

BEYOND TODAY

Envisioning a Better World Tomorrow

THE GREATEST COMEBACK EVER!

10

Jesus Gave His Life's
Blood for You

20

The Disturbing
Waning Resistance
to Abortion

A New Chapter
for America ...
and the World?

14

7 Ways to Love
Your Enemies

22

CONTENTS

March–April 2025

Cover article ✓

The Greatest Comeback Ever!

Triumphant return to high political office against repeated attempts by powerful foes to silence and destroy is certainly extraordinary. But it's not the greatest comeback ever. That distinction belongs to a return from death around 2,000 years ago to truly save the world, offering all people hope in ultimate victory.

by **Jim Tuck & Tom Robinson**



Articles & Columns ✓

10

Jesus Gave His Life's Blood for You

Donating a pint of blood can help save another person's life. When Jesus Christ gave His blood to the point of death in an enormous sacrifice, He opened the door for you to be saved from death, making it possible for you to have eternal life.

by **John LaBissoniere**

14

A New Chapter for America . . . and the World?

"God spared my life to make America great again," Donald Trump declared in his inaugural address. If true, what would that mean for him and the nation he leads? What would it mean for you?

by **Darris McNeely**

18

Current Events & Trends

A critical eye on current world conditions from a biblical worldview.

20

The Disturbing Waning Resistance to Abortion

The 2022 overturning of the earlier U.S. Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion was hailed as a victory in the defense of the unborn. Yet with the new ruling to return the matter to the states, several have expanded abortion, and many pro-life advocates have compromised. Our real concern should be where God stands on the matter.

by **James Ginn**

22

7 Ways to Love Your Enemies

Loving our enemies isn't a natural human inclination, but it's the example Jesus Christ set for us to follow. Here are seven ways to show love to those who seem to be against us.

by **Becky Sweat**

25

God, Science & the Bible

New Discoveries

About Trees and Their Benefits

How the tops of trees avoid becoming enmeshed with the branches of other trees is yet another evidence of design.

by **Mario Seiglie**

4–5

Letters From Our Readers & Editorial

13 Questions & Answers

How do we obey God's commands in Scripture to keep holy His sacred feasts days?

26 Compass Check

What You Need to Know About Dopamine

by **Kayleen Schreiber**

28 Follow Me . . .

The God Who Blesses Us

God gave His ancient priesthood specific words for blessing His people that assure us of His loving intentions toward us, encouraging us to press on in living according to God's will.

by **Robin Webber**

31 How to watch Beyond Today

Discover much more content on our website

- Every digital back issue of *Beyond Today* magazine
- Every streaming episode of *Beyond Today* television
- All our apps—iOS, Android, AppleTV, Roku and more
- Children's content—fun Bible lessons, stories and activities
- Weekly live-streamed worship services
- Content in French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and more



Find it all at
beyondtoday.org

BEYOND TODAY

Volume 30, Number 2

Circulation: 383,271

Publisher: United Church of God,
an International Association

Council of Elders: Scott Ashley, Jorge de Campos, Aaron Dean, Dan Dowd, John Elliott, Victor Kubik, Len Martin, Darris McNeely, Tim Pebworth (chairman), Mario Seigle, Rex Sexton, Paul Wasilkoff

Church president: Rick Shabi

Media operation manager: Peter Eddington

Managing editor: Tom Robinson

Senior writers: John LaBissoniere, Darris McNeely, Steve Myers, Gary Petty, Tom Robinson

Proofreader: Robert Curry

Design production manager: Mitchell Moss

Senior graphic designer & illustrator: Matt Hernandez

Circulation manager: John LaBissoniere

Beyond Today (ISSN: 1086-9514) is published by the United Church of God, *an International Association*, 555 Technecenter Dr., Milford, OH 45150. © 2025 United Church of God, *an International Association*.

Beyond Today and the *Beyond Today* logo is a registered trademark. Printed in the 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. Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., publishers) unless otherwise noted.

To request a free subscription, visit our website at beyondtoday.org or contact the office nearest you from the list on page 31. *Beyond Today* is sent free to all who request it. Your subscription is provided by the voluntary contributions of members of the United Church of God, *an International Association*, and others.

Personal contact: The United Church of God has congregations and ministers throughout the United States and many other countries. To contact a minister or to find locations and times of services, contact our office nearest you or visit our website at ucg.org/churches.

Unsolicited materials: Due to staffing limitations, unsolicited materials sent to *Beyond Today* will not be critiqued or returned. By their submission authors agree that submitted materials become the property of the United Church of God, *an International Association*, to use as it sees fit. This agreement is controlled by California law.

HOW *Beyond Today* MAGAZINE IS PAID FOR

Beyond Today is dedicated to proclaiming the true good news of Jesus Christ. It is sent free of charge to all who request it through the voluntary contributions of members of the United Church of God, *an International Association*, and our extended worldwide family of donors. We are grateful for these generous donations.

While we do not solicit the general public for funds, we welcome contributions to help us share this message of truth and hope with others. You can make a donation at donate.ucg.org, or by contacting our office nearest you on page 31. Contributions are tax deductible where permissible by law.

The United Church of God, in accordance with responsible financial stewardship, is audited annually by an independent accounting firm.



Reaching for a Strong Hand From Someplace

In our November-December 2024 issue, we explored the many threats facing our world, the source of those threats, and God's plan to intervene in solving them once and for all.

Dear friends, I received the second issue of my subscription to *Beyond Today* magazine, and as with the previous issue, all the articles provide an outstanding view of the real situation in our nation and the world. The cover article is a must-read for everyone who still cannot understand that no human is able to solve the problems that are affecting our daily lives. The article "Are You Looking for Direction in All The Wrong Places?" is a wakeup call for those seeking the answers from the wrong sources, in "a deceived world gone astray."

Yes, keeping away from the lies of the devil and seeking the truth through our Lord is the only pathway to victory. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to read a magazine that provides a solid stand for the Christian faith of persons like myself. May our Lord and Savior keep everyone at *Beyond Today* blessed.

From the Internet

My hat off for "Censorship, Intimidation & Rising Tyranny." I hope that *Beyond Today* will continue with publication of articles concerning politics, because nobody can live unaffected by politics in this world.

Subscriber in Ontario, Canada

A response to "Persecuted for Righteousness" in the July-August 2024 issue

I so enjoyed the article about the believers in Bangladesh and their struggles with persecution. How inspiring to learn of their giving of water which is actually the gift of life to their tormentors. That gave me pause to reflect. I cannot honestly say that I would be as forgiving, so Christlike in my thoughts and actions if I faced the same problem. Thank you for presenting to this angry world this much-needed testimony. God bless and keep our brothers and sisters all over the world. God bless you and your life-changing work! Please accept my

donation. I truly do look forward to receiving your magazine. It never disappoints as a source of inspiration.

Subscriber in Pennsylvania

More letters regarding our free resources

I have read your magazine and am amazed at the research you do and the articles you create. Thank you for your magazine.

From the Internet

I really enjoy reading all the booklets you have sent to me and all members of our Bible study group in this healthcare facility. We have Bible studies often during the week here. God bless you all.

From the Internet

Notes from prisoners

Editor's note: Beyond Today television episodes are available to watch on an in-prison digital resources platform called Edovo. We receive many notes from prisoners, a few of which are printed below.

I have watched all 40 episodes of *Beyond Today* that are available to me on the Edovo app on my tablet. I have reached out to one of United Church of God's congregations, and have been in contact with one of the pastors. There are 13 Bible study aids that I am interested in reviewing. Thank you!

We all love your magazines, plus we watch your videos on prison tablets. They are great! You are great. Thank you all for everything you do. May the good Lord bless you.

Dear fellow brothers in Christ at *Beyond Today*, I am currently incarcerated in prison in New York. My addictions to drugs and alcoholism have contributed to my being taken away from my children and family. After losing my wife to Covid over two

years ago I went into a downward spiral, drinking to numb the pain. I began using drugs, and I wish that I could have just put my faith in Jesus instead; it shames me greatly to say this. But you have given me optimism and have started the process of restoring my faith, bringing me closer to God. I am thankful for this experience, and I'm not mad anymore. I know that I was saved before things could have been worse for me, where maybe I could've seriously hurt or killed someone through reckless actions due to drugs and alcohol. I would like to send my deepest thank you to all of my brothers and sisters in Christ at *Beyond Today*. I would also like to ask for prayers for my son and daughter. I know that prayers are worth more than gold.

Location of church services

My question is in regards to seeing if there is a Church of God where I live. I'm looking for a church that teaches only truth. A lot of churches are scammers that lead you into the darkness. It's like the blind leading the blind nowadays. Please lead me to the right church. Thank you and may God bless you. Amen, and glory be to God.

Reader in Queensland, Australia

Thanks for your letter! We have many congregations around Australia and the world; simply visit ucg.org/congregations and you'll find a map with all of them listed. Reach out to the pastor of the one closest to you and he'll be happy to assist you. We hope to see you soon!

Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to Beyond Today, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A., or email btinfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).



"A Dead Man . . . Has Risen"

Just three days into his new term in office, U.S. President Donald Trump addressed by videoconference the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, which represents many nations and leaders who've been diametrically opposed to his positions and renewed ascendance, as they see him as a threat to various globalist aims. WEF head Klaus Schwab introduced him by acknowledging that he and America were indispensable to achieving any international objectives.

In an onstage panel of WEF leaders the day prior, Jan. 22, political scientist Graham Allison said with amazement yet great concern: "Trump has done something no person in the world has ever done before. A dead man, a dead politician, has risen, somebody who a year . . . four years ago at Davos, he's buried and dead politically . . . He's now returned. This is the greatest comeback in political history, of a politician. And then, therefore, he thinks he can do anything."

This was followed by Yale Professor Walter Mead acknowledging: "We need to also factor in not only who's won, which is Trump, but who's lost, which is to say, us. And I guess I would add, throw into that the epitome of the us who is losing here is Europe, that the European Union and by and large its member states have misread the direction where events were going . . . The causes that it is interested in (climate, human rights, some others), as well as the methods of diplomacy that it prefers, are simply being gradually kind of marginalized, as something new—not necessarily something better, but something new—moves into the center."

A few things jump out from these comments and the turn of affairs.

Foremost here is the comparison of Donald Trump's return to prominence with a resurrection of the dead. Many have made similar comments in calling it the greatest comeback of all time. But rest assured, it is certainly not that. As remarkable as it is, it was not an actual resurrection from death. There have been very few of those—and only one that has been lasting, with monumental impact for all mankind.

That one is of course the resurrection of Jesus Christ to immortality. It's at this time of year, the season of the biblical Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread to follow, that we reflect on the remarkable story of Jesus Christ's death for our sins and return to life for God's ongoing work of salvation. This truly greatest comeback through an actual resurrection is the focus of our cover story.

This is not to diminish the current political accomplishment, which is immense—yet also, of course, subject to the will or allowance of God on high (see Daniel 2:21). Noteworthy, too, in the Davos remarks is the acknowledgment of the radical change that is happening not just in the United States but throughout geopolitics. The dominance of President Trump at this usually antagonistic forum at which he was not even present was palpable. Things have definitely shifted. And as was pointed out, so many had misread the direction where events were going.

Indeed, it's possible that we are on the cusp of a return to U.S. dominance on the world stage and a time of economic resurgence, though time will tell—and things could easily worsen before they improve (for more thoughts on this, see "A New Chapter for America . . . and the World?" beginning on page 14). Of course, conditions can change quickly, and prophecy shows that ultimately American power will wane and fall. But in the meantime, all of us have the opportunity to use the time we have as best we can—especially to repent and live as God directs us to.

A sad reality check on the spiritual condition of society is the expansion of abortion in many places after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned its national legalization 49 years earlier, now sending the issue back to the individual states, along with the refusal of many pro-life advocates, including the Trump administration, to seek a ban on the heinous evil of abortion, seeing this as a losing political issue (read more in "The Disturbing Waning Resistance to Abortion" beginning on page 20). The words of Thomas Jefferson inscribed on his memorial in Washington, D.C. cry out in warning: "Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever."

The rejection of the woke agenda, including returning to the sanity of recognizing the biological reality of only two genders, is a very positive sign. But problems still loom. Which way will things go?

What's really needed is national repentance. Yet whether that happens or not, you personally can choose to repent of your own wrong ways before God—and He will help you change. "Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light'" (Ephesians 5:14). Yes, you can be a dead man who has risen!

Tom Robinson, Managing Editor
Beyond Today Magazine



THE GREATEST COMEBACK EVER!

A triumphant return to high political office in spite of repeated attempts by powerful foes to silence and destroy is certainly extraordinary. But it's not the greatest comeback ever. That distinction belongs to a return from death around 2,000 years ago to truly save the world, offering all people hope in ultimate victory.

by Jim Tuck & Tom Robinson

Throughout history, comebacks have been celebrated as incredible feats of resilience, determination and fortitude. Comeback stories connect with our own struggles and inspire us to rise to overcome and keep fighting. Still, successful comebacks are rare. In the sports world, even elite athletes have difficulty returning to their greatness after a prolonged pause. Competition is fierce. Even a minor decline in performance can mean the difference between victory or failure.

