]. The cost to the world's economies, after adjusting for inflation, is nine times higher and for the insurance industry three times as much."

In 1998 an estimated 50,000 people died in more than 700 natural disasters around the world—an increase of about 100 catastrophes over 1995, the previous worst year for natural disasters. Windstorms and floods accounted for 85 percent of the financial losses. Most of the disasters struck poor and



uninsured areas, so insurance-industry losses were only \$15 billion. However, that figure was more than three times the industry payouts for 1997.

“From deforestation of mountain slopes to development in flood plains and watersheds,” noted Mr. Rekenenthaler, “from poor topsoil management to excessive burning of fossil fuels, mankind increasingly is becoming an enemy to his own state. Complicating the picture are data trends indicating the planet is rapidly warming . . . The World Meteorological Organization announced that 1998 was the warmest year since records began being kept in 1860. Moreover, 1998 marked the 20th consecutive year in which global surface temperatures were above normal. Seven of the hottest years on record have occurred in the past decade . . .”

Even scientists who are skeptical of a global warming trend have admitted the recent evidence is troubling. “It is very important that we not jump to conclusions about weather extremes because, in a sense, every year has its extremes,” explains Rob Quayle of Global Climate Lab. “But some events in 1998 just were so striking that it is obvious something is going on. This definitely was a year characterized by weather extremes.”

#### **Killer hurricanes and tornadoes**

For the first time in the 20th century, in September 1998 four hurricanes simultaneously plowed through the Atlantic Basin. Since 1995 this area has been victim to 41 hurricanes—20 of major proportions—of which the monstrous Mitch reached the maximum category 5 with 180-mile-and-hour winds. It killed at least 11,000 people, caused \$5 billion in damage and left millions homeless. In 1992 Hurricane Andrew caused \$30 billion in damage.

More recently, in 1999 five Atlantic hurricanes reached category-4 status—the largest number in a season since records began being kept in 1886.

Some are attributing this increase in hurricanes and their intensity to warmer ocean temperatures. “. . . Sea surface temperatures in some areas are the warmest ever recorded,” comments Mr. Rekenenthaler. “And those heated waters are being blamed—at least in part—for this year’s [1998] bumper crop of tropical storms, hurricanes, and ultra-heavy rainfalls in some areas of the world.

“The warmer waters also are being blamed for a massive die-off of coral reefs around the world, which not only serve as hearth and home to marine life, but also as natural barriers to tsunamis and other damaging coastal waves. The result of all this warming is that the storms that roar in from the oceans are larger, are laden with unusually large amounts of moisture, and are powered by strong winds, all of which serve to make life miserable for those living in their paths.”

Also, the number of twister-related deaths in the United States reached its highest level in 24 years. In the first half of 1998, three F5 tornadoes, the rarest and most powerful of the twisters, wrought havoc in their paths.

#### **Some areas wetter, others drier**

Kevin Trenberth, director of the Climate Analysis Section of the

*“More major natural disasters occurred in 1998 than in any other year on record.”*

—1999 Red Cross report





## RECOMMENDED READING

Are devastating natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes and floods an indication that we are in the time of the end? Request your free copy of *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* from our office nearest you listed on page 2 or download it from our Web site at [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org).

National Center for Atmospheric Research, recently completed a study that supports the idea that regions of the earth are experiencing wetter- or drier-than-normal weather.

“As the earth warms,” explains Mr. Trenberth, “more and more moisture is sucked into the atmosphere. There is 10 percent more moisture in the air today due to increased evaporation. When a storm system picks it up, it delivers that to the earth much harder than if it wasn’t there. At the same time, dry regions are experiencing longer droughts . . . The warmer temperatures pull tremendous amounts of moisture into the atmosphere, leaving some areas dry while delivering a lot of rain to other regions. These droughts, in turn, lead to massive crop failures and famine. As one example, Texas and Oklahoma suffered through the second worst drought of their history last summer, resulting in billions in aid to farmers and ranchers.”

This unstable weather pattern can explain the common phenomenon nowadays of having massive rains in some areas and drought in others. In a recent report, climatologist Jonathan Overpeck suggested that the megadroughts that periodically occur across the planet could lead “to a natural disaster of a dimension unprecedented in the 20th century.”

Not all the news is negative. Warmer temperatures have increased the growing seasons in some areas. A 35-year study of plant life shows warmer spring temperatures arriving six days earlier and colder fall temperatures being delayed by five days. Plant life in many areas responds favorably to increases in average temperatures.

As noted above, there is controversy over what actually is causing the weather-related disasters we have witnessed recently. There is also considerable debate over whether the earth is indeed in a long-term warming trend and whether humans are contributing to any increase in average global temperatures. But it is indisputable that disastrous upheavals have occurred recently—and indications are that they will continue. Superdisasters and megadroughts are not the normal terms used by sober scientists and agencies such as the Red Cross, which usually resist sensationalizing the news.

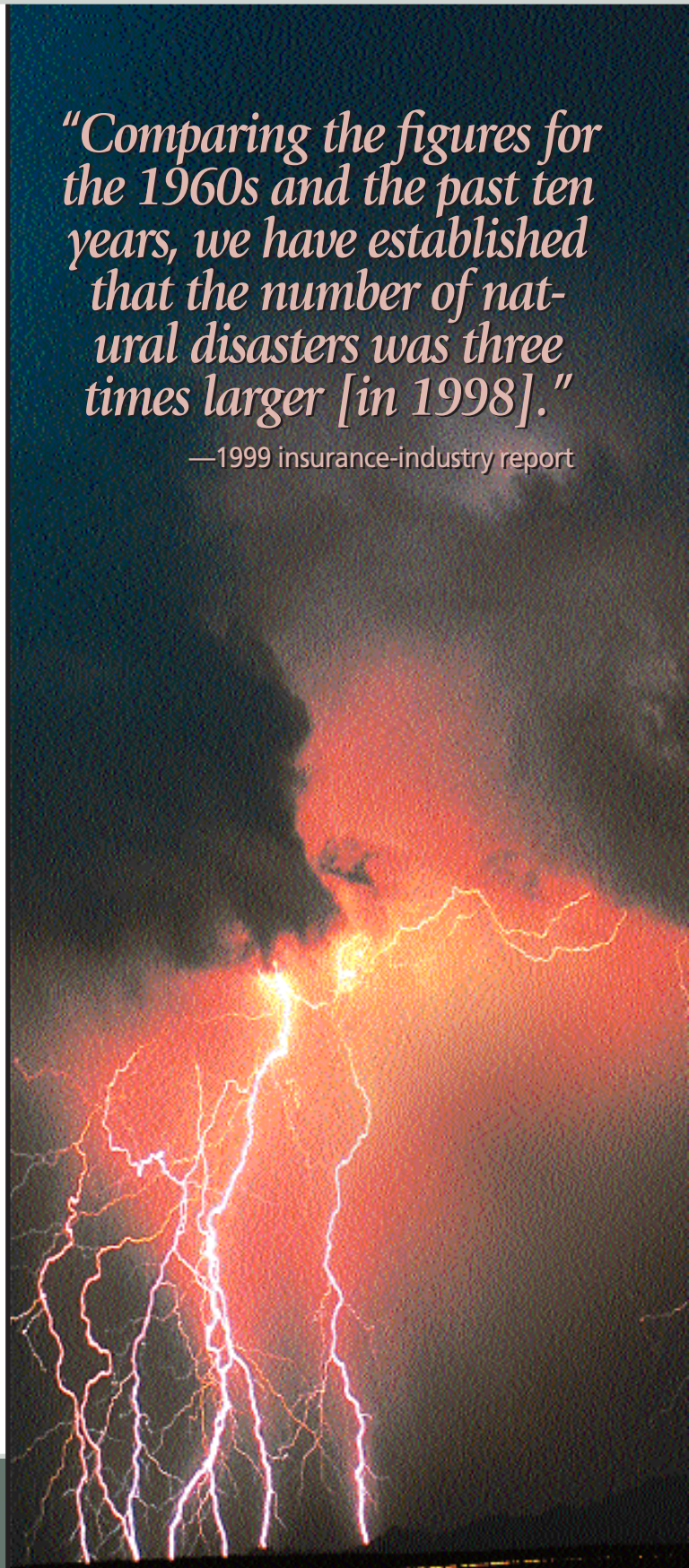
Centuries ago God promised His people they could experience a harmonious balance of sunshine and rain—neither too much nor too little. He declared these ideal conditions for food production and for safe living conditions to be “blessings,” and indeed they are (Deuteronomy 28:12).

