

July/August 1999

# The Good News



## When Time and Chance Happen to You

Youth Violence: Where Does the Blame Lie? • Do You Have an Immortal Soul?  
If Children Could Pick Their Parents • After Kosovo: Power Shift Taking Place?

## Where Do We Go From Here?

Rarely does a day go by when we don't read or hear of a senseless tragedy, a life cut short.

A drunk driver plows into a car, killing an entire family. A child drowns, ending a life that had scarcely begun. A lonely and troubled teenager ends her torment by taking her own life. A madman, heeding the call of his personal demons, guns down several people who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. In a dusty, drought-stricken wasteland, a hungry mother cradles her emaciated son as the light slowly ebbs from his eyes.

We wonder at the meaning and the randomness of it all and think to ourselves that we're glad it wasn't us.

*The Good News* is dedicated to answering the big questions of life: Why are we here? Where are we going? Is there a God, and if so why does He allow suffering and tragedies? What do we face at the end of this life?

Regardless of our hopes and dreams, one thing's for sure: We all face the certainty of death. Whether through illness, accident, random violence or old age, we will die.

What does this mean? Is death the end? Is life a brief moment of consciousness in an eternity of nothingness?

The late astronomer and author Carl Sagan wondered about these questions as he saw his own death approaching. "I would love to believe that when I die I will live again, that some thinking, feeling, remembering part of me will continue," he said. "But, much as I want to believe that, and despite the ancient and worldwide cultural traditions that assert an afterlife, I know of nothing to suggest that it is more than wishful thinking."

Is this what we have to look forward to?

Dr. Sagan, like thousands of scientists before and since, spent decades trying to discover the meaning of life and how it began, but without success. In spite of his brilliance, he spent his life looking for answers in all the wrong places.

He didn't heed the advice of King Solomon, who reveals to us where we should begin our search for answers to the great questions. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding," he wrote (Proverbs 9:10).

To understand what happens after death, shouldn't we look to the words of the One who gave us life? Wouldn't the Creator of life be the One best to explain the mystery of death?

Over the millennia mankind has evolved all kinds of ideas about the possibility of life after death. Millions believe in reincarnation, that they will live again with a new human or animal body. Millions more believe we possess immortal souls, that though our physical bodies may die our souls live forever.

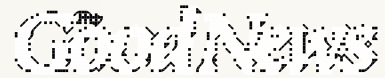
Many believe we are destined for eternal bliss in heaven or everlasting torment in hell. Some think God predestined each of us for one of those fates, that, regardless of our words and deeds, at death some will receive eternal ecstasy and others eternal agony.

Such beliefs, however, raise even more questions. For example, why would anyone want to worship a God who would willingly and deliberately torture some of His children in hell forever?

Many people are shocked to find their beliefs about what happens after death aren't found in the Bible at all but came from philosophers and pre-Christian religions. Such beliefs often paint a distorted view of God and His purpose for us.

Where do we go from here? That's a good question, and you need to know the answers. A good place to start is in the pages of your Bible and this issue of *The Good News*.

—Scott Ashley



July/August 1999 Volume 4, Number 4

*The Good News* (ISSN: 1086-9514) is published bimonthly by the United Church of God, an International Association, 5405 DuPont Circle, Suite A, Milford, OH 45150. © 1999 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. Periodicals Postage paid at Milford, Ohio 45150 and at additional mailing offices.

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,  
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Scriptural references in *The Good News* are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., publishers) unless otherwise noted.

#### 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 7ZF, England  
Phone: 0181-386-8467 Fax: 01257-453978

**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)

**French-speaking areas:** United Church of God  
P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027  
Phone: (513) 576-9796

**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 4345, 2125 Randburg, South Africa  
Phone: 011 886-4650 Fax: 011 886-7610  
Web site address: [www.ucg.org.za](http://www.ucg.org.za)

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

Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement Number 1487140.  
Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to  
*The Good News*, Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027.

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# When Time and Cha

*We live in a world in which tragic accidents are a fact of life. "Time and chance" affect us all, wrote King Solomon. What lessons do tragedies hold for us? When tragedy strikes, where should our thoughts turn?*

by John Miller

**I**t was a warm, summer morning in New Bedford, Ohio. Soft breezes gently swayed the leaves on the maple tree in the front yard of our home. It was July 17, 1986. I had the day off work. It was promising to be an enjoyable one with my family.

The children were up out of bed, and Jonathan, our 1-year-old, was bouncing on my knee.

My wife enjoyed one of those peak moments of life that morning: Jonathan said "Mama" for the first time.



*The Miller family today: From left, Mary Ann, Susan, John and Daniel.*

Later that same morning Daniel and Mary Ann, our two older children, watched as I adjusted the brakes on our Pontiac. In spite of busy fingers, dirty faces and countless questions, I completed the job in record time.

Then the children stepped back so I could test the brakes. I got into the car, shifted to reverse and slowly began to back up when I felt a sudden, unexpected bump.

The children screamed.

What toy had I run over? I wondered.

So I continued to back up, expecting to see a smashed little red wagon. Instead I saw, there in the driveway, the lifeless body of Jonathan.

I jumped out of the car, and as I ran to my youngest son many questions raced through my mind. How could this have happened? How did he get under the car without my seeing him? I thought Jonathan was still in the house! How would I tell my wife? How could I comfort the children when I had just killed their brother?

My wife came running as the children looked on stunned. We stood there, numb in shock and grief, as we realized Jonathan was dead. What could we do? Where could we go for help?

Seek God, I thought. But then I wondered, Will God support me when I have just killed my son?

We called paramedics and accompanied our children into the house. A day that had begun so pleasantly had become a nightmare.

## **Tragedy becomes real**

We live in a world of tragedies. We read of them in the newspaper and see them on television. We think they happen to other people but not to us. I know now, as the police reminded me that awful day, that these things can happen to anyone. The grim reality is that, even as you are reading this article, someone somewhere is experiencing a tragedy similar to ours.

How can we deal with such devastating circumstances? How do you pull through without your life disintegrating? Can you ever again enjoy life after such a tragedy, or are you doomed to suffer through an endless series of nightmares?

From experience I can say that, yes, you can eventually enjoy life, even after the worst of tragedies. Eventually the pain subsides. If handled properly, the memory of the tragedy can serve as a motivation that will bring positive changes to your life.

Perhaps this article—a message from one who has been there—will bring hope and encouragement to people who have experienced similar trials.

## **Time and chance**

The first thing that comes to mind in the aftermath

# ance Happen to You



of a tragedy is the big question why. Why did this happen? Why did it happen to me? Why did it happen to my loved one?

On the heels of those thoughts and emotions come the if-onlies. If only I had done this or not done that. If only I had known my baby was under the car.

But the reality is that I did not know. If I had known, the accident would not have occurred.

King Solomon pondered these questions when he set his heart “to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 1:13). After his study of the vagaries and uncertainties of human experience, he concluded that “time and chance happen to them all” (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

Time and chance had paid us a visit. Jonathan, whom I had last seen as a bouncing baby in the house, was lured by curiosity to creep underneath the car. Why didn’t he come to the side of the car where I was working so I would have been aware he was there? Why did he crawl beneath the car where I couldn’t see him? How did he get there in the first place? Why did he happen to be positioned in the path of the tire the moment I backed up?

God intervenes powerfully for His people on many occasions. But, as Solomon pointed out, time and chance affect us all.

### Help from God

When time and chance happen to His people, God sometimes chooses not to

## The first thing that usually comes to mind in the aftermath of a tragedy is the big question why? Why did this happen? Why did it happen to me?

intervene when He sees that His intervention would not work to our ultimate good. Nevertheless, He promises that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Furthermore, God promises we will not suffer anything that is not common to man or more than we can bear. Most important, God always provides a way of escape to endure such trials (1 Corinthians 10:13).

These promises are certain, and my family found great comfort in them. Yes, God allows trials for our ultimate good, but He always provides a way out. Often in the aftermath of a tragedy we find ourselves in a state of shock. We need something as

solid as a rock to anchor to—and that rock is Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4). Friends can help, but ultimately God is the One who sees us through and heals our wounds.

Jesus Christ knows that a natural human emotion is grief. We mourn when a loved one dies, especially when one dies unexpectedly. In the hours just before His crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples He would “go away”; He would die. “But because I have said these things to you,” He said, “sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away . . .” (John 16:5-7).

Can you imagine how the disciples must have felt when they heard their Leader say this? But then He gave the key to dealing with tragedy and overcoming long-term mental and emotional distress: “. . . For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send [it] to you” (John 16:7).

Jesus was sending help, and that help would guide, strengthen, comfort and empower His people at all times, especially when they were in trouble. This helper is none other than the very power of God, the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:19).

Luke wrote that the brethren in the early Church, after experiencing great persecution and witnessing the martyrdom of Stephen, “had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied” (Acts 9:31; see also Acts 4:1-31; 5:17-42; 6:8-15; 7:1-60).

Paul wrote to Timothy to urge him “to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:6-7).

During a time of tragedy, more than anything else we need love, comfort and a strong, sound mind filled with wisdom to maneuver through the emotional jungle. Such help is readily available. God promises His Spirit and a liberal supply of wisdom to those who ask Him (Luke 11:13; James 1:5).

### Accepting reality

The first step toward a healthy recovery

from debilitating tragedy is to accept the reality of what happened. This is a necessary step, even though it may seem easier, at first, not to face it.

Reality can be excruciating, even nightmarish, but it is necessary to deal openly with events and discuss them, especially with your immediate family and close friends. You need not be ashamed of your emotions.

I remember recounting the event to a close friend and finding great comfort in doing so.

In our case the whole family was at the scene of the accident. Two of our children saw their beloved younger brother die. The experience was traumatic for them, but children have an amazing ability to come to grips with abnormal circumstances if they are simply told the truth. They accept reality and God’s promises with an inspiring innocent faith that adults would do well to develop.

Our children immediately accepted and were soothed by God’s promise of a future resurrection for their little brother.

Knowing the truth about life after death was of great comfort to us and gave us hope. We knew our son would live again (see “The Resurrection: The Astounding Truth,” page 8, and “What Does the Bible Say About the Immortal Soul?,” page 14). This reassuring knowledge helped us accept the reality of what had happened.

### Pitfalls to avoid

In charting your way through the maze of emotions, you need to avoid certain things. Otherwise you may cause yourself much additional pain.

The first thing our pastor told my family when he arrived at our home was, “Whatever you do, don’t start blaming each other or God.” I will be forever grateful for this wise counsel. It helped us avoid many pitfalls.

It is only natural to want to blame something or someone for what happened, but that is a useless, unproductive waste of time. No matter how much blame or accusation is leveled against something or someone, it will not change the reality of what occurred. It will only extend the emotional anguish and prolong the process of accepting what happened.

This, of course, does not mean that if criminal activity were involved appropriate legal action should not be pursued,

but leave that to the lawyers and courts. Don't allow a court of accusers to convene in your mind. It will only perpetuate the misery.

It is especially important not to accuse or lay blame if a member of the family appears to have been the cause of the accident. In our situation this was the case. This could have been fertile ground for accusations, blame and hurtful arguments.

## The grim reality was that our situation was exactly what Solomon described—a product of time and chance. Sometimes, no matter how careful you are, accidents can and will happen.

However, we realized we needed each other's encouragement and comfort, not accusations. This realization saved us untold grief and greatly strengthened our relationship.

The grim reality was that our situation was exactly as Solomon described—a product of time and chance. As the police officer told me that day, sometimes, no matter how careful you are, accidents will happen.

### Dealing with emotions

At times like this many strong emotions come forth, ranging from anger to guilt, from anxiety to utter despair. These are entirely normal during bereavement. It is important to bring and keep them out in the open until the healing is complete. Make sure family communication stays strong. Discuss the tragedy as often as necessary to allow each family member to come to terms with it.

This is especially important with children. They may be little, but their minds hold an amazing capacity to discern fact from fiction. They find comfort in facts but feel insecure and distressed when they hear vague answers.

Emotions are a natural reaction to human experience. They help us develop sensitivity and compassion for others. We begin to understand why and how God is sensitive to our needs.

### Allowing tragedy to change you

After you have accepted the reality of what has occurred, it is important to ask yourself some questions: How can this help me make positive changes in my life? What can I possibly learn from this experience that will improve my life and the lives of others? What could be the reasons God

allowed me to suffer like this?

Notice the words of Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3). This is an apt description of God, and in the next verse the apostle gives one reason God allows us to suffer: He "comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those

who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:4).

These are insightful words indeed! God expects us to use our experiences to *comfort others* in the same way He comforts us. In the process of doing so we find the greatest comfort of all—joy. You will find joy as you reach out to others, comforting and encouraging them with the sensitivity you have to their circumstance because of your own experience.

The amazing thing is that you will find this will speed your healing process like ointment in a wound. This is why Paul could say: "I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation" (2 Corinthians 7:4).

The second great benefit that can come from a tragic experience is an unrelenting motivation to enter God's Kingdom. The death of a loved one should naturally fill us with a sense of obligation and responsibility to seek that Kingdom—if not for our own benefit, certainly for the benefit of the deceased.

For me, the death of our son has served as the single biggest motivation in my life. It has helped me focus on what is most important: seeking first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). When we seek the Kingdom of God, He promises us an abundant life (John 10:10). A better and more meaningful family life is sure to result when you focus on the Kingdom of God and use your experiences to help others by showing compassion and encouraging them.

### Looking forward

The final step is to look to the future. The Bible is replete with promises of a future life for the deceased. Jesus himself said, "He who believes in Me, though he

may die, he shall live" and "the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth" (John 11:25; 5:28-29). The prophet Ezekiel saw the resurrection of the dead in a vision from God and graphically recorded it for us in Ezekiel 37.

I remember my first thought when I saw my son dead in the driveway: He *will* live again. He *will* be resurrected to life.

It is important to talk about the deceased as years go by, to keep them a part of the family. We have had many inspiring discussions with our children about their brother and what things will be like in the new life. They know and understand God's promise of a better life in this world to come.

Zechariah prophesied a time when "old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets" (Zechariah 8:4-5).

This is most assuredly not a description of Jerusalem today, but it is the sure reality of the world tomorrow.

Time and chance are a reality we face. They are simply a part of life. But, with God's loving help, His healing comfort, tragic experiences can motivate us to a more positive and abundant life, one that is focused on the Kingdom of God. **GN**

### Recommended Reading

What really happens when a loved one dies? Is this life all there is? Do some of the dead spend an eternity in heaven? Could an all-loving, all-merciful God sentence some of His children to eternal, excruciating torture in hell?