Widely discussed of late is a remarkable comeback in the political arena—the return of former U.S. President Donald Trump, who, after losing the 2020 presidential election, managed to stage a political comeback seen by many as one of legendary proportions. Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu hailed Trump's 2024 election victory as “history's greatest comeback.” Not since Grover Cleveland in the late 1800s has a

person served non-consecutive terms as U.S. president—and Trump did it facing far more powerful resistance. Numerous attempts to shut him out, defame him and silence him ultimately didn't work. He even survived two known assassination attempts.

However, while this return to power is certainly remarkable in the context of modern politics, it is by no means the greatest comeback in history. The Bible records some amazing comebacks (see “Other Biblical Comeback Stories” on page 8). Yet there is one that far surpasses any other. The greatest comeback in history is that of Jesus Christ. Efforts to silence and destroy Him led to His actual death—but *He was resurrected from the dead!* Unlike any other comeback, Jesus' return to life after His crucifixion is unparalleled, not only in its miraculous nature but also in its eternal significance, changing the entire trajectory of humanity's future. And

Jesus' victory over death continues with the promise of His future return to rule the world—and setting the pattern for our own victory with Him.

Leaving divine glory to face immediate threat

To fully appreciate the magnitude of Jesus Christ's comeback, we must first understand the magnitude of who He was, what He descended to, the opposition He faced during His human life and the horrific death He experienced.

John 1:1-3 reveals that in the beginning there were two divine Beings, God and the Word, and that all things were created through the Word. Verse 14 clearly states the Word became flesh and lived among us. Jesus, who was born of the virgin Mary, was also the Creator of all things! And "though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to" (Philippians 2:6, New Living Translation). "But He emptied Himself, taking upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (verse 7, Modern English Version).

Jesus humbled Himself and came as a Man, divesting Himself voluntarily of His divine glory and might. This great powerful Being placed His existence in the hands of God the Father at His conception in the womb of Mary!

At Jesus' birth, He was in the crosshairs of those plotting to kill Him. He was already that lowly Lamb being prepared for slaughter (Isaiah 53:7). Herod the Great, hearing of this One who was born to be King of the Jews, the Messiah of the line of David, tried to eliminate Him through the massacre of innocent children (Matthew 2). Herod was a tool here of Satan the devil (see Revelation 12:3-4, 9). But Jesus was taken away to safety at that time, as it was not yet His time to die.

Escalating efforts to destroy Jesus

At around age 30, Jesus began His ministry preaching about the Kingdom of God, stressing the importance of love, forgiveness and sincere obedience to God. He performed miracles, healed the sick, cast out demons and trained disciples to carry His message. His teachings and actions soon garnered the attention of the established religious and political powers. The things He said and did, including shocking hints He gave regarding His identity, were seen as a direct threat

to the status quo, and soon authorities began conspiring to silence Him.

Religious leaders constantly sought to entrap Jesus in His own words, but He always turned the tables, making them look foolish. Outraged at temple sacrifices, offerings and the temple tax becoming a source of unscrupulous profiteering, He drove the notorious money changers out of the temple (Mark 11:15-17)—threatening a lucrative enterprise that also brought wealth to the high priestly family and political leadership. "And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching" (verse 18).

The efforts to destroy Jesus escalated over time. His enemies

plotted His arrest, knowing that His growing influence among the people would disrupt their authority. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-44), "the chief priests

and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, 'What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation'" (verses 47-48).

There was also a great deal of envy involved, as the Roman governor Pontius Pilate perceived when Jesus was accused before him (Mark 15:10).

Ultimately, they succeeded in having Jesus arrested, tried and sentenced to death. If ever there was a rush to judgment and execution, the case of Jesus was it. He was "set up" as a lamb for the slaughter. He was charged with being an insurrectionist trying to destroy the temple, making Himself king in challenge to Roman authority and forbidding His disciples from paying Roman tribute. The judges brought these illegal charges against Him without any prior witness testimony—holding the trial before sunrise to prevent anyone from testifying on Jesus' behalf but coaching false witnesses to testify whose statements did not agree. Yet Jesus Christ was totally innocent. Even Pilate found no fault with Him.

Torturous death—but not the end

Shamefully, the political leaders of the day, including Pilate, gave in to the pressure of the worked-up mob that demanded His death by crucifixion, a brutal and humiliating form of execution. Jesus was mocked, beaten, and forced to



For all intents and purposes, the death of Jesus seemed like the end. But little did they know that this would not be the end of Jesus' story.

carry the beam for His crucifixion through the streets before being nailed up for all to see.

And then He died—this One who had made the world, rejected and killed by those He created! He was laid in a tomb, with the thought that He would never be seen or heard from again.

For all intents and purposes, the death of Jesus seemed like the end. His followers were devastated. His message, which had sparked so much hope and anticipation, seemed to have been defeated. The religious authorities believed that with His death, the threat He posed to their power had been eliminated. But little did they know that this would not be the end of Jesus' story.

In fact, His suffering and death—which they and all people bore guilt in—was part of an awesome plan laid out before the foundation of the world. It had to happen to pay the penalty of the sins of mankind—with Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). This was foreshadowed in the annual Passover, observed in Israel for centuries with the sacrifice of a lamb. The apostle Paul understood this symbolism, telling us that “indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

But in that great plan, Jesus was not to remain dead.

The miracle of the resurrection

The most incredible comeback in history occurred after Jesus' body lay in the tomb for three days and three nights (see Matthew 12:40). The tomb was empty, the stone rolled away.

Contrary to all expectations, Jesus rose from the dead, God the Father restoring Him to life! (Galatians 1:1). The Bible describes how His followers, who had witnessed His brutal execution, were initially hopeless and doubting—but soon He appeared to them, alive and well, and their hearts were revived. Jesus' resurrection was not merely a resuscitation or a return to life in the ordinary sense; it was a miraculous victory over death itself!

Moreover, it also confirmed His divinity and the truth of His teachings. He had foretold His death and resurrection, and His return from the dead validated His claims of who He was. The resurrection was a powerful declaration that a cold tomb and the forces of darkness, sin and death could not hold Him down (see Acts 2:24). It was the ultimate victory over the very powers that had tried to silence and destroy Him—ultimately Satan (Hebrews 2:14).

And it came during the festival that follows the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which pictures our following Jesus out of a life of sin and death into newness of life (compare 1 Corinthians 5:7-8; Romans 6:1-4). In Jesus' triumph over the ultimate enemy, death,

Other Biblical Comeback Stories

The Bible is replete with inspiring comeback stories, though one towers above all.

Joseph, favored son of Jacob who relayed prophetic dreams of dominion over his family, was resented by his brothers, who sold him into slavery. He ended up a slave in the house of the high Egyptian official Potiphar, where he was promoted to overseer. Then resisting the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife, she accused him of sexual assault, and he was thrown into prison.

Eventually the keeper of the prison put him in charge of the other prisoners. When Pharaoh's butler and baker were briefly thrown in the prison, they each had dreams that Joseph interpreted accurately—the baker executed and the butler restored to office. Joseph asked the butler to remember him so he could be released, yet he forgot him. But God didn't forget Joseph, causing Pharaoh to have a dream his magicians couldn't interpret, prodding the butler to remember. Joseph foretold seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine with direction for preparation. Pharaoh then promoted Joseph to prime minister over all Egypt! His brothers later came and submitted to him without realizing—until at last he told them his true identity.

Moses, spared from the Egyptian killing of Israelite babies, was raised as Egyptian royalty. As a man he went to look on the plight of his people in bondage and ended up killing an Egyptian taskmaster who was beating an Israelite, then hid the body. Discovering this had become known and would be used to condemn him, he fled across the desert to Midian where he married into the family of Jethro and tended his flocks for 40 years. God then called him at the burning bush at age 80 to return to Egypt and deliver the Israelites out of slavery, bringing down the world's greatest empire and leading the Israelites to the Promised Land, as he would go on to do.

David, anointed king as a boy by Samuel to replace Saul, never sought to take over. After slaying Goliath, David became a great military leader under Saul. But Saul's jealousy led to his trying to kill David, who fled into the wilderness, where various refugees and a rough group of fighters gathered around him. David spent many years on the run from Saul, but twice spared his life when he had opportunity to kill him. Eventually God brought about Saul's death, and David was at last made king of Judah—and after seven more years He was made king of all Israel. As a righteous king, David went on to rule over a far greater dominion than Saul, though with some terrible lapses.

Ultimately, David will be resurrected to rule in God's Kingdom—as will Joseph and Moses. These three and many other biblical heroes of faith are great comebacks, yet they are but types and reflections of the greatest comeback story of all time—that of Jesus Christ.

He offered the world the hope of eternal life.

In the 40 days following His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples, offering them proof of His living presence. His comeback was not just a fleeting moment; it was a powerful declaration that death itself had been defeated and that God's plan of salvation was being fulfilled. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to the Christian faith, representing the hope of eternal life for all who believe in Him. As we're told, God "has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

The ascension of Jesus, leading His Church and the promise of His return

After appearing to His followers and providing them with instructions about spreading His message to the world, Jesus ascended into heaven. The ascension of Jesus, though a moment of sorrow for His followers at His apparent absence, also marked a new phase in the unfolding of God's plan for humanity. Jesus' ascension to the right hand of the Father signified His victory over death and His return to reign over the universe. His return to heaven was not a retreat but a triumphant return to His rightful place in glory, from where He would also serve as our High Priest and lead His Church through God's Holy Spirit.

The message of the resurrection taught by the Church was intended to call people to changed lives through repentance: "Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations'" (Luke 24:46-47).

Yet the greatest comeback of all does not end with Jesus' ascension and leading of His people today. Jesus assured us that He will one day return to earth to establish His Kingdom over all nations. This future return, known as the Second Coming, is a source of great hope and anticipation for believers. It is a promise that Jesus will come again, not as a lowly servant but as King of Kings to rule and reign over all the earth. This final comeback will be the ultimate victory, as Jesus will defeat all evil, bring justice to the world, and establish peace and righteousness for eternity.

In the New Testament, Christians are told to look forward to this return with eager expectation (Titus 2:13; 2 Timothy 4:8)—also submitting to Christ's rule in their life even now, not just *hearing* the gospel or good news but *obeying* it in living according to God's will (1 Peter 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:8). The return of Christ will lead to all people learning to live the ways of God and receiving opportunity for salvation. And it will culminate, as presented in Revelation 21-22, in a new heaven and a new earth, where God will dwell with His people forever, and death, sorrow and pain will be no more (Revelation 21:4). The ultimate comeback of Jesus Christ is the "restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21)—the Kingdom age leading at last to eternity with God the Father and Christ. Jesus' return from the

Christians are to look forward to Christ's return with eager expectation—also submitting to His rule in their lives even now, not just hearing the gospel or good news but obeying it.

dead is a foretaste of this restoration to come—and the means to its realization.

The true greatest comeback

The story of Jesus Christ's resurrection is not just the greatest comeback in history; it is the story of God's unwavering love for humanity and His determination to bring about ultimate redemption for the world. No political, athletic or cultural comeback of any kind can compare to the eternal impact of Jesus' resurrection and the promise of His return.

In a world that is often filled with turmoil, suffering and uncertainty, the resurrection of Jesus offers the ultimate hope. It is the assurance that no matter what happens in this life, death is not the end. Jesus' victory over death provides the ultimate hope for all who believe in Him. Just as He rose from the dead, so too will those who follow Him live forever.

And the next stage of Jesus' comeback, His return to earth in power and glory, will be the greatest return ever seen. It will lead to ultimate victory over evil and death. While earthly comebacks may inspire us for a time, it is the eternal comeback of Jesus that will forever change the course of history and bring peace, justice and hope to the whole world.

Do you recognize the hand of God through history and in the life of this Man, Jesus Christ, and will you commit to heeding His calling in your life? Jesus came and gave His life to bring many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10). The Bible calls them the weak of this world, yet each will have their own comeback story to confound the mighty (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)—and to ultimately live and reign with Christ forever. Do you want to be free of sin and death? Will you repent and believe the good news? (Mark 1:14-15). Now is the time to respond! **BT**

DIVE DEEPER



To learn more about who Jesus was, His life and teachings, and what His death and resurrection mean for us, be sure to request or download our study guide *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*. And to see how the story of His death and resurrection and future return fit within the framework of the biblical festivals God gave us to observe, also read *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. Both are available free.

Scan the code or visit ucg.org/ma25 to find them both.





