



COMPASS CHECK

Helping you point your spiritual compass toward God



CALLING ALL CAMPERS!

What Keeping God's Sabbath Means to Me

Emotional Differences Between Young Men and Young Women

Have You Found What You're Looking For?

Tattoos: "It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time"

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COMPASS CORNER



Ever Feel Like a Loser?

Dear Compass Checkers,

I don't know how you'll answer this question, but my answer is a resounding "yes." I have felt this way many times in my life. I've had to deal with my emotions in this regard. So what about you? First, it's okay to say "yes" to this question, and if you do, now we need to know how to deal with this feeling because many of us may feel this way at some point in our lives.

First—let's get to the point:

You are not a loser!

I know some of our CC readers could say, "Well, you don't know me." While it's true I don't know most of you personally, we all have this in common: We are human beings, and to be human is to doubt ourselves and to have our share of bad days. Sometimes the world comes crashing in on us.

As I write this column, I've had a very tough week so far, and it's only Wednesday evening. But that's okay, I have prayed about the multiple situations that are facing me this week, and I have turned them over to God. I am not going to worry about them since I have faith in God to take care of things. I can't lose if I do this. Yes, I need to do my part, but I am not going to try to solve these challenges by myself. And if I do try to do things by myself, then I will fail!

This is the key: If we turn our lives over to God (this means we have to step out of the way and stop trying to work things out ourselves), and if we follow God, then we are on the right track. God answers our prayers since He loves us and we seek Him in our lives.

Notice God's love in Matthew 10:29-31 (New International Version): "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth

COMPASS CHECK

Compass Check is a biblically based magazine for young people of the United Church of God, an International Association (UCGIA) aged 12-18. Our name, *Compass Check*, describes youth pointing their spiritual compass toward God.

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Publisher: UCGIA | *Council of Elders:* Scott Ashley, Aaron Dean, Jorge de Campos, Robert Dick, Dan Dowd, John Elliott, Mark Mickelson, Mario Seiglie, Rainer Salomaa, Rex Sexton, Don Ward (chairman), Anthony Wasilkoff

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The goal of *Compass Check* is to inspire Church youth, ages 12-18, to respond to the gospel message.

Vol. 3, No. 4

United Youth Magazine | Spring 2018

more than many sparrows.”

CC readers, God knows the number of hairs on your head—amazing! God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son want to make sure you do not fail in your lives. He has a plan for you now as a teen and into your adult years. Frankly, His plan for you goes into eternity, and that is a long time indeed!

Do you pray about your challenges in life? When you feel like a failure, do you stop doing things by yourself and really pray to God, then seek His help and His solutions for your



fears and problems? If you do, then you are on the path of not failing. Remember, our goals should be God’s goals. God reminds us of this in Isaiah 55:8: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways.” So our overall goal is to yield to God to make His thoughts our thoughts. God in us (His Holy Spirit either working with us before baptism or in us after baptism—John 14:17) gives us the success, the encouragement and His mindset to overcome our fears and discouragements. This is because God loves us and intervenes for us as we seek Him in our lives.

Here is a reminder that our goals and our plans should be according to what pleases God: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:33-34, NIV).

We cannot really be losers if we turn our lives over to God

I’ve had to learn this, or actually re-learn this, many times. My human nature takes over sometimes and I think I can do it all. It is then I fail. This has been, and still is, a big lesson for me: God has never let me down, and He does not consider

me to be a loser, as long as I seek Him in my life and stay faithful to Him. But have I let God down in my life? Yes, many times. Yet, when I repent and turn things over to God, He mercifully directs me to accomplish His will.

I also want to add—ask God in prayer to give you a “merry heart.” A crushed spirit or the feeling of being a failure “dries the bones” or saps a person’s strength. Notice this in Proverbs 17:22 (NIV): “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”

None of us is perfect—we sometimes get messy attitudes. But since Jesus Christ was on this earth as a human being, He understands us to our core, and He can intervene on our behalf to His Father. What an incredible blessing and miracle this is for all of us! Notice this in Hebrews 4:15-16 (NIV): “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

In 2 Timothy 1:7 we read that God’s Holy Spirit does not give us a spirit of fear: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” Don’t hesitate to reach out to God and ask for His power, His love and a sound mind.

When we sincerely seek God in prayer and let Him direct us by obeying Him, He will never let us truly fail. We may go through some bumps and bruises in life, but God is our shield and our hope. King David wrote about this: “Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield . . . Let Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us, just as we hope in You” (Psalm 33:20, 22).

We have another great issue of *Compass Check* for your reading enjoyment. Enjoy!

Until next time, your camp friend,



Steve Nutzman

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Dear Readers



In high school I played shortstop on our softball team. The shortstop position involves fielding a lot of hard ground balls. You cover a large area, and with right-handed hitters, that space between second and third base is the sweet spot for cranking out solid hits. I remember getting regular egg-sized welts from softballs hitting my shins (after I missed them with my glove) and having bruises on my legs and hips from diving after ground balls hit too far to the side of me.

This got discouraging after a while. It's hard to put 100 percent into something that can cause pain. But being timid about it just made it more likely for me to add another bruise to my collection. Thankfully, my softball coach gave our team some advice that helped me overcome my fear of imminent danger, and I think about it frequently, not just in terms of sports.