You need to discover the vital truth from the pages of your Bible. You can understand what the Bible really says when you request your free copy of *What Happens After Death?* It's yours for the asking when you contact our office in your country, or the country nearest you, listed on page 2. You can also download this and other booklets from the literature library of our Web site at [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org).



# The Resurrection: *The Astounding Truth*

**T**he beginning of “When Time and Chance Happen to You” (see page 4) describes the circumstances under which my wife and I lost our young son. After the accident, as I held his broken body in my arms for the last time, a deep realization dawned on me: This was not the end.

In a flash an amazing biblical truth became clear: My son would live again! The words of Jesus Christ—“for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth” (John 5:28-29)—suddenly took on new meaning.

The concept of a resurrection to life—a biblical teaching few understand—was no longer an intangible promise in the pages of the Bible. The resurrection suddenly became a real event for me. I saw it for the first time for what it is: a commitment from Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus Christ is committed to “the hour” when we can again meet our little boy whom I was bidding farewell. That time will be a joyous family reunion, one we cannot afford to miss, no matter the cost.

## Hope amid tragedy

We had Jonathan’s funeral the next day. The funeral director gave us a little white casket, his way of expressing sympathy in our time of loss. In the small parlor of his establishment my family and our relatives and friends paid Jonathan our respects.

The words of our pastor, spoken as I sat in the front row with my wife and two remaining children, ring in my ears to this day: “We are assembled here today on a very sobering occasion. The life of young Jonathan was snuffed out ever so quickly. But God’s Word shows us that he will live again.”

Then he proceeded to expound God’s message of hope through the resurrection made possible by Jesus Christ.

As I looked at the little white casket, I wanted to weep, but I couldn’t. That would come later. God’s revelation through His Word was too profound. Scriptures I had read many times suddenly came alive with deep meaning. The vision of hope that had inspired me in the driveway within moments of Jonathan’s death began to assume new dimensions.

The promise of a resurrection to life was not just for me, not just for my family, not just for Jonathan. I began to realize this promise was about a family reunion on an unparalleled scale for the family of man.

Death knows no social and economic boundaries, but neither does the resurrection by which victory is promised: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive,” declared the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Death seems so final. Death leaves gaping voids and numb and bewildered survivors in its wake. My wife and our other children know. We’ve been there. We laid little Jonathan to rest in a tiny grave and went home with an indescribable void in our hearts.

But death is not final. It is simply an interval before the life to come. The pain of death for those of us left behind is real, but so is the promise of the resurrection that will reunite us with our loved ones.

The promise of the resurrection has powerfully affected my family and me. It has brought much comfort and inspired abundant hope.

Confusion abounds on the subject of death. Many who are unfamiliar with the promises in the Bible have much needless fear of the unknown. But God’s Word provides answers—real answers—that give hope and comfort.

The truth of the resurrection is profound, and you can discover it yourself in the pages of your Bible.

We begin our journey in the book of Revelation, which provides a fascinating picture of mankind’s future. This prophetic book

provides a chronological framework of many end-time events, including the resurrections.

The 19th chapter of Revelation sets the stage by describing the glorious return of Jesus Christ to earth. The heavens open and Christ rides out on a white horse followed by the armies of God. At this moment the people of God from all ages, past and present, are reunited in one dramatic event described by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians:

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

At this momentous time God’s people from all ages receive eternal life in the family of God! As “heirs of God” and “joint heirs” with Jesus Christ, they are glorified with Him to become like Him in the truest sense (Romans 8:17; 1 John 3:2). The resurrection will be a dramatic reunion as the patriarchs of old, together with their brethren in Christ, attain what they awaited for so long—a “better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35; Daniel 12:13)

The story continues. Jesus Christ and His heavenly forces crush the rebellious armies of earth in a colossal battle. An angel binds Satan so he cannot influence humankind (Revelation 19:14-21; 20:1-3). Finally the world will be at one with God as Jesus and the resurrected saints usher in the long-awaited Kingdom of God.

The resurrected saints immediately inherit responsibilities. They have work to do, and Christ enlists the active participation of His brethren. The resurrected saints receive “thrones,” say the Scriptures, along with “judgment.” They reign with Christ for 1,000 years and then into eternity (Revelation 20:4).

A new and glorious age of peace and prosperity is a reality. Surely this is an event no Christian would want to miss. Surely there can be no greater victory over death than to participate in this “better resurrection.”

## What will the resurrected saints do?

The teachings of traditional Christianity often depict the blessed saints floating on clouds in heaven, strumming on harps and basking in the bliss of the eternal presence of God.

But the Bible paints quite a different picture of the future God has planned for the resurrected faithful.

Jesus Christ makes “them kings and priests . . . and they shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10). They play an important part in a plan God designed to engage and benefit all—righteous leadership and spiritual education for everyone.

The Bible reveals to us the responsibilities that will be given to some after this resurrection. Jesus Christ assumes the role of King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16). King David is resurrected as king over Israel (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 37:24), and each of the 12 apostles will rule over one of the tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28).

In this resurrection all will be given rulership and responsibility, apparently administering different locales and cities (Luke 19:11-27), according to their ability and faithfulness.

Resurrected saints are not destined to tune harps for all eternity. They are meant to *change the world*. Indeed, the Bible foretells unparalleled prosperity as Christ and His resurrected brethren work to build a new and wonderful world, a kingdom governed by the laws of the living God. (For more information about this wonderful time, please request *The Gospel of the Kingdom* and *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.)

But what about other people, those who do not attain this “better resurrection”? Will they miss out simply because they did not

know? Will they suffer eternal damnation for failing to serve a God they had no idea even existed?

God says unequivocally He loves the whole world (John 3:16). Can God, who declares such love for all humanity, condemn people for not believing in a Being they never knew?

What about those who died prematurely and tragically? What about our son Jonathan, whose life was snuffed out in his innocence with no chance to know Christ? What is the fate of all those who have died at a tender age?

The answer is simple: God fulfills His purpose one step at a time. No one is left out. No one is forgotten. The first and "better" resurrection, far from being a case of divine preferential treatment, simply sets the stage for the capstone of God's great plan to save the rest of mankind.

We pick up the story in Revelation, where we find that "the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished" (Revelation 20:5). If the first resurrection were magnificent because of the glorification of the saints, the second resurrection is marvelous because of its sheer numbers. Imagine how many billions of people

## Death knows no socioeconomic boundaries, but neither does the resurrection by which victory is promised: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive," declared the apostle Paul.

will be part of the resurrection of "the rest of the dead" when we consider how many people must have lived and died over the centuries.

The apostle John describes the second resurrection: "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it . . . And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to the things written in the books" (Revelation 20:11-12).

This is a great deal of information for only two verses. Let's let the Bible explain each aspect.

### Small and great before God's throne

The apostle John sees the formerly deceased, small and great, standing alive before the throne of God. What is the nature of their resurrection?

The prophet Ezekiel provides us with some specifics. Let's listen in to the dialogue between God and Ezekiel as the Creator shows the prophet a valley full of dry bones. "And He said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?'" (Ezekiel 37:3).

Notice God engaging Ezekiel in His powerful and extraordinary message. He admonishes Ezekiel: "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: 'Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you and you shall live . . .'" (verses 4-6).

What a challenge for Ezekiel! He was to prophesy to a massive accumulation of bones and tell them they would live again.

When Ezekiel prophesied as commanded, notice what happened: ". . . There was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over" (verses 7-8). Then "breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army" (verse 10).

So here we read, in much greater detail, what is described in the prophetic framework of the book of Revelation as part of "the dead, small and great, standing before God" (Revelation 20:12).

God brings them up out of their graves as described in Ezekiel's vision and restores them to physical life for a time.

Imagine what a grand reunion this will be. How many families will reunite? How many children will arise and look for their parents? How many grandparents and great-grandparents will see their posterity for the first time?

How many people do you know who will be there in this grand restoration to life? Will you be there to greet them?

### The books are opened

God does not do anything capriciously. He brings people back to life for the special purpose He describes in His dialogue with Ezekiel: "*Then you shall know that I am the LORD*" (Ezekiel 37:6, emphasis added). God brings them back to life not to condemn them but to give them *the opportunity to genuinely know Him for the first time.*

How do we get to know God? We know Him through His Word. This truth harmonizes perfectly with the statement about "books" being "opened" in Revelation 20:12. The Greek word for "books" in this passage is *biblia* and is used to refer to the books of the Bible (Luke 4:17, 20; John 20:30; Revelation 22:7, 9, 10, 18, 19). For the first time these people have the opportunity to get know God and His Word.

Billions of people have lived and died without having heard of God and His Word. Billions who heard of God and His Word died without really understanding it. Untold billions of children have died in innocence before they had a chance to know God and commit their lives to Him.

These people will live again in the flesh in the resurrection described by Ezekiel. But they have more than physical life to look forward to as "another book is opened, which is the Book of Life" (same verse).

God will not resurrect these people just so they can again enjoy physical life. He will bring them back because He wants to give them *the opportunity for eternal life* through His Spirit.

God describes His intentions for those brought to life in this resurrection: "'I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it,' says the LORD" (Ezekiel 37:14).

The Bible paints a dramatically different, but clear, picture of the resurrection and judgment compared with the hellfire-and-brimstone concept held by many people. God is a merciful and loving Being who brings people out of their graves not to condemn them but to offer them the opportunity they never had: eternal life through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

This does not mean that God does not hold them accountable for their words and deeds. Indeed, He will judge them "according to their works." But He will judge them only *after* they fully realize what He would have them do.

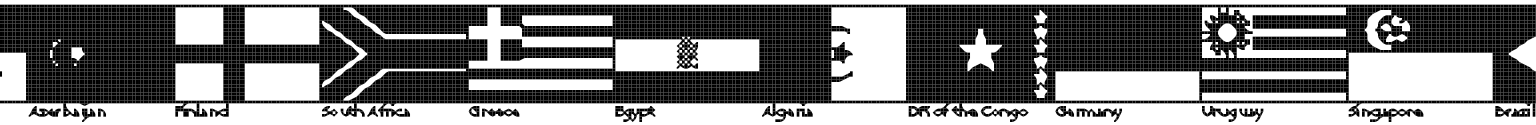
Isn't it comforting and encouraging to know that God does not show partiality, that He offers equal opportunity for salvation to all who have ever lived?

Much more can be said about the resurrections to life, but one thing is sure: They provide hope and comfort to people who face the reality of their own mortality or the death of a loved one. The promise of a resurrection provides a concrete explanation of the fate of the deceased. More important, it promises reunification in a grand family reunion.

For members of my family and me, the coming reunion is an event we eagerly await. This promise of hope has profoundly affected each of us. It has been and remains a catalyst, a flame burning deep within us, that prods us toward the finish line when we will once again see and hold our son Jonathan.

May this vision also comfort, inspire and motivate you.

—John Miller



# An Overview of Condi

## European army or NATO?

Former Italian prime minister Romano Prodi, incoming president of the European Commission, has called for the creation of a European army as the next logical step in Europe's integration. Signor Prodi spoke of Europe being marginalized unless it possessed its own defense forces rather than having to rely so heavily on the United States military.

The British government was shocked by Signor Prodi's replies to an interview on the BBC's *On the Record*. John Maples, Conservative Party spokesman

on military matters, was pointed in his rejoinder: "This is yet another step towards a European state. The single currency, a single fiscal policy, a common foreign policy and joint armed force constitute a state."

In the wake of bombing accidents in Yugoslavia, some have suggested scrapping NATO. Wrote British journalist Robert Fisk: "As a citizen of the new, modern Europe . . . I don't want Europe to be 'protected' by the U.S. If that means the end of the Atlantic Alliance, so be it . . . Until it is, Europe will never—ever—take responsibility for itself or for the dictators that threaten our society . . . Until NATO is dead, there will never be a real European defence force."

The drive for European unity appears to be relentless. While Mr. Prodi spoke of achieving an army separate from NATO, "Germany's [defense minister] Rudolf Scharping gave

*"As a citizen of the new, modern Europe . . . I don't want Europe to be 'protected' by the U.S. . . . Until NATO is dead, there will never be a real European defence force."*

a December 2000 deadline for the establishment of a rapid response infrastructure that will end dependence on the U.S.," reported Mr. Fisk.

Actually, NATO itself has already taken a significant step in the direction of such an army. According to a *Daily Mail* report from Washington, "NATO agreed to make a huge chunk of its military capability available to the European Union to use as it pleases when conflicts flare across the continent." This decision was made during NATO's 50th anniversary celebration in the United States.

The British are understandably nervous about these developments and say they feel seriously threatened by the steady, unabated erosion of their national sovereignty.

Leaders in the highest echelons on the Continent have periodically spoken of a United States of Europe that eventually would wield enormous powers over member states. (Sources: *The Times* [London]; *The Daily Mail* [London]; *The Independent* [London].)

## Universal papal authority

An Anglican and Roman Catholic joint commission has recognized the pope's overall spiritual authority, depicting the pope as a "gift to be received by all churches."

The archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, commented: "In a world torn apart by violence and division, Christians urgently need to speak with a common voice, confident of the authority of the gospel of peace."

After five years of intense debate, the commission published a 50-page paper. Its conclusion, unsettling to some, was that "only the Pope has the moral authority to unite the various Christian denominations." Said the Anglican bishop of Arundel and Brighton: "The primacy of the Pope is a gift to be shared." (Source: *Electronic Telegraph* [Britain].)

## Golan Heights to be offered for peace?

According to *The Sunday Times*, Israel's prime minister-elect, Ehud Barak, will push to offer Syria the Golan Heights in return for a peace agreement in an important step ending 50 years of hostility between the Jewish state and the Arab world.

As a part of a proposed comprehensive peace settlement, Israel would insist on demilitarized strips of land 15 miles wide on either side of the border, plus American and perhaps European troops manning key points on the Golan itself. Mr. Barak also wants an Israeli embassy in Damascus, along with full and friendly trade relations with Syria.

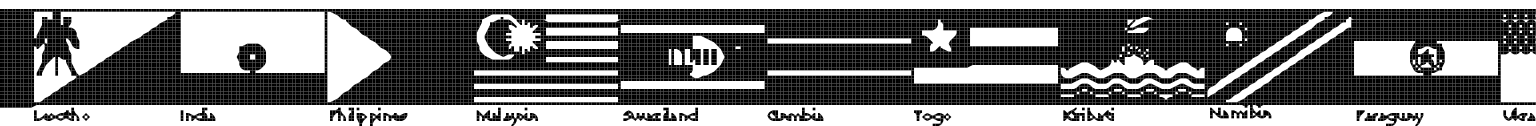
Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria during the Six Day War of June 1967. An important question remains: Can Israel successfully trade territory for peace? (Source: *The Sunday Times* [London].)