Jesus Gave His Life's Blood for You

Donating a pint of blood at a blood bank can help save another person's life. When Jesus Christ gave His blood to the point of death in an enormous sacrifice, He opened the door for us to be saved from death, making it possible for all of us to have eternal life—you included.

by John LaBissoniere

When Jesus Christ gave His life in sacrifice, His blood shed at His agonizing crucifixion—a spear piercing His side causing His blood to pour out with water (John 19:34)—He became the doorway (John 10:9) for repentant, obedient people to ultimately be saved from oblivion. God had stated in Leviticus 17:11: “The life of every living thing is in the blood. So I myself have assigned it to you on the altar to make atonement for your lives, for the blood makes atonement by means of the life” (New English Translation). We gain helpful perspective on how the blood that flows through your body is essential in sustaining physical life by considering the remarkable work of Dr. Charles Drew.

In 1938 Drew began postgraduate work at Columbia University in New York City and soon earned his Doctor of Medical Science degree, the first black American to do so. His doctoral dissertation was titled “Banked Blood: A Study

in Blood Preservation.” At that time, scientists and physicians had no means of preserving blood from deterioration. Because whole blood had a “shelf life” of only a few days, for transfusions to be successful, donors had to be on nearly immediate standby. This situation challenged Dr. Drew to search for a method to safely and efficiently preserve blood for future use.

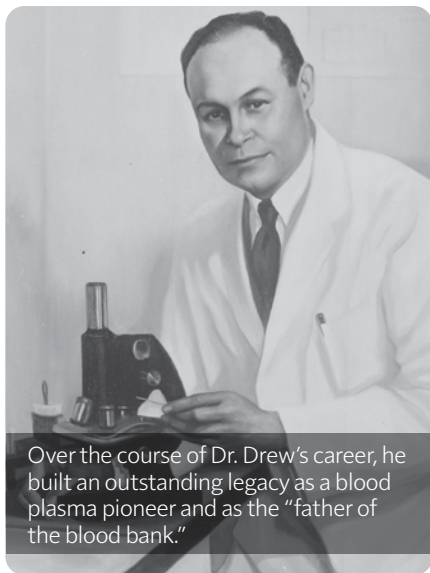
Through extensive experimentation, he discovered that plasma, the light-yellow liquid component of blood, could be separated from blood cells and platelets by means of a centrifuge or through sedimentation. The plasma could then be preserved for lengthy periods by refrigeration, enabling long-distance transport. Through additional research, Dr. Drew learned that plasma could be dried and then safely rehydrated with distilled water. Furthermore, he established how this blood component, which helps stabilize blood pressure and regulates clotting,

could be substituted for whole blood in emergency transfusions, such as when treating shock, burns and other traumas.

Father of the blood bank

Dr. Drew's discoveries came just when needed. In September 1939, World War II broke out in Europe, and the German Luftwaffe (air force) soon began a sustained daily bombing campaign against London and other British cities. This resulted in a desperate need for blood transfusions to aid military and civilian casualties. In response, a relief program called “Blood for Britain” was established in the United States to collect plasma donations to send abroad. Because of Dr. Drew's expertise, he was appointed head of the program to safely collect and ship large quantities of life-saving plasma from blood donors at nine New York City hospitals.

At the same time, he was appointed assistant director of a pilot program for



Over the course of Dr. Drew's career, he built an outstanding legacy as a blood plasma pioneer and as the "father of the blood bank."

a National Blood Donor Service in the United States. To ensure that the nation would have adequate blood supplies of whole blood and plasma in the event the nation entered the war, Dr. Drew developed a system of mass producing dried plasma. In addition, he created and established mobile blood-collection units, known today as "bloodmobiles."

Over the course of Dr. Drew's career, he built an outstanding legacy as a blood-plasma pioneer and as the "father of the blood bank." Not only was his research and work vital in saving the lives of many people during his time, but it built the groundwork for advancing medical science so that countless additional lives could be saved. As Dr. Drew and all medical personnel knew then and know today, there is no substitute for blood.

While people can be instrumental in helping save others' lives by periodically donating blood, let's now focus on what Jesus Christ as Savior accomplished when He came to earth.

Comprehending a sinful person's vulnerable condition

It was by means of Christ's tremendous sacrifice of giving His blood all the way to death that He began the process of spiritually saving every human being, including you. Perhaps it could be said that Jesus was the greatest blood donor of all time. As John 15:13 declares, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."

Although Jesus Christ's beaten body

and blood refer to the same great sacrifice, He revealed that there is a clear distinction between the bread and the wine of the New Testament Passover, which He instituted on the night before He died. Whereas unleavened bread represented His body, the wine was symbolic of His blood, "which is shed for many for the remission [forgiveness] of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

Under the Old Covenant, the blood of animal offerings foreshadowed Christ's sacrifice. But when He came to earth and lived an entirely sinless life, He offered *His own blood* as the spotless Passover Lamb (Ephesians 1:7; John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7). When baptized members of the Church of God participate in the Passover service annually, they clearly acknowledge that their lives have been literally purchased by Jesus Christ through His precious shed blood and that they owe Him everything (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18-19). All humanity must ultimately come to understand this. Do you?

Without Jesus having paid our personal penalty for sin, we would be utterly condemned to a death of perpetual oblivion since "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," with death as the penalty (Romans 3:23; 6:23). Indeed, it's important to truly comprehend a sinful person's vulnerable spiritual condition. The apostle Paul made the following statement about himself, which applies to everyone, including you and me: "So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. *The trouble is with me*, for I am all too human, *a slave to sin*" (Romans 7:14, New Living Translation, emphasis added throughout). Through sinful

We gain helpful perspective on how the blood that flows through your body is essential in sustaining physical life by considering the remarkable work of Dr. Charles Drew.

thoughts, words and actions, each of us earned the stark penalty of perpetual death. The *only* escape from the death sentence is through the blood that Jesus Christ generously poured out for you through His terrible suffering and agony (Matthew 20:28).

By sacrificing His life on your and all our behalf, Christ provided the pathway forward so that our sins, which are violations of His laws (1 John 3:4), can be completely absolved and reconciliation with God the Father can also occur (Romans 5:6-10). Because Jesus was resurrected from the grave and is now at the right hand of His Father in heaven as our High Priest (Mark 16:19), we have the unparalleled opportunity to receive the gift of salvation and everlasting life in His divine Kingdom (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9).

When considering this, it is vital to note that Jesus' death and resurrection are only the *start* of the process of spiritual salvation. And note also that being reconciled with God the Father requires that all of us personally repent of our sins, be baptized, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and then live by diligently loving God and following His commandments (Acts 2:38-40; Matthew 24:13). The apostle Paul confirmed this when he wrote, "I preached that they must repent of their sins and turn to God *and do the things* that would show they had repented" (Acts 26:20, Good News Translation).

Coming into harmony with God the Father

As a result of repentance, baptism, faith, obedience and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior, a person is

As Scripture tells us, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

justified—meaning having come into harmony with the Father. Paul wrote, “For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be *the offering for our sin*, so that we could be made right with God through Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:21, NLT).

And so it can be for you. Not only are you justified, but you are also sanctified or set apart as holy before the Father (Hebrews 13:12). Being so greatly blessed in this way, you therefore have the ongoing responsibility as a servant of righteousness (Romans 6:18) to conduct yourself uprightly by carefully following the example Jesus Himself set. Even though you will stumble and sin at times after baptism, you can and must continue to profoundly repent, and you will be forgiven and washed clean of sin. This is because the living Christ in heaven graciously intercedes with the Father on your behalf (1 John 1:7; Hebrews 9:14-15).

Now, some questions: What happens to your sins after you deeply repent? Isaiah 1:18 states, “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” How far from you are your iniquities carried away? Psalm 103:12 says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” When you have your sins forgiven and forgotten forever through the blood of Christ, you can be at complete peace with God. Paul wrote about the genuine peace of mind and the closeness to God that results from His forgiveness: “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near [to the Father] *by the blood of Christ*” (Ephesians 2:13).

You can have complete confidence that He will hear and respond when you approach Him in trusting prayer. As Scripture further tells us, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). Having this open door to come before God the Father in prayer in Jesus’ name makes it possible for you to know that you are God’s very own treasured and loved child (1 John 3:1-2).

Delivered from the power of darkness

Another outstanding benefit of embracing Christ’s sacrifice is that we are rescued from the relentless and oppressive influence of Satan the devil. God “has *delivered us from the power of darkness* and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption *through His blood*, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14).

This is incredibly important because the devil is described as the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30), being chief of the demonic “rulers of the darkness of this age” (Ephesians 6:12). In this regard, it is vital to understand that since Satan is utterly evil, debased, cunning and corrupt, he will not give up on attempts to draw us back into his foul ways of disobedience toward God. You, as all of us, must therefore be constantly on guard against temptation and sin while staying exceedingly close to your Heavenly Father through regular prayer

and Bible study. The apostle Peter wrote: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9).

It is the sustained application of the blood of Jesus Christ throughout your life that gives you full victory over Satan and his “cunning craftiness” (Ephesians 4:14). In this respect, Revelation 12:11 says, “And they overcame him *by the blood of the Lamb* and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” Paul offers you the following encouraging words as you strive to faithfully accomplish your godly calling: “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, *through the blood of the everlasting covenant*, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever” (Hebrews 13:20-21).

Finally, the blood that flows through your body is critical in sustaining your physical life. It was through Dr. Charles Drew’s remarkable research and work on ways of preserving blood plasma that the lives of countless individuals have been saved. And, regarding your perfect Savior Jesus Christ, it was through His enormous sacrifice and tremendous love that you and all people have the opportunity to be spiritually saved and granted everlasting life in God’s Kingdom and family!

Since Jesus gave His precious life’s blood for you to the point of dying, what will you do to make sure you will be delivered from ultimate death and given the matchless gift of salvation and everlasting divine life? God is awaiting your answer! **BT**

DIVE DEEPER



It’s at this time of year that we commemorate the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ in observance of the Passover. To learn more about it and God’s other annual observances, be sure to obtain a free copy of our study guide *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. Scan the code or visit ucg.org/ma25 to find it.



Q: Realizing Christians should reject holidays of pagan origin like Easter and Christmas and instead keep holy God's feast days commanded in Scripture, how do we do this?

A: It's clear from God's Word that the weekly seventh-day Sabbath and annual festivals, listed in Leviticus 23, are special to Him and that He expects His people to keep them as special observances to Him. Jesus Christ and the early Church continued in them. And they teach us about Christ's role in the progression of God's great plan of salvation.

The weekly Sabbath, from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, is a day of rest on which we are not to work. Our customary work is also forbidden on God's annual Holy Days. Although specific details aren't given in every case, God told His people to hold special worship services during these occasions. On the weekly Sabbath and annual Holy Days we attend "holy convocations" or commanded assemblies (verse 4).

In honoring His commands, today we conduct services that include sermons and congregational hymns, preceded and followed by Christian fellowship. On annual Holy Days, the messages focus on aspects of the significance of the festivals we are observing.

The first of the annual festivals listed is the Passover, a memorial of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins, redeeming us from death. Accordingly, this period of the year is approached with deep spiritual introspection. We commemorate the Passover on the evening that begins the 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar (which in 2025 falls on April 11 after sunset) with a service based on the accounts in the four Gospels and the apostle Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 11:23-28.

The evening service begins with a brief explanation of its purpose, followed by washing of one another's feet (based on Jesus' example and instructions in John 13). Then explanation is given for the symbols of unleavened bread and wine representing the body and blood of our Savior. Baptized members of the Church eat a small piece of unleavened bread and drink a small amount of wine to signify acceptance of that sacrifice. Although it is one of God's festivals, Passover is not listed as a Holy Day or Sabbath (although this year it coincides with the weekly Sabbath).

The next night is the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This seven-day festival starts and ends with an annual Sabbath day on which church services are held. (In 2025, the first day begins April 12 at sunset, with services on April 13. The last day begins April 18 at sunset, with services on April 19.)

For this Feast, we are to remove from our homes in advance all leavening agents that cause bread to rise in baking, such as yeast or baking soda, and all leavened bread products, and not eat any during the feast—these symbolizing sin during this week (Exodus 12:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8). Instead, we eat unleavened bread during this time, picturing living a Christlike life by avoiding sin and partaking of Christ

as the true Bread of life to live by His righteousness.

The evening that begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a special memorial of the Exodus from Egypt, picturing the deliverance from our past sinful lives, referred to as a "night to be much observed" (Exodus 12:42, King James Version). Groups gather in homes or other places for a fellowship meal that includes discussion of the significance of the evening.

The next festival, Pentecost, is an annual Sabbath that always falls on a Sunday, the 50th day of a count starting with the Sunday during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Then several months later come the festivals in the latter part of the year, starting with the Feast of Trumpets. We are not to do customary work on these days, and both are observed with holy convocations. (In 2025, Pentecost services are on June 1, and Feast of Trumpets services are on Sept. 23, each Holy Day starting the evening before at sunset.)



On the next of God's Holy Days, the Day of Atonement, God instructs us to "afflict" ourselves for this 24-hour period. In other scriptures this refers to fasting—going without food and drink (Leviticus 23:27-29; compare Psalm 35:13, KJV; Isaiah 58:3, 5). In Acts 27:9, this Holy Day is called "the Fast." Young children and those with medical conditions for whom fasting could be detrimental to health are not expected to fast in this way. (In 2025,

the Day of Atonement starts at sunset Oct. 1, with services on Oct. 2.)