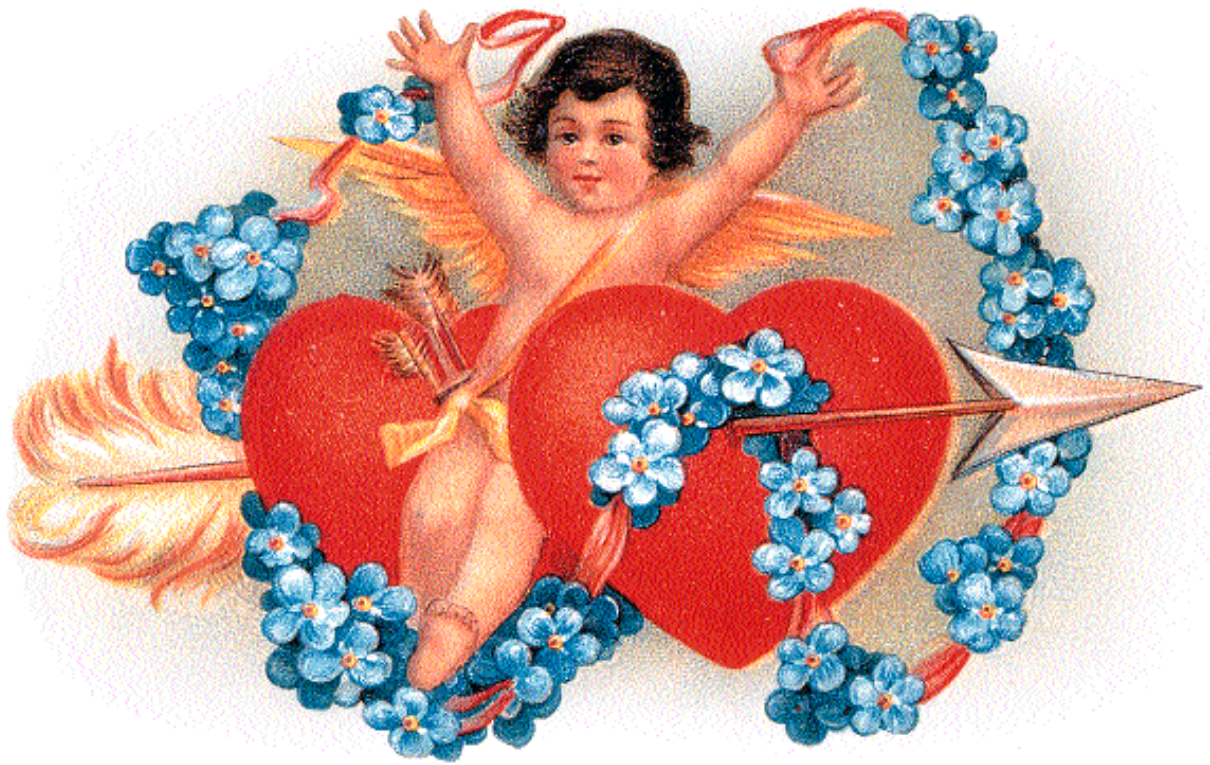
He linked blessings to the behavior of the people, warning them good weather could not be taken for granted when the populace abandoned His revealed spiritual values. “I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit” (Leviticus 26:19-20).

How much of what is happening in the world’s weather is merely natural cycling, and how much is related to God’s warning of the consequences of turning our backs on Him? It seems clear that in recent years the world is not being blessed with a proper, life-giving balance of rain and sunshine. Mankind would do well to look to its conduct and to humbly seek the One who can provide what we lack. **GN**

*“Comparing the figures for the 1960s and the past ten years, we have established that the number of natural disasters was three times larger [in 1998].”*

—1999 insurance-industry report





# St. Valentine, Cupid and *Jesus Christ*

**E**very year in mid-February millions of people express romantic feelings toward each other by exchanging heart-shaped boxes of chocolates, flowers and “valentines.”

Children express hidden infatuations by sending cards as “secret admirers.” Retailers stock shelves with merchandise covered in stylized hearts and Cupids preparing for the popular observance of St. Valentine’s Day, Feb. 14.

Where and how did these curious customs originate?

Valentine’s Day acquired its name from a Catholic saint, although exactly who he was is a matter of debate. The two most famous Valentines were a Roman priest and a bishop, both of whom suffered martyrdom in the last half of the third century.

*Celebrations: The Complete Book of American Holidays* records the story this way: “Everyone knows that St. Valentine’s Day is that day of the year when friends and lovers express affection for one another, through cards, candy and flowers, whatever means the imagination can find. But no one is quite certain who this St. Valentine was—or, more appropriately, who these Valentines were. The early lists of church martyrs reveal at least three Valentines, and one source boosted this number to an unwieldy eight, each of whom had his feast day on Feb. 14.

“The various Valentines eventually evolved into one. Lover’s quarrels come under his jurisdiction and, naturally, he is the patron saint of engaged couples and of anyone wishing to marry” (Robert J. Myers and the editors of Hallmark Cards, 1972, pp. 48-49).

During the Middle Ages, Valentine’s Day grew increasingly popular in Europe. Feb. 14 was significant not only for its religious meaning but because it was widely believed that birds begin to mate on this date. Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1340-1400) mentions the mating of birds on Valentine’s Day in his poem “Parliament of Foules.”

“English literature, following Chaucer, contains frequent references to February 14 as sacred to lovers. Shakespeare, Drayton, and Gay are among those who mention it in this connection, and the diarist Samuel Pepys several times discusses the day and its related customs. The *Paston Letters*, covering the period from 1422 to 1509, contain a letter by Dame Elizabeth Brews to John Paston, with whom she hoped to arrange a match for her daughter, which runs this way:

“And cousin mine, upon Monday is St. Valentine’s day and every bird chooseth himself a mate . . .” (Jane M. Hatch, *The American Book of Days*, 1978, p. 178).

For centuries St. Valentine’s Day flourished as

by Gary Petty

*Its customs appear harmless, but is Valentine’s Day really a Christian holiday? What are its origins? Could this seemingly innocent celebration promote unbiblical teachings?*

24 hours of romantic superstition. A common belief was that a girl would marry the first bachelor she saw or conjure her future mate's image by visiting a graveyard on St. Valentine's Eve.

The custom of sending valentine cards grew popular in the 1700s. In the early 1800s commercial valentines appeared, and soon there was no end to how entrepreneurs could make money from the holiday. Valentine's Day became so popular in the United States that an 1863 periodical claimed it was second in celebration only to Christmas.

Valentine's Day is as popular as ever with children and couples. It is one of the biggest moneymaking days for florists, candy makers and gift shops.

### Pre-Christian origins

But do the roots of Valentine's Day run deeper and further back into history?

The origins of Valentine's Day predate Christianity. "The most plausible theory for St. Valentine's Day traces its customs back to the Roman Lupercalia, a feast celebrated in February in honor of the pastoral god Lupercus, a Roman version of the Greek god Pan. The festival was an important one for the Romans, [and] naturally had some aspects of a rebirth rite to it" (Myers, pp. 50-51).

The original festival, celebrated on Feb. 15, was founded in the ancient legend of

Vol. XV, ninth edition, 1907, "Lupercalia").

Over the years many customs were added to the celebration. One was for the names of girls to be placed in a box to be drawn by boys. Each resulting match was then considered a pair for the coming year.

### Lupercalia and Christianity

As Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, it was common for pagan converts to retain their earlier religious customs and practices. Edward Gibbons, in his classic work *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, states: "After the conversion of the Imperial city, the Christians still continued, in the month of February, the annual celebration of the Lupercalia; to which they ascribed a secret and mysterious influence of the genial powers of the animal and vegetable world" (Vol. II, The Modern Library, p. 327).

Pope Gelasius is said to have eradicated Lupercalia from Christian observance in the last decade of the fifth century. But, in reality, the mingling of paganism and Christianity had become inseparable in much of the Western world. Saturnalia and Mithraism were incorporated into the church through claiming a December birth date for Jesus Christ. Various spring fertility rites merged to form the basis of Easter celebrations. Lupercalia evolved into the observance of St. Valentine's Day.

*Celebrations: The Complete Book*

**Christianity, with its emphasis on one God, was viewed by many Romans as a strange superstition or even a kind of atheism that denied the existence of the gods.**

the infants Romulus and Remus. The two brothers were said to have been abandoned but discovered and nursed by a wolf, or *lupus* in Latin. The two boys are credited as the founders of Rome.