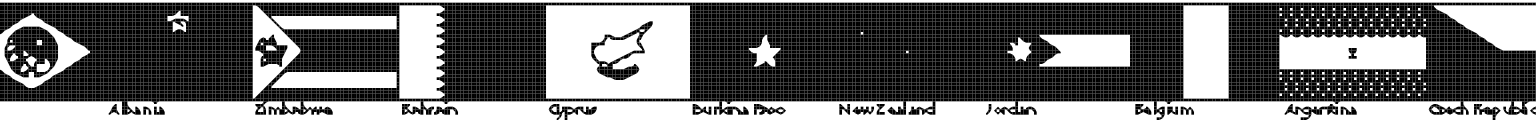
## Fears delay plans to eradicate smallpox

The smallpox virus was slated to be the first species specifically targeted for extinction. Had all gone well, in June it would have been eradicated as scheduled had the United States and Russia destroyed their long-stored samples of the deadly virus.

However, fearing its possible use as a biological weapon by terrorists, the United States announced it would delay its planned destruction of the virus based on intelligence that the virus may have been secreted away in Iraq, North Korea and some areas of the former Soviet Union.

Over the last few decades smallpox has virtually disappeared, except for what were thought to be scattered samples kept for research. Scientists and physicians had hoped all traces of the disease could be eradicated and looked forward to the extinction of one of mankind's most deadly killers. But no one could guarantee that, had the United States and Russia destroyed their samples, it wouldn't





Albania

Zimbabwe

Bahrain

Cyprus

Burkina Faso

New Zealand

Jordan

Belgium

Argentina

Czech Rep. U.K.

# ions Around the World

reappear in the hands of terrorists or a rogue state.

Smallpox is believed to have taken more lives over the ages than any other infectious disease. Some scientists estimate that in this century alone smallpox claimed up to a half-billion lives, more than all other epidemics and wars put together. Historical accounts indicate the disease has been around as long as 3,000 years.

Should the virus be used in war or a terrorist action, the

*Smallpox is believed to have taken more lives over the ages than any other infectious disease. Some scientists estimate that in this century alone smallpox claimed up to a half-billion lives.*

number of deaths could be staggering. Since most countries phased out vaccinations as the disease was driven into submission, billions of people have no resistance to the disease.

Some liken our situation to that of the American Indians who, having no natural resistance to the disease, were decimated when colonists and settlers inadvertently brought the virus with them as they came into contact with the American natives. In that sense, "we're all Indians," noted Elizabeth Fenn, a smallpox historian at George Washington University. "We're approaching 100 percent susceptibility" to the disease, she said.

Scientists have called for programs to develop a new vaccine to protect up to 100 million people vulnerable in the United States.

Jesus Christ predicted that "pestilence"—disease epidemics—would be a characteristic of the time of unprecedented worldwide turmoil leading up to His return (Source: *The New York Times*, Matthew 24:7, 21-22.)

## Heart disease still kills

A tragic byproduct of overweight among Westerners is greater vulnerability to heart disease. The American Heart Association (as reported in *The American*, based in Britain) says heart disease is expected to cost Americans billions of dollars in 1999 as people put on weight. "Heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure and other cardiovascular diseases will cost the nation \$274.2 billion, up 6 per cent from \$259.1 billion in 1997 . . .

"Heart disease is the nation's number one cause of death . . . Overweight or obese people are more likely to develop heart attacks and strokes even if they have no other risk factors . . . In 1995, the most recent year for which figures are available, 960,592 people died of cardiovascular diseases in the United States, an increase of nearly 11,000 from 1994."

Heart disease plagues Britain as well. According to Jenny Hope, medical correspondent for *The Daily Mail*, heart disease remains Britain's biggest killer, accounting for half of all deaths and costing 10 billion pounds a year. "Half of those deaths could be prevented by a healthier lifestyle—such as

cutting out smoking, eating more fruits and vegetables and less fat, and taking more exercise." (Sources: *The American*; *The Daily Mail* [London].)

## Scourge of war in the Sudan

Nearly two million civilians have died in the southern Sudan during a 15-year war that has developed into the deadliest conflict since World War II. Said Robin Winter, director of the U.S. Committee for Refugees: "This is greater than the combined toll of civilian deaths in Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda and a number of other places . . . But the international community seems not to be interested."

The state of apathy exists partially because the Sudan government has had some success sealing off the country from the prying eyes of journalists and aid agencies. (Source: *The Los Angeles Times*.)

## Forests in jeopardy

A worldwide survey has revealed that "the world's forests are being stripped of their rarest trees." One in 12 species is in danger of extinction, and more than 7,000 individual tree varieties are at risk.

This is a man-made crisis brought about by environmental pollution and abuse. The threat is worldwide, ranging from Mexico and Brazil across the Atlantic to Nigeria and the Cameroon, up to Britain and then across to China.

The world is witnessing threats to fauna and flora. God gave man this beautiful earth and told him to "tend and keep it." How pleased is He with our stewardship of this majestic planet? (Source: *The Sunday Times* [London]; Genesis 2:15.)

## AIDS increasing among U.S. seniors

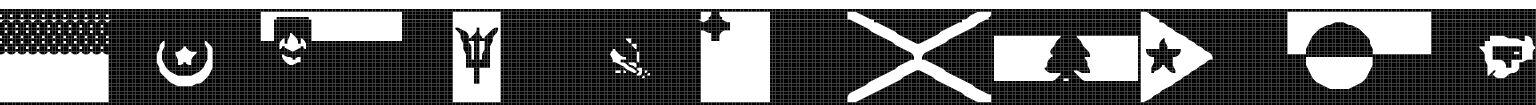
Residents of retirement resorts are reporting a marked increase in AIDS. Infections are especially high in Florida, where thousands of older Americans have flocked in search of the good life. In Palm Beach 15 percent of new cases are among people over 50. A 63-year-old woman became HIV-positive after her recent divorce.

Age doesn't always equate to wisdom. Some mistakes

*Some mistakes reap much more serious consequences than others. The Ten Commandments are for everyone, including senior citizens.*

reap much more serious consequences than others. The Ten Commandments are for everyone, including senior citizens. No age-group is exempt from God's laws. They constitute an invaluable code of conduct designed for the benefit and protection of humankind. To learn more, please write for our free booklet *The Ten Commandments*. (Source: *The Times* [London].)

—John Ross Schroeder and Scott Ashley



Macedonia

Slovenia

Barbados

Angola

Malta

Jamaica

Lebanon

Djibouti

Greenland

Cambodia

# After Kosovo: Power Shift Taking Place?

*Is America surrendering its leadership of the Western world?*

by Melvin Rhodes

**T**he North Atlantic Treaty Organization formed in 1949 as a bulwark against Soviet communism, which allied Europe with America's interests. A war-weakened Germany was integrated into the alliance, making it subordinate and dependent on U.S. military protection. As the 19 nations of NATO celebrate a victory of sorts in the Balkan conflict and its 50th anniversary as one of the most enduring alliances in history, America's leadership of the Western world is increasingly questioned.

Recognizing that the interests of Europe and the United States don't always overlap, the leaders of 15 European nations decided in June to create a joint European Union (EU) army, making the EU a military power for the first time since its formation 42 years ago.

The European Union, long an economic giant, plans to add military muscle to its economic strength. By late 2000 the union plans to have in place a 60,000-strong Eurocorps—an army almost twice as large as the total U.S. military forces deployed in the Kosovo conflict—to project military power and protect European interests. The intended move marks a major step in the development of a new, more assertive Europe.

"The union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises without prejudice to actions by NATO," declared a communiqué from the European leaders.

The magazine *Foreign Affairs* summarized shifting world power and opinion over recent years: "Even old allies stubbornly resist American demands, while many other nations view U.S. policy and ideals as openly hostile to their own. Washington is blind to the fact that it no longer enjoys the dominance it had at the end of the Cold War" (March-April, p. II).

## German initiative

Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of Germany, in office less than a year, recently stepped forward to help fill a vacuum left by American vacillation in

dealing with Serbia. He apologized to the Chinese government and people for NATO's (actually, America's) accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, defusing a potentially dangerous escalating tension between two major powers.

The German leader and his foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, were also at the forefront of negotiations with Russian envoy Victor Chernomyrdin, who was busy visiting the major capitals of the nations involved in the conflict, trying to end hostilities.

Chancellor Schröder ruled out any possibility of using ground troops against Serbia by making it absolutely clear Germany would not support such action, weakening NATO unity on this particular issue. For Germany to have done so might have brought the fall of the fledgling coalition government, made up of Mr. Schröder's Social Democrats and the leftist environmental Green Party, which opposes all wars. Memories of Germany's last military intervention in the area during the Nazi era linger.

Largely overlooked is that the conflict in Yugoslavia is rooted at least in part in Germany's unilateral decision eight years ago to recognize the independence of Croatia when that former Yugoslavian republic broke away from the Yugoslav federation.

This move took Germany's allies by surprise. In a short time other nations, following Germany's lead, backed Croatia and sent the clear signal that the federation of Yugoslavia was subject to further division. Inevitably, ancient ethnic rivalries came to the fore, and the federation that was established only after World War I was progressively dismembered.

Germany's support for Croatia followed almost immediately from the country's renewed confidence after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent reunification of East and West Germany. Germany's World War II ties with Croatia were thought to be behind the German government's far-reaching decision. The consequences have been horrendous for the peoples in the Balkans and have sucked Germany's allies into a quagmire.

**"On issue after issue, the United States has found itself increasingly alone . . . These issues include UN dues, sanctions against Cuba, Iran, Iraq and Libya; the land mines treaty; global warming; an international war crimes tribunal . . . Much of the international community is on one side and the United States is on the other."**

—Samuel P. Huntington, director of the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies (*Foreign Affairs*, March-April, p. 41)

## Diplomatic and military troubles

Over the course of the short war, American leaders appeared to make serious diplomatic misjudgments and military mistakes even with the most sophisticated weaponry and intelligence available.

Meanwhile, Russian and Chinese involvement in the Kosovo conflict has raised the profile of these two nations and their leaders at the expense of the United States. America has inadvertently opened the door for a Russian presence in the region. The Clinton administration seems desperate to appease China to make up for its embassy-bombing mistake.

The greatest change as a result of the Kosovo conflict is likely to be in America's relationship with Europe. Although most Western Europeans supported action against the Serbs to save the Kosovar Albanians, support waned as perceptions grew that the U.S.-led bombing campaign was only worsening the plight of the refugees.

The conflict has further weakened America's military preparedness, already ragged from the long stalemate in Iraq and deployments to other hot spots around the globe. Difficulties such as the crash of an F117 stealth fighter—the most advanced weapon in the United States Air Force arsenal—and several embarrassing bombing mishaps blamed on faulty or outdated military intelligence have led to much soul-searching among U.S. military planners and leaders.

The Pentagon has expressed concern about diminishing supplies of cruise missiles and other munitions and admitted that, since cruise-missile production lines have long since shut down, replacement orders cannot be filled for at least another year.

Additional burdens on the U.S. military around the world, coupled with defense cuts at home, lower-than-expected enlistments and trained personnel leaving the armed forces, point to a reduction in America's military role in the years ahead.

Many observers openly doubt the U.S. armed forces' longstanding commitment to be able to wage "limited wars" simultaneously on two fronts. This obviously creates a dangerous situation for U.S. troops should another conflict break out in such troubled areas as Korea, Iraq and Taiwan.

## Empires aren't forever

It's difficult for people brought up since

World War II to imagine a world not dominated by the United States. But history shows power can shift dramatically and suddenly, often as a result of war.

In 1937 it could be said the only superpower in the world was Great Britain. The empire spanned a quarter of the globe, and its strategic military bases gave it prominence seemingly everywhere. Within 10 years Britain was reduced to the No. 3 spot in the world pecking order as the United States and the Soviet Union entered a 40-year period of domination.

Those pivotal 10 years included World War II. Britain emerged victorious, but it was so weakened it could no longer sustain its empire and military responsibilities. The result was the gradual dismantling of its empire beginning with the Indian subcontinent in 1947.

What happened to Britain was in many ways an echo of what had happened to France. A century and a half earlier it had been the Napoleonic Wars between Britain and France that reduced French military power and elevated Great Britain.

Beginning with the Korean War, the last 50 years has witnessed a string of conflicts that have diminished American military power and prestige. As these prolonged hostilities continue to weaken and at times embarrass America on a global scale, other nations are beginning to recognize they will have to pick up the defense burden for the sake of their own safety and security.

## Propheesied power shift

When we look at Bible prophecy, we see descriptions of several dominant world powers at the time immediately before God's dramatic intervention in human affairs. But no power recognizable as the United States is among them. The books of Daniel and Revelation both show us that the dominant power at the time will be an alliance of 10 rulers who will suddenly arise and ultimately turn on Jesus Christ at His return.

Revelation 17:12-14 talks of "ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet . . . They receive authority for one hour [a short time] as kings with the beast . . . These will make war with the Lamb [the returning Jesus Christ] . . ."

This final union of 10 kings—or heads of state such as prime ministers, chancellors, presidents and premiers, as we would

call them today—appears to be the last of a series of attempts over the centuries to unite Europe, in effect resurrecting the Roman Empire. It is a continuation of the "fourth beast" of Daniel's vision in Daniel 7, which began more than 2,000 years ago. Daniel 7:7-27 shows the formation and rise of this coalition of rulers will lead directly into the time of Christ's return.

For these prophecies to come to pass, the geopolitical balance of power must dramatically shift. America's unchallenged preeminence will apparently come to an end, with a revived, unified Europe eventually replacing it as the dominant power. Undoubtedly Britain will find itself in a difficult dilemma as to whether to side with Continental Europe or her traditional Atlantic ally, the United States.

Recognition of European military weakness in the face of challenges such as that from Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, coupled with America's vacillation over Kosovo and its own military problems, no doubt contributed to the announced intention of forming a European defense force outside American control. Although it in no way rivals America as a military power, things could change, especially considering that the total armed forces of the European countries already exceed the military manpower of the United States.

This is one scenario by which we may see the prophesied rise of a coalition of leaders who join forces to create the world's next superpower.

Continue reading *The Good News*, and our other publications, to gain a better understanding of Bible prophecy and its implications. **GN**

## RECOMMENDED READING

Can you know where this world is going? What's behind the trends that threaten to overwhelm us? Is there a road map that can show us where we're going? To help you better see where world events are headed, be sure to request your free copy of *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Please contact our office in your country (or the country nearest you) listed on page 2 for your free copy. This booklet is also available through our literature library on our Web site: [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org).