Most of the festivals are observed in local congregations or at times in a gathering of several nearby local congregations. The exception to this is the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day immediately following. Members and their families gather in centralized locations throughout the United States and around the world for the entire eight-day period (in 2025 from sunset Oct. 6 to sunset Oct. 14).

We observe this main festival season of the year with church services on each of the eight days along with the opportunity for fellowship and recreation outside of services. The first day and Eighth Day are both Holy Days on which no customary work is done. This festival period, foreshadowing the coming reign of Jesus Christ on earth, is to be a time of great spiritual and physical enjoyment for everyone (Deuteronomy 14:26), so sharing meals and enjoyable activities with fellow Church members at area attractions is encouraged. And our celebration includes programs and events for families, seniors, teens and young adults.

There is great joy and connection in meeting with God's people at these holy times He has given us. **BT**

DIVE DEEPER



To learn more about these festivals and why we celebrate them, request or download our free study guide *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. Dates for subsequent years can be found at ucg.org/holy-day-calendar.

And for information on attending services, contact our minister closest to you (through ucg.org/congregations or the nearest church office listed on page 31). **Scan the code or visit ucg.org/ma25 to find it.**



A New Chapter for America...

and the World?

“God spared my life to make America great again,” Donald Trump stunningly declared in his inaugural address in returning to the U.S. presidency. If true, what would that mean for him and the nation he leads? What would it mean for you?

by Darris McNeely

“**F**rom this moment America’s decline is over,” Donald Trump stated after taking the oath of office Jan. 20, 2025 to become the country’s 47th president. His address from the Capitol Rotunda seemed as much a proclamation to the world as to the nation. “The golden age of America begins right now,” he said. “From this day forward, our country will flourish and be respected again all over the world. We will be the envy of every nation. And we will not allow ourselves to be taken advantage of any longer.”

A golden age? That remains to be seen. In any case, there is an opportunity for great change for the better. Of course, God’s will is paramount. What is happening, and what needs to happen?

Reversals in immigration, energy and DEI

The president declared war on the Mexican drug cartels, labeling them foreign terrorist groups. He sealed the southern border. Within hours federal agents began rounding up and deporting more serious criminal elements among the millions of people who have poured into the country illegally in recent years.

“Drill, baby, drill” becomes the operative phrase for

extracting oil and natural gas to make the nation not only energy independent but an energy exporter to help reduce the huge national debt and bring down costs of everything, boosting economic prosperity—counter to recent bans on offshore and federal lands drilling. We will likely see a resurgence of energy infrastructure shut down during the Biden administration.

President Trump declared in his speech, “From now on there will be only two genders in America, male and female.” By executive order he removed “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” (DEI) policies, stating government hiring and promotion will be merit-based. Later in the week he signed an executive order confirming U.S. policy will “recognize two sexes, male and female. These sexes are not changeable and are grounded in fundamental and incontrovertible reality.” Many major companies followed suit by removing DEI practice from their corporate environment.

Pro-life signals

On Friday, Jan. 24, more than 100,000 supporters of the right to life marched in Washington in the annual March for Life. Vice President J.D. Vance spoke live to the crowd and

President Trump addressed the people by video. Vance said: “I want more babies in the United States of America. I want more happy children in our country, and I want beautiful young men and women who are eager to welcome them into the world and eager to raise them. And it is the task of our government to make it easier for young moms and dads to afford to have kids, to bring them into the world and to welcome them as the blessings that we know they are here at the March for Life.”

On that Friday, President Trump signed an executive order to end the use of federal taxpayer dollars to fund or promote elective abortion. He also signed a presidential memorandum reinstating the Mexico City Policy to stop the use of federal taxpayer dollars for abortion overseas. Other actions in support of the unborn were signed that week.

Underscoring the sanctity of life, the U.S. House of Representatives again passed the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, ensuring that those babies who survived botched abortions enjoy equal protection under law. But it failed to advance in the U.S. Senate by a vote of 52-47.

While abortion has been made legal in many states, the issue still remains a central part of debate in America. The Trump administration’s actions in the first week guarantee the issue is not settled. But it has sadly been relegated to a losing issue even among the political right. In running for office, Trump said that if Congress passed a national abortion ban, he would not sign it. (See “The Disturbing Waning Resistance to Abortion” beginning on page 20.)

Abortion is the central moral issue of our day. Life comes from God. Human life is sacred. When government moves by policy to protect its unborn, it should be noted as significant. God holds the key of life and death. When man destroys the unborn, he is defying the will and purpose of God. A nation that kills its unborn will suffer the judgment of God. It will cease to exist, just as every prior culture of death has. God is not mocked, and what the nation sows it shall reap.

Abortion defies the will of God. Every day thousands of legal abortions occur. It is not a settled issue in the nation. God’s judgment awaits the nation on the matter. This is the critical moral issue of the time.

Planting the flag on Mars

The president has forged alliances with key leaders in the tech field. His relationship with the world’s richest man, Elon Musk, whose SpaceX program is leading the nation into a new frontier of space exploration, is probably the most significant. Musk’s support on the campaign trail was instrumental in validating Trump with younger Americans. Musk’s ambition is to make mankind an “interstellar race,” starting with traveling to Mars and beyond. Trump called for the planting of the American flag on Mars.

In Trump’s new term in office, leaders of tech industries have made the calculation to work with him rather than oppose



Donald Trump is sworn into office as the 47th president of the United States in the Capitol Rotunda on Jan. 20, 2025.

him. There is every reason to believe this will benefit their business. “Onshoring” tech jobs that have gone to China will benefit the American economy, the American worker and Americans in general. History shows that when the key sectors of government, industry, education and culture cooperate, promoting liberty and free market practices, the nation prospers.

It is certainly possible that a new age of American prosperity and influence is beginning. The American economy is the world’s strongest. The dollar is king. America leads, and the world is watching.

Restoring national greatness

The catchphrase Donald Trump and his supporters have rallied behind for more than 10 years now, “Make America Great Again,” reaches for something beyond politics, whether recognized or not. The matter of American greatness reflects what *God* has done among the modern nations, not man, and should be considered from a biblical perspective.

Countless articles in *Beyond Today* have shown that the greatness of America’s power, economy and position in the world is due not to American exceptionalism or nationalistic policies. Political acumen alone is not responsible for the singular role America has held in world affairs for more than a century.

America is “great” by any measure through the grace and promises of God. Its vast land rich in resources and sheltered by two great oceans is a marvel of world geography. Its natural harbors and temperate climate are factors many observers have attributed to God. It’s as if the land mass was specially formed, held in reserve through the ages, and given to a people imbued with the talents and drive to develop the resources into a world power. Despite those who disdain the nation as illegitimate and immoral and eagerly promote its demise, America has on balance been a force for good in the world unmatched by any other nation in history.

Early president John Quincy Adams recognized that America was “destined by God and nature to be the most

populous and most powerful people ever combined under one social compact.” This is all traceable to the biblical promises God made to Abraham and his descendants. We chronicle the story in our study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

Trump’s goal of restored national power took on new life with his post-election comments that America should retake possession of the Panama Canal, a U.S. creation ceded to Panama in 1999 according to a 1977 agreement made during the Carter administration. The Panama Canal serves as a vital sea gate, part of the prophesied “gates of your enemies” foretold as part of the promise to Abraham’s descendants (see Genesis 22:17; 24:60). Control of this sea lane between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans is critical to American economic and military interests. It is part of a line of defense that keeps the peace in the Western Hemisphere. It’s now being used to take advantage of the United States while benefiting China.

Trump also began talking about bringing Greenland into the American sphere of influence. The vast island nation, currently administered by Denmark, holds vast amounts of untapped natural resources, many of which are vital to national interests. The Arctic ice cap is changing along the northern coast. A passageway for ships is opening. Control of this northern arctic passage by any power will allow control of access to resources and become a vital military asset. Were hostile powers like China or Russia to take control, it would dramatically realign the geostrategic balance of power.

The biblical teaching of America’s God-ordained destiny and position is crucial to understand here. The Bible foretells a period called Jacob’s trouble (Jeremiah 30:7), when the modern nations that are the recipients of the Abrahamic promises of blessings and national greatness will be eclipsed by a world power called “Babylon.” Bible prophecy describes a beast-like power rising from the nations, exerting a tyrannical influence over the world. This time of Jacob’s trouble, also called the “Great Tribulation” (Matthew 24:21-22), will signal a world shift toward events leading to the end of the age and Jesus Christ’s return.



The matter of American greatness reflects what *God* has done among the modern nations, not man, and should be considered from a biblical perspective.

The need for national repentance

Perhaps the most striking statement made by President Trump was his bold declaration: “I believe my life was saved for a reason. I was saved by God to make America great again.”

What if it’s true that Donald Trump was saved from two assassination attempts by God’s grace and will? What would that mean for him and the nation he leads? What would it mean for you?

Deliverance by God comes with a responsibility, an obligation, a duty to fulfill. President Trump should listen to what God says. As leader of a great nation, he would have to bow his knee to God and seek His will. If he was saved by God to truly “make America great again,” he would have to

lead America to unprecedented national repentance.

President Trump and other national leaders would need to heed the words of God spoken to a greatly blessed nation meant to set an example to others of obeying God’s laws: “Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’” (Deuteronomy 4:6).

They would need to read further and listen to God’s warning: “Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you . . . When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly . . . and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish . . . And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you” (Deuteronomy 4:23-27).

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God said the nation would be punished for its immoral conduct at every level (Jeremiah 5:7-9).

America still suffers from the sin of abortion. Drugs such as fentanyl, produced in foreign countries and injected into the lifeblood of a generation, continue to ravage lives. A culture of greed and materialism still dominates. Any hope of making America “great” in God’s eyes will have to address



If Trump was saved by God to truly “make America great again,” he would have to lead America to unprecedented national repentance.

ways that are not grounded in the Ten Commandments.

There is a systemic problem at the core of the nation. Founded as a pluralistic society of religious freedom, America has been a nation of religious, even biblical, values. But this religion missed the center mark of biblical truth. The Judeo-Christian ethic was missing critical elements—God’s Sabbaths and the absence of idolatry. It was for these two sins that God sent ancient Israel into captivity (Ezekiel 20:12-16).

Thinking all faiths are equal, America’s pluralistic society had a fatal flaw from its start. Even while God’s promises to Abraham were exactly fulfilled, and America has been a powerful benevolent and “great” nation, it has suffered the lack of true knowledge from God and of practicing His ways. Religious holidays laced with pagan elements have hidden the knowledge of the true God and His purpose for mankind.

The words of the prophet Hosea give an accurate description of the United States: “Hear the word of the LORD, you children of Israel, for the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: ‘There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed. Therefore the land will mourn . . .

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge . . . The more they increased, the more they sinned against Me . . . They set their heart on their iniquity . . . So I will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their deeds” (Hosea 4:1-9). Just as God punished ancient Israel for its sins, He plans to punish its modern descendants for their persistent disobedience.

A Nineveh moment

Could national repentance happen? Could America come to that on such a level that God’s judgment is withheld? It happened once in the Assyrian capital of Nineveh at the

preaching of the biblical prophet Jonah. Such reform would truly “make America great again.” But anything less would lead to the future collapse described in these and many other prophecies. We should pray President Trump would be led to see this as the greatest policy he could implement.

We at *Beyond Today* believe we should cry out to God about the sins of this nation. We should not be passive bystanders to history and Bible prophecy. God ordered in vision that a mark be set on those who “sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within [the city]” (Ezekiel 9:4).

God says His people who humble themselves and pray for forgiveness will be heard: “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14). This is a promise from God. Has any nation done this in history? What would happen if the president led the nation in such a prayer? We may never know. But the promise can be yours. You can change and obey God’s law in its fullness.

We urge you to consider this to be such a moment for yourself. America may be at a fork in the road, a pause in cosmic time, where there is opportunity for this message to reach hearts and minds. This is a call to consider making your life “great” within the truth of God. This can be your moment to turn to Him! **BT**

DIVE DEEPER



To better understand the promises of national greatness given to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, be sure to send for or download our informative study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. And to see that even if we are in a time of national resurgence, that will not go on indefinitely as it is the end time, also read *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* Both study guides are available free. **Scan the code or visit ucg.org/maz5 to find them.**



Turkey's President Erdogan envisions return of the Ottoman Empire

In December 2024, Turkish President Erdogan, upset over Israel's suppression of Hamas and incursions into Syria following the overthrow of the Assad regime, made a bold announcement: "The Syrian cities that we call Aleppo, Idlib, Damascus and Raqqa will become our provinces very soon." Moreover, Turkey, which is supposed to be a NATO ally, has been funding Hamas in Gaza.