He talked to us about the importance of what we said to ourselves, our internal dialogue, while we were out on the softball field. He said we should constantly describe to ourselves the game situation, so that we wouldn't get caught not paying attention, or not knowing where to throw the ball. For example, as shortstop I would be saying to myself: "There's one out. The batter has one ball and one strike. There's a runner on first base. If a ground ball comes to me and I pick it up cleanly, I'll throw it to second base. If I bobble it, I'll throw it to first base. If a pop fly comes to me outside of the infield, I'll catch it and then check the runner at first . . ."

With this kind of self-talk, I would be prepared, thereby lessening the likelihood of a mental error. But it also made my reflexes faster, because I didn't have to second-guess myself. When you know exactly what you need to do in a situation before it happens, you can act more confidently and calmly, and reduce the number of unforced errors that occur.

Our coach also said that our mental discussion should include saying we want the ball to



come to us. Not just that we know what to do if it comes to us, but that we're hoping it will actually happen. I should be itching for the ball, wanting to be the one to make the play, even if the game is on the line. This is what really great athletes have down. They'll visualize and practice the game-winning play with themselves as the key component. They want the pressure.

I started saying those kinds of things to myself in practice and games, that I wanted the ball to come to me and that I knew what to do when it did. And it helped me overcome the dread of getting another bump on my shin. But it's helped me in other ways too. At work I can anticipate potentially tricky situations and prepare for them. I can be the one to volunteer to solve problems or take on a challenging client. And in the Church, this advice helps me be more willing to serve and grow. I can be on the lookout for opportunities to help where there's a need, and when someone asks me to fill a role, I can be up for the challenge, instead of shrinking back.

It's not always easy to have this kind of confidence. But we can look to God for the encouragement needed to step up to the plate. Second Corinthians 3:12 says, "Since we have such a hope, we are very bold" (English Standard Version).

Whether you're a softball player or not, I hope this advice can be helpful for you like it was for me, so that you can anticipate and prepare for the pressures of life, and move forward into them, instead of getting stuck on your heels.

Your friend,



Kourtney Kovanis

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WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO

AT CAMP?



BY REX SEXTON & STEVE NUTZMAN

Camp season is just around the corner! The camp staff is already busy making plans for over 400 campers who will be attending this summer. Our staff would love to have you attend.

What do you most look forward to when you come to camp? What about seeing all your friends again! Or making new friends? And there is the Zone—the safe place where all campers and staff can enjoy a week of spiritual growth in an emotionally safe environment. The Zone actually pictures the future Kingdom of God. Now where else can you find all of this other than United Youth Camps?

But wait, we're not going to ignore the many recreational activities at camp. What are some of your favorite activities at camp? Is it swimming, water skiing, the high challenge course, the dances, the good food, talking with your dormmates, chilling out after dinner at a camp mixer, watching the sun set over the Pacific Ocean, making something cool in craft class or tubing at Winter Camp? These enjoyable activities are offered to make sure each camper has lots of fun, learns new skills, faces challenges and fears successfully and builds confidence.

Many campers tell us that they come away from camp with a heightened sense of leadership, social etiquette and the ability to work with others. Again, where else can you spend a week and have all of this, and more, a part of your life?

By way of background, when the United Church of God formed in the spring of 1995, one of the first priorities set by the ministry was to establish summer camps for our teens and preteens. Camps began with only a few months notice and were a success from the very first year. Camp builds on what we read in Psalm 71:5: "For You are my hope, O Lord GOD; You are my trust from my youth." God is calling you when young so you can have a one-on-one relationship with Him, which is really incredible.

Returning campers know that our main focus is always on Christian living—teaching from the Bible and showing God's way of life to our campers and staff. Our camp programs offer varied and challenging activities, but the core purpose of camp is to teach the truths illustrated in our over-all and daily themes each year.

In teaching our Christian living lessons each year at camp, we include visual, active and audio reinforcement throughout each day. The lessons are designed in a discussion format so you campers will think about and apply what is being taught. The lesson of each day is carried through in the activities, dorm discussions, campfire talks and dorm parent encouragement. Memory scriptures are often practiced by the entire dorm as campers walk between activities. The themes of the week are summarized and made practical by the messages and Q&A sessions on the Sabbath. The result is

a package of truth and practical lessons that each camper takes home, hopefully helping them to live God's way of life during the year.

Notice that this Christian living model is based on the example in Deuteronomy 6:6-9: "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" (New International Version). God's model cannot be improved upon, and we are thankful to follow it in our camp program.

Some of you have noticed that during the Feast of Tabernacles we have asked you at the teen Bible study what the attendees remember from summer camp that year. It has been rewarding to see how many campers recall the

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themes and memory verses from the previous summer. This is inspiring!

In the camper surveys that are filled out at the end of camp each year there are some encouraging trends in recent years. Three important questions are gaining in positive ratings. They are: 1) "Campers understand the Christian living content provided," 2) "Increased motivation to pray and study the Bible" and 3) "Campers believe God is calling them." These are vital areas that the senior camp team has worked very hard on, and we are pleased to see the results.