# What Does the Bible Say About the Immortal Soul?

*Many people think the Bible says we have an immortal soul destined, at death, for heaven, hell or purgatory. Does the Bible teach this, or does it show that something else happens when we die?*

by Gary Petty

**W**hat happens to us after we die? Where are our loved ones who have passed on? Will we ever see them again? Everyone needs to know that life has purpose, that death isn't the permanent end of our existence. The most common Christian belief regarding the afterlife is that people possess immortal souls and at death their consciousness in the form of that soul departs from the body and goes to heaven or hell.

Most religions teach some form of life after death. The ancient Egyptians, for example, practiced elaborate ceremonies to prepare the pharaohs for their next life. They constructed massive pyramids and other elaborate tombs filled with luxuries the deceased were assumed to need in the hereafter.

In some civilizations when a ruler died others who had accompanied and served him in his life were put to death so they could immediately serve him in the afterlife. Wives and other relatives, servants, sometimes even household pets joined him in death and a supposed entrance into a new life on the other side.

*The most common Christian belief is that people possess immortal souls and at death their consciousness departs and goes to heaven or hell.*

Belief in the immortality of the soul was an important aspect of ancient thought espoused by the Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Plato, in *Phaedo*, presents Socrates' explanation of death: "Is it not the separation of soul and body? And to be dead is the completion of this; when the soul exists in herself, and is released from the body and body is released from the soul, what is this but death?" (*Five Great Dialogues*, Classics Club edition, 1969, p. 93).

Socrates explained that the immortal soul, once freed from the body, is rewarded according to good deeds or punished for evil. Socrates lived ca. 470-399 B.C., so his view of the soul predated Christianity.

Plato (ca. 428-348 B.C.) saw man's existence as divided into the material and spiritual, or "Ideal,"

realms. "Plato reasoned that the soul, being eternal, must have had a pre-existence in the ideal world where it learned about the eternal Ideals" (William S. Sahakian, *History of Philosophy*, 1968, p. 56). In Plato's reasoning, man is meant to attain goodness and return to the Ideal through the experiences of the transmigration of the soul. Thus secular philosophies sanction the idea of the immortal soul, even though the Bible does not. Believe it or not, God's Word teaches something entirely different.

## History of a controversial teaching

The doctrine of the immortal soul caused much controversy in the early Catholic Church.

Origen (ca. 185-254) was the first person to attempt to organize Christian doctrine into a systematic theology. He was an admirer of Plato and believed in the immortality of the soul and that it would depart to an everlasting reward or everlasting punishment at death.

In *Origen de Principiis* he wrote: ". . . The soul, having a substance and life of its own, shall after its departure from the world, be rewarded according to its deserts, being destined to obtain either an inheritance of eternal life and blessedness, if its actions shall have procured this for it, or to be delivered up to eternal fire and punishments, if the guilt of its crimes shall have brought it down to this . . ." (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 4, 1995, p. 240).

Origen taught that human souls existed before the body but are imprisoned in the physical world as a form of punishment. Physical life, he reasoned, is a purification process to return humans to a spiritual state.

Later Augustine (354-430) tackled the problem of the immortality of the soul and death. For Augustine death meant the destruction of the body, but the conscious soul would continue to live in either a blissful state with God or an agonizing state of separation from God.

In *The City of God* he wrote that the soul "is therefore called immortal, because in a sense, it does not cease to live and to feel; while the body is called mortal

because it can be forsaken of all life, and cannot by itself live at all. The death, then, of the soul, takes place when God forsakes it, as the death of the body when the soul forsakes it" (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, 1995, p. 245.)

The influences of pagan Platonic philosophy on Origen and Augustine are profound. Richard Tarnas, in his best-seller *The Passion of the Western Mind*, points to this influence: "... It was Augustine's formulation of Christian Platonism that was to permeate virtually all of medieval Christian thought in the West. So enthusiastic was the Christian integration of the Greek spirit that Socrates and Plato were frequently regarded as divinely inspired pre-Christian saints..." (1991, p. 103).

Centuries later Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225-1274) crystallized the doctrine of the immortal soul in his *Summa Theologiae*. He taught that the soul is a conscious intellect and will and cannot be destroyed.

A few centuries later the leaders of the Protestant Reformation generally accepted these traditional views, so they became entrenched in traditional Protestant teaching.

The immortality of the soul is foundational in Western thought, both philosophical and religious. Belief in going to heaven or hell depends on it. But does the Bible teach that death is the separation of body and soul or that the soul is immortal?

### Hebrew understanding of the soul

The Hebrew word translated "soul" in the Old Testament is *nephesh*, which simply means "a breathing creature." *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* defines *nephesh* as "the essence of life, the act of breathing, taking breath..." The problem with the English term 'soul' is that no actual equivalent of the term or the idea behind it is represented in the Hebrew language. The Hebrew system of thought does not include the combination or opposition of the 'body' and 'soul' which are really *Greek and Latin in origin*" (1985, p. 237-238, emphasis added).

*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* makes this comment on *nephesh*: "The word 'soul' in English, though it has to some extent naturalized the Hebrew idiom, frequently carries with it overtones, ultimately coming from philosophical

## The Quest for Immortality

In recent years major museums have played host to a special exhibition that spotlights pre-Christian Chinese civilization. The most spectacular facet of the exhibit features the concept of the afterlife and to what extent the ancient Chinese tried to ensure their immortality. In an attempt to thwart death, the Chinese, like the Egyptians before them, employed meticulous methods in their quest for everlasting life.

Said *The Times* (London), which sponsored the exhibition at the British Museum: "If the Chinese had not believed so passionately in the spirit world and the afterlife, they would never have ensured that their tombs carried such resplendent cargoes. The wealth of refined bronzes, jades and ceramics installed there testifies to the importance of their faith in life after death" (Sept. 10, 1996).

As did the ancients, some moderns go to great lengths to hold onto life. Yet no one can for long forestall the divine decree recorded in the creation epic: "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

On the other hand, the Creator of the human race decreed a way to attain everlasting life, a fail-safe formula for gaining eternal existence backed up by the highest source of authority in the world, His own Word. A beauty of it is that this opportunity is available as a gift to all, not just a select few.

God's Word records that the patriarch Job posed a poignant question about life and death: "If a man dies, shall he live again?" Job's answer was unequivocal. "All the days of my hard service will I wait, till my change come" (Job 14:14).

This patriarch's firm belief was based on God's promise of a miraculous change, a time of transformation to immortal spirit—not just a perpetuation of his physical life.

The Hebrew prophet Daniel provides us another brief glimpse into the next world, through an archangel's words: "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake... Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness [will shine] like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:2-3).

The apostle Paul explains this remarkable change, telling us that "this corruptible [body] must put on incorruption, and this mortal [body] must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:54).

He makes this point clear when he says: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (verses 42-44).

Yet death of the physical body is inevitable. The Bible writers describe it as a temporary sleep, a state of complete unconsciousness (Ecclesiastes 9:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). King David was one of those writers. "For in death there is no remembrance of You," he said in a prayer to God; "in the grave who shall give You thanks?" (Psalm 6:5).

Paul elaborates: "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruits of those that are fallen asleep [have died]. For since by man came death, by Man [Christ] came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

To come back to life, one must first die. The only way anyone can inherit eternal life is through a resurrection.

Who is a candidate for eternal life? What must one do to live forever?

Anyone who accepts Jesus Christ's offer of the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23) must live by the code of conduct expounded by Christ Himself when He told the rich, young ruler to keep the Ten Commandments (Matthew 19:17-19). The Commandments serve as the foundation of God's law. They tell us how to express love to our fellow human beings and how to love God.

Just acknowledging the name of Christ will not do. "But why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things which I say?" asked Jesus Himself (Luke 6:46). Furthermore, "not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Ancient Egyptians and Chinese clothed and treated the physical body to preserve it and in a futile attempt to achieve eternal life. Our quest for immortality can be fulfilled only if we walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6; 1 Peter 2:21), just as Abraham did when the patriarch expressed his humble attitude: "I... am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27).

God alone provides us with the way to eternal life. We can discover much more about that way in His Word, the Bible.

—Gerhard Marx

Greek (Platonism) and from Orphism and Gnosticism which are absent in 'nephesh.' In the OT it *never means the immortal soul*, but it is essentially the life principle, or the living being, or the self as the subject of appetite, and emotion, occasionally of volition" (Vol. 4, 1962, "Soul," emphasis added).

That *nephesh* doesn't refer to an immortal soul can be seen in the way the word is used in the Old Testament. It is translated "soul" or "being" in reference to man in Genesis 2:7, but also to animals by being

## **The immortality of the soul is foundational in Western thought. Belief in going to heaven or hell depends on it. But does the Bible teach that death is the separation of body and soul, or that the soul is immortal?**

translated "creature" in Genesis 1:24.

*Nephesh* is translated "body" in Leviticus 21:11 in reference to a human corpse.

The Hebrew Scriptures state plainly that, rather than possess immortality, the soul can and does die. "The soul [*nephesh*] who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

The Old Testament describes the dead as going to *sheol*, translated into English as "hell," "pit" or "grave." Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 describes *sheol* as a place of *unconsciousness*: "For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished . . ."

King David laments that death extinguishes a relationship with God. "For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave [*sheol*] who will give You thanks?" (Psalm 6:5).

The immortal-soul concept isn't part of the Old Testament, but it began to make inroads into Jewish thought as Jews came in contact with Greek culture. In the first century the Jewish philosopher Philo taught a Platonic concept: ". . . The death of a man is the separation of his soul from his body . . ." (*The Works of Philo*, translated by C.D. Yonge, 1993, p. 37). Philo followed the Hellenistic view that the soul is freed upon death to an everlasting life of virtue or evil.

### **The apostles' view**

In the New Testament the Greek word translated "soul" is *psuche*, which is also translated "life."

In Psalm 16:10 David uses *nephesh* ("soul") to claim that the "Holy One," or Messiah, wouldn't be left in *sheol*, the

grave. Peter quotes this verse in Acts 2:27, using the Greek *psuche* for the Hebrew *nephesh* (notice verses 25-31).

Like *nephesh*, *psuche* refers to human "souls" (Acts 2:41) and for animals (it is translated "life" in the King James Version of Revelation 8:9 and 16:3). Jesus declared that God can destroy man's *psuche*, or "soul" (Matthew 10:28).

If the Old Testament describes death as an unconscious state, how does the New Testament describe it?

No one wrote more about this subject than the apostle Paul. He describes death as "sleep" (1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Many people are surprised to find that the term *immortal soul* appears nowhere in the Bible. However, though the Scriptures do not speak of the soul as being immortal, they have much to say about *immortality*. For example: "You know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15).

Paul told the members of the congregation in Rome to "seek" immortality (Romans 2:5-7). He taught Christians at Corinth that they must be changed and "put on" immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51-55). Paul proclaimed that only God and His Son possess immortality (1 Timothy 6:12-16) and that eternal life is a "gift" from God (Romans 6:23).

The most powerful words come from Jesus Himself: "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40).

### **True origin of immortal-soul teaching**

We've seen in this brief look at the supposedly immortal soul that the Bible teaches no such concept. The idea filtered into Western thought through Greek philosophy. Its origins are older than Athens, in fact as old as man.

The concept of the immortal soul was introduced into man's thinking at the earliest beginnings of human history. God told the first human beings, Adam and Eve, that if they sinned they would die and return to the dust from which He had

created them (Genesis 2:17; 3:19). Satan, the embodiment of evil, the powerful entity who opposes God, assured them they wouldn't die (verses 1-5).

Satan slyly injected into Eve's consciousness the notion that God was lying and that she and her husband would not die, thus ingraining the unscriptural teaching of the immortality of the soul into human thought. Satan has since deceived the world on this important understanding as well as many other biblical truths (Revelation 12:9). Much of the world, including millions of people in religions outside of traditional Christianity, are convinced they have—or are—immortal souls and hope they will go to a happy place or state of being immediately after they die.

### **The biblical answer to death**

Yet the Bible plainly teaches that the dead lie in the grave and know nothing, think no thoughts, have no emotions, possess no consciousness. Does this mean death, the cessation of life, is final, the end of everything?

The Bible answers this question too. Although mankind is physical, subject to death, the good news is that God promises a resurrection to eternal life to everyone who repents, worships God and accepts Jesus as the Messiah and His sacrifice. The first resurrection to immortality will take place when Christ returns to establish God's Kingdom on this earth.

Later will come another resurrection—to physical life—for people who had never had a relationship with the Father and Jesus Christ. They, too, will gain the opportunity for immortality. The true final answer is not death but resurrection. **GN**

### **Recommended Reading**

To learn more about this vital subject, be sure to request your free copies of the booklets *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind, What Happens After Death?* and *What Is Your Destiny?* All are free for the asking. Just contact us at our office nearest you nearest you listed on page 2. You'll also find these booklets on our Web site at [www.ugc.org](http://www.ugc.org).





In the 1960s Bill Roberts forever abandoned youthful innocence for the killing fields of Vietnam. Not long ago something happened to Bill that brought back the terror he felt years ago in guerrilla warfare.

His recent brush with death was not in a war in Southeast Asia. It happened in Portland, Oregon, a prosperous city of a million and a half people. The enemy wasn't Vietnamese guerrillas but gun-

could be killed as easily as the fictional characters on a video-game screen.

### Explosive violence

After a 15-year-old boy confessed to the May 1998 shooting of 22 students and his parents in Springfield, Oregon, commentators pointed out that explosive violence had crept from the poor, inner-city communities of the 1980s and early '90s onto the manicured lawns of suburbia.

# Youth Violence

## Who's to Blame?

What's behind the growing epidemic of youth violence? What does this disturbing trend tell us about the state of our families, culture and society?

by Howard Davis

toting gang members in a school yard.

Mr. Roberts serves as principal of a school attended by my children. He is still a soldier, but his fight is with the explosion of youth violence that began 20 years ago in America.

With the American prison population up to 1.8 million from 750,000 in only 10 years, violence among young people affects every stratum of American life.

Easy solutions are hard to come by because the problem with youth violence is not a trend fueled primarily by desperation and poverty. It is driven by powerful forces and influences that lead some children to treat other human beings as if they are of no more value than the electronic video-game figures they mindlessly kill off by the hour for amusement.

With the lines between fantasy and reality confused and blurred, some American youths have received the unmistakable message that it is entertaining to kill. The two teenaged gunmen who killed and maimed 35 students and teachers at Colorado's Columbine High School in April laughed as they roamed the classrooms and hallways and gunned down their victims.

Does our culture teach children that killing people is not a big deal? Violent movies, video and computer games, and many television shows certainly send that message.