Turkish President
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Turkey heads up the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), fostering unity among its 57 countries and promoting Islam. Erdogan at a speech shortly before at the Seventh Religious Council in Ankara "vilified the West's progress as built on blood and exploitation, while championing the rise of a so-called divine Islamic civilization—a bitter irony given the Islamic Caliphate's own legacy of conquest, subjugation, and brutality etched into history" ("NATO Member Erdogan Denounces Western Civilization, Advocates for the Rise of an Islamic World Order," RAIR Foundation, Dec. 6, 2024).

A commentary by a former CIA officer and senior analyst with the American Security Council Foundation states: "Turkey is embarked on resurrecting the Ottoman Empire under the rule of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Now, under Erdogan, secular Turkey is becoming an autocratic Islamic state. Erdogan is fostering Islamic (Sharia) law and persecuting Christians, Shiites, Alevis, and Kurds. Freedoms of speech and press are curtailed, with journalists and intellectuals

jailed. Hijabs on women are now common.

"Erdogan is modeling himself after Sultan Selim, who died in 1520 and grew the Ottoman Empire from a regional power to a world power with Islam as the cultural base. Selim was also Caliph or leader of the Muslim community in the Ottoman Empire which covered most of the Middle East and North Africa" (Laurence Sandord,

"Meanwhile in Turkey, Erdogan Envisions Return of the Ottoman Empire," WorldTribune, Feb. 9, 2025).

He also points out: "Turkey is expanding its reach into the Turkic and Arabic-speaking Sunni Muslim countries of Asia and Africa. Turkey's military is asserting itself in Syria, Cyprus, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, and Sudan. It is threatening an Islamic takeover of Jerusalem. Turkish military jets routinely fly over Greek islands off Turkiye's coast. Kurds in Syria, Iraq, and Turkiye are under constant Turkish military attacks.

"Erdogan is redefining Turkey's role in the world. He is cultivating relationships with Russia . . . despite being a NATO member and by acting as a middleman in aiding Russia [to] circumvent Western sanctions due to the Ukraine War."

There are serious concerns to watch out here for. Both Turkey and the Palestinian people evidently share roots in the ancient people of Edom—which figures into a number of Bible prophecies. To learn more, request or download our free study guide *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.

Nearly a billion people have an incurable STI, study says

Shockingly, "a whopping 900 million people have an incurable STI [Sexually Transmitted Infection], a new study claims. According to a team led by epidemiologist Manale Harfouche from the Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar, genital herpes is the most common incurable sexually transmitted infection contracted around the world. A stag-



gering 24% of people aged under 50 worldwide have been struck by it" ("Incurable STI' Is Ravaging Nearly One Billion People as Experts Issue Urgent Warning," *Daily Star*, Dec. 11, 2024).

"They also found that around 520 million of those with it have the HSV-2 strain, which can cause painful blisters or ulcers on private areas and is spread by skin-to-skin contact. The group also found that 129 million cases of chlamydia were reported in 2020—although that is curable" (ibid.).

These staggering numbers are an indictment of the waywardness of mankind. If people followed God's rules for sexuality, they would not suffer from such maladies. To learn more, request or download our free study guide *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*.

When things are going well, watch out!

As society in some ways may seem to be returning to a period of restored liberties, common sense and opportunities for prosperity, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment. While we may feel hopeful about the future, this is also a time of great danger. One of the risks is the ever-present possibility of sudden change. History shows us that things can shift in an instant, and today's stability could give way to chaos at any moment. The Bible warns us in 1 Thessalonians 5:3: "For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape." These words remind us that, despite appearances, the calm we experience today may

be short-lived. And we are living in the end time, which will ultimately see great calamity before Christ returns.

On the other hand, things may continue to go well for a good while. Yet there is great spiritual danger in times of prosperity. When times are hard, we are more apt to draw nearer to God. But when life is going well, it's easy to forget our dependence on Him. This is a trap many fall into, as self-sufficiency can lead us to believe we no longer need God's guidance and provision. In Deuteronomy 8:11-14, we are warned not to become complacent or forget the God who has blessed us. Prosperity can cause us to drift away from our spiritual roots, focusing on the things

of this world instead of seeking God's will.

No matter what is happening, now is the time to draw near to God and make good use of the time we have. As Ephesians 5:16 urges us, in this age we should be "redeeming the time, because the days are evil." The spiritual dangers of complacency and self-reliance are ever-present, and we must be vigilant in walking with God, especially during times of stability and prosperity.

It's crucial to stay spiritually awake and aware. For a deeper understanding of the events unfolding around us, request or download our free study guide *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*

Normalization of homosexuality and same-sex marriage

In the United States and many other countries, the normalization and acceptance of sexual behavior prohibited in Scripture continues.

As the *New York Post* points out favorably, “President Trump is assembling an administration stocked with prominent gay and lesbian Americans” (“Trump Is Tapping Members of the LGBT Community for Top Spots in His Administration . . .” Jan. 18, 2025). For instance, the new treasury secretary is a man who is “married” to another man, the two raising children.

Trump’s focus is apparently on those who can do their job well, regardless of these other factors. We can certainly appreciate people being elevated according to ability and merit. However, there is likely also a factor of increasing the size of the perceived “Republican tent” to attract more people.

It should be noted that the president has taken a position against the transgender and nonbinary agenda and upholds the reality of there being only

two genders. There are many gay and lesbian allies to this stand, as the denial of male and female opposes not only heterosexuality but also homosex-



uality. And Trump has welcomed such allies into his administration. Yet this serves to further normalize and promote the acceptance of homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

Things were of course already headed in this direction. As reported last year, “More than two in three Americans continue to believe that marriage between same-sex couples should be legal (69%), and nearly as many say gay or lesbian relations are morally acceptable (64%). Both readings have been consistently above the 50% mark since the early 2010s and above 60% since 2017” (“Same-Sex Relations, Marriage Still Supported by Most in U.S.,” Gallup, June 24, 2024). Yet it should be noted that among Republicans, support for legalizing same-sex unions dipped back below 50 percent. Now we might expect it to climb again.

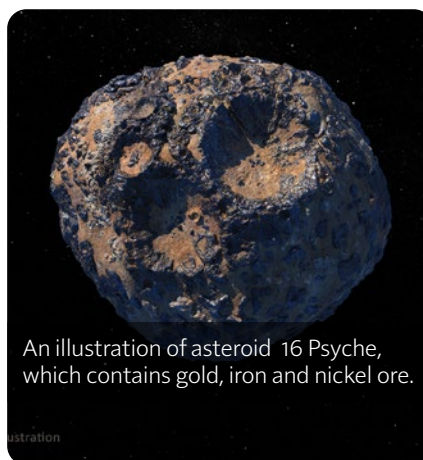
Sadly there is such utter confusion over God’s purpose for marriage and family and what He requires—and blatant disregard.

To better understand, be sure to request or download our free study guide *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*.

Asteroid threat—wealth potential and coming calamity

According to NASA’s Center for Near Earth Object Studies, the odds of an asteroid named 2024 YR striking the earth in 2032 were calculated in early February 2025 to be 2.3 percent—a 1 in 43 chance—double the odds given the previous week (“Asteroid’s Chances of Hitting Earth in 2032 Just Got Higher—but Don’t Panic,” *The Guardian*, Feb. 6). It’s about the size of a football field, as was the Tunguska asteroid that flattened more than 800 square miles of remote Siberia when it exploded in 1908. Yet astronomers are urging people not to panic, as chances of asteroid impacts are often revised.

Some see untold resources and wealth in asteroids. In October 2023, NASA and SpaceX launched a mission to examine the massive, 173-mile-wide asteroid 16 Psyche (“SpaceX Falcon Heavy Rocket Launches NASA’s Psyche Probe to Bizarre Metal Asteroid,” *Space.com*, Oct. 13, 2023), valued for its gold, iron and nickel ore at \$10 quintillion (“NASA Sending Ship to Asteroid Worth 70,000 Times More Than the Global Economy,” *Daily Star*, Jan. 30, 2023). The spacecraft will reach the asteroid in the Main Asteroid Belt between Mars and Jupiter in 2029, followed by nearly two years of analysis. Some imagine mining asteroids, even dragging smaller ones or fragments closer to earth.



An illustration of asteroid 16 Psyche, which contains gold, iron and nickel ore.

Other exploration has focused on the feasibility of diverting asteroids. In October 2022, a milestone was reached when NASA sent a probe to strike the 525-foot-wide asteroid Dimorphos and shifted its orbit a bit (“NASA Reports Smashing Success With Asteroid Redirection Test,” *Washington Post*, Oct. 11, 2022). Yet it’s admitted that diverting an asteroid isn’t something that could be done at the last minute to save the world. There would have to be a lot of warning time.

The threat posed by large objects colliding with us is a real one. Large meteors have hit the planet

in the past, and they could do so again. “A collision with a larger rock, measuring at least 0.6 miles wide (1 km wide), would ‘probably trigger the end of civilization’” (“Could an Asteroid Destroy Earth?” *Live Science*, Sept. 30, 2022).

Thankfully, mankind will not be wiped out by such an asteroid. But the Bible does foretell vast destruction from the heavens around the time of Christ’s return. Revelation 6:13 speaks of stars falling followed by the sky receding as a scroll. Revelation 8:8-9 speaks of a great burning mountain thrown into the sea and destroying a third of the ships—which could perhaps refer to either a supervolcano or a meteor. Verses 10-11 describe a great star falling from heaven, burning like a torch, polluting the fresh water—perhaps an asteroid or comet impact. Revelation 16:21 speaks of heavy hailstones falling from heaven—possibly smaller asteroid or comet debris. In any event, there will be great natural disasters throughout the world, including from the sky.

Of course, real protection lies not in asteroid-diverting space missions, but in repentance and drawing close to God. Send for our free study guide *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* to better understand the times ahead.

The Disturbing Waning Resistance to **ABORTION**

The 2022 overturning of the earlier U.S. Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion in America was hailed as a victory in the defense of the unborn. Yet with the new ruling mandating returning the matter to individual states, several have expanded abortion up to the moment of birth. And many pro-life advocates have caved on aspects of the issue, seeing it as a losing political position. But the real concern is this: Where does God stand on the matter?

by James Ginn

Abortion is not merely a political issue or a matter of demographics—it is the deliberate, premeditated destruction of an innocent, developing human being. The reality is stark and undeniable: Abortion is the taking of life, a tragedy that goes beyond policy debates and strikes at the core of humanity's moral compass. Sadly, what we see today in America, and increasingly in other nations, is a disturbing normalization of this horrific practice. Despite the monumental victory of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in 2022 to overturn the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion throughout the United States, abortion continues to be a subject of political discourse and public debate, with its moral implications largely overlooked.

Many conservatives and pro-life advocates celebrated the court's ruling, which effectively removed the federal right to abortion and handed the matter back to individual states. Yet this decision, far from ending the abortion debate, has illuminated a troubling shift in American politics. Abortion, once a clear issue of moral truth and justice, has become muddled by political considerations and demographic calculations. Even some states that once led the charge in protecting the unborn, like

Ohio and Missouri, have relaxed or overturned their bans. Meanwhile, states such as California and New York have expanded abortion access to include practices like partial-birth abortion—a clear abomination in the eyes of God.

The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* was supposed to be a victory for life, but it has highlighted the unsettling reality that, for many, abortion is no longer seen through a moral lens. Instead, it has become a political issue, with politicians from both major parties either defending or attempting to limit abortion for purely pragmatic reasons. The results of this shift are devastating: Abortion is increasingly normalized in America and around the world, and its moral implications are being ignored. The overriding concern should be what God thinks.

The disconnect: How did we get here?

How did we get to a point where the intentional destruction of innocent life is treated as a political issue? How did we come to believe that we have the right to decide whether another human being lives or dies based on our personal desires or political affiliations? These questions echo a deeper spiritual crisis that goes far beyond the political landscape.

The answer lies in a fundamental

breakdown of morality—a shift from seeing life as a divine gift to treating it as something we can ignore or discard at will. From the earliest days of the pro-abortion movement, the issue has been framed as one of individual rights—the right of a woman to choose, the right of people to control their own body. But when we examine abortion through a biblical lens, it becomes clear that this is not a matter of one's personal rights but of obedience to God's will.

The first woman to advocate for her right to choose was the biblical Eve. Though the specific issue at hand was not abortion, the overarching principle is the same: Eve, misled by Satan the devil, chose to trust her own judgment over God's. She focused on what she didn't have, ignoring the abundance of blessings already granted to her. In choosing her own path, Eve defied God's clear command. Adam went along with her choice, and humanity has been wrestling with the consequences ever since (Genesis 3).

Today, many women (and men) are still following in Eve's footsteps. A 2015 study by LifeWay Research revealed that 76 percent of women who had an abortion indicated that "local churches had no influence on their decision to terminate their pregnancy." Even more shockingly, 70 percent of those



God's Word is clear about the value of life and the sin of shedding innocent blood.

women identified as Christians. There is a glaring disconnect between the actions of those who claim to follow Christ and the clear teachings of Scripture on the sanctity of life.