Our United Church of God camps are growing! In 2017 in the U.S. we operated six teen camps, attended by 493 campers and served by 356 staff. The seven preteen camps included 473 campers and 449 staff. So our camps involve nearly 1,800 people or roughly 25 percent of our weekly church attendance in the U.S.

We really hope you will join the staff this summer at the camp of your choice. And if you have never been to camp, please go this summer. You will have the time of your life. Reserve your spot at camp by registering online now at <http://uyc.ucg.org>. We're looking forward to seeing you at camp. **CC**



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HAVE YOU FOUND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?



DAN PRESTON

I was 11 years old and in the fifth grade, getting ready to become a sixth grader, aka the top dogs of New Richmond Elementary School. I had earned enough report card money over the past year to buy a radio of my own, and was now beginning to discover music. Of course, I was already very familiar with the theme songs to all my favorite cartoon shows like *Scooby-Doo*, *Where Are You!* and *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*. (I have the power!!!!!!) But my musical interests were beginning to expand beyond the catchy tunes that accompanied my favorite TV shows. I began listening to the lyrics of music and identifying with the message that was being conveyed. In short, it was music that made me think. It was music of my own.

“Everybody Wants to Rule the World” by Tears for Fears was a popular tune of the day. The title of the song says it all: If we’re honest with ourselves, most of us—from time to time—want to rule the world. That is to say, we have a tendency to want everything to work out the way we want it to. At 11, I might not have been the world’s foremost philosopher, but I could identify with that concept. We all want what we want, when we want it and how we want it. Human nature at its finest.

Then there was R.E.M.’s “It’s the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine).” This really spoke to me as a Gen-Xer. The world is crashing down around us, and how do we feel? As long as I have my Walkman (forerunner to the iPod) and a bag of Doritos, I’m good. Perhaps the most famous album to drop in 1987 was U2’s *Joshua Tree*. There were several great hits from that album, but one sticks out to me: “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For.” A great beat, a spine-chilling rhythm and Bono’s heart-filled, soulful voice pouring lyrics into my ears like some sort of audible medicine. One line in particular from that song really stuck out to me:

“I BELIEVE IN THE KINGDOM COME . . .”

Now, I won’t pretend to know exactly what the singer was thinking when he sang these lyrics, but I can tell you what they meant to me and my life. Even if he didn’t have exactly the same concept of the Kingdom that I or my Church had, it was revolutionary to me to hear a rock singer mention a concept as deep and real as the Kingdom of God in his music. Not that we should look to celebrities as our moral compass, but if an international rock icon could believe and wonder about a concept such as the Kingdom of God, then maybe I could too.

While we both believed in the coming Kingdom of God, there was a bigger question in these lyrics that needed to be answered. How did this “kingdom come” relate to what I was looking for? You see, the singer of the song sought deeper meaning and was struggling to answer fundamental questions of life. But what about me? Little ol’, not-a-pop-star, cheap-sunglass-wearing me. Did I struggle with the answers to life’s deep

questions too? I, of course, had questions about life and God. If God loves people, why does He allow bad things to happen to them? If I am to love my brother and sister, why do they make me so mad sometimes? If God knows everything, why did He allow Satan the chance to rebel? These are some tough questions and, to be honest, I still ask them sometimes today. I do understand that God allows all things to work for good (Romans 8:28), but sometimes I just don’t see how that is happening at a particular moment.

How could I reconcile all the hardships in life with a God who is creating a Kingdom that He wants me to be a part of? The answer to this question can begin to be found in a saying by Jesus Christ in Matthew 7:7-8: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”

I don’t recall if I read this scripture after first listening to that U2 album, but I know now that it describes exactly what was going on then. From an early age, I had been taught that



my life had purpose. That, even though time and chance happen to everyone, my life wasn't all made up of random events. My parents had shown me from childhood that, despite the difficult questions that life might hand us, there is something bigger going on (Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Psalm 71:17). Life isn't random—it has meaning. Somehow, it all added

up to something much bigger than what I could see right in front of me, or in the news

headlines I saw every day that caused me to worry about the world I lived in. Daily, as I went about the activities that add up to what we call life, I had begun to knock, seek and find—just as Jesus described—what life was all about. God had shown me—had helped me to find—that my whole life is a journey toward the Kingdom of God.

As I got older, this picture became clearer. I had—I have—purpose and meaning. I am to be part of an eternal spiritual family (Hebrews 2:10), and this family has a big job ahead of it (Revelation 5:10). The time will come when

people who have lived, suffered and died in a miserable human existence will receive a chance for a better life. Isaiah 30:20-21 gives us some insight: “And though the LORD gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.” While I might not be able

SOMEHOW, IT ALL ADDED UP TO SOMETHING MUCH BIGGER THAN WHAT I COULD SEE RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME, OR IN THE NEWS HEADLINES I SAW EVERY DAY THAT CAUSED ME TO WORRY ABOUT THE WORLD I LIVED IN.

to answer all of life's questions today, I know that a time will come when those questions will be answered. Through my experiences today—good and bad—I will help others one day by giving them good advice, telling them, “This is the way, walk in it.”