Strangely, many violent teenagers are possessed of a sense of invincibility. Not only do they show no fear of God, they have little fear or understanding that they

Not only is homicide one of the greatest risks to our youngsters, says the U.S. Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, it has progressively permeated the national landscape. The epidemic of gun violence began to peak among youth in the late 1980s, ravaging a predominantly poor minority generation of inner-city residents, according to James Garbarino, director of the Family Life Development Center at Cornell University.

National Council on Crime and Delinquency president Barry Krisberg notes a difference in today's profile of youth violence. Recent mass-murder attempts and episodes "had nothing to do with drugs or guns," he said. "Some were from affluent communities and intact families."

In the last six years 11 of 12 mass shootings with multiple victims took place in cities with populations under 80,000. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report nine of these were municipalities with a population smaller than 52,000.

Initial studies indicate a shift in violent youth behavior out of the low socioeconomic stereotype. Harvard School of Public Health professor Deborah Prothrow-Stith characterizes the movement of youth violence from poor urban communities to the rest of the population and regions as an effect similar to any other epidemic. "It's the second wave," she said. "First [it strikes] the most vulnerable community, and then it spreads."

Copycat acts have also proliferated. In

one study 25 percent of young violent felons said they got the specific idea for their violent activity directly from television. “I can do that” is the remark attributed to the 15-year-old Oregon shooter in a conversation two months earlier to his school-bus driver when he heard about the school massacre by two youths in Paducah, Kentucky.

commitment that requires time, attention and resources. In their absence, children grow up in a veritable jungle.

It doesn’t have to be so.

Consistent, loving guidance of children works. Demonstrating concern works. These parental commitments help stop violence by preventing it. They require

National Council on Crime and Delinquency president Krisberg calls a “nihilistic culture that does not promote community and social values.”

Not only are right values ignored, but wrong values are often celebrated. “Go to the movies and listen to the music,” says Mr. Krisberg. “It’s violent, it has misogynist content. There’s gross materialism and no ennobling values celebrated.”

## School was just letting out when the gang members arrived with revolvers under their coats and dozens of umbrellas tipped with blades. They were ready for the boy.

Murders committed by teens ages 14 to 17 tripled between 1976 and 1993, then dropped somewhat, according to University of Oregon sociology-department chairman Robert O’Brien. However, observers point out that upward trends in youth violence may be masked somewhat by imprisonment, aggressive policing and a dynamic national economy.

### A childhood jungle

Youth violence is, at its core, an outgrowth of an American crisis of values. Successful child-raising requires values flowing from a firm commitment to children—a

child-centered approach that touches the spirit of the child rather than a manipulation of material circumstances masquerading as attention.

A central message of Jesus Christ regarding children is that they are to be loved because “of such is the Kingdom of God.” He showed that true love works. The explosion of youth violence is a clear warning that time is running out to begin practicing Christ’s approach before it’s too late.

Most youthful violence emanates from environments in which brutal adult behavior is modeled and acted out in what

### A new battleground

The war of youth violence is waged in many communities. On Mr. Roberts’ Portland school ground, a battle almost erupted because a 12-year-old student had grabbed a basketball away from a gang member.

A few days later school was just letting out when the gang members arrived with revolvers under their coats and dozens of umbrellas tipped with blades. They were ready for the boy.

What surprised Mr. Roberts and led him to instinctively sense he might witness a murder was the bizarre willingness of the 12-year-old with no violent history to take on the gang single-handedly.

As the boy raced out the front door toward the gang, Mr. Roberts grabbed him, handing him over to two assistants who restrained him in Mr. Roberts’ office while

## A Generation of Abandonment

Some see American children as a generation of rage. Surrounded with materialism, the typical child may look healthy materially—but many are emotionally abandoned to look for meaning in things that destroy the mind and heart.

Accompanying children’s search for meaning in violent entertainment is the disintegration of the institution of fatherhood. Although the average American child watches 220 minutes of television a day, he spends only three to eight minutes face to face with his father—if he happens to live with his father. In the absence of a father, television is raising many of our children.

About one in four children grow up with a single mother and another quarter with a mother and stepfather. But even children with natural fathers who live with them are often profoundly neglected. Struggling with ignorance of child-nurturing skills, many fathers unknowingly lay the groundwork for a national mental-health crises. Most people are unaware of the connection between deteriorating psychological health, the absence of strong, loving fathers and youth violence.

An epidemic of mental illness in children leaves children, especially boys, prone to violent behavior.

Kip Kinkel, the 15-year-old who admitted to gunning down 22 students in Oregon, was diagnosed with attention-deficit-and-hyperactive disorder (ADHD) and a learning disability when he was 11. New York developmental psychologist Myriam Miedzian noted the boy had “easy access to

guns but not to effective treatment.”

“ADHD is six to nine times as prevalent among boys than among girls, mental retardation nearly twice as prevalent, autism three times and conduct disorder four to 12 times as prevalent” said Dr. Miedzian. “As a result, boys are at greater risk for violent behavior.”

From 1975 to 1990 the percentage of youths in the United States in need of professional mental-health services nearly doubled, from 10 percent to 18 percent, said James Garbarino, Family Life Development Center director at Cornell University.

Some psychologists estimate 40 percent of the jail population and 30 percent of delinquent boys suffer from learning disabilities. “Not only do most high-risk children go untreated, they see more than 10,000 TV murders by age 18,” said Dr. Miedzian.

Not all of these trends in deteriorating youth mental health are attributed to genetic factors. Some believe that young children, when lied to and disappointed enough by care-givers, develop a kind of schizophrenia.

In a process called “crazymaking,” children who are told they are loved by abusive or negligent parents learn to disassociate themselves from primary relationships. This can happen to children of wealth as well as children of poverty. Some experts see those youth obsessed with television exhibiting characteristics of attachment disorder, with television becoming their main reference in life.

Mr. Roberts confronted the gang.

In schools across the nation, principals experience such potentially deadly conflicts. Although this situation passed without harm, Mr. Roberts says he feels sure he will see similar problems again. He fears that America, with its random, bloody explosions of violence, is in some

up without enriching values conveyed by the intimacy of sacrificial parental love.

Many of them have no concept of the sanctity of life, even their own. "This is the way we want to go out," read the suicide note from Columbine High School gunmen Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, who between them killed 13 people in a rampage

also will *reject you* . . . Because you have *forgotten* the law of your God, I also will *forget* your children" (Hosea 4:6, emphasis added).

Youth violence is not a mystery. It is a mistake, a sin and a tragedy for all concerned. But the good news is that the spiritual principles that have always worked still work. Families, communities and nations

## The Spirit of Violence

**T**o many secular prophets, the gloomy trends of youthful violence are a harbinger of a crisis of biblical proportions.

A spirit of violence and death pervades American entertainment media. Dysfunctional, violent and aggressive lifestyles bring to mind the decay of civilizations and the warnings of biblical prophets.

Although our youth may experience violence of epic proportions in the next century, this is nothing new. The Bible describes periods of pervasive violence. Ezekiel prophesied to a generation in Jerusalem that was later wiped out in one of the bloodiest periods of Old Testament history: "Violence has risen up into a rod of wickedness . . . The land is filled with crimes of blood, and the city is full of violence" (Ezekiel 7:11, 23-24).

The social illness underlying the violence then and now are the same. The American problem can be traced in large part to a breakdown of family structure and cohesion. The Bible pinpoints this breakdown as a fundamental cause of violence.

" . . . The LORD was a witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did not one God make her? . . . And what does the one God desire? Godly offspring. So look to yourselves, and do not let anyone be faithless to the wife of his youth. For I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless" (Malachi 2:14-16, New Revised Standard Version).

ways repeating the frightening guerrilla warfare of Vietnam.

The tentacles of youth violence have traveled across the Atlantic and the Pacific into most other parts of the Western World. Consider the United Kingdom. In some British schools youth violence and disrespect for authority are out of control. An East Anglian instructor wrote an article, "How We Teachers Have Lost Control of the Classroom" (*Sunday Telegraph*), in which he said only one goal matters: "reducing violence in schools."

### Need for spiritually motivated love

Former U.S. Army general Colin Powell, whose leadership helped the American military and its allies emerge victorious in 1991's Operation Desert Storm, says the problem of troubled youth is the greatest threat to the future of the United States.

The violence of youths has its roots in a parental culture that has spiritually abandoned them. More money, expensive schools and government programs run by well-meaning bureaucrats cannot substitute for parental love. Western nations often look to institutional programs for salvation from social crises, but this is one money can't buy.

The 15 million children living in poverty are not alone in a landscape of emotional, interpersonal and spiritual impoverishment. Many children in prosperous nations grow

up with bullets and homemade bombs before they turned their guns on themselves.

With materialism substituted for love, many children have no comprehension of an overriding purpose for life, no sense that life is anything more than a quest for instant gratification. They have scarce knowledge of a Higher Power with endless love who reveals a meaningful purpose and destiny for every man, woman and child.

The discouraging social forces affect almost all of society. Even people who profess to be Christian aren't immune, with divorce and abuse rampant. Too many political and religious leaders have abandoned belief in absolute standards such as those that flow from the immutable law of God. God's standards condemn both lack of and abuse of parental authority as well as the sexual promiscuity that almost always leads to single-parenthood.

As a result, children absorb a chaos of relativistic values that mingle hedonism with self-destructive and aggressive behavior.

### Serious consequences

The Creator of mankind has the authority to define right and wrong, and He warns that He will reject a nation whose mothers and fathers reject the spiritual knowledge revealed in the law of God.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," declares the Creator God. "Because you have *rejected knowledge*, I

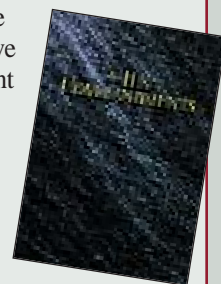
don't have to be destroyed if they will seek the spiritual knowledge that shows them how to express godly love.

Societies and cultures can change. In the case of America's crisis of youth violence, the problem begins in the home. It is there that parents must learn about and then begin to foster a family culture based on biblical values. Love, if it is genuine, always works. **GN**

### Recommended Reading

The United Church of God is concerned about the direction our families and youths have been taking. We have published a blueprint for stable homes, communities and societies, a booklet titled *The Ten Commandments*.

Without a solid understanding of the most basic of all laws, society has little chance of saving its youth, its most treasured possession. Please request your free copy of this booklet from the office in your country (or the country nearest you) listed on page 2. This booklet is also available in the literature library at our Web site, [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org).





# Where Will the *Genetics Revolution* Lead?

by Noel Hornor

**A** man on the moon! July 20 of this year marks the 30th anniversary of perhaps the most captivating moment in a century rich with technological achievements. A few years ago *U.S. News & World Report* called the first manned moon voyage “the signature of our century.” With that event mankind fulfilled a dream of decades. It seemed to many people at the time we could accomplish almost anything.

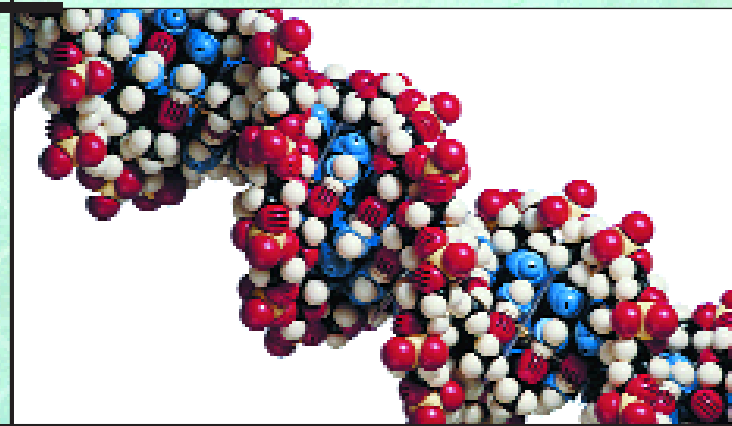
In this amazing century one invention after another has altered forever the course of history. Of all man has achieved, two developments seem to have brought about more sweeping changes than any other. These

century to come. And the rapid rise of the life sciences means that many of the changes it will soon be in our power to make will be fundamental and irreversible” (*The Daily Mail* [London], May 22).

Keep in mind, as Mr. Johnson implies, that the *focus* of technology has changed. Although still prominent, the main focus of science is no longer on outer space. It is on the inner space of the deoxyribonucleic-acid (DNA) molecule. Next century’s frontier is the science of biotechnology.

If scientists are correct in their projections, the futuristic wave of genetics will present us with

*Your world has probably already been affected by genetic engineering whether you realize it or not.*



are the automobile in the first half of the century and the computer in the second.

If this century has given us future shock, the pace of change in the next century will be even more dizzying. How fast is human knowledge advancing? “In the past decade, more scientific knowledge has been created than in all of human history” (Michio Kaku, *Visions: How Science Will Revolutionize the 21st Century*, 1998, p. 4).

British journalist Paul Johnson adds: “We may think science moved fast in the 20th century, but we are going to be dazzled by its acceleration in the

fascinating possibilities—and perplexing choices.

## Genetic engineering already here

For centuries mankind has manipulated genetics to ensure the passing on and strengthening of desirable traits in animals and plants. Humanity has seen many benefits from understanding and properly using genetics. Animals have been bred to be stronger, more hardy, to produce more wool, milk or meat. Strains of wheat, corn and rice have been created that produce more food while needing less fertilizer and water. Fast-growing trees provide more lumber, pulp, fuel and shade. Even flowers are bigger, more colorful, more beautiful than they would be otherwise.

But, since scientists began unlocking the secrets of DNA in the 1950s, genetic manipulation has taken on new meaning. Researchers have discovered ways to change the inherited shape, form and function of living things by altering their genetic material. This process is known as genetic engineering.

All living cells—plant, animal and human—contain the genetic material DNA, which determines the attributes of the offspring of all living things. By directly manipulating that material, scientists can change inherited characteristics in predetermined ways.

Such manipulation of genetic material is a reality.

Your world has probably already been affected by genetic engineering whether you realize it or not. Many food products have been genetically altered. Tomatoes have been genetically manipulated to have a longer shelf life. Rice strains have been engineered to be disease-resistant. Genes of fish have been placed into potatoes and strawberries to make these plants more resistant to cold weather.

Not all of these products are in commercial production yet, but work continues. Even so, a considerable amount of processed foods sold in Britain has in some way been genetically modified.

Scientists have also tinkered with livestock. Cows have been injected with growth hormones to increase their milk production. Attempts are underway to engineer sheep that produce a chemical in their skin that will provide immunity to insect parasites. Researchers are attempting to develop herpes-proof pigs. These projects are only the tip of the iceberg.