God's Word is clear about the value of life and the sin of shedding innocent blood. Numbers 35:33 (English Standard Version) warns, "You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it." Yet, we see people—many of them professing Christians—abandoning these biblical truths in favor of personal preferences and political expedience.

FOR MORE ON THIS TOPIC, SEARCH FOR "ABORTION" AT UCG.ORG

This moral erosion has seeped into the political arena as well. Many pro-life conservatives celebrated the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, believing the victory would halt the abortion agenda in its tracks. However, the political landscape has shifted. President Donald Trump, once heralded as a hero of the pro-life movement, has openly stated that he would not support a national ban on abortion. And he's spoken favorably of a common position of protecting life beyond an arbitrary 15 weeks or so. This reflects the growing political pragmatism that now surrounds the issue: Too many Republicans are viewing abortion as a "losing" political issue, one that risks alienating women voters, especially in suburban areas. And so, the fight for life becomes just another pawn in the political chess game.

It was encouraging to see support from President Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance at the recent March for Life in Washington, D.C. Perhaps some gains can yet be made for life, but far too much has already been surrendered.

The absence of God's authority—a crisis of morality

The real tragedy here is that, in the modern political and social climate, morality has become a matter of personal preference rather than divine authority. The United States, once a nation founded on Christian principles, has drifted further and further away from God's Word in its approach to life and death. As President John Adams rightly stated: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." The current state of abortion in America—where the right to kill an unborn child is a matter of political negotiation—is a direct

consequence of abandoning God's moral law in favor of man's subjective desires.

This crisis is not limited to the United States. Abortion was first legalized in the Soviet Union, a nation that sought to replace religious authority with state control, and the effects were far-reaching. Over time, the Soviet government instilled a disdain for religion, encouraging people to place their trust in the state rather than in the Creator. Similarly, as America and other nations grow increasingly secular, we see the rise of a culture that views the state as the ultimate arbiter of right and wrong. Decisions that were once governed by God's moral law are now governed by human lawmakers, who in many cases are more concerned with political gain than with justice and righteousness.

In light of this, we must ask ourselves: Have we learned nothing from history? The abandonment of divine morality and the normalization of abortion are not just political issues—they are *spiritual* ones. As Christians, we must return to the firm foundation of God's Word and recognize that the sanctity of life is not subject to political negotiations. It is a command from God.

The call to repent and choose life

The situation is dire. Again, as Numbers 35:33 warns, the murder of innocents defiles the land (compare Deuteronomy 19:10). The United States and many other nations around the world are incurring God's judgment because of their collective sin in allowing abortion to be normalized. This is not just a political issue. It is a moral and spiritual issue that calls for repentance.

As Christians, we must cry out to God for mercy and restoration. We must call on our nations to repent of their sin and return to biblical values. God desires life, not death. As Deuteronomy 30:19 says, He calls us to "choose life, that both you and your descendants may live." We must choose life, both in our personal decisions and in our national policies.

Ultimately, the battle for life is not over. The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* was a stunning victory, but it is only the beginning of a much larger spiritual battle. As Christians, we must stand firm in our commitment to defending the unborn and calling the nation we live in and all nations to repentance. It is time to heed God's call to choose life and to reject the culture of death that has taken root in modern society. May God have mercy on us all! **BT**



7 Ways to Love Your Enemies

Loving our enemies isn't a natural human inclination, but it's the example Jesus Christ set for us to follow. Here are seven ways to show love to those who seem to be against us.

by Becky Sweat

This may well be Jesus' most difficult command: "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45). Jesus implored us to love not just our friends, but also our foes.

We've probably all struggled with this. We might work or attend school with someone who is always trying to one-up, deride or demean us. A former friend might be spreading ugly lies about us. We may have a business competitor determined to build up his own operation by destroying ours. Or maybe we've come to regard certain people as enemies not for what they've done to us personally, but because they espouse contrary political or religious views in a strident and combative manner.

Loving such people is usually the exact opposite of what we want to do. The natural human inclination is to respond with animosity, engage in verbal battles, smear their reputation, ridicule them, or try to make them suffer like we have. Those of us who are less confrontational might just cut off all communication with people who trouble us and simply "not care" about them.

Yet loving our enemies is the example God the Father and Jesus Christ have set for us. Even when the world at large was an enemy of God and living in opposition to His way of life, God gave His Son, who willingly died on the cross to reconcile

us all to God so we could be saved (Romans 5:10; John 3:16; 10:11, 17-18). Jesus commands us to show this same kind of love to our own enemies.

In a nutshell, to love our enemies means we are to cultivate a genuine concern for them and desire what's best for them. This is not to say we should excuse or condone wrong conduct, nor does it necessarily mean having a "normal" relationship with them if they're unwilling to change. But we are to be gracious and compassionate in our dealings with them.

Realistically, extending this kind of love to our enemies can truly be impossible if we are only looking to our limited human strengths and perspectives. We need God's help to succeed at this. We should pray that He will give us the spiritual strength to be able to love those who mistreat us and will help us to see the situation as it really is (and not clouded by personal biases). God will do this for us.

Personally, I've also found that it's helpful to reflect on specific ways we might show love to our enemies. When we know exactly what we should be doing, it becomes that much easier to love our enemies as Jesus instructed. Here are seven such practices, based on biblical precepts, we all should be following:

1. Pray for your enemies

The command in Matthew 5:44 to love our enemies is followed by the instruction to *bless* and *pray* for them in terms of

seeking their ultimate well-being (not success in their antagonism). Jesus is challenging us to shift from dwelling on the harm done to us to genuinely desiring good for those who have mistreated us. When we bless our enemies through prayer, we are “standing in the gap,” interceding for them, seeking God’s direction and mercy for them (see Ezekiel 22:30; 1 Timothy 2:1).

Specifically, we should pray that God would lead our enemies to recognize the wrong and harm in their behavior and to repent, seeing the value in living by biblical principles. Ask God to intervene in their lives so that whatever underlying factors might be motivating them to mistreat others will be dealt with as needed.

We should want them to repent so they can learn to live according to God’s precepts (resulting in blessings), and so we can have a healthy relationship with them. Prayer for enemies also improves our own attitude. It’s difficult to harbor bad feelings toward others or wish them ill when we’re regularly praying for them.

2. Be gracious

Matthew 5:44 also tells us to *do good* to our enemies. Likewise, Romans 12:21 says, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Choose to replace any anger and resentment you may be harboring towards your adversary with acts of kindness and goodness.

This might include greeting them in a friendly manner when we see them—smile, shake hands, say hello, and be willing to make some small talk—rather than purposely avoiding them. If you observe redeeming qualities in them, sincerely compliment them when you’re in their presence. Offer your support when they’re clearly in need; that could mean sending a card when they’re sick or taking a meal over to them. As Proverbs 25:21 says, “If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.”

Treating our enemies graciously shows we have their best interests at heart and breaks the cycle of hostility that fuels more evil. It can help thaw an adversary’s cold heart, and move an enemy to change. Proverbs 25 goes on to say that in treating an enemy kindly, we “heap burning coals on his head” (verse 22, New International Version)—likely meaning either that we melt away their hostility or induce pangs of guilt leading to positive change.

3. Forgive them

Another essential aspect of loving our enemies is forgiving them for what they’ve done. Think about the example Jesus set. He was betrayed and persecuted, and time and again, He chose forgiveness. Even when the Romans were crucifying Him, Jesus said in Luke 23:34, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”

God has forgiven us of much, and we too should forgive others. Throughout His ministry, Jesus emphasized the importance of forgiveness. In Matthew 18, Peter asks Jesus:

“Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” (verse 21, NIV). Jesus replied, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times” (verse 22, NIV)—or “seventy times seven,” as others translate. Essentially, Jesus was saying we should just keep forgiving. Luke 17:3-4 clarifies that this is with stated repentance—though we must have a forgiving attitude constantly and not bear grudges.

To forgive is to let go of bitterness or resentment towards those who have wronged us. While we might not like what they did to us or condone wrongdoing, we are not to harbor ill will toward them or wish them harm. This doesn’t necessarily mean we will be able to reconcile with them; reconciling with toxic people might not be possible if they don’t show godly sorrow over what they’ve done. But we do need to control our attitudes toward them, ridding ourselves of bitterness, rage, anger and malice (see Ephesians 4:31).

Realistically, extending this kind of love to our enemies can truly be impossible if we are only looking to our limited human strengths and perspectives.

4. Speak well of them or say nothing

Instead of speaking ill of our offenders, we should speak as well of them as we can. This is another aspect of *blessing* our enemies (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:28). Remember that what we say about others behind their backs very often gets back to them. So if our enemies come up in conversations with others, note some of their good qualities—as that could pleasantly surprise them if they end up hearing about it, serving to ease the tension. It also helps us maintain a less negative, more balanced perspective.

In most cases, if we can’t think of anything positive to say about someone, we should hold our tongue. This goes against common practice. We live at a time when it’s considered acceptable and even therapeutic to publicly air our grievances about others. But the Bible tells us that love covers up offenses (Proverbs 10:12; 17:9). Rather than telling others how someone wronged us, we show love by not spreading such negative information.

Of course, there are times when it’s appropriate or necessary to share negative information, as even the apostles did about certain individuals. Crimes and abuse should be reported. And there could be a need to warn others of a person’s bad character—though we must always be cautious in

what we say. Love for enemies must be balanced with love for others we must also care about.

5. Try to understand their perspectives and challenges

If your adversaries tell you what they have against you, be willing to hear what they have to say, even if they don't communicate their complaints in a kind manner. They may bring up a valid point—a flaw in yourself you haven't really seen before. Show them you want to remedy the situation by being willing to admit and address anything you might be doing to exacerbate the conflict (compare Matthew 5:23-24).

Or if they're struggling with a lot of personal hardships and open up about it, let them talk. Really listen to what they have to say. And even if they don't open up to you, you can still try to think about some of the personal struggles they may be facing. Put yourself in their shoes. Try to understand why they think the way they do, even if you don't feel the same way.

This can fall within the instruction in Philippians 2:4 to look out for the interests of others. We all have the need to be understood. Simply listening to someone's story can be incredibly diffusing. It can make the person feel heard and validated, which can pave the way for peaceful resolution.

Moreover, sometimes when we try to understand "our enemies," we'll come to realize they really aren't purposely trying to hurt us, or maybe we're being oversensitive. I can think of situations when I felt like others were against me, but then I came to see that I had been interpreting their words or actions all wrong—that really what had been happening was a reflection of our differing personalities, backgrounds or upbringings, *not* that they were intentionally trying to hurt me.

Recognize also that Satan is working to confuse and mislead others just as he tries to do with you. He is the real enemy of us all—a fact that should help us to empathize with those opposing us (see 2 Timothy 2:25-26).

6. Don't retaliate

Our enemies may have committed atrocious acts against us. But if we take revenge or return bad treatment, that only escalates conflict and makes a bad situation worse. Moreover, we would be giving in to debased impulses and becoming hurtful ourselves. Romans 12:17-18 says: "Repay no one evil for evil . . . As much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."

Rather than retaliating, Scripture says to respond to hateful, rude actions with a "soft answer" or gentle response (Proverbs 15:1), and by "turning the other cheek" (see Matthew 5:39). We should be willing to suffer wrongdoings against us, even if it seems like our enemies deserve retribution. In Luke 6:36, Jesus instructs us: "Be merciful, just as your Father also

is merciful." Showing mercy can help diffuse conflict, and sometimes it's the only means of eliciting change in others. It can be a way to demonstrate to our enemies that we're truly concerned about them and aren't just focused on our own well-being.

This isn't to say that those who have committed evil acts should never be punished. Societies do need to mete out justice to prevent further wrongdoing—for the good of all, including the wrongdoers, who should not be allowed to continue in their evil ways to their own ultimate destruction. However, we should not seek personal retribution, as God in His perfect wisdom will execute vengeance on our behalf (Romans 12:19), working toward the ultimate best for all.

Always remember that your enemies could change their ways. Yet it probably won't happen overnight. Give them time. A key aspect of godly love is patience (1 Corinthians 13:4).

7. Be patient

Always remember that your enemies could change their ways. Yet it probably won't happen overnight. Give them time. A key aspect of godly love is patience (1 Corinthians 13:4). Accept where they are in their lives right now, while remembering that's not the end of the story. God will work with them on His timetable; He knows when it's best to do whatever He needs to do. We may perceive flaws in our enemies that God hasn't shown them yet. But at some point He will.

Until He does, we need to be "bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2). This means patiently enduring wrongs, provocation, annoyance and pain without complaint or loss of temper. By being longsuffering, we create space for growth and transformation, both for ourselves and for those who have hurt us.

There are other possibilities too. Showing love to your foes in the ways discussed here can help make friends out of enemies. I know numerous individuals who had clashed with each other at first, but eventually they learned to appreciate each other and became friends. Obviously that doesn't always happen. However, we should still strive to love our enemies the best we can.