At age 11 I began to realize that, while music might be good or might be bad, it has a powerful effect on people's lives. It has the power to make people think. I know, because that is precisely what it did to me. It was also at this time that I began to find what it was I was looking for—whether I knew I had been looking for it or not. I realized my relationship with God wasn't the reciting of the Ten Commandments or the putting of an offering in a little green envelope. I was realizing that He wanted a relationship with me, and that my life had purpose. He wanted me to be a part of His family and, more than that, He had plans for me to serve Him by helping others come to the same understanding.

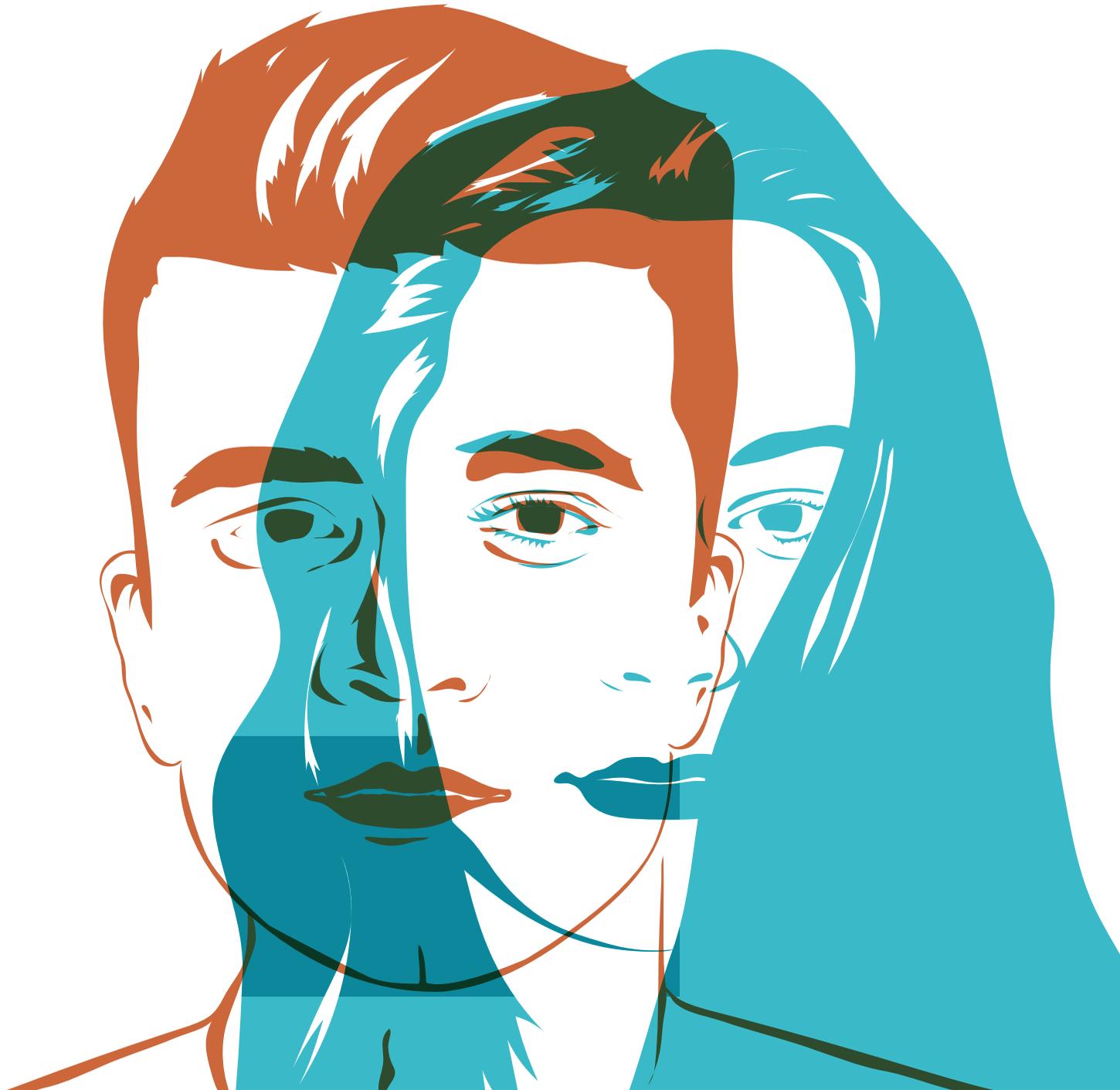
Fun fact: A few years later, I was able to visit the Joshua Tree National Forest (referenced in the name of the U2 album) with my brother, my sister and our parents. It was during the Feast of Tabernacles, which we were keeping in Palm Springs in the autumn of 1990. It was a moment that will live in my mind forever as if it were yesterday. As I stood there staring out over the landscape, I was a different person than I had been three years earlier when I first heard that album. I had matured a bit in that time, and God had showed me something critical at that point in my life. Although I didn't know the answers to all of life's questions, I was starting to see that it was the peace and comfort of His mind, His plans and His way of thinking that I had been looking for all along. **CC**



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emotional differences in young men & *young women*

by *Jennifer* & Jay Ledbetter



As husband and wife of over 20 years, Jennifer and Jay have discovered a few keys to better understanding the emotional differences God created within each gender and would like to share what they've learned with you.