#### **Genetic engineering: good or bad?**

Not everyone views such tinkering as positive scientific advancement. Some,

nobody knows . . . And like some drug complications, ecological side-effects may take years to appear" (*The Economist*, June 13, 1998).

Some engineering of plants involves the use of virus particles. One concern is that this could result in the unintentional creation of viruses harmful to existing crops. Another concern is that, in the efforts to design plants that produce toxic chemicals that ward off their natural pests, chemicals might result that poison native animals or beneficial insects. The inadvertent production of allergens in foods is another concern.

Proponents of genetic engineering believe these risks are justified because of the potential that such research offers to lessen the effects of food shortages and malnutrition.

If genetic manipulation of plants and animals causes concern, it is nothing compared to the concern in some quarters about genetic engineering in humans.

#### **The Human Genome Project**

The seminal event for the science of genetic engineering occurred in 1953

to the prodigious information-processing power of the computer.

By unlocking the genetic code of life, scientists believe they may eventually have at their fingertips the power to heal diseases, create new species, fashion "designer children" and perhaps move closer to grasping the Holy Grail of immortality by reversing the aging process.

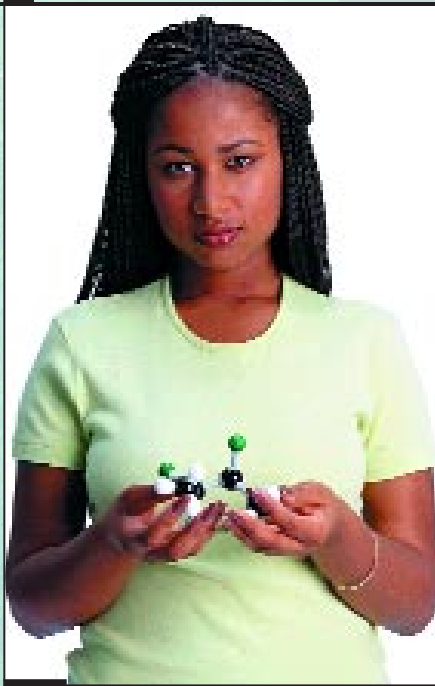
#### **A new era in medicine**

Many diseases are influenced, at least in part, by genetic factors. Through the HGP, genes that are linked with various cancers, Alzheimer's disease and diabetes have been pinpointed. Through such progress, geneticists hope to discover new ways to fight disease. Some believe it will be possible in a few years to develop custom-made drugs for the best fit to an individual's body chemistry.

These possibilities excite scientists. Not only will this new knowledge deliver the potential to treat diseases, it will bring the possibility of *preventing* the diseases in the first place.

But, with the possibility of obtaining a readout of our individual genetic makeup,

*Parents might be able to plan a customized child who is genetically disposed to be physically attractive, of superior intelligence or athletically talented.*



particularly in Europe, skeptically view it as an assault on nature. "If something goes wrong, how can it be put right? The truth is,

when James Watson and Francis Crick discovered the structure of the DNA molecule. If this were the birth of modern genetics, many scientists believe the Human Genome Project (HGP) is its industrial revolution.

The HGP is a global scientific project. Its director is an American, Francis Collins of the National Institute of Health. He calls it "the most important scientific project mankind has ever mounted."

The purpose of the project is to make a "map" of the approximately 100,000 human genes on the 23 pairs of chromosomes in the cells of our bodies. "Once it is completed, we will have an 'owner's manual' for a human being" (Kaku, p. 143).

The implications of such research are far-reaching. The original target date for completion of the project was 2005. The expectation is that it will be completed before that time, perhaps as early as the end of 2001. In running not only ahead of schedule but under budget, it is unusual among government projects. The rapid progress is attributable in large part

we may be presented with a Pandora's box of choices.

Genetic testing and screening could arm parents or prospective parents with the foreknowledge that they have the potential to beget a child with a serious physical impairment. As more disease-causing genes are identified, prospective parents, on learning the expectant mother is carrying a defective fetus, might be encouraged by doctors to abort rather than deliver an unborn child. Some parental carriers of the gene for cystic fibrosis have already faced this choice when they identified the disease in their developing fetus.

Genetic blueprinting will beget a host of privacy concerns. Will governments at some point mandate genetic testing for couples seeking to get married? This is sure to raise serious concern about the prospect of government intervention. Would governments pressure pregnant women who are carrying defective fetuses to submit to abortions? Governments might conceivably do this out of concern over the financial burdens placed on their health-care

## Send in the Clones

Except for some simpler life forms, nature's method of reproduction is the union of male and female. Cloning is a means of producing offspring without this formality. Cloning does not, as some may think, present the possibility of producing offspring in a test tube. It requires that a cloned cell be implanted in the womb of a female of the species.

What about the ethics of *human* cloning? Some believe it is a needed and beneficial step. Others are appalled that anyone would even consider cloning another person, producing a human being by replication rather than reproduction. A cloned child would have only one parent, who in a sense would be genetically like an identical twin, though much younger. This lively debate is sure to intensify as experiments in cloning continue.

British biologist J.B.S. Haldane was among the first to use the term *cloning*, in 1963, when he foresaw cloning of human beings as an imminent probability.

In spite of Haldane's optimism, little scientific evidence surfaced during the 1960s that human cloning would ever succeed. Plants were easily cloned, but cloning mammals was elusive, particularly the idea of developing a complete organism from an adult body cell. Though the entire DNA is present in an adult cell, the great challenge is to coax the material into reverting to the embryonic state so that all of the differentiated body tissues—muscle, bone, nerve cells and so on—can be produced.

In 1996 scientists were stunned by the news that Scotsman Ian Helmut fused the cell nucleus from the udder of an adult sheep with an egg structure taken from another sheep and implanted the altered egg into the uterus of a third sheep. The result was Dolly, an apparently normal sheep, cloned from an adult cell. Dolly was born July 5, 1996.



The implications of this development are profound in that it indicates that what J.B.S. Haldane anticipated is now possible. Lee Silver, a molecular biologist at Princeton University, observed that "genetic engineering of human beings is now really on the horizon" (Gina Kolata, *Clone: The Road to Dolly and the Path Ahead*, 1998, p. 233).

Though nations have enacted legislation outlawing human cloning, the issue will not go away. There will be pressures to develop and perfect the process. Among these is what is called the "technological imperative," the idea that it is wrong to artificially impede scientific progress.

Economic pressures may arise also. Because many couples experience difficulty in conceiving children, fertility clinics have become a fixture in our world. We can expect the fertility industry to push for legalization of human-cloning procedures. Even if it is not legalized, the possibility exists of the development of an underground cloning industry.

Many geneticists, doctors and political leaders agree that human cloning should not be attempted at this time. It is a science in the developmental stage. Production of genetically damaged offspring is a distinct possibility.

Others, however, believe it is only a matter of time before the technique is improved and accepted. "Most . . . fertility experts, asked if humans will one day be cloned, replied, 'Of course.'" As for the propriety or impropriety of reproduction without sex, one doctor said, "In my opinion, it is all nonsense whether it is sexual or asexual . . . The whole argument is sort of silly—so what? People will agree with me in fifty years" (Kolata, p. 247).

God created sex in human beings for several reasons. One is reproduction (Genesis 1:28). The whole created order shows that God is a believer in variety, else why are there so many varieties in so many species? Why the different races? Our Creator doesn't want His children to be yellow pencils. The apostle Paul told us the Church, although it is one body, is composed of many members. He likened them to the various parts of the physical human body, each different but serving a necessary function (1 Corinthians 12).

systems by children with incurable lifelong afflictions requiring expensive care.

### Design your own child

If gene-manipulation procedures sufficiently improve to yield predictable results, what will happen then? Some believe it may be possible to design a dream child with the characteristics the parents desire in their offspring. Parents might be able to plan a customized child who is genetically disposed to be physically attractive, of superior intelligence or athletically talented.

On the other end of the spectrum, if certain genetic traits are associated with physical violence, totalitarian societies might move to counter this by targeting those who are considered apt to commit or have committed felonious acts. These concerns may seem far-fetched to some, but they should not be dismissed, given that attempts at ethnic cleansing have been a sad reality in several regions in recent years.

### Is it right or wrong?

Is there such a thing as right or wrong in these matters? Does genetic engineering or cloning have anything to do with God? Many in the field of science do not believe in God, so to them it is a nonissue. But those who believe God exists should address the matter of what He may think.

After God created life on earth—plants and animals—He proclaimed it all to be very good (Genesis 1:31). God also declared that sanctity exists between species. Everything, including plants (Genesis 1:11-12), animals and man (Genesis 1:24-28), was created to reproduce "according to its kind." In Genesis, "kind" is generally equivalent to a species.

Genetic engineering is an attempt to improve on what God made. God designed into every species considerable genetic diversity and potential, which is why we see hundreds of breeds of dogs, cats, birds and cows, along with billions of people, all different. As noted earlier, humans for centuries have used this diversity to produce stronger, more productive, more beneficial plants and animals.

But could taking genetic engineering a quantum leap forward produce unforeseen problems?

"Researchers in the field of molecular biology are arguing that there is nothing particularly sacred about the concept of species" (Michael J. Reiss and Roger Straughan, *Improving Nature? The Science*

and *Ethics of Genetic Engineering*, 1996, p. 64). In reality, since such genetic engineering amounts to tampering with God's creation, those who call for caution are wise in having and voicing concerns. "No new scientific or technological development can claim immunity from ethical scrutiny" (Reiss and Straughan, p. 6).

In addition to protecting individual species, we should also be concerned about the environment in a larger sense. Just because we can do certain things technologically does not mean we can do them *safely*.

At one time nuclear-power plants seemed like a brilliant idea, but a string of nuclear-power-plant disasters has dimmed their luster. Decades ago nations embarked on a binge of building nuclear facilities without adequately thinking through long-term storage solutions for radioactive wastes. Humanity has a long history of short-sightedness when it comes to considering the possible consequences of our actions. The potential for ecological damage to other plants and animals from genetic engineering should raise warning flags.

### Genetic tinkering gone awry

A case in point is a United States experiment in which pigs were given a human growth-hormone gene in hopes they would put on weight faster. They put on weight

with a special awe. Evolutionists believe man is simply the highest life form. With knowledge of genetics, some are tempted to look at man simply as so much genetic material to be manipulated in an attempt to improve the human species. The truth is that God designed man to be the highest form of physical life—made in the very image of God—and with the wondrous potential of becoming a part of His family. (To better understand this astounding truth, please request our free booklet, *What Is Your Destiny?*)

### Misplaced priorities

The desire to alleviate human suffering through genetic engineering may spring from good intentions, but we should consider why sickness and disease exist. One of the reasons, simply put, is sin and abuse of our bodies. The health costs from alcohol abuse, illegal-drug use, smoking, sexually transmitted diseases and improper diet, not to mention crime and violence as a means to solving problems, are staggering.

The problem that man most needs to address—but that we frequently ignore—is the need to change our nature rather than indulge our obsession with trying to improve on the physical design of mankind.

As with many other contemporary issues, some will use the issue of freedom as a trump card to get their way. Some

cloning could prove to be another step in the further disintegration of the family.

Where will all this lead?

As humanity approaches the 21st century, with an incredible arsenal of technology in our possession, we would be wise to consider what can happen to a civilization that is infatuated with its own wisdom and rejects the knowledge of God.

The world in the days before the flood of Noah had rejected God's ways. "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). The result of living that way was destruction. We would do well to heed the lesson of what can happen to a society that rejects the knowledge of God.

One of the gravest dangers of our modern, technologically advanced society is the power we have created to destroy all human life. Man has possessed this frightening potential for some time—since harnessing the power of the atom to create enough nightmarish nuclear weapons to eliminate all life on earth many times over.

In the wrong hands, biotechnology can be a grave danger. Germ weapons could be used by rogue nations or terrorist groups, or even by misguided individuals, to devastate entire countries. Karl Johnson of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta expressed this very concern: "Any

***The problem that man most needs to address is the need to change our nature rather than indulge our obsession with trying to improve on the physical design of mankind.***

but were also partially blind and arthritic and developed ulcers.

Among the dangers we face with plants is that an altered plant might bring unforeseen consequences to the environment. Researchers recently found that one variety of genetically engineered corn produced pollen that was toxic to monarch butterflies. Others raise the concern that manipulated plants could become "weeds" with no useful purpose and the potential to run amok. Man has often introduced animals or plants to areas in which they were not indigenous, only to see them become a major nuisance harmful to other species in the area and impossible to eradicate.

The bottom line is that man's attempts to improve on God's handiwork can—and sometimes do—backfire.

Genetic engineering of humans and cloning is an area where man should tread

cloning advocates speak of "human procreative liberty." Do we have a right to clone that outweighs other ethical considerations?

Are we, without adequately considering the consequences, tampering with society's building block, the family? "Whether or not we know it, the severing of procreation from sex, love and intimacy is inherently dehumanizing, no matter how good the product" (*Flesh of My Flesh: Ethics of Cloning Humans*, Gregory E. Pence, editor, 1998, p. 26).

In God's plan, children should come into the world in a stable home environment founded on a committed marriage between a man and woman (Genesis 2:24). At one time this was the cultural norm in most nations. This standard has been trampled in recent decades by a series of cultural earthquakes and repeated assaults on the family. Manufacturing children by

crackpot with a few thousand dollars' worth of equipment and a college biology education under his belt could manufacture bugs that would make Ebola look like a walk around the park" (Kaku, p. 258).

Jesus Christ prophesied a time when the survival of human life would be jeopardized. "It will be a time of great distress, such as there has never been before since the beginning of the world, and will never be again," He warns. "If that time of troubles were not cut short, no living thing could survive . . ." (Matthew 24:21-22, Revised English Bible).

As we move rapidly down the pathway of scientific progress, mankind moves closer to the moment Jesus predicted. When that time comes, we will discover that the god of technology will not be able to save us. Our deliverance will come from God alone. **GN**



Intelligent machines will soon surpass the abilities of human beings, say enthusiasts of artificial intelligence. Such predictions are no longer espoused only by science-fiction aficionados. Some serious scientists are saying the same thing.

Why would anyone want to create an artificial entity more intelligent than man? The reasoning of some proponents of artificial intelligence (AI) is that, although mankind represents the pinnacle of intelligence on the planet, we have proven inept at handling many of our problems. Thus we need a new and better solution. "We could turn to these superior intelligences for advice and authority in all matters of concern—and the humanity-induced troubles of the world could at last be resolved" (Roger Penrose, *Shadows of the Mind*, 1994, p. 11).