Lupercalia was celebrated in honor of pastoral deities, and ceremonies included the sacrifice of goats and a dog. Young men dressed in sacrificial animal skins would run from a cave, said to be where Romulus and Remus were cared for by the wolf, brandishing strips of goat skins. Any women struck by these things were assured fertility. "These things were called *Februa*, the festival *Februatio*, and the day *Dies Februetus*, hence arose the name of the month February, the last of the old Roman year" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*,

*of American Holidays* comments: "Everywhere that Christians came into power they immediately adapted the holidays and customs of the people to their own creed. Now it was a simple matter to call the day that this drawing took place St. Valentine's Day . . . To Christianize the heathen practice of picking lots for sweethearts, all that was needed was to replace the names of the girls with names of saints and to have the young people emulate the particular virtues of whatever saint they drew. Incidentally, this custom is not dead today and is still observed in some religious orders.

"It was always more fun, of course, to pick a girl's rather than a saint's name. Consequently, by at least the fourteenth century the custom had reverted to

its original form" (pp. 50-51).

### Roman gods and Christian saints

Why would people observe a day that honors pagan gods by associating it with Christian saints?

The ancient Romans worshiped gods and goddesses involved with every aspect of life. Jupiter, the chief of the gods, was the deity of rain and storms, while his wife, Juno, was the goddess of womanhood. Minerva was the goddess of handicrafts and wisdom; Venus, of sexual love and birth; Vesta, of the hearth and sacred fires; Ceres, of farming and harvests.

The Greeks considered Mercury to be the messenger of the gods, but the Romans worshiped him as the god of trade, and businessmen celebrated his feast day to increase profits. Others included Mars, god of war; Castor and Pollux, gods of sea travelers; Cronos, the guardian of time; and Cupid, god of love, whose magic arrows encouraged humans and immortals to fall in love. The list goes on and on.

Romans would generically call on "the gods," but each deity had its own cult, and worshipers would pray and conduct religious ceremonies to a specific god or goddess to ask for help. Christianity, with its emphasis on one God, was viewed by many Romans as a strange superstition or even a kind of atheism that denied the existence of the gods.

Members of the early Christian Church considered themselves "saints," meaning holy or separated to God. Paul greets the church at Philippi as "all the saints in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:1). However, it wasn't long before "saints," in the Roman tradition, began to take on the erroneous meaning of a special class of martyrs or performers of heroic virtue.

In the second and third centuries it became common for some to honor the death of a martyr by celebrating the anniversary of his or her demise. The local cult would offer prayers to the dead for intercession with God. A "saint" could eventually receive universal recognition by declaration of the bishop of Rome.

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* explains: "As was taught by St. Augustine . . . Catholics, while giving to God alone adoration strictly so-called, honor the saints because of the Divine supernatural gifts which have earned them eternal life, and through which they reign with God in the heavenly fatherland as His chosen

friends and faithful servants.

“In other words, Catholics honor God in His saints as the loving distributor of supernatural gifts. The worship of *latria* . . . or strict adoration is given to God alone; the worship, or *dulia* . . . or honor and humble reverence, is paid the saints; the worship of *hyperdulia* . . . on account of her greater excellence, [is directed] to the Blessed Virgin Mary” (Vol. II, “Saints,” 1907, Online Edition, 1999, Kevin Knight).

The evolution from the early Church’s recognition of all members being saints to the veneration and worship of the dead is rooted in the early mixture of paganism with Christianity. The populace throughout

sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-16).

One of the roles Jesus Christ fulfills as our resurrected High Priest is Intercessor, one who pleads on behalf of another. The Bible declares: “Therefore He [Jesus] is

## *It’s this apathy about how to worship God, and the corresponding moral decay, that is the result of mixing Christianity with paganism.*

the Roman Empire was accustomed not only to the worship of the Greek and Roman pantheon, but to cultic worship of local deities. It was an easy step for misguided congregations rooted in paganism to replace the customs of local cults with the worship of dead martyrs.

Over the centuries the Catholic Church canonized saints for many events, problems, illnesses and occupations, each celebrated with his or her own feast day. St. Stephen is the patron saint of stonemasons; doctors can pray to St. Luke, fishermen to St. Andrew, and carpenters to St. Joseph. Patron saints are there for farmers, hunters, shoemakers and even comedians. The primary saint in Catholic theology is Mary, the mother of Jesus.

### **The danger in a harmless holiday**

What harm can there be in the celebration of lovers in the name of St. Valentine? Besides, what does it matter that some of the day’s customs hark back to pagan rites?

For one thing, nowhere does the Bible approve of praying to dead (or living) saints. In fact, Jesus declared that no one except Himself has ascended into heaven (John 3:13). Genuine saints wait in their graves for the resurrection to occur at Jesus’ return. Venerating dead saints propagates an ancient heathen custom that has no basis in reality.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about the resurrection: “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you

also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

The Bible encourages Christians to pray for each other, but heavenly intercession is reserved for Jesus Christ. At Jesus’ death the veil in the temple, a heavy curtain that separated the “holy of holies,” representing God’s throne, from the rest of the temple, was supernaturally torn from top to bottom. This action demonstrated that a new access to God was made available by the sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah. A Christian’s relationship to God is with a personal and intimate Father. The supposed need for another heavenly intercessor denigrates this role of Christ.

### **Does it matter to God?**

God warned ancient Israel, the people He chose to represent true religion, not to mix pagan customs with worshiping Him as the true God. “When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods . . . Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it;

you shall not add to it nor take away from it” (Deuteronomy 12:29-32).

Paul compares mixing paganism with Christianity to worshiping demons: “What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons” (1 Corinthians 10:19-21).

Holidays such as St. Valentine’s Day metamorphose into icons of Western culture, parodying religion. Most people don’t care that its origins lie in the Roman Lupercalia and are rooted in tenets that have nothing to do with the Bible. It’s this apathy about how to worship God, and the corresponding moral decay, that is the result of mixing Christianity with paganism.

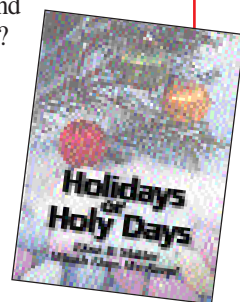
Jesus said His followers would “worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23). Observance of this holiday is just one of many traditions that must be questioned if Christianity is to return to its rightful foundation laid by Jesus Christ. **GN**

### **RECOMMENDED READING**

Does it matter which days we keep? Does God care one way or another about the days and customs we celebrate to honor Him? Why do so many of our holidays—including many religious observances—have strange and unusual customs found nowhere in the Bible?

Many people are shocked to discover the origins of most popular holidays. They’re also surprised to find that the feast days God commands in the Bible—the same days kept by Jesus Christ and the apostles—are almost universally ignored.

Does it matter to God? Be sure to request your free copy of *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?* Contact our office in your country (or the country nearest you) on page 2 or download this intriguing, eye-opening booklet from our Web site at [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org).





# The Divorce Revolution Spawns the Cohabitation Generation

*Hoping to avoid the difficulties they saw in their parents' marriages, many young adults are skipping marriage in favor of living together outside of marriage. But does this solve problems or create new ones?*

by Cecil Maranville

**T**here was an outside chance 30 years ago that a youngster might know a child from a home broken by divorce. Nowadays there is an outside chance that a youngster might know a child from a home *not* broken by divorce. Children living at home with their married biological parents are increasingly oddities.

Are these statements hyperbole? Maybe. Maybe not. A quiet but phenomenal change has swept through Western civilization. It's so quiet few seem to know about it. Fewer still seem to think it matters.

Over the course of the last few decades, societal norms have evolved from viewing divorce as a stigma to seeing it as normal, natural and often necessary and desirable. Sociologists call this change in attitude the divorce revolution.

The children of the divorce revolution don't buy the cavalier philosophy that divorce is normal. They are taking steps that will—they think—help them avoid the pain and other costs associated with broken marriages. In short, the divorce revolution has spawned the cohabitation generation.

Unmarried cohabitation, or living together, is the status of people who are not married to each other but are sexual partners sharing a household.

God reveals that sexual relations outside of marriage are harmful and damaging: "Flee sexual immorality. Every sin

that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18, emphasis added throughout).

Why? What does God know that people lately have been discovering the hard way?

Far from insignificant, the trend toward living together is nothing short of revolutionary. In the United States about 11 percent of couples lived together before marriage between 1965 and 1974; 44 percent cohabited before marriage between 1980 and 1990; more than 50 percent of people marrying today lived together before marriage. Almost 60 percent of American high-school seniors agreed or mostly agreed with the survey statement that cohabiting is usually a good way to prepare for marriage.