Advice for the guys (from *Jennifer*)

Guys, have you ever wanted to find out what girls need and want from you? Well, here is your chance! Over the years I've struggled sometimes to understand what I really needed emotionally from my husband. As a teen I had no idea of the important emotional differences between guys and girls, but I wish now that I had. God mercifully opened my eyes later on and has continued to teach me all along my journey. Your Creator wants you to have healthy relationships and to become men of strong character and leadership. Don't forget to ask God for help every day and pick one or two of the points below to begin practicing right away.

Five things *girls* need

1. To feel understood

Pay attention when a girl begins to share her feelings or thoughts. Ask questions (without offering solutions) until you understand how she truly feels. Girls process thoughts and emotions most often by talking them through, and occasionally they will even cry. Don't be afraid of a few tears; it's a perfectly healthy way for her to process emotions when they get too heavy! Pray for the understanding and compassion you may need to let her work through these important steps. It may take patience, but this simple kindness is often the most meaningful and appreciated gift you can offer.

2. To feel protected

Many guys underestimate their ability to be protectors, and that doesn't necessarily mean physically. Sometimes protecting a girl means being patient with her feelings, being a gentleman around her and making sure you don't stray into compromising situations. Your responsibility as the protector is to always put her wellbeing first. Remember that godly love is always self-sacrificing, never self-serving. Philippians 2:3-4 says: "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

3. To feel supported

Girls often carry the combined emotional weight of multiple concerns on their shoulders. Occasionally she may need you to be a patient supporter when the weight becomes too much. Let her know that you are able and willing to be a support in whatever way is needed. Knowing that she doesn't have to worry about burdening you will help her to open up and share her struggle. Though pertaining to a married couple, you can still

gain insight from the words of 1 Peter 3:7: “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” This doesn’t mean that women are inferior in any way, just that they require more tenderness and gentleness emotionally than may come naturally to a man.

4. To be valued

Girls and how they operate may seem confusing to you at times (even after decades of marriage!). When feeling frustrated, focus on what you appreciate most about her. Let her know often that you notice and truly appreciate the things she contributes. Her contributions may be very different than yours, but that is by God’s design. When a girl does not feel valued in her life, she may be tempted to go along with things that she normally wouldn’t. A need for approval and affirmation of worth may leave her more vulnerable to making mistakes that can cause long-term emotional damage. Proverbs 27:7 says, “A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb, but to a hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” This scripture means that a person who is satisfied is not seeking anything to fill them, but someone who is unsatisfied may seek out even the wrong things to try and fill the emptiness they feel inside. By sincerely acknowledging a girl’s value on a regular basis, you can be a source of strength for her.

5. To be led

This is specific to engaged or married couples. However, as young men it’s important to be practicing and praying about the awesome responsibilities involved. Being a good leader means gaining the loyalty and trust of those around you and providing a positive example for them to follow. You can do this by praying often for God to shape you into a man who follows Jesus Christ’s example of servant leadership. The goal we’re aiming for is stated in Ephesians 5:28-29: “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.”

So even though girls are different from you in some important ways, practice recognizing those differences and ask God for the ability to understand and appreciate them. With self-sacrificing love, honoring the differences between girls and guys can become a great strength in any meaningful relationship you have with the opposite gender. I pray for God to bless you and help you to become a strong man filled with godly character and faith.

Advice for the girls (from Jay)

Girls, you may have a hard time relating to the guys in your life—and for good reason—we were created to be very different from you! My hope is that you can take the tips below and use them to strengthen your healthy friendships and relationships with the opposite gender as you grow older.

Five things guys need

1. To experience an example of kindness, gentleness, confidence and joy

You might be surprised to know that young men are not as simple as pop culture makes them out to be. They are not dumb or purely concerned with the outward appearance of girls. In fact, often what is most attractive to them is joy, kindness and confidence. These qualities are attractive because it makes everyone feel better just being around a person who has them. Philippians 4:4-7 says: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (New International Version).

These godly traits create the type of beauty that won’t fade with age. Ask your Creator God often for help in building these characteristics. “Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised” (Proverbs 31:30).

2. To be needed

Guys love to be around confident, independent girls, but we also have a strong desire to be needed. So be mindful about allowing the young men in your life to step up when you see they are trying. If you need help with something, don’t be afraid to ask. And if you see an opening for him to serve, suggest it to him. The process of growing into a godly



man doesn't start out perfectly. If a guy friend offers to help with something, even if you aren't sure you need it, consider accepting his help. Think of it as helping him build his "servant-leadership" muscle.

3. To be encouraged

It's worth a lot to a guy to have an encourager who's there even in times of failure. Sometimes he will act before he thinks through a situation as carefully as you might. So he'll appreciate a girl who doesn't criticize too harshly when he almost kills himself jumping off the roof into the pool or nearly receives a concussion while sliding down the stairs in a flimsy cardboard box. Learn to laugh with him and just be a friend. If you are an encourager rather than constant worrier and critic, he will feel safe to share his deepest thoughts and hopes with you when he's ready. "Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body" (Proverbs 16:24, English Standard Version).