Such thoughts set off alarm bells in the minds of people who fear such creations could take over society and enslave us or even decide they don't need us. This concept has provided the themes for several Hollywood action films, including the popular 1999 release *Matrix* and two *Terminator* movies.

#### Artificial intelligence still young

"Super artificial intelligence" is not

switchboard and an "auto-attendant" directs their calls. Videocassette recorders (VCRs) and personal computers that respond to spoken commands already exist. Automobile ignition systems that recognize drivers' voices are on the horizon. The front door of your home may someday be equipped with a system that will unlock after a recognizable spoken command.

AI developers hope heuristic (self-educating) computers, equipped with vast databases and programmed to analyze and dissect problems, will be in extensive use around 2020. Heuristic computers might provide services normally supplied by a doctor or lawyer.

Some scientists believe machines with even-more-humanlike traits will become commonplace. "It is reasonable to assume that by 2050 we may have robots that can interface intelligently with humans, [and] machines with primitive emotions . . . and common sense" (Michio Kaku, *Visions: How Science Will Revolutionize the 21st Century*, 1997, p. 90).

#### Cyborgs: a coming reality?

Some artificial-intelligence proponents are certain that, by the end of the 21st century, cybernetic organisms—the merger of

but built with synthetic material.

"There will be nostalgia for our humble carbon-based roots, but there is nostalgia for vinyl records also" (Kurzweil, p. 126). According to the scenario, we will accept our new status because this brain-porting technology will provide the power to conquer mortality. Immortality will simply be a matter of making frequent backups. "While we are at it, we can add all human knowledge" to our new minds (Kurzweil). In such a brave new world, scientists predict, we will not be limited by the human brain, with its mere 100 trillion connections and synapses.

#### How to explain consciousness

If these things sound fantastic, that's because they are. Major gulfs exist between the present state of AI and the imagined bold new world. One of the problems is how to create a conscious entity out of the inanimate. To be conscious, in a human sense, means to be aware of one's own existence, sensations, thoughts and surroundings, to learn from the past and experiences of others and to plan for the future.

# Artificial Intelligence: Building a Better Brain?

anticipated until well into the 21st century. AI's current state is still in its childhood. Recent developments include a chess-playing IBM computer named Deep Blue that defeated the reigning (human) world champion in 1997. AI-infused machines can also perform complicated analytical chores such as scheduling maintenance of the space shuttles.

On the horizon lies enhanced speech recognition, which some experts consider a part of AI technology. Many companies already use sophisticated computers to answer their phones. Callers dial into a

humans with their electronic creations—will be reality.

Scientists will achieve this amazing feat through a process: Brain-scan technology will permit them to scan a brain and download its information to computer memory. They will "literally copy it, connection by connection, synapse by synapse, neurotransmitter by neurotransmitter" (Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines*, 1999, p. 125). Eventually, they predict, the technology will exist to enable us to reinstall this electronic file of someone's mind into another medium, possibly humanlike

Can true intelligence exist without such consciousness? This presents a huge problem to the development of AI because science cannot yet fathom the secrets of human consciousness. The consciousness of a human being has been called the ultimate mystery of existence. As Albert Einstein put it: "The hardest thing to understand is why we can



understand anything at all” (Kaku, p. 338).

How does consciousness arise? Some call it an emergent phenomenon, something that “happens naturally when a system becomes complex enough” (Kaku, p. 94). Working from this theory, some scientists believe that eventually a form of consciousness will emerge in a laboratory environment. Others are skeptical, calling the emergent theory of consciousness “more a matter of faith than a strategy for success” (Kaku, p. 94).

Consciousness is a remarkable phenomenon, one that separates us from simpler life forms. For instance, most people would agree that human consciousness is far above any kind of awareness exhibited by insects. Researchers have recorded film footage of one insect devouring another while apparently unaware that it was being eaten by yet a third insect. This raises the question of whether insects have any awareness or consciousness at all. Nor do insects demonstrate any appreciation of art and beauty.

Of course, primates and dolphins may reflect a small degree of what we may provisionally describe

ing ability will be difficult, if not impossible, to program into artificial intelligence. “One human mental function that is extremely hard to duplicate on a machine . . . is the intuitive leap—the sudden inspiration that allows you to ‘get it’” (James Trefil, *Are We Unique?*, 1997, p. 130).

We can overestimate the potential of computers because their components “fire” much more rapidly than the neurons in the human brain. They perform mathematical calculations faster and more accurately than humans. But no computer yet designed *understands* what it is doing.

Computers are woefully inferior to humans in other ways. One is the ability to recognize patterns—human faces, for example. Robots can be programmed to recognize a face, but they are thrown off if the face is rotated by a few degrees. Humans, on the other hand, can instantly pick a familiar face out of a large crowd. Recently it was considered a major achievement when a researcher created a computerized neural network that was able to recognize patterns with the same accuracy as a bee’s brain (Kaku, p. 87).

### The origin of consciousness

Scientists have formulated explanations

man from the dust of the earth, and breathed into him the breath of life; and man became “a living being” (Genesis 1:26; 2:7).

Before God enlivened the first man, he was a lifeless creation. Afterward he was a living being, made in the image of God. God placed a unique consciousness in human beings. We can recognize beauty, make judgments and perform other mental tasks that are unique to humans.

Man is the only creature that puzzles over the reason for his existence. We are the only physical beings that demonstrably can ponder past, present and future. We did *not* evolve this ability; God created it. He is the author of human consciousness and intelligence.

As for man developing a source of artificial intelligence that can supply answers to our insoluble problems, his new knowledge tends to produce even more problems in approximate proportion to the amount of new information he discovers. If we are wise, we will look to God for answers through His revelation, the Bible.

Man cannot find lasting solutions to his problems because they are, at their core, *spiritual* in nature (Isaiah 59). Until humanity as a whole is ready to recognize the true source of its problems, and seek God’s

## Scientists predict astounding advancements in artificial intelligence in the coming years. Can it help us solve our chronic problems?

by Noel Hornor

as a limited animal “consciousness.”

But our ability to think, reason and plan clearly sets us apart from other creatures.

Humans also have the ability to think intuitively. An example of intuitive thinking is the moment at which we grasp things “in a flash,” as when we are trying to solve a word puzzle. Scientists realize this judgment-making

for the origin of consciousness. The generally accepted scientific view is that “after billions of years of swirling around, matter and energy evolved to create life-forms—complex self-replicating patterns of matter and energy—that became sufficiently advanced to reflect . . . on their own consciousness” (Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines*, 1999, p. 62). When this had happened, according to this perspective, consciousness had evolved.

The Bible gives us God’s vantage point. As our Creator, He is in a position to know. God made man in His “image,” forming

solutions, we will continue to face the dilemmas and difficulties that have plagued mankind for thousands of years.

There is indeed a new world coming, a world vastly different from our expectations but far better than anything we have imagined. The Bible calls it “the Kingdom of God” and tells us it will include a transformation of people’s thought and behavior. To learn more about the differences between this biblical picture and mankind’s fascination with technologies such as artificial intelligence, be sure to request our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. **GN**

# A Good Soldier

*If Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams and Benjamin Franklin conceived the framework of a new nation, George Washington navigated it through its greatest crisis. Few know how well he shouldered the heavy task that fell on him in 1775.*

by Bruce Gore

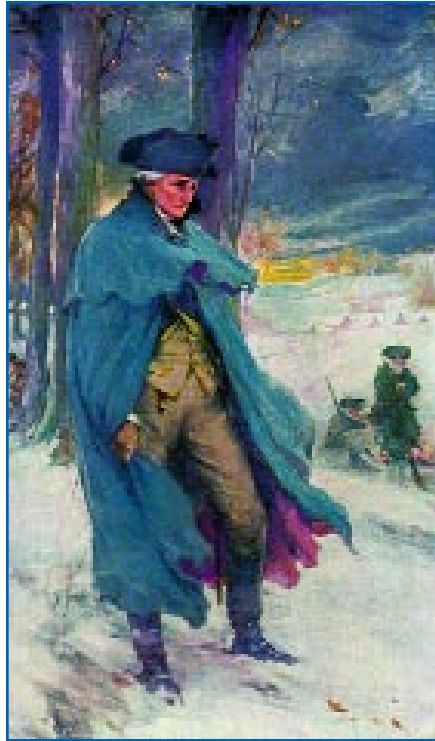
**T**he news of April 18, 1775, dashed any hope of peacefully settling differences between Great Britain and the American colonies. Maj. John Pitcairn of the British army had fired upon the American militia assembled in Lexington, Massachusetts. Americans from towns and villages in every direction lay among the dead and wounded.

Word quickly spread. The almost-hourly appearance of armed men from far and near soon resulted in a ragtag but determined army gathered around Boston.

The new Congress quickly moved to adopt the army, calling it the Continental Army. It was essential that the troops be given a leader—a commander in chief—for the inexperienced, newly formed Continental Army of the 13 colonies.

Opinions varied on whom to choose. Several were ambitious for the post. Massachusetts representative John Adams rose to nominate George Washington, a colonel of the Virginia forces. Citing Washington's talents and unquestioned character, Adams made the motion to appoint him commander in chief of the armed forces of the American Colonies.

Support for his appointment was unanimous. Washington accepted, refusing compensation other than the reimbursement of



letters to family members, he was the greatest skeptic of his fitness for his military and leadership duties.

## Forging a leader

Little hint of greatness was to be found in the early years of this wealthy landowner, whose time was largely occupied with his large holdings. Washington was

slow to endorse independence from the mother country, doing so only when it seemed no other course could work. In a letter to a neighbor, he tended toward peaceful resistance yet faced the reality that force might ultimately prove necessary. He was present when Patrick Henry delivered

his powerful speech against the Stamp Act. Earlier Washington had fought alongside the British in the French and Indian War, distinguishing himself as a courageous leader with little concern for his own safety and comfort. He was appointed commander of the Virginia forces when only 23.

In the early years he learned lessons that would serve him well. He knew the training of the English soldiers was best adapted to the battlefields of Europe and not the woods of North America. He readily understood the value of camouflage and of avoiding meeting the enemy in face-to-face battle lines too often. He was convinced early in his career he could defeat the British army.

Washington faced serious difficulties in surviving his first year. He labored to collect arms and ammunition and bring discipline to a collection of merchants, farmers and hunters, many of whom were suspicious of a standing army. Colonial poverty, lack of material support and short-term enlistments left him with an inadequately equipped fighting force.

## Criticism, cold and conflict

Washington's tactics of not seeking face-to-face battles with the British fell under constant criticism. His difficulties could have broken the spirit of most leaders. The fiber of the character of Washington and his men was tested over and over as an impotent and meddling Congress failed to provide the needs of the ragged troops.

Washington painfully witnessed the misery of his men sleeping on the frozen, snow-covered ground. Many had no shoes or blankets and little food as they wintered at Valley Forge and again at Trenton, New Jersey. On one occasion, he pledged his private fortune to help provide pay to the soldiers. His leadership and personal example during these distressing times

*To the day of his death, as evidenced by letters to family members, Washington was the greatest skeptic of his fitness for his military and leadership duties.*

his expenses. He asked "every gentleman in the room," however, to remember his declaration that he did not believe himself equal to the command and that he accepted it only as a duty made imperative by the unanimity of the vote.

To the day of his death, as evidenced by

slow to endorse independence from the mother country, doing so only when it seemed no other course could work. In a letter to a neighbor, he tended toward peaceful resistance yet faced the reality that force might ultimately prove necessary. He was present when Patrick Henry delivered

kept many of them from giving up.

“These are the times that try men’s souls,” wrote Thomas Paine in 1776. But the next few years were even worse for Washington. Adding to his burdens, some of his officers were involved behind his back in a plot to replace him with one of their own, Gen. Horatio Gates, as commander in chief.

### Daring leadership

Washington’s surprise crossing of the ice-filled Delaware River on a stormy night, marching in the teeth of slashing sleet and snow to attack the Hessians in Trenton, is the stuff of legend. This victory injected new life and hope into the flagging morale of the ill-equipped Continental Army.

His courage in battle frequently led him to expose himself recklessly to enemy fire. To the dismay of other officers, he often rode back and forth in the thick of battle rallying his troops. The enemy shot horses out from under him more than once, yet he finished the war as one of a few uninjured officers.

A fellow officer wrote: “Our army love their General very much, but they have one thing against him which is the little care he takes of himself in any action. His personal bravery and the desire he has of animating his troops by example, make him fearless of danger. This occasions much uneasiness.”

Washington’s extraordinary escape in one battle led a Colonial preacher to declare in a sermon his belief that Washington had been preserved to be the “savior of his country.”

At one point the Colonial army numbered no more than 3,500 because of desertions and short enlistments. Some historians say the largest number of soldiers Gen. Washington ever had under his command was 18,000 to 20,000. He faced a force of 30,000 well-supplied, seasoned, disciplined soldiers. Yet in the end he cornered Gen. Charles Cornwallis at Yorktown.

Encircled, with his back to the sea and Washington’s army facing him on land, Cornwallis sought terms of peace. On Oct. 19, 1781, the proud and once-powerful British units paraded between files of French and American soldiers to lay down their arms in surrender.

A mortal blow had been struck. The British, after arduous negotiations, were generous for the most part and recognized the independence of their former colonies.

With a few notable exceptions, the two countries have been close allies since.

### Commander to king?

In December 1783 Washington retired to his home at Mount Vernon, Virginia. In spite of the limited newspaper reporting of the time, Washington had become a national hero. Had he wished, he could have stepped into the role of a monarch over this newly formed country. His army, unhappy with its treatment and remuneration at the end of the war, was ready to make him king. Washington quickly and

## *The patriarch Job asks a crucial question: Will we accept good things from God but get discouraged and want to quit when hard times come upon us?*

indignantly put a stop to any such plans.

“In plain terms he stated his abhorrence of the proposal; he was at a loss to conceive what part of his conduct could have encouraged such thinking; they could not have ‘found a person to whom their schemes were more disagreeable’; and he charged them ‘if you have any regard for yourself or posterity, or respect for me, to banish these thoughts from your mind, and never communicate as from yourself or nay one else, a sentiment of the like nature’” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition, Vol. 28, p. 346).

The Federal Convention met at Philadelphia in May 1787 to frame the United States Constitution. Washington was present as a delegate from Virginia. As soon as enough states had ratified the document to assure the success of the new government, the unanimous vote of the electors made Washington the first president of the United States of America.

As with most leaders before and since, Washington soon suffered virulent attacks from journalists, politicians and fellow statesmen. It was reported that in a cabinet meeting in 1793 he said that “he would rather be in his grave than in his present situation.”

### Lessons for leaders

Washington proved himself to be a good soldier: loyal and resolute in difficult as well as good times. The Bible describes true Christians as soldiers in the army of Jesus Christ.