In 1970 the number of people living together without marriage was 523,000. Today the number exceeds four million. According to figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, the rate of people cohabiting has increased by some 700 percent since 1970 and numbers of couples with children in the home increased almost 550 percent from 1970 to 1994. Marriage statistics are equally shocking. The U.S. marriage rate has dropped 43 percent over the past four decades to its lowest point ever.

## Why do some choose to live together?

Why has the rate of marriages dropped? What has caused this revolution? In large part, it's a result of the divorce revolution, aided by a general loosening of attitudes toward morality. Having witnessed and experienced firsthand the negative results of divorce, today's youth want

to avoid them. According to a Rutgers University study: "For today's young adults, the first generation to come of age during the divorce revolution, living together seems like a good way to achieve some of the benefits of marriage and avoid the risk of divorce . . . According to surveys, most young people say it is a good idea to live with a person before marrying" (David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Should We Live Together? What Young Adults Need to Know About Cohabitation Before Marriage: A Comprehensive Review of Recent Research," The National Marriage Project: The Next Generation Series).

They believe that cohabiting couples who eventually marry will have stronger marriages for their having lived together first. Cohabitation, they reason, enables them to get to know each other much better than people who enter into marriage without first living together. Then, if things don't work out, the relationship can be broken without the hassle of either legal procedures or religious permission.

They assume many divorces will be avoided by starting relationships with a trial period of living together. Cohabiting, they believe, will provide opportunity for the unmarried man or woman to experiment enough that he or she will find the ideal match before eventually entering into marriage.

That's not to say that all young adults have the same reasons for cohabiting. Some live together with no intention of marrying. Others live together briefly before marrying each other. Still others see cohabiting with various partners as preparation for marriage with someone—eventually.

Other reasons are often cited. It is claimed that cohabitation provides economic benefits. Marin Clarkberg, assistant professor of sociology at Cornell University, addressed cohabitation in the March issue of the scholarly journal *Social Forces* (Vol. 77, No. 3). Expressing the popular view, she wrote: "For those unsure about their economic prospects, living together and pooling resources in the short run may be a smarter strategy than simply living on one's own while waiting to mature into marriage material" ("Money, Jobs Decide Who Cohabits or Marries," Cornell University, 1999, [www.newswise.com](http://www.newswise.com)).

Young adults perceive the idea that living together is a more progressive, realistic approach to today's world than old, repressive, Victorian attitudes toward intimacy.

The feminist movement, with its theme of reversing male dominance of the American family, encourages cohabitation instead of traditional marriage roles. The modern approach, it is argued, allows a woman more control, more free-

dom and less subjection to men.

Included in the report were the results of a survey of a group of young adults about their views of living together and marriage. All were single, from New Jersey and 20-something.

"[Most] of them thought marriage should occur [only after] there are children, and children should come after a house is bought and a couple has a good annual income—around \$75,000 in the women's views . . . [The] young people saw . . . cohabitation as a good way to test compatibility, detect character strengths and weaknesses, and arrange certain household economies . . . Women preferred short-term cohabitation, saying they could determine the man's suitability for marriage in a few months. In contrast, many of the men said they could cohabit indefinitely" (Cheryl Wetzstein, "Cohabitation No Formula for Future Bliss in Marriage," *The Washington Times*, March 30, 1999).

#### What do the results show?

In spite of such a vast increase in numbers of couples cohabiting without benefit of marriage, and in spite of the many reasons offered for their behavior, evidence is sorely lacking that cohabitation makes any positive contribution to marriage whatsoever.

In fact, the evidence runs strongly to the contrary, that cohabitation is detrimental. Researchers have found that living together before marriage increases the risk of divorce after marriage. "Research conducted at Yale and Columbia University and published in *American Sociological Review* found, 'the overall association between premarital cohabitation and subsequent marital stability is striking. The dissolution [divorce] rates of women who cohabit premaritally with their future spouse are, on average, nearly 80 percent higher than the rates of those who do not'" (Neil Bennett, "Commitment and the Modern Union: Assessing the Link Between Premarital Cohabitation and Subsequent Marital Stability," *American Sociological Review* 53, pp. 127-138).

David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead of the Rutgers University study concluded that "virtually all research on the topic has determined that the chances of divorce ending a marriage preceded by cohabitation are significantly greater than for a marriage not preceded by cohabitation. A 1992 study of 3,300 cases, for example, based on the 1987 National Survey of Families and Households, found that in their marriages prior [cohabitants] 'are estimated to have a hazard



of dissolution [divorce] that is about 46 percent higher than for [noncohabitants].”

Researchers have also found that living together outside of marriage increases the risk of domestic violence for women and the risk of physical and sexual abuse for children. “One study in Great Britain . . . found that, compared to children living with married biological parents, children living with cohabiting but unmarried biological parents are 20 times more likely to be subject to child abuse, and those living with a mother and a cohabiting boyfriend who is not the father face an increased risk of 33 times” (Popenoe and Whitehead).

A similar pattern was found in another American study. The Family Violence

marriage without the problems, cohabitation delivers the opposite: the difficulties of poor marriage relationships without many of the benefits of good ones.

### Religion ineffective

In the United States of 30 years ago, people who lived together unmarried were said to be “living in sin,” but American society is rapidly distancing itself from that religious perspective. Many young people associate getting married before living together with values of a past, out-of-date generation—values that are not for the current generation. They prefer not to worry about having to discuss their relationship with a clergyman either at the beginning

as an alternative to weddings.

Those who read and believe the Bible know it is God’s will that relationships between single men and women progress to marriage *without* living together first. “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity; that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God; that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we solemnly forewarned you. For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7, Revised Standard Version).

Are most religions teaching God’s point of view on this crucial issue and leading people in ways that will benefit them the most?

“ . . . Few religions prohibit cohabitation or even actively attempt to discourage it, so the religious barrier may be quite weak . . . As the practice of cohabitation in America becomes increasingly common, popular distinctions between cohabitation and marriage are fading. In short, the legal, social and religious barriers to cohabitation are weak and likely to get weaker. Unless there is an unexpected turnaround, America and the other Anglo countries, plus the rest of northern Europe, do appear to be headed in the direction of Scandinavia” (Popenoe and Whitehead).

Scandinavia, principally Sweden and Denmark, lead the world in cohabiting couples—along with the lowest marriage rate and one of the highest divorce rates.

### What does the future hold?

Popenoe and Whitehead wrote: “We recognize the larger social and cultural trends that make cohabiting relationships attractive to many young adults today. Unmarried cohabitation is not likely to go away.”

That translates into more abuse of women and children, more depression, more unhappiness and more divorce. To address issues such as health care, financial contracts and child custody, new legislation will be written to accommodate these marriage-without-getting-married relationships.

Family law in many states already takes it into consideration but will likely have to accommodate new legislation to deal with the complexities brought on by the modern kind of cohabitation. Current cohabitation practices don’t necessarily fall within the framework of existing law, which is geared *toward* marriage, not the avoidance of it.

*Marriage is a divine institution, ordained of God. He alone makes the rules. He knows what works and what doesn't. Many are learning that lesson the hard way.*

Research Program at the University of New Hampshire found that cohabitants “are much more violent than marrieds.” More specifically, the rate of violence among cohabiting couples was *twice as high* as for marrieds and the rate for “severe” violence was found to be nearly *five times* greater (Kersti Yllo and Murray Straus, “Interpersonal Violence Among Married and Cohabiting Couples,” *Family Relations* 30, pp. 339-347, emphasis added).

People who live together are much more likely to enter unsuccessful cohabiting relationships again. They become serial cohabitants. Leaving one relationship apparently makes it easier to leave another—rather than providing the stability many say they seek.

Fully three quarters the number of children born to cohabiting parents will see their parents split up before they reach age 16, whereas only about a third of the children born to married parents face a similar trauma.

Chances that cohabiting mothers will marry their children’s fathers are declining. The most recent statistics show that it will happen in only 44 percent of cases.

Economic relationships of cohabitants are often tenuous. Depression in cohabiting couples runs more than three times the rate among married couples. Overall, unmarried couples have lower levels of happiness and well-being than married couples.

So, rather than providing the benefits of

or dissolution of their union.