4. To have a little space when needed

Sometimes guys need to have emotional distance. Generally, it takes us longer than girls to process emotions, and we do not usually "talk through" the process as girls do. If a guy pulls away to do an activity that may seem a waste of time to you, it may seem as if he doesn't care enough to spend that time with you or share his thoughts and feelings. But it's just a way of decompressing, processing whatever he's going through and recharging. Guys can be a little like a rubber band—pulling away to process emotions, and if you're patient, snapping back, eager to spend time with you again before long.

5. To have moral support in the Christian walk

More than you might realize, a lot of guys desire to become men of God—but can sometimes use help. A guy will usually appreciate when you encourage him to become a better version of himself. You can help him see major flaws and shortcomings by bringing them up gently while letting him know that you still believe in him. Proverbs 27:6 puts it this way: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend . . ." His guy friends are great, but they can't help in this area

quite like you can, because they may not be as open to talking about these kinds of things. He'll value when you listen to the fears and struggles he has in his attempt to walk with God. There are very few things that mean more to us guys than to know that you are a true Christian ally.

So ladies, you should know that guys really do like that you are different. They even like the mystery of not always understanding you! And you should know that we genuinely love being able to share this crazy world with you.

Always seek God's purpose in your life, and may your Creator God multiply and bless your efforts as you honor His purpose in your relationships!

Learning about the differences between genders is an important process that does not come easily to most people. As you journey toward adulthood, it will be helpful to understand how to relate emotionally to the opposite gender, from siblings and friends to eventually a spouse.

Our marriage greatly improved once we began seeking God's instruction in how to relate to one another. Even friendships will benefit from a prayerful consideration of scriptures such as those referenced in this article and many others. CC



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Learn a Language

Expand Your World



I watched my

classmate walk to the front of the room, and my heart began to race; I knew that my turn was next. It was the second week of classes, and our French teacher was having us take turns reciting the French alphabet in front of the whole class. I was 14 years old, taking my first class at the local high school, and it was my first time ever learning a foreign language. “*Très bien*, Sarah! Okay, Jessica, your turn.” I stood up slowly, pushed in my chair and walked forward. Turning around to face the class, I began, “A, b, c, d . . .”

Now, fast-forward seven years.

The hum of friendly pre-church chatter filled the air as I took my seat in a special booth at the back of the room. My heart began to race as I watched the songleader walk onto the stage and up to the pulpit. I readjusted my headphones, cleared my throat, and looked down to make sure that my microphone was on. The songleader looked out at the room and smiled and said, “*Bonjour à tous*.”

“Hello everyone,” I said into the mic.

“*J’espère que vous allez bien aujourd’hui*.”

“I hope you’re doing well today.”

“*Nous allons commencer dans 5 minutes. Veuillez rejoindre vos sièges*.”

I spoke quickly and concisely, trying to keep my words up to speed as the non-French speakers listened to my interpretation through their headsets. “We’re going to start in 5 minutes,” I said. “Please find your seats.”

Last year I celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in France and had the opportunity to do simultaneous interpretation for the first time. The Feast was full of amazing opportunities: meeting the French brethren, singing special music in French, helping interpret for the tour guides on some of our excursions, leading the children’s choir in both English and French and so on.

How had I gone from learning how to recite the letters of the French alphabet to speaking French well enough to interpret sermons, tours and conversations? If you answered “lots of time and practice,” you would be correct. There’s no doubt that learning your first foreign language is difficult. Many of you, I am sure, have already begun learning your first foreign language, and can attest to this. Not only do you have to learn completely new words and their spellings, but you must also learn the proper ways to organize those words and the seemingly strange ways to move your mouth in order to pronounce those words.

The next challenge in language learning comes when

you put the language you have studied into practice. Languages exist to help people communicate, so you will have to eventually test out what you have learned *on another human being*. This can be intimidating! However, it brings me to one of the most important tips I can give to someone who wants to learn a language: *Do not be afraid to make mistakes*. If you can find a way to lay aside your fear of making mistakes and embrace them as part of the process, you will make leaps and bounds in your progress. If you never open your mouth, you'll never learn anything new. (Mistakes often make for great stories later—I definitely have a few!)

Now that we've talked about *how* to learn a foreign language, the bigger question is *why*—why, for example, did I choose to keep learning French after I had completed the two classes that my high school required? For me, something clicked when a group of French exchange students visited my high school. As I listened to those teenagers talking to each other in French, I realized: “Wow. Real people across the world use this language every single day.” Perhaps this fact was obvious to everyone else, but in any case, a light bulb went off in my head when I realized the implications and benefits of being able to speak another language.

Think about this: Behind each language lies a whole world that is waiting to be explored. This includes books, movies, poems and songs that you have never seen or heard before. There are people to meet, stories to hear and different cultures to learn about. At their core, languages exist to help us connect with other people and share ideas with them. The more languages you know, the more people you have the potential to meet! How cool is it that millions of people around the world would be thrilled to talk to you about your country, your favorite movie or your family—if only you both had the words to do so?