“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” wrote the

apostle Paul. “No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier” (2 Timothy 2:3-4).

A Christian commits his life in totality to the captain of his salvation, Jesus Christ. A soldier’s lot is to endure hardships; he is called to do battle.

Early Christians faced tremendous struggles. In a time of hardship and persecution that would soon lead to his death, Paul reminded Timothy of his calling:

“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the

laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling . . .

“For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit [which] dwells in us” (2 Timothy 1:6-14).

The patriarch Job asks a crucial question: Will we accept good things from God but get discouraged and want to quit when hard times come upon us? (Job 2:10).

The battles a Christian must face are not physical, but spiritual (Ephesians 6:12). The enemy, Satan the devil, is powerful. The war will be long and difficult, but our captain assures us that in the end we will be victorious. We will gain independence from the powers of unrighteousness.

To better understand the Christian’s struggle, request your free copies of the booklets *You Can Have Living Faith, What Is Your Destiny?*, *The Road to Eternal Life* and *The Church Jesus Built*. All are free for the asking when you contact our office nearest you, or visit the literature library of our Web site at [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org). **GN**



# If Children Could Choose Their Parents

*If your children had a choice, would they pick you for a parent?*

by David Treybig

**"P**ick your parents wisely." This saying is offered as sage, although tongue-in-cheek, advice for children. Since parents more than anyone else have the greatest opportunity to influence their children, being blessed with wise parents is a great advantage.

However, children don't get to pick their parents. They are stuck with what they get, and all too often a child is deprived of one parent by divorce—an event over which children have no control.

Sometimes it is helpful to look at situations from different perspectives to gain a deeper understanding. Some refer to this as thinking outside the box. How about joining me for a few minutes in contemplating issues that would matter to children if they could select their parents?

Perhaps you wonder why I'm focusing on a



*Children want both of their parents, Mom and Dad, living with them under the same roof.*

child's perspective. The answer is simple. It is because God's Word teaches us we should be concerned for other people (1 Corinthians 10:24; 12:25), and other people include children.

Jesus Christ loved children (Matthew 19:14).

Parents should follow the biblical injunctions to love their children and teach them God's ways (Titus 2:4; Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Since children have needs and God expects us to properly teach our kids and treat them with respect and love, let's consider the traits children might wish for in their parents.

## **They want, and need, both parents**

First, children want both of their parents, Mom and Dad, living with them under the same roof. Since God says He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), God obviously agrees with kids on this point. He intends that children live with both of their parents in the same household. Regrettably, "nearly 40 percent of American children currently do not live with their biological fathers" ("The Lost Art of Fatherhood," Dan Fost, *American Demographics*, March 1996, pp. 15-17).

Researchers continue to find that two-parent households are best for youths. According to one source, children from single-parent homes are 20 to 40 percent more likely to suffer health problems than those living with both parents ("Physician and Pastor: Co-laborers," Hilton Terrell, *Journal of Biblical Ethics in Medicine*, spring 1993, pp. 31-42).

Children in fatherless homes are more likely to drop out of school, abuse alcohol and drugs and break the law ("Father's Greatest Gift," Ken Canfield, *New Man*, July-August 1994, pp. 54-60).

As teens in the United States grow older, studies predict they will be "less likely to engage in [sexual] intercourse if they live with their natural fathers than if they do not" ("Father's Restraints," *Family in America*, March 1993, pp. 2NR-3NR).

Divorce so devastates children that the popular notion that children are better off when their parents end a bad marriage is shown, in many cases, to be wishful thinking.

Closely related to both parents living in the

*Being blessed with wise parents is a great advantage. However, children don't get to pick their parents. They are stuck with what they get.*



*Another item on a child's wish list for parents would probably be an encouraging environment.*

same home is parents not sending their children off to day care. Wise children would select parents who would care for them as infants in their own homes and not place them in outside facilities. Too often debates rage over whether a woman's place is in the home or in the workplace, all the while neglecting the children's perspective. When we consider which place is best for the children, the issue takes on much greater clarity.

"Daycare workers are among the lowest-paid and poorest qualified in any industry in America, yet they are being entrusted with the nurturing of our most precious resource—our children. The younger the child when placed in a nine-to-five routine of day care, the less likely he is to become a well-adjusted adult" (*Current Thoughts and Trends review of Children of the Universe*, Amitai Etzioni, *Utne Reader*, May-June 1993, pp. 52-61). Child-care facilities with large numbers of children are simply unable to provide the sustained, personal, one-on-one attention so necessary for the healthy development of children.

Economic needs are commonly cited as the reason for placing children in day-care facilities. The reality, however, is that many times most of the money the second parent earns ends up spent on day care itself and

restaurants or fast food because no one stays home to prepare a meal.

Although two-income households can achieve financial gains, a commendable number of parents are giving their children's needs the highest priority and are choosing a lower standard of living so they can maintain higher family standards. When they do this they find they achieve a much more rewarding home life. Although some mothers remain at home with their children to accomplish this, others are finding part-time work when their husbands stay at home with the children or take on jobs that can be done from home.

Wise children would no doubt select parents who would place their welfare ahead of financial gain.

### **The value of quality time**

The next item on a child's shopping list for good parents would likely be finding a mother and father who would spend time with them. The popular notion that spending "quality time" with children makes up for lack of attention at other times gets failing grades from their point of view. To them the quantity of time is more important than its supposed quality.

Sociologist Mark Warr of the University of Texas confirmed that recent studies "raise serious questions about the emphasis on quality time so prevalent today. Although quality time is surely desirable, the quantity of time spent with the family is not irrelevant. Contemporary arguments notwithstanding, small amounts of quality time may not be sufficient to offset the criminogenic aspects of peer culture to which adolescents are commonly exposed" (*Family in America*, February 1994).

In other words, children need regular and frequent time with their parents to help offset the growing exposure to negative influences outside (and many times inside, via television and music) the home.

Ideally, children should spend enough time with their parents to see them working about the house as well as enjoying the "quality time" of special occasions. By being with their parents, youths learn how to work. By doing a good deed for someone with their parents, youths learn how to give.

When kids see Dad give Mom an affectionate kiss and observe them treating each other with respect, they learn how a happy marriage works. Although some adults may not rate these sorts of things as quality

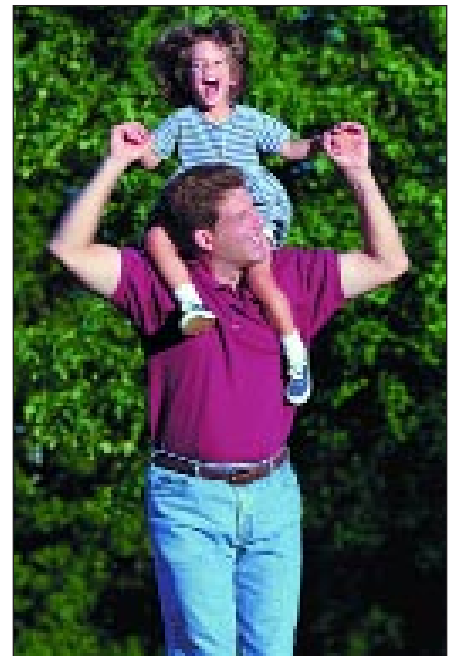
time, they are essential for the healthy development of socially mature children.

### **The power of encouragement**

Another item on a child's wish list for parents would probably be an encouraging environment. Children would like to have parents who take a strong personal interest in helping them develop their skills and find their way in life.

Since children tend to live up to their parents' expectations, they are best served by a mom and dad who assure them they can succeed. Sadly, most homes are filled with negativism. "Psychologist Larry Kubiak says that the average amount of time parents spend communicating with their teenage children is only 14 minutes per day. Of that time, 12 minutes is negative, one minute is neutral, and one minute is positive" (*Youthworker Update*, November 1993).

Being good parents means putting our children's needs ahead of our desires. If



*The next item on a child's shopping list for good parents would likely be finding a mother and father who would spend time with them.*

you have children, give them what they need as well as what they want: a positive, encouraging home with both parents living together in peace. Their future, and that of our communities and ultimately our nations, depends on it. **GN**

**H**ow often do you find yourself faced with a situation where you know you should say no, and you may even want to, but you don't because of what others may think? For many of us, such situations happen all too often. So how do we deal with them? How do we keep from acting against our better judgment?

The difficulty often lies in our not wanting others to think badly of us, so we find it hard to say no. Yet, if we refuse to say no, we can end up getting in trouble or hurting ourselves or others. We could even end up breaking the law of God.

If you find yourself taken advantage of because you can't bring yourself to utter a polite but firm no, consider some of the excuses you've probably heard:

- "I knew he was driving too fast, but my friends were in a hurry."
- "I knew it was illegal to drink, but the others wanted to."
- "I didn't agree with the group, but I didn't want to stand out as different."
- "I shouldn't have given in, but everyone else was doing it."

Situations like these often place us in compromising positions when it comes to our beliefs and standards, family rules or desires. But it is possible to come up with reasonable and friendly ways of saying no. The next time you're faced with a dilemma when you know you should say no, consider some of the following.

**Go by the rules.** Make your refusal impersonal. This helps counter the problem of being pressured into doing something you know you shouldn't do, whether you're at school or with friends. When faced with invitations to do things you know you shouldn't—smoke, try drugs or drink alcohol illegally, cheat or engage in illicit activity—explain that your family members agree to follow specific rules so the answer has to be no. This may be hard at first, but you'll find your friends will respect you more when you take a moral stand.

Going by the rules can also help when you're faced with people who drive dangerously, drink illegally or too much, or otherwise exert an unwanted influence over you.

An excellent example, expressed lyrically, is in Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical production *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. It takes us back to the biblical story of Joseph, a talented, good-looking young man who, although a slave, managed the estate of Potiphar, an Egyptian nobleman. All was going well for the young man until the nobleman's wife tried to seduce him.

The seduction scene, according to Mr. Webber, goes this way:

Joseph's looks and handsome figure,  
Had attracted her attention,  
Every morning she would beckon,  
"Come and lie with me love."

Joseph wanted to resist her,  
Till one day she proved too eager,  
Joseph cried in vain,  
"Please stop, I don't believe in free love."

The biblical account describes Potiphar's wife repeatedly trying to seduce Joseph. But he resists, telling her: "There is

no one greater in this house than I, nor has he [her husband] kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

But the woman persisted. "So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her. But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside, that she caught him by his garment, saying, 'Lie with me.'" But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside" (verses 10-12).

After his repeated refusals to engage in immorality, his decision not to betray his master—and not to disobey God—Joseph had only one option: to literally run from the evil.

This incident is echoed millennia later in the apostle Paul's words: "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).

Joseph politely refused when pressured by the boss's wife to do wrong. He didn't weaken. He recognized the would-be seductress's proposition as a slap in the face of Joseph's spiritual Father, the Creator God.

Because of Joseph's values, he simply would not allow that sort of thing to occur. When the woman persisted in her amorous advances, he avoided the source of temptation as much as possible: He kept away from her. When she finally trapped him into a compromising situation, Joseph simply fled.

The Bible records that Joseph paid a steep initial price for his refusal to compromise. Potiphar's wife accused him of

# You Can Say **NO** And Still Keep Your Friends

Sometimes if you don't say no you can end up hurting yourself. The challenge is in learning to say no without offending others and losing friends.

by Graemme Marshall

attempted rape, and Potiphar had him thrown in jail. In the end, however, God richly rewarded Joseph for his upstanding character and refusal to sin.

The rest of the story reveals Joseph eventually becoming the second-most-powerful man in the ancient superpower of Egypt.

***Say no by showing what needs to be done for a yes.***

What do you do when a salesman pressures you to buy something? If you are interested, you might explain that if you are shown the

saving the group a lot of trouble.

***Say no by asking others to walk in your shoes.***

One way you can courteously refuse is by helping other



exact item you want, in the color and style you want, and for the right price, then you might buy. Don't give in to doing things against your will.

We can learn from the tragic love story of Samson, an unusually strong man and one of the heroes of ancient Israel. Samson became romantically involved with a woman named Delilah (Judges 16:4). Allowing his emotions to get the best of him, he ended up the target of a sinister plot. The local Philistine rulers set him up by paying her to snare him (verses 5-6).

On three occasions Delilah asked superman Samson to reveal the secret of his great strength. For a while he successfully put her off until finally, under the pressure of constant questioning, flattery and accusations that if he didn't answer her he must not love her, he relented.

Samson suffered for his indiscretion in confiding in Delilah. The story's heartrending conclusion reveals the ugly consequences of giving in when one should have held firm in his convictions (verses 15-17, 21). We should place a much higher priority on living a righteous and upright life than on activities that could place us in compromising situations.

Stand firm when you know you're right. When others suggest you do something you don't want to do or know you shouldn't do, offer alternatives. Tell them: "I'm sorry, but I just can't do that. However, I'd be glad to join you if you'd like to try this other idea instead." You might just end up

people appreciate your problem and why you have to say no. After all, what would they do if they had your homework to complete? What would they do if they had an exam coming up and were being asked to neglect preparing for it? What would their answer be if they had to face your priorities?

Explain to others that your refusal is the proper and sensible thing to do at the time. This helps reasonable people understand why you have to say no to their request.

Along with asking others to walk in your shoes, it helps to try to walk in theirs. It's also wise to avoid coming across as if you think you are better than they are.

When faced with the need for a delicate refusal without hurting others' feelings, be firm but kind. If you're enticed to go against your principles, be strong in your resolve to choose right and say no to wrong. Remember that a refusal is more readily accepted when given in a warm and friendly manner.

When faced with having to say no, say it gracefully and with a smile. **GN**

# What Happens After Death?



**T**his is one of the great questions of life: What happens when we die? Is death the end of human existence and consciousness, or do we continue in some other place or state of being? Do we go to a place of everlasting reward or eternal torment? Are we destined to be reincarnated, coming to life again in a different body in a seemingly endless cycle of living and dying? Will we ever see deceased loved ones again? Is there somewhere you can go to find the answers?

In spite of centuries of research, science cannot tell us when, where or how life began. Only one source tells us how life began and for what purpose. Shouldn't we go to that source to understand the mystery of death?

The Bible tells us exactly what happens after death. It tells us what happens to those who have done right and wrong and reveals the fate of the billions of people who have never known God and His way of life. Most churches claim to teach what the Bible says—but what does it really reveal? You need to discover the answers yourself. You'll be shocked when you find out what the Bible really teaches about what happens after death!

*What Happens After Death?* will help you understand the incredible truth about this great mystery. For your free copy, write or call our office in your country (or the country nearest you) on page 2 of this issue.

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