“Underlying all of these trends is the broad cultural shift from a more religious society where marriage was considered the bedrock of civilization and people were imbued with a strong sense of social conformity and tradition, to a more secular society focused on individual autonomy and self-invention. This cultural rejection of traditional institutional and moral authority, evident in all of the advanced, Western societies, often has had ‘freedom of choice’ as its theme and the acceptance of ‘alternative lifestyles’ as its message” (Popenoe and Whitehead).

Men have long misappropriated religion as authority to suppress and abuse women. Seizing advantage from reactions to those wrongs, the feminist movement has influenced religious thought and practices to be more accepting of cohabitation. The feminist angle is that living together is a more positive arrangement for women. (As noted above, research shows that just the opposite is true: The incidence of abuse increases.)

Religion ought to take the lead in teaching and encouraging the practice of balanced, biblically based roles for husbands and wives to reverse further erosion of marriage. Instead, some religions rush to take a more popular, acceptable and politically correct stance, attempting to respond to and accommodate social trends. They have begun to offer “commitment ceremonies”

Presently 11 states and the District of Columbia recognize common-law marriages. The family-law statutes of six states and the District of Columbia include cohabitation in their definition of a common-law marriage. But that is, of course, looking at cohabitation as proof of intent to be married, not as proof that the couple *doesn't* intend to marry.

Cohabiting is often done supposedly to avoid the very problems it brings.

"Unlike divorce or unwed childbearing, the trend toward cohabitation has inspired virtually no public comment or criticism," says the Popenoe-Whitehead report. That in itself is a sad commentary on our civilization.

But *The Good News* isn't afraid to comment: Living together unmarried isn't a way to right the wrongs of the divorce revolution, but another wrong in itself. It is sin—sin that has been dressed up in acceptable-sounding words, perhaps, but *sin*. When people sin, they pay a price, their children pay a price, and their entire nation pays a price—a terrible price.

Christ's words resound with wisdom and warning: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery [*porneia*, meaning immorality, including fornication and unmarried cohabitation].' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28). Knowing the damage that sexual sins inflict on mankind, Jesus commands us to avoid it at all costs.

Whether a man and woman should live together unmarried must not be decided by economics, convenience, societal trends or personal preferences—not by human opinion in any form. Marriage is a divine institution, ordained of God. He alone makes the rules. He knows what works and what doesn't. Research increasingly confirms that rejecting His way brings only sorrow and heartache, as many are learning the hard way.

God created marriage so we might learn to love with loyalty and tenderness. Marriage involves commitment, self-sacrifice and a willingness to share. At its deepest level, marriage pictures the loving relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:22-32). It pictures faithfulness, commitment and permanence. God is the author of the marriage institution, for which living together is an unwise and unfulfilling substitute.

(The Popenoe-Whitehead report cited in this article can be read in its entirety at <http://www.smartmarriages.com/cohabit.html>.) **GN**

# Threshold

*Continued from page 5*

8:11). Although overwhelming by human standards, this final humanly designed government will be replaced by Jesus Christ and His government (Revelation 19).

Only at Jesus Christ's return will the earth see unprecedented peace and unparalleled prosperity. It will remain thus for at least 1,000 years (Revelation 20:4). During that millennium—yet ahead of us—the human spirit will be changed; God will change it.

Then everyone will know the true God (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Hebrews 8:11). Because man's heart and spirit will be changed, wars will cease—happiness, productivity and peace will prevail. No academies will teach young men how to wage war (Micah 4:1-5). The "waste places"—cities destroyed in warfare leading up to Christ's return—will be rebuilt (Isaiah 58:12).

Rain will fall in due season. The plowman will overtake the reaper; the treader of grapes will overtake him who sows seed (Amos 9:13). Even formerly wild animals will be made peaceful (Isaiah 11:6-9).

From the standpoint of biblical prophecy, we may be on the threshold of an age different from any era mankind has ever experienced. You can prepare yourself for it. But know that dark storm clouds will grace the horizon before the brightness of a new age shines forth, that a great tribulation will darken man's future before we experience a promised paradise.

For now, we can pray for that new age that will bring the peace and prosperity God has guaranteed mankind from time immemorial (Isaiah 11). As Jesus Christ instructs, let us pray to God for that new and exciting time: "Thy kingdom come." **GN**

## RECOMMENDED READING

Where is this world headed? Does Bible prophecy give us any indications? Be sure to request your free copy of *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. Please contact our office in your country (or the country nearest you) listed on page 2. You may also read or download this booklet from the literature library of our Web site: [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org).



## Discover Life's Answers in This Free Bible Study Course.

This new study course (from the publishers of *The Good News*) isn't just about the Bible. It's about *life itself*. Why were you born? What is the purpose of life? What is your destiny? What lies ahead for our world, for your family and loved ones?

Discover the answers to these and many other vital questions. Every month you'll receive a new lesson taking you through the major questions, themes and teachings of the Bible (12 lessons in all). And it's absolutely free, with no cost or obligation. Request your first lesson, *Why the Bible is the Word of God*, today. Begin to discover the Bible's answers to life's questions!

Contact our office at the address nearest you listed on page 2 or visit our Web site at [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org). All materials are provided free in the public interest.

# Are You Missing Out on Something?

*If you're like most people, you have a vague feeling there must be more to life than meets the eye. Discover how you can find that missing ingredient in your life.*

by John Ross Schroeder

**W**e all know the feeling of being left out—not invited to a party, ignored by the country-club set or shunned by the in crowd. Maybe we haven't been able to afford a vacation this year, or perhaps we've never achieved that big career break.

Middle-aged Americans and Canadians may remember George Morgan's popular country-and-western hit, "Oh, How Close We Were, Almost." We can identify with being close, but still not quite there—always managing to come up just a little short.

Yet we're usually resilient. We get over the slights and learn to live with our longings. We live to endure another day.

## **An unsatisfied lot**

But, no matter how comfortably we seem situated, we often want to be somewhere else doing something different. An actor was so dissatisfied with his life that it was said he didn't want to be anywhere. Others long to be somewhere over the rainbow, as Judy Garland sang in *The Wizard of Oz*. Another time. Another job. Another place. Maybe even another marriage partner. The grass is always greener just over the horizon. We want we know not what.

The wisest of the ancients, King Solomon, observed: "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing" (Ecclesiastes 1:8). Whatever we do in life, it's never quite enough. An undefinable something anxiously and restlessly tugs at our natures. Some of us turn to drugs and too much alcohol, only to find they bring only a temporary respite often

followed by a huge letdown. Ours is an anxious and lonely planet for many people. Reality doesn't meet expectations.

British columnist James Hawes observed: "Most of us spend many of our days, and the odd sleepless Sunday night, in a mixture of vague dissatisfaction with our work and pay, niggling worries about our relationships and health, and low-level fear about our jobs and mortgages" (*The Independent Magazine*, Feb. 15, 1997).

Besides our material desires, we have other longings as well. Whether we live relatively luxuriously or are barely surviving, we yearn for something infinitely more satisfying. We have needs that can be described only as *spiritual*—intangible yet real cravings that nag at our natures.

Solomon also wrote that God "has put eternity in [our] hearts" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Perhaps that explains why some of us attempt to seek out a Shangri-la or fountain of youth, something in the great somewhere that will forever satisfy our unfulfilled longings.

Shake hands among yourselves if you feel this way. Such feelings are common to everybody.

## **The condition**

Most of us know we're missing out on something. This is intrinsic to what some philosophers have called the human condition. Whole areas of understanding are foreign to our life experiences. Essential spiritual knowledge that would assist us in our restless quest for some kind of immortality eludes us.

Our world isn't exactly ideal. We have to make our way in a society whose standards are anywhere from slipping to nonexistent.

Ours are lives that breed dissatisfaction. As the late author Norman Cousins so aptly expressed it: "Much of our ache and brooding are the results of our difficulty in using ourselves fully. We perform compartmentalized tasks in a compartmentalized world. We are reined in—physically, socially, spiritually. Only rarely do we have a sense of fulfilling ourselves through total contact with a total challenge" (*Human Options*, 1981, p. 101).

Yet God, who is revealed in the Bible, does not want human beings, whom He made in His own image, to be dissatisfied for the rest of their lives. He says to the dissatisfied of all generations: "Come for water, all who are thirsty; though you have no money, come, buy grain and eat; come, buy wine and milk, not for money, not for price. Why spend your money for what is not food, your earnings on what fails to satisfy? Listen to me and you will fare well, you will enjoy the fat of the land. Come to me and listen to my words. Hear me and you will have life" (Isaiah 55:1-3, Revised English Bible).