Thanks to my time studying foreign languages, I have had many such opportunities, and I cannot begin to tell you how much enjoyment they have added to my life. I chose to study French as one of my majors in college, and part of this experience included studying abroad in the French Alps for a semester. I lived with a French host family, with two girls who became like my little sisters. We still keep in touch. When I spent my first year of college at a community college that didn't offer French, I decided to take the opportunity to learn a little Spanish as well. Because of this, when I went to Mexico for the Feast in 2014, I was able to talk to the Mexican brethren, which made the week even more enriching and unforgettable. As a result of having studied Spanish, I recently had the opportunity to volunteer for a Youth Corps project in South America. My Spanish-speaking

abilities are nowhere near fluent, and I made plenty of mistakes when I spoke, but I knew enough to be able to joke around and have some great conversations with the Chilean brethren during the project, to serve the youth at some local middle schools and to make some memories that I will never forget.

Aside from the fun benefits of being able to speak a foreign language, the skill also has many practical applications. Knowing a foreign language can make you stand out to a future employer and can serve as a determining factor in whether you get that future job you are really excited about. In fact, that is what happened to me! In February of this year, I was offered a job in Cincinnati, Ohio, at the Church's home office to work in the French department. Since that time, I have translated hundreds of e-mails, worked on a new French website that is almost ready to be launched and collaborated on plenty of other fun projects, including translating the kids video *Poly, Col y Toly* from Spanish into French! Learning new languages opens up opportunities to meet people,

Ideas for getting started

On your own time

- Books from the library
- Fun, free apps like Duolingo
- More expensive and thorough programs like Rosetta Stone or Pimsleur

Structured format

- High school classes
- Community language club
- College classes

to learn and to serve. Because I took the time to study a couple of languages as I was growing up, I have had the opportunity to meet many people from around the world, travel to foreign countries and volunteer for fun church projects. You can too! You can even start today! It's as easy as *un, deux, trois*, or *uno, dos, tres*. Above I have listed a few ideas and resources to help you on your own language learning adventures. *Bon courage!* **CC**



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BY ARTHUR SUCKLING

The elevator doors opened, and out walked a young lady. She was tattooed all over her forehead, cheeks, ears, neck, chest and shoulders. She smiled as she passed by, clearly feeling secure in her body artwork. She was a little over the top compared to many who decorate their bodies today.

Tattooing has become very popular in the last decade or so. Full arms (sometimes called “sleeves”) and legs more blue than brown or white are quite in vogue. Even older, gray-haired people have adorned their aging bodies with what clearly are new tattoos seen while at the gym.

When I was young and a member of the Royal Navy, I worked with men who were veterans of World War II. Some of these men had their entire backs covered with a theme. One man’s back was tattooed with “The Rock of Ages.” This was represented by a huge cross on top of rocks with the

waves breaking over them. A lady in white clothing was pictured struggling to climb up to the cross. Another man had a galleon ship with Neptune and a serpent intertwined around the ship. A third example is man with multiple tattoos who had a dotted line around his neck with “Please cut along dotted line.” I could go on, but you get the picture.

The history of tattooing goes back to the beginning of recorded time. One motivation may be based in religious beliefs or “beautifying benefits.” Tattoos were even used as identifying markers for slaves and criminals. Currently some street gangs require symbols indicating membership, status or rank. Numbers and special signs on faces and necks give the police marks to identify.

There are various ways to create permanent markers for the skin. Some cut the skin and rub ink into the cut. Another way is pricking with crude pins and rubbing in the ink or

dye to penetrate under the skin. Coal miners frequently had blue scars that resulted from the coal dust entering a cut or graze.

Today, with the assistance of modern equipment and coloring agents, body art has been taken to a new level. Very fine needles deposit ink subtly into the subcutaneous layers below the skin. This allows for fine shading and great detail. The inks and colors are neutral to the body and therefore are not rejected, so they are permanent. Well, almost permanent. Removal by laser surgery is available today but is painful, expensive and doesn't always remove the tattoo completely.

There are a couple of basic questions that need to be asked: Is tattooing a wise thing to do, and is it in keeping with God's Word?

Let us look first at what God says in the Scriptures. Leviticus 19:26-28 has a section covering various pagan practices that God's people are to avoid, and tattooing is one of these. It says, "You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you . . ." The reason given is "I am the LORD" (Verse 28; also see the sidebar). Since God created us, and if His opinion is important to us, we ought to listen and obey.

A second reason is that fashions come and go all the time, and one thing is for sure, they will make the rounds in a generation or two. I see young ladies today wearing hairstyles that my grandparents wore. Clothing styles also change frequently. There's nothing wrong with new fashions so long as they are modest, appropriate and balanced. However, with tattooing, that's a different kettle of fish. Why? Hair and clothing can be easily modified or changed. Not so much with a tattoo! Its permanent residence below skin is showerproof and scrub-proof.

We should also consider the particular object or design the tattoo represents. It says something about you. It sends a message—one you may come to regret. The decision to have a tattoo is easily made especially when a person is young and perhaps under the influence of alcohol or drugs. This is not a good idea. Waking up in the morning with some grotesque image that your friends told you was great the night before may not seem so through sober eyes! It is amazing what people will do when they are not fully in control of their faculties. An overall good principle to apply here



is in 2 Timothy 2:22: "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Another motivation may be an emotional one perhaps involving a romance. The famous artist Norman Rockwell illustrated this by painting a sailor being tattooed with the name Betty. The only problem was that above were "Sing Lee, Olga, Mimi, Rosetta and Sally" all crossed out! (*The Tattooist*, *Post* cover, March 4, 1944). What may seem cool today may not be cool tomorrow.