We need to be patient, loving and forgiving, because that's the kind of people God wants us to be, and that's the example Jesus Christ set for us. It's the only way to a truly harmonious existence. **BT**

New Discoveries About Trees and Their Benefits

by Mario Seiglie

We might not think of it in this way, but we depend on trees for our very survival.

They provide 28 percent of the world's oxygen (with the rest of the oxygen produced by other plants or plant-like life, especially microscopic phytoplankton in the oceans). In a sense, trees are part of the world's "lungs"—pulling in carbon dioxide while creating the precious oxygen we breathe. In fact, a single large tree can produce the incredible amount of some 260 pounds of oxygen per year.

Today, a lot of people look on carbon dioxide as harmful, but it's actually an essential "plant food" for trees. Sunlight, water, chlorophyll and carbon dioxide are the main ingredients for

plants to produce oxygen and so much of the delicious food we eat.

The study of trees has yielded a stunning discovery. While under a forest canopy, have you ever wondered how the tops of the trees avoid becoming hopelessly enmeshed with the branches of other trees?

As it turns out, while trees don't have eyes to "see" other branches, scientific research indicates that they can indirectly detect when their branches approach those of different trees through a phenomenon called "crown shyness," where trees adjust their growth patterns to avoid touching each other, likely due to a combination of factors like light competition and chemical signals, essentially allowing them to "sense" the proximity of other trees' canopies.

Writing for the Natural History Museum in London, science writer Emily Osterloff notes: "Research shows that plants can detect a frequency of visible light called far-red light, which can tell them how close they are to their neighbours. They can also use the blue light in the spectrum to avoid growing into the shade" ("Crown Shyness: Are Trees Social Distancing Too?" nhm.ac.uk). She further points out that the gaps allow sunlight to reach the forest floor to benefit other plants, and

they may limit the spread of leaf-eating insects and tree diseases.

This ability of trees to detect when their branches approach other trees so they don't crowd out all the rays of the sun and avoid becoming a jumbled mass of branches points to trees having been "intelligently designed" rather than having fortuitously "evolved." How could a tree know it would eventually need these detectors at the end of its branches and have



it embedded into its genetic software? It is much more reasonable to conclude that the tree was programmed with this complex ability *from the start*.

The Bible describes the tree's creation as having all of its essential elements in place from the beginning. As Genesis 1:11-12 tells us, "Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth'; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good" (emphasis added throughout).

The tree is a gift from God that keeps on giving. Here are nine more of its benefits (most of this list is from "The Power of One Tree," Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources).

Its shade provides a pleasant temperature since it gives off humidity and cools the air. The U.S. Department of Agriculture states, "The net cooling effect of a young, healthy tree is equivalent to *ten room-size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day*."

It provides wood to build and heat houses, as well as material for their furniture.

It provides shelter for birds and other animals.

It provides protection against wind and rain—

a natural "umbrella."

It provides protection for the soil, with its roots helping prevent erosion.

It provides delicious food and vital medicine for people and animals.

It provides nutrients to the soil when it dies—all of it is biodegradable—without pollutants!

It provides our main source of paper. According to estimates calculated by the University of Maine,

one tree can produce around 8,333 sheets of paper. The average office worker uses 10,000 sheets of copy paper each year.

It provides a sense of calm and relaxation. One study showed that hospital patients whose rooms had a view of trees recovered more quickly and

were less depressed than those looking out at a brick wall. The same effect happened with schoolchildren able to see trees out their classroom window.

We should be so thankful that God created trees!

Perhaps the best tribute to trees was given by the U.S. poet Joyce Kilmer in 1913:

Trees

I think that I shall never see a poem lovely
as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest against
the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day, and lifts her
leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear a nest of robins
in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain; who inti-
mately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me, *but only*
God can make a tree. **BT**

DIVE DEEPER



The world is full of evidence of design by a supremely intelligent Creator. To see more, request or download our free study guide *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*



Scan the code or visit ucg.org/maz5 to find it.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DOPAMINE

by Kayleen Schreiber

Have you heard of dopamine? Some people call it the “pleasure” chemical, but that’s not really accurate. Dopamine is a chemical your brain produces and releases between brain cells when you do certain things. Understanding it can help you navigate pitfalls to finding true and long-lasting happiness.

TRIGGERS AND WANTING MORE

Lots of activities can trigger a release of extra dopamine—eating sugar, playing sports, scrolling social media, watching movies, playing video games, taking drugs, drinking alcohol, viewing pornography. Different activities cause different amounts of dopamine to be released, but when it happens, the dopamine gives you a little boost. You feel a little happier, a little excited, or just a little less blah for a short time.

Gaining such a boost is not always a bad thing. Dopamine gives you the drive to put in hard work because you know you will feel accomplished when you’re done. Dopamine pushes you to want more for yourself, for your life or for your family.

However, we now have access to more dopamine triggers than at any other time of human history. Here’s the problem: *The brain is never satisfied.* It always tells you: *You need more.* Dopamine never produces feelings of contentment, satisfaction or peace. Notifications on your phone, Netflix on your TV, video games in your room—all these are triggering consistent and strong dopamine releases in your brain, telling you to keep doing those things over and over, but never producing true happiness or satisfaction.

NO SATISFACTION

Proverbs 27:20 tells us, “The eyes of man are never satisfied.” This is a spot-on description of the dopamine cycle in our brain. If you seek only desire, pleasure and entertainment, it never brings satisfaction because that’s not the purpose of dopamine.

In Ecclesiastes 2:10-11 Solomon wrote: “I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless [or frustration], a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun” (New International Version).

Pursuing the pleasure of dopamine is not satisfying and does not produce true joy, satisfaction or contentment in the long run. Over time your brain gets used to having high levels of dopamine being released constantly. Consequently, you start to feel bad if you try to stop checking social media or playing video games. Things that normally give you a little satisfaction, like spending time with family, walking in nature or figuring out tough problems, stop feeling good. These changes are especially influential to teenage brains, which are still going through major changes up until at least age 25. The human body is never satisfied with dopamine because its purpose is to motivate you to take action and achieve goals, not to create lasting peace.

Distractions like social media or video games are really just your brain seeking quick excitement and energy from a dopamine spike, which is a lot easier than putting in the effort to find peace and satisfaction. Distraction and escape are easy and



The human body is never satisfied with dopamine because its only purpose is to motivate you to take action.

pleasurable in the short term, but they end up making you more sensitive to pain. It becomes more and more difficult to feel good. Your brain requires more and more dopamine to feel pleasure in the moment.

On the other hand, if you are willing to moderate and put limits on how much dopamine you are seeking during the day, you will allow your brain to produce other chemicals that allow for contentment and true happiness.

A PLAN OF ACTION

So, what can we do? It helps to make a plan for how you want social media, video games, TV, etc. to play a role in your life. If you don't have social media, I would suggest waiting to start. Research is showing that it makes teens less happy over time.

Important for teens is to talk with your parents. Be honest with them about what you see around you and how teens are using social media. Your parents want you to be happy, but they also need to keep you safe and help you develop your full potential through your teenage years.

If you do have social media, be honest with yourself—are there things that you wish you spent less time on but can't seem to stop? Do you feel worse about yourself after using social media or watching too much TV or playing video games for too long?

If yes, you will need to decide on some rules for yourself to moderate how you spend your time. This is not just for teens; it's important for adults to

do this as well. For example, you could decide to make the weekly Sabbath rest day a Sabbath rest or pause from digital devices as well. Or you can limit yourself to a certain amount of time on social media each day. Ask your family or friends to help you—you shouldn't try to rely only on willpower for this.

For teens, have parents turn off your access to your phone or social media outside of the time you decide together. (For more ideas on social media usage, search for “4 Tips to Cut the Negativity of Social Media in Your Life” at our website ucg.org.) You could also decide to delete certain social media apps altogether. If there is a certain one that your parents feel is unsafe or is creating negative interactions or temptations, it's not worth keeping it.

This isn't an easy process. Unfortunately, you will probably feel worse before you feel better. If you implement some of these techniques, be ready for negative feelings for up to two weeks. This is the time it takes for your brain to bounce back to normal. It is telling you that it's not getting the dopamine it's used to getting. Lean in to family time, time in person with friends, time in nature and time doing truly satisfying activities like art, music or sports. After two weeks your brain should be back to producing dopamine from these productive and healthy activities, and you will start to feel better.

GAINING CONTROL FOR ULTIMATE JOY

Today's culture tells you that you should pursue what makes you feel good, whether that's social media, video games or even drugs or alcohol. But those things only give temporary pleasure and in the long term make you feel worse. In our society today, you have to be proactive with moderating dopamine-releasing activities like social media so they don't hijack your brain's ability to feel pleasure from healthy activities.

You do have to be willing to experience and feel some unpleasant emotions like boredom, loneliness, frustration and awkwardness without immediately seeking an escape. Insulating ourselves from all pain and discomfort, running from it instead of facing it, ends up just making it worse. Sometimes understanding how our brains work can help us take back control of behaviors that we know we should reduce or eliminate.

The apostle Paul wrote, “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (Philippians 4:11, New International Version). He teaches that true peace does not come from external stimuli but from internal spiritual fulfillment—and that is rooted in faith or trust in God and gratitude.

Psalm 16:11 reminds us that God provides the way to lasting contentment and true joy: “You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” **BT**

DIVE DEEPER



To learn more about dopamine as the puppet master behind tech addiction, watch Dr. Kayleen Schreiber's seminar “Dopamine: The Thrill and the Lie” on our YouTube channel. **Scan the code or visit ucg.org/ma25 to find it.**



The God **WHO BLESSES US**

Jesus Christ led a blessed life, and He and the Father desire the same for us. God gave His ancient priesthood specific words for blessing His people that assure us of His loving intentions toward us, encouraging us to press on in living according to God's will.

by Robin Webber

Occasionally we hear people say they're blessed instead of the more common expression of being lucky. This usually refers to belief in God's care for them—their words a lens into their hearts. How about you? Do you acknowledge being lovingly *blessed* by a Heavenly Father and Savior with your long-term interest in Their sovereign hands, or is *luck* still a part of your personal vocabulary?

Consider Jesus Christ's words in

the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12), as He declared blessing after blessing to those who would follow Him and seek to reflect His "spiritual DNA," even as He revealed what His own Father, our Heavenly Father, is like (Matthew 11:27; John 14:9). He not only "talked the talk," but most importantly practiced it to His last human breath. As He died, Jesus was confident in proclaiming, "Father, 'into your hands I commit My Spirit'" (Luke 23:46). For through His perfect

sacrifice would come the greatest blessing of all—the "brick wall" of death would crumble, and the "door" of life (see John 10:9) framed by Jesus' sacrifice would open wide our access to God's throne in heaven.

How can we as disciples of Christ today heed our Master's invitation of "*Follow Me*" (Matthew 4:19; John 21:22), as we internalize His commitment to accept God's will—not by happenstance or "luck," but blessings from Above? Where do we begin?

“This is the way you shall bless”

Consider a young lad from Nazareth going up to Jerusalem during the annual biblical festivals and entering the temple courts. It’s here that the priests would offer God’s personal blessing to the assembled throngs. This was not something written the night before by an anxious priest to hopefully “get it right” for the big day ahead, but was a “golden oldie”—nearly 1,500 years old, drafted by one Author, the one true God. The blessing spoken by the priests in Jesus’ day was the same that God personally gave to Moses to pass on to Aaron the high priest and his sons (Numbers 6:22-27).

This self-disclosure from God was to reveal and forever remind those who would follow Him what He was like and how He felt about His chosen flock—be it Israel of old or the spiritual “Israel of God” today (Galatians 6:16), the Body of Christ. The God of Israel, Author of all life, whose character doesn’t change (Malachi 3:6), commanded His priesthood, “This is the way you shall bless” (Numbers 6:23). Repetition is the best form of emphasis, and God never wants us to forget His love for us.

So where do we begin to understand God’s love and sustaining grace—His ongoing bestowal of favor and goodwill toward us—in this ageless blessing? There are seven great truths in this singular blessing by which you can embrace, experience and in turn express God’s love. Each begins with God and moves to the direct object of His affection—you and me and all who heed His Son’s call of “*Follow Me*.”

Seven revealed truths in the priestly blessing of Numbers 6

1. God wants to bless us

“*The LORD bless you . . .*” (verse 24). God’s call for blessing from Him reveals that He wants to bless us—indeed, even more than we would seek (compare Ephesians 3:20). Have you ever thought

about that? The Hebrew word translated “bless,” *barak*, speaks to a declaration. God is boldly expressing His intent of generosity. The New Testament Greek term for blessing is *makarios*, pointing to general happiness. In the ancient world this terminology was used for completeness in which nothing was lacking.

This is echoed in the imagery of Psalm 23:1: “The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want [or suffer lack].” There is no need to look elsewhere even when external pressures are knocking on the

Jude did: “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24).