We were born not only to look for, but eventually to find, the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45-46). But few seem to really discover it. Ponce de León wasn't the only man not to find the fabled fountain of youth. He has had plenty of company.

## **Envisioning the future**

Some have found the spiritual answers to the human dilemma. Jesus Christ once said to His disciples, "... Many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Matthew 13:17).

The prophets of whom Jesus Christ spoke sensed an inkling of the golden age to come. They knew the One who would ultimately bring it about. They spoke of Him in their prophecies. However faintly they grasped the full reality, they knew Someone would come into humanity whose mission would culminate with that great city “whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). Plainly the Spirit of Christ was in these Hebrew prophets (1 Peter 1:11).

The apostle Paul wrote of “the revelation of the mystery [which was] kept secret since the world began” (Romans 16:25). The solution to this mystery was not fully known even to those who diligently sought understanding, much less to those only mildly curious. Jesus Christ said to His disciples: “. . . It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [the whole multitude] it has not been given” (Matthew 13:11).

### God’s plan for everybody

God follows a timetable. He is seldom in as great a hurry as we. His plan calls for doors of understanding to be opened a little at a time—initially only to a little flock the Bible terms the firstfruits, then in a future age to come the entire inhabited world, finally culminating in the removal of spiritual blindness from all who have ever lived.

But how do *you* fit into this providential plan? You are reading a magazine called *The Good News*. You are a part of a growing family of readers who, for the most part, seek answers about “the good news,” or the gospel message Jesus brought. Therefore it could be that God is inviting you to become a part of His Kingdom—with the wonderful opportunity to receive as a gift an indescribable taste of “the powers of the age to come” (Hebrews 6:5).

Many are caught up in their day-to-day activities. They show little interest in the things of God and the Bible—and may have to wait for their spiritual opportunities until a later, better age. But, as the writer of the book of Hebrews said in a different context, we are confident of better things concerning you (verse 9).

### An invitation to the Kingdom

A person’s calling to salvation is, of course, God’s choice. We on the *Good News* staff cannot open your mind or call you to Him. That is strictly God’s business (John 6:44, 65) and far beyond our limited

*“These are the words of the LORD who made the earth, who formed and established it . . . If you call to me I shall answer, and tell you great and mysterious things of which you are still unaware.”*

powers. But we are asked to make spiritual knowledge readily and freely available to help sincere inquirers find the truth of God (Matthew 28:18-20).

We can’t tell you everything in one article or even one magazine. That’s why the publishers of *The Good News* offer many basic booklets to further explain and spread this precious spiritual knowledge. Perhaps the one that fits this particular article best is *What Is Your Destiny?* It explains more fully what is missing in your life. It’s free for the asking, along with the companion booklets *The Gospel of the Kingdom* and *Making Life Work*. To obtain these three vital publications, please write to the address of our office nearest you. (For a description of some of our other reader services, please see “*Good News Reader Services*,” below.)

The benefits of knowledge about the age to come are both spiritual and material. God understands we have physical needs, and it is right to seek what we require in an honest and godly manner. Consider the example of Jabez, from the line and family of Judah. The Bible says he “was more honorable than his brothers” (1 Chronicles 4:9).

The Hebrew Scriptures tell us little about his life, but we should take careful note of what God has chosen to reveal. “And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, ‘Oh, that

you would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain.’”

God granted him what Jabez requested (verse 10). Clearly, Jabez was an honorable and righteous man.

A leper implored Jesus, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” Christ’s simple, direct answer was, “I am willing; be cleansed” (Matthew 8:2-3). Elsewhere in the Gospels He said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

He also told us of spiritual principles we must put first in our lives: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [material necessities] shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). God is more than willing to extend His helping hand—often in wonderful ways beyond our human understanding.

### Answers are available

The wise founder of a religious college once said to an eager group of students: “This college is a gold mine, but you’ll have to dig for the precious spiritual knowledge.” The Creator wants us to discover His truth. A kind of partnership exists between God and man.

“Seek, and you shall find,” said Jesus Christ. He also said, “Ask, and it will be given to you” (Matthew 7:7).

The One who made us is more than willing to impart His wondrous truth to the privileged men and women He is calling. Through the prophet Jeremiah He tells us: “These are the words of the LORD who made the earth, who formed and established it; the LORD is his name. If you call to me I shall answer, and tell you great and mysterious things of which you are still unaware” (Jeremiah 33:2-3, Revised English Bible). **GN**

## Good News Reader Services

Please feel free to write us with comments or questions about this or any other article in *The Good News*. Your query may be answered in booklets such as those offered above (*What Is Your Destiny?* and *The Gospel of the Kingdom*) or other literature. Our letter answerers will be glad to help you as well. We at *The Good News* are anxious to serve our readers.

Also, if you would like to counsel with someone in person about spiritual matters, the United Church of God has ministers and other representatives in most parts of the United States and many international areas. They are happy to assist you. Please see the inside front cover of this magazine for the address of our office nearest you.

# WHO IS WINNING *the Battle of the Sexes?*

by David Treybig



On Sept. 20, 1973, two tennis champions squared off in a much-publicized challenge match dubbed the Battle of the Sexes. Representing women was Billie Jean King, a formidable opponent with many Wimbledon titles to her name. Bobby Riggs represented men.

Although Mr. Riggs at 55 was also a former champion, he was 26 years older than the 29-year-old Ms. King.

The match was set up according to the men's standard: The winner would have to win three sets instead of the customary two for women. Using this test of endurance to her advantage, Ms. King made her opponent run as much as possible and pre-

dle domestic duties such as cooking, housecleaning and washing clothes has become an important issue. What does a family do when a husband and wife both have good jobs and one is asked to transfer to another area?

Workplaces can be hostile environments for men and women. Men feel demeaned when a woman (or another man, for that matter) who doesn't know the job is placed over them. Women are insulted when their contributions are either not taken seriously or are not rewarded the same as men's—or when they are the objects of insults and sexual jokes.

The battle between the sexes continues. Are husbands and wives doomed to a life of fighting each other for their

*Are husbands and wives doomed to a life of fighting each other for their rights? Is this what God intended when He made us male and female?*

ailed by scores of 6-4, 6-3 and 6-3.

Billie Jean King's victory in the Battle of the Sexes was symbolic of significant changes in athletic opportunities that were occurring in the United States. Laws were passed requiring colleges, universities and other schools to offer the same number of sports for women as they offered for men. With this change and an overall greater awareness of women's causes, many believed females were on track to receive opportunities and respect equal to men's.

Some 26 years later our society still grapples with the same issues. Though outwardly claiming not to discriminate according to sex, equal pay remains an issue because many companies still pay men more than women do for the same job. As more women work full time outside the home, the decision of who will take care of the children and han-

rights? Is this what God intended when He made us male and female? Let's understand God's instruction book, the Bible, and see where humanity has gone wrong.

## A "very good" plan

A modern, and somewhat biased, account of mankind's creation says God first created man and, after realizing His mistakes, created woman. Such reasoning assumes God made a mistake in creating humanity male and female. Yet the biblical account tells us God described His creative work, including designing people as male and female, as being "very good" (Genesis 1:31). His plan was not flawed. Disharmony between the sexes is not a design problem.

It is also plain from the creation account that both men and women are

made in the image and likeness of God (verses 26-27). If both sexes gave more thought to the awe-inspiring legacy bequeathed to human beings by the eternal God, some of the conflicts we have would appropriately pale into insignificance.

From the outset the creation of Eve from Adam's rib links the first woman and first man together in a particularly important way. They were *literally* made of the same flesh and bone. Being exactly the same flesh, they were a perfect match. Their only difference was their masculinity and femininity.

In teaching that future husbands and wives were to "become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24), God emphasized that the sameness of flesh that Adam and Eve shared was to be a continuing concept for marriages for all time.

Jesus Christ underscored the importance of this concept in His basic teaching about marriage. "But in the beginning, at the creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'That is why a man leaves his father and mother, and is united with his wife, and the two become one flesh.' It follows that they are *no longer two individuals*: they are one flesh" (Mark 10:6-8, Revised English Bible). Christ used the strongest of metaphors to emphasize the intimate and loving relationship a husband and wife were to enjoy in every aspect of their lives.

The apostle Paul upheld this principle and added that it is symbolic of our relationship to Jesus Christ. "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" (Ephesians 5:28-30). God designed a husband and wife to be a close-knit team—not opponents in constant conflict.

### **A shared inheritance**

When we examine the Scriptures, we find, as Paul explained, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

During His earthly ministry, someone asked Jesus about marriage in the Kingdom of God. He responded: "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in

marriage, and they can no longer die" (Luke 20:34-36, New International Version).

Reflecting this common future, Peter admonished husbands and wives to think of themselves as "heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). Husbands and wives are joint or fellow heirs of the Kingdom of God. Men and women have the same glorious spiritual future. Both will be "sons of God" in God's Kingdom (Galatians 3:28; Luke 10:36).

But in this life God has ordained differences between the sexes. God gave men and women strengths complementary to each other. In other words, God has given us different roles. Let's examine two specific areas in which God has ordained varied roles.

### **Different roles in marriage**

God intends husbands and wives to treat each other with love and respect (1 Peter 3:7; Ephesians 5:33). God's way does not authorize abuse or any feelings of superiority. Although the Bible shows husbands and wives have different roles within marriage, they are to treat each other with kindness and honor.

The Bible reveals that within marriage the husband should be the leader. Wives are instructed to "submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything" (Ephesians 5:22-24).

A woman's voluntary acceptance of this role requires spiritual strength. It is a conscious choice godly women make first and foremost because of their respect for Christ. The reality is that no husband can effectively carry out his duties and responsibilities as the head of his family without his wife's cooperation and positive input.

Another important concept to understand is that a husband is to be the head of *his* wife, not the head of every woman he meets. Further, proper leadership within the family flows from a husband's understanding that he, too, is under authority—in this case the loving authority of Jesus Christ.

Even though some husbands' poor choices and actions have made it difficult for their wives to fulfill this role, God's standard remains. As Peter explained, this is something godly women do whether their husbands are godly or not. In such

cases some women have positively influenced their husbands by their good conduct, wisdom and example (1 Peter 3:1-2).

But wives aren't the only ones with a challenging marital role. Husbands have an equally difficult task: loving their wives as Christ loved the Church (Ephesians 5:25-29), especially when their wives act in unloving ways.

A loving husband must put his wife's and family's needs and desires above his own. Consider Christ's example. He died for sinners who put Him to death—not just loyal, friendly people who supported Him and encouraged Him throughout His physical life. Godly husbands and wives try hard to fulfill the roles God has given them within their marriages even though their mates may occasionally be selfish and inconsiderate. God doesn't expect mates to endure cruel abuse, but He does expect us to be tolerant of human frailties. The ideal of marriage is everlasting faithfulness to one's partner, reflecting Christ's unending faithfulness to the Church.

In recent years some have assumed that a husband's leadership within the family has simply been a cultural phenomenon from male-dominated societies and therefore changeable as culture changes. In the truest sense, marital roles *are* cultural matters, but not in the way some have thought.

Throughout time God has invited people to adopt His culture and standards, not fadish human cultural values. Paul and Peter emphasized this principle by explaining that godly culture with different roles for husbands and wives goes back to creation (1 Timothy 2:11-14) and was reflected in former times by holy women and men such as Sarah and Abraham (1 Peter 3:5-6). Godly husbands and wives follow these biblical examples as they make God's culture their culture.

### **Different roles in the Church**

In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul explained to the Christians in Corinth how to conduct religious services. Paul made it clear that the formal speaking role was the responsibility of men (verses 34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-14). This is not a reflection on a woman's spiritual understanding or her innate ability to teach.

The Scriptures are clear that God grants both men and women His Spirit with its accompanying wisdom. At the founding of the Church on Pentecost, God poured out His Spirit on men and women. As Peter

*Continued on page 30*

# What Parents Wish Their Teen



**T**eens, did you know your parents wish they could say yes to your requests more often than they say no?

Parents find themselves in a strait. They want their teens to respect and like them, yet they often must restrict their teens' behavior.

As a parent I often hear, "You don't know what it's like!" For many stressed-out parents that is certainly true. Trying to decide which dance, sleep-over, party or trek to the mall is appropriate, and when it might be putting your teen at risk, takes the wisdom of Solomon. Parents want to believe the best and offer teens the experiences that will help them mature and grow. But often they see their children walking through a minefield in which each step can bring unexpected dangers.

## **Making good decisions**

If you want trust from your parents, you need to learn to make good decisions.

Telling your parents you are staying after school to catch up on your grades by doing extra assignments, and then going to the gym to watch the cheerleaders practice or visiting a friend's house to play basketball, is deceitful. If you want to be trusted, show that

you can be. Learn to be honest and tell your parents your plans. Most parents want to give you freedom to make choices. But you must earn their trust.

Pushing the limits causes stress and tension for everyone. I remember many a night sitting up and waiting for one of my teens to come home, thinking that for every minute that passed after curfew some great tragedy was stalking him or her. Learn to communicate with your parents. Making a phone call and checking in goes a long way toward demonstrating your maturity and respect for them.

## ***Making a phone call and checking in goes a long way toward demonstrating your maturity and respect for them.***

## **Be proactive**

If you want to go places and earn perks from your parents, don't wait to be nagged before doing chores and other work around the house. Emptying the dishwasher or taking out the trash rather than crushing the last milk carton down just millimeters from the top of the trash receptacle might not always get you pats on the back, but little things add up. Learn to make your bed and keep your room clean and neat. You'll be surprised how such actions improve your parents' attitude toward you.

Parents want to say yes, and you can make saying yes much easier for them if you consider your requests from their point of view. What do your parents want and expect from you?

Parents want you to be happy and successful while not getting hurt. The evils that pervade our world are beamed into our living rooms in living color on the nightly news. Remember that your parents are concerned about you and want you to be safe. Pick your friends wisely and introduce them to your parents. Remember that "bad friends will ruin good habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33, New Century Version).

If you want your parents to give you permission to go places with your friends, make sure you cover all the bases. Have a plan.

My son calls it a "proposition" when he unfolds one of the most elaborate schemes you can imagine. He usually thinks of things that he knows I'll quiz him on, like "Who is going?"; "Are there any parents going along?"; "Any girls?" (I wasn't born yesterday); "Where can I reach you?"; and so on. Perhaps it is because he knows the drill, nonetheless he is on the right track. Parents want to say yes

*Continued on page 30*

# What Tee

**P**arents, did you know your teens often want you to say no? Teens live in a fascinating world that few adults born before computers, video games and cable television can understand. Kids are stuck on fast forward. They want everything, and they understand little of the world around them.

But, even if you don't understand the latest styles or have never heard of the songs or artists on your teen's latest CDs, you have much to offer. The role of a parent is that of a coach, mentor and friend. Often, slowing down the pace and halting your teen's hectic life is the best way to prepare him for the challenges of life.

A recent *Newsweek* article summarizes the challenge many parents face: "... To parents and teachers, they [‘tweens,’ or children ages 10-12] can also be a nightmare, aping the hair, clothes and makeup of celebrities twice their age while still throwing tantrums worthy of a 2-year-old. Psychologists worry that in their rush to *act* like grown-ups, these kids will never really learn to *be* grown-up, confusing the appearance of maturity with the real thing" ("The Truth About Tweens," Oct. 18, 1999, pp. 64-65).

### Help to do what is right

Recently a young teenager feeling pressure from his neighborhood peers pleaded with his parents to tell him he couldn't

*Recently a young teenager feeling pressure from his peers pleaded with his parents to tell him he couldn't go out on school nights. He mentioned to his mother and father, "You must help me do what is right."*

go out on school nights. He mentioned to his mother and father, "You must *help me* do what is right." Shockingly—for many parents who feel guilty about spending too much time at work and too little time supervising their children—kids *want* guidance.

Mary (not her real name) was often at home alone. Raising her alone, her mother worked nights as a cocktail waitress. When

camp. When asked if she could hang out with her friends, her answer was that she wasn't allowed out on school nights. Mary told me this was her *own* rule, but she wished her mother had established it.

Children left to rear themselves often feel isolated and alone and are vulnerable to making decisions to do what it takes to find acceptance and support from other teens. What many teens need is precious

***Children left to rear themselves often feel isolated and alone and are vulnerable to making decisions to do what it takes to find acceptance and support from other teens.***

Mary's mother was home, she was often sleeping. Mary's friends were experimenting with drugs and sex, and Mary found it difficult to avoid the pressure of doing what she knew was wrong.

Her excuse to stay away from the pressure was to spend more time in her room watching TV and E-mailing friends from

in our hectic, frenetic life: focused time as a family.

Paul advised parents not to "provoke" their children "to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). To train means to establish a pattern or procedure and require

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# Battle

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publicly explained: “But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy’ (Acts 2:16-18).