You might be saying, “Well, what about accidents, death?” Yes, the “whys” bubble to the surface. “Where is the keeping?!” Question: Is there someplace in Scripture where God promised that all His followers would live long and die peacefully in this age? We have no say over length of life, only the quality of life offered moment by moment.

God’s call for blessing from Him reveals that He wants to bless us—indeed, even more than we would seek (compare Ephesians 3:20).

door of our hearts. And such pressures do come! Remember, though, that Jesus never said it would be easy, but He did say it would be worth it! With this verse in mind, remember our Master blessed us by stating, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father is well pleased [a form of Greek *eudokeo*, “think good”] to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32, New English Translation).

2. God wants to keep us

“*. . . and keep you . . .*” (verse 24).

Yes, the God of blessings wants to reassure us that He is watching over us physically and spiritually—that we are not alone! Humanly we can at times have a “cave-in,” joining the prophet Elijah in his temporary dark abode (see 1 Kings 19:9), thinking God has forgotten this portion of His blessing. Thus, the importance of our rehearsing and not forgetting. It reminds us that our God is on the job and awake towards His spiritual children. The Hebrew word for “keep,” *shamar*, means to observe, to take heed. Yes, we are kept! Personally, I like that feeling—but I need to remember its Source and praise Him as the apostle

And God will provide the strength and comfort as the need emerges—in life and in death. After all, His Son is Master over both worlds! (Revelation 1:18).

3. God smiles at us

“*. . . the LORD make His face shine upon you . . .*” (verse 25). A shining face is the mark of pleasure, as it is specifically focused on someone. Think of our joyful smile when our children accomplish a task or when our adult children walk in the door for a visit or the grandkids come running into our presence. We want to bathe them in our affection! And so does our Heavenly Father with us. No matter how old any of us are, we are all children to the One known as the Ancient of Days.

Consider the words of God in Isaiah 66:2: “But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite [or repentant] spirit, and who trembles at My word.” Have you ever thought of God’s acknowledging smile as His face looks down on you as you heed His words? As Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3).

4. God is gracious toward us

“... and be gracious to you...” (verse 25). This is a godly reality and gift we need to constantly be reminded of—in an ungracious world of tit for tat and eye for eye that regards you only as good as your latest success. Grace in Hebrew, *khen*, means “favor” or goodwill being shown, while the Greek term *charis* refers to such favor bestowed as a gift in forging a relationship of mutual devotion (see the study guide offered below). Through it we are forgiven of sin and empowered to walk in God’s ways. We can’t make it on our own. Hear the stories of Peter and Paul, and remember your own story apart from God’s grace. Lock onto the reality that grace is not a mere *event* but an *existence*, as we continually strive to humble ourselves and experience God’s ongoing sustaining grace to lift us up beyond ourselves.

5. God is forever attentive to us

“... the LORD lift up His countenance upon you...” (verse 26). Have you ever been in a conversation with someone who really wanted to be somewhere else, showing disinterest and non-engagement (a coach’s time-out signal effectively written all over the person)? You are pouring your heart out when the person’s cell phone rings, answered with, “Okay, I’ll be right over.” Hmmm! That is not our God! In His lifting of His countenance on you, you have His total laser-like focus and steadfast attention. Why? Because you are His child, and He loves you.

Jesus showed His trust in this reality outside the sepulcher of Lazarus when He prayed to the Father, needful of His partnership in raising His friend from the dead. We read: “Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank you that You have heard Me. And I know that You

always hear Me...’” (John 11:41-42)

Like our Master, we, aware of the fifth vital truth in the blessing, should have an expectancy that God is partnering with us throughout the day in



a focused and loving relationship. The key, though, is to follow Jesus’ example to “look up” and invite our Heavenly Father into the process, knowing His countenance is upon us now and always.

6. God gives us peace

“... and give you peace” (verse 26). Jesus on the last night of His human life offered a personal gift to us when stating: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). The tranquility of heart spoken about here is not the absence of trials, as we will have them, but a divinely granted positive well-being and inner strength

even in times of challenge. Those with trusting reliance on God will walk in a wholeness and completeness through challenging circumstances. This peace can be spelled as “perspective.” Simply put, our position before God’s throne trumps whatever the condition might be on the ground. Such perspective allowed the apostle Paul to write that “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding [going beyond the facts on the ground], will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

7. God will follow through on His promises

“So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them” (verse 27). Why are these words following the blessing so special? We have all experienced the promises of well-intentioned people who promise us the moon and come up empty. The beautifying element here is that God is simply and surely going to do

as He says in blessing us, effectively declaring, “*I will do it!*” It is just as He declared about prophesying the future to encourage us in whatever comes our way: “... I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure’” (Isaiah 46:9-10).

Is it any wonder that the boy from Nazareth, assured through the oft-repeated, purpose-filled priestly blessing, would grow up to walk “the walk” to Golgotha for you and me? The same One left us a meaningful “P.S.” to acknowledged blessing—a blessing in itself: “*Follow Me.*” **BT**

DIVE DEEPER



To better understand the scriptural concept of grace, and what it means in terms of repentance, salvation and a relationship with God, be sure to download or request our free study guide *What Does the Bible Teach About Grace?* Scan the code or visit ucg.org/ma25 to find it.



Watch BEYOND TODAY on streaming and broadcast

STREAMING PLATFORMS



Stream *Beyond Today* content
with our streaming box apps and
on YouTube @beyondtodaytv



BROADCAST CHANNELS

Nationwide, U.S.A. — THE WORD Network

Sat., 6:30 p.m. ET, 5:30 p.m. CT, 4:30 p.m. MT, 3:30 p.m. PT and
Thurs., 7:30 p.m. ET, 6:30 p.m. CT, 5:30 p.m. MT, 4:30 p.m. PT and
Mon., 12:30 a.m. ET, Sun. 11:30 p.m. CT, 10:30 p.m. MT, 9:30 p.m. PT.

Regional Cable & Broadcast TV — U.S.A.

Alaska

Anchorage - Channel 18—Tue., 9 p.m.

California

Petaluma - Channel 26—Sun.-Sat., 6 & 6:30 a.m.;

Mon.-Fri. 11 & 11:30 p.m.

San Diego - Channels 18, 19 & 23—Mon., 5 p.m.

San Francisco - Channel 29—Sun., 6:30 p.m.

Ohio

Toledo - Channel 69—Sun., 6 p.m.

Oregon

Milwaukee - Channel 23—Sun., 6 a.m.; Mon., 11:30 p.m.;

Wed., 4:30 p.m.; Thurs., 7 a.m.; Fri., 5:30 a.m.;

Sat., 8:30 a.m. & 4:30 p.m.

Oregon City - Channel 23—Sun., 2:30 p.m.; Thurs., 10:30 a.m.

& 2:30 p.m.; Fri., 4:30 a.m.; Sat., 3 a.m. & 4 a.m.

Gresham/East Portland - Channel 22/23—Sun., 7:30 p.m.

Virginia

Fairfax - Channel 36—Mon., 5:30 p.m.; Fri., 1 a.m.; Sat. 10 a.m.

Washington

Everett - Channel 77—Wed., 5 p.m.

Europe

Faith World Television on SKY TV channel 588—

Sat., 12:30 p.m. & 17:00 GMT; Sun., 06:30 & 11:00 GMT.

Canada

Vision TV—Sun. 6 p.m. EST & Sat. 5 a.m. EST

Faith TV—Sun. 1 p.m. EST

Australia

9Gem Network—Sun., 8 a.m.

New Zealand

Sky Open—Sun., 8:30 a.m. (simulcast on Sky satellite
platform)

Zambia

Chipata - 90.0 Feel Free Radio FM—Sun., 06:30

Mufulira, Mafken Radio 97.7 FM—Sat., 18:15

Solwezi, FCC Radio 89.7 FM—Mon., 20:30

UNITED CHURCH of GOD

an International Association

To request a free subscription, or to request
the free study guides offered in this issue,
visit beyondtoday.org or contact the office
nearest you from the list below

NORTH, SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

United States: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

Phone: (513) 576-9796 | Fax: (513) 576-9795 | Website: beyondtoday.org | info@ucg.org

Canada: United Church of God—Canada, Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1,
Canada | Phone: (905) 614-1234, (800) 338-7779 | Fax: (905) 614-1749 | Website: ucg.ca

Caribbean islands: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027
Phone: (513) 576-9796 | Fax: (513) 576-9795 | Website: beyondtoday.org | info@ucg.org

Spanish-speaking areas: Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. | Phone: (513) 576-9796 | Fax: (513) 576-9795 | Website: ucg.org/espanol | info@ucg.org

EUROPE

Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg: P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, Netherlands

British Isles: United Church of God, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts, WD19 6FZ, England
Phone: 020-8386-8467 | Fax: 020-8386-1999 | Website: goodnews.org.uk

Eastern Europe and Baltic states: Head Sõnumid, Pk. 62, 50002 Tartu Postkontor, Estonia

France: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 24 avenue Descartes, 33160 Saint-Médard-en-Jalles,
France

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

Italy: Website: ucgitaly.org | info@ucgitaly.org

Scandinavia: Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027 |
norden@ucg.org

AFRICA

Cameroon: United Church of God Cameroon, BP 10322 Bessengue, Douala, Cameroon

East Africa, Madagascar and Mauritius: United Church of God—East Africa

P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi | 00200, Kenya | kenya@ucg.org | Website: ucgeastafrica.org

Ghana: P.O. Box AF 75, Adenta, Accra, Ghana | ghana@ucg.org

Malawi: P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi | Phone: +265 (0) 999 823 523 |
malawi@ucg.org

Nigeria: United Church of God—Nigeria, P.O. Box 2265 Somolu, Lagos, Nigeria |
Phone: 8033233193 | Website: ucgnigeria.org | nigeria@ucg.org

South Africa: United Church of God—Southern Africa | Postnetnet Suite#28, Private
Bag X025, Lynwood Ridge, 0040, South Africa | Phone: +27 (0) 797259453 | Fax: +27 (0)
865727437 | Website: south-africa.ucg.org | UnitedChurchofGod.SA@gmail.com

Zambia: P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia | Phone: (0026)0966925840 | zambia@ucg.org

Zimbabwe: United Church of God—Zimbabwe, c/o M. Chichaya, No 15 Mukwa Street, Eiffel
Flats, Kadoma, Zimbabwe | Phone: +263 772 922 362 | zimbabwe@ucg.org

PACIFIC REGION

Australia and all other South Pacific regions not listed: United Church of God—Australia
GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia | Free call: 1800 356 202 |

Phone: 07 5630 3774 | Fax: 07 55 202 122 | Website: ucg.org.au | info@ucg.org.au

New Zealand: United Church of God, P.O. Box 10468, Te Rapa, Hamilton 3241, New
Zealand | Phone: Toll-free 0508-463-763 | Website: ucg.org.nz | info@ucg.org.nz

Tonga: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 518, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

ASIA

All except Philippines and Singapore: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati,
OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. | Phone: (513) 576-9796 | Fax: (513) 576-9795 | info@ucg.org

Philippines: P.O. Box 1474, MCPO, 1254 Makati City, Philippines | Cell/text: +63 918-904-
4444 | Website: ucg.org.ph | info@ucg.org.ph

Singapore: United Church of God, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia
Website: ucg-singapore.org | info@ucg.org.au

ALL AREAS AND NATIONS NOT LISTED

United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

Phone: (513) 576-9796 | Fax: (513) 576-9795 | Website: beyondtoday.org | info@ucg.org

Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement Number 40026236.

Canada return address: *Beyond Today*, 2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, ON N8T 3B7.

Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to: *Beyond Today*, Box 541027,
Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027.

Watch Beyond Today



On cable: THE WORD Network, Saturday 6:30 p.m. ET | Thursday 7:30 p.m. ET

The Word Network is available in over 200 countries, reaching viewers in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas. It reaches homes in the U.S. through DirecTV, Comcast, Time Warner Cable, Bright House Networks, Cox, Cablevision, Charter and other cable operators—and homes on Sky TV in the U.K.

Streaming: Our app on Roku, AppleTV, FireTV, Samsung SmartTV, or on YouTube @BeyondTodayTV.

Who was Jesus?

Few will dispute that a man named Jesus lived 2,000 years ago and that He was a great teacher who impacted the world from His time until now.

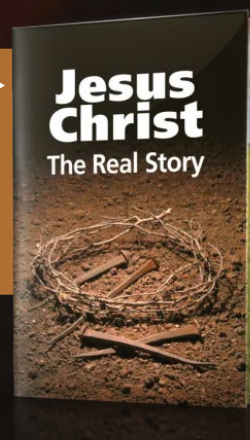
Yet very few truly understand the fullness of what His teachings meant then—and what they mean for *you* today.

Discover the **real** Jesus Christ. ▶

Request your **FREE** copy of *Jesus Christ The Real Story*



or read it online at ucg.org/ma25.



EMAIL NEWSLETTER:

Go to ucg.org/btupdate to sign up for the latest from the publishers of *Beyond Today*, straight to your email inbox.