Philip the evangelist had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9). *Prophecy* comes from the Greek word *propheteia* and signifies “the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God” (*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 1985, “Prophecy, Prophesy, Prophesying”). It should not be thought of strictly as telling the future. “. . . Prophecy is not necessarily, nor even primarily, foretelling. It is the declaration of that which cannot be known by natural means . . . whether with reference to the past, the present, or the future . . .” (ibid.).

Most often it is simply reflective of conveying spiritual wisdom. Some of the biblically approved ways for women to “prophesy” include teaching children (Proverbs 1:8) and other younger women (Titus 2:3-5). One thinks of “the words of King Lemuel” in Proverbs 31, “the prophecy that his mother taught him” (verse 1).

Although women may teach spiritual principles, according to Paul’s instruction they are not to preach during formal religious services. Note the example of Priscilla, whom Paul called one of his “fellow workers in Christ Jesus” (Romans 16:3-4).

“Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately” (Acts 18:24-26, NIV). In the privacy of their home, Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, taught Apollos spiritual principles he did not yet understand.

It is worth noting that Aquila and Priscilla are each mentioned six times in the New Testament—never separately but

always together as a team. Sometimes one is named first and sometimes the other. People just didn’t think of Aquila without thinking of Priscilla, and vice versa. This is perhaps the ideal New Testament example of oneness, togetherness and teamwork in a marriage—perhaps the personification of Christ’s teaching that “they are no longer two individuals.”

Since the apostle Paul is the author of the directives that women are to keep silent in religious services, some have theorized that he was a backward thinker whose writings reflected his bias against women. But should his instruction be understood as merely a personal preference?

Perhaps realizing that some may mistakenly view his statements in 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 about women not speaking at services as just his own idea, Paul added that “the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord” (verse 37). Paul’s teaching was God’s instruction, not just an expression of his personal opinion.

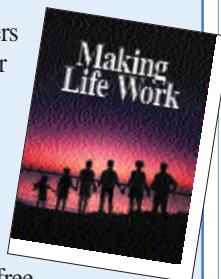
## And the winners are . . .

Now that we have examined the scriptural roles of males and females, it is time to abandon the concept of the battle of the sexes.

The real winners are those who are not fighting against the roles God has given the sexes. The winners are husbands and wives who respect God’s standards and understand that we are joint heirs of the coming Kingdom of God who follow the inspired apostle’s instruction in Titus 3:2 to “speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all.” This is the correct formula for successful male-female and marital relationships. This is how to make marriage work! **GN**

### RECOMMENDED READING

How can you experience a giving, loving marriage? What does it take to build respectful, thriving families? The answers have been around for ages, but few have been willing to give them a try. Discover these and many other secrets for success in *Making Life Work*. For your free copy, contact us at our address nearest you listed on page 2 or visit our Web site at [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org).



# Parents

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but want you to consider the risks.

It is my policy to try to say yes to as many requests of my teenagers as I can. But I have standards. I say, “Yes you can—if you can answer my concerns.”

This often makes a challenge out of the normal concerns that parents have about the risks that face teens. “If you can work out the transportation, if you can get home by your curfew, if you can promise me that adults are present, if you can get your homework and chores done,” and so on.

## Learning to take a no

An important step is learning to accept no as an answer. Many times parents have their reasons for saying they don’t feel your social plans are the best idea. A rebuttal to parents’ real and imagined concerns seems natural for most teenagers. My advice is to defer to your parents with respect and dignity. Often your willingness to accept their decisions will allow them to reconsider after a discussion.

I do know that raising your voice, slamming the door and throwing a tantrum make matters only worse. Even if you wear your parents down and get your way, you still lose. You lose respect and demonstrate immaturity—two factors that will likely undermine your chances to participate in future opportunities.

Growing up is difficult at best in our hectic and emotionally draining society. Often teens try to fit in and find acceptance among fickle peers whose demeanor masks their insecurities. God intended a stable family to be the backbone of society. Make that backbone work for you. Grow closer to your parents by sharing your life with them and asking for their help.

Parents do want to say yes to your wants and needs. But most of all they want you to make that decision easier for them by showing you’re thinking about your choices. Be proactive. Keep a good attitude. Learn to take a no and communicate often with your parents about what is going on in your life.

Remember Ephesians 6:1: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise.” You might be surprised how many times you will hear: “Yes. Have a good time, and be safe.” **GN**

# Teens

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compliance. Offering a consistent approach to your family is like having visible, clear boundaries around your property.

Teens would rather see a sermon than hear one. If you live by values in your own life, it is far more reasonable to expect your teens to imitate you. Telling your son or daughter not to smoke while lighting up can be transparently hypocritical. Values such as honesty, controlling your anger and showing respect for others are not as obvious, but are valuable in coaching young minds.

## Teens need responsibility

Help your children by defining their roles in the family and including a sense of responsibility. It wasn't too many years ago that many families lived on family farms. Chores and others responsibilities were a way of life.

Today's teens often don't feel needed or vital to the welfare of the family. Parents do well to include responsibilities and chores in the daily lives of their children. Teens need discretionary money, perhaps in the form of an allowance. However, chores should be considered a necessary part of working together as a family. They help knit the family as a team.

Other ways of developing needed structure are to have meals together and create some family rituals. At our house the Friday-evening meal is a popular tradition that includes a special candlelight meal, peaceful mood music and a fire in the fireplace (yes, often even in the summer). My oldest daughters, although no longer living at home, often reminisce about these special family times. Many a discussion on Friday evening opened windows of opportunity for my wife and me to teach and serve as mentors.

Teens want parents to know they need them; they want them to act like parents. The book of Proverbs mentions that parents should "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). Too many moms and dads become absentee parents while fantasizing that the outward poise and brashness of their teens mean they want to be left alone. Teens need and want their parents' love and guidance. Be there for them and don't be afraid to sometimes say no. **GN**

## Who Are We?

### Who's Behind The Good News?



**W**ho is behind *The Good News* magazine? Many readers have wondered who we are and how we are able to provide *The Good News* free to anyone who requests it.

Simply put, *The Good News* is provided by people—people from all walks of life, from all over the world.

But those people share a goal: to proclaim the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all the world as a witness and to teach all nations to observe what Christ commanded (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).

We are dedicated to proclaiming the same message Jesus Christ brought: the wonderful *good news* of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43, 8:1). Gospel means "good news," and from this *The Good News* gets its name.

The message Jesus brought truly is good news: the answer to all mankind's problems. Through the pages of *The Good News* and various booklets (also free) we show the biblical answers to the dilemmas that have defied human solution and threaten the very survival of humankind.

We are committed to taking that message to the entire world, sharing the truth of God's purpose and plan for us as taught by Jesus Christ. Jesus also told His followers, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). He freely shared this message with us; we freely share it with all who ask.

Jesus also commanded His followers to feed His sheep (John 21:15-17). To fulfill this command, the United Church of God has congregations and ministers around the world. In these congregations believers assemble to be instructed from the Scriptures and to fellowship. For locations and times of services in your area, write or call us at the addresses listed inside. Visitors are always welcome.



**F**or additional information, you can use your computer to access our World Wide Web site on the Internet. The address [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org) gives you access to general information, back issues of *The Good News*, booklets and more.

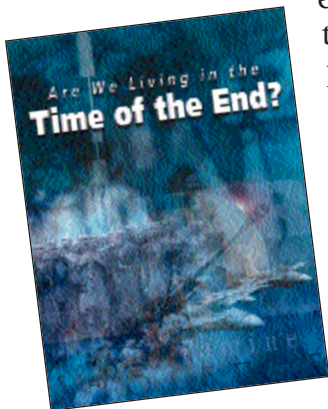


United Church of God  
an International Association

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# What Does Bible Prophecy Tell Us About the Time of the End?

For thousands of years people have been fascinated with predictions of the end of the world. If we look into the inspired writings of the biblical prophets and apostles, we find many prophecies that refer to the time of the end. Should we take them seriously? Are world conditions such that the predictions could be fulfilled in our day?



Jesus Christ Himself talked of a future time so horrendous that no human beings would be spared "unless those days were shortened" (Matthew 24:22). Did He have our time in mind?

Many prophecies leave us in no doubt that increasingly cataclysmic events will occur before God's direct intervention in human affairs. These terrifying prophecies will see their fulfillment at some future time. The crucial question is *when*.

This eye-opening booklet examines exactly what Jesus Christ, His apostles and the prophets of old really said about the intriguing days they refer to as the time of the end. Request your free copy today!

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