With tattoos becoming more popular, more

Embarrassment has eventually left my psyche, but the tattoos remain as a reminder of my youthful immaturity.

research is looking into the effects of tattoo ink in the body. Scientists have known for a while that ink pigments from tattoos travel to lymph nodes, because the lymph nodes become tinted. Recent research is discovering more about the nanoparticles that make up pigments and their effect on the body, like skin and lymph node inflammation. A recent article explains: "The team reports strong evidence of the 'long-term deposition' of toxic elements in the body, which they say could lead to chronic enlargement of the lymph nodes" (*NewsAtlas.com*, Sept. 13, 2017; *Scientific Reports*, Sept. 12, 2017).

I have three tattoos. I got them while I was in the Royal Navy and before God called me to His Church. Way back I was so proud of my peacock and my Bermuda long-tail bird with its yellow bill and white body. Each shoulder displays one, and an emblem of Wales is on my right forearm with

my sister's name under it. But over the years, the thick ink lines have gradually merged. My peacock is a huge blob of blue, and my sister's name has the same unreadable fate. What begins looking like a butterfly may look like a jumbo jet as the skin sags over the years.

What looked good at the time is no longer so! Why? For three reasons. When I was called by God and became a member attending church, I was embarrassed to learn that I had something that I could not change and was against what God said. This reminder would be with me for the rest of my life as there was no way to remove it. At the time there was no laser treatment available. Second, the technology used in the process was quite rudimentary. The needles were large, the ink lines were very thick, and the colors were not very bright. Third, as mentioned above, as I have aged so have my tattoos, and they now look horrible.

As the years have passed by, embarrassment has eventually left my psyche, but the tattoos remain as a reminder of my youthful immaturity every time I see them. I was not a part of God's way of life back then. I clearly know that God never intended for us to mark ourselves in this manner. So remember: It's easy to put on; very difficult and expensive to take off. What seemed like a good idea at the time is no longer good. **CC**



Arthur Suckling's 50 years of teaching, ministering and working with the people who have dedicated their lives to following God's way have enriched his life greatly.
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Statement From the Council of Elders Regarding TATTOOS

Tattooing is directly mentioned in the Bible. “You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:28).

The original Hebrew words are “*nathan qa’aqqa*” which as per the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* refer to “the procedure of making a mark or pattern on the skin by pricking it with a needle coated with pigment” (1988, Vol. 4, p. 739).

Many believe that this prohibition against tattoos in Leviticus 19:28 is only in the specific context of particular pagan practices—that the tattoos referred to are those that, like the cuttings, are for the dead (that is, as part of idolatrous mourning customs and attempts to induce the gods to help the dead in the afterlife). However the prohibition against tattooing in Leviticus 19:28 can stand independently from “cuttings of the flesh for the dead” by the specific wording of the verse.

The *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* supports the above by stating: “In Lev. 19:28 we find two prohibitions of an unnatural disfigurement of the body: ‘You shall not make any cutting in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you.’ The latter (Heb. *qa’aqqa*, ‘incision’) refers to tattooing, and has no reference to idolatrous usages, but was intended to inculcate upon the Israelites a *proper reverence for God’s creation*” (1974, p. 696, emphasis ours).

“God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27). The human body is God’s crowning design in the entire physical realm. Any attempted unnatural marring of the body shows disrespect to God and lack of reverence to His creation. Paul adds, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own” (1 Corinthians 6:19)? So we are to “glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God’s” (verse 20).

We are to reflect God’s thinking and values, and strive to follow His instructions for us carefully and respectfully. “Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you’” (2 Corinthians 6:17). That is the context of Leviticus 19, “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (verse 2). A variety of actions which make one *unholy* are prohibited in this chapter, such as not revering one’s parents, breaking the Sabbath, idolatry, stealing or dealing falsely, prostituting your daughter, false weights, and making marks or patterns on the skin by pricking it with a needle coated with pigment (tattooing).

God’s clear intent with the above scriptures in mind is that our bodies should not be marked with tattoos.

WHAT KEEPING *God's* Sabbath *MEANS* TO ME

The Sabbath marks the end of the week and of a busy schedule. It is a time for me to get together with my friends and brethren in the Church and learn more about God. It is a day to refocus on what really matters by studying God's Word without the daily distractions of work and school. I could keep going and talk about what I think the Sabbath is about and why it's so special to me, but I think it's good to also look in the Scriptures and see what God says about the Sabbath.

Of course, without God, there wouldn't be a Sabbath to begin with. Genesis 2:2-3 says: "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." The Sabbath is God's, and He takes it seriously because He created it (Exodus 20:10). He expects His people to keep it holy and not profane it.

Sometimes you have to give something up if it interferes with God's Holy Day. This is what I've had to do in my life. Something I've always wanted to do is join marching band. As you can probably guess, most of the practices and performances are on Friday night or Saturday, so I've never had the opportunity to join it. A big blessing in my life, though, is my current band director. I've been in band for seven years, and through all the years, she has bent over backwards to make sure dress rehearsals aren't on Friday nights. Even for the Christmas concert, which my sister and I don't participate in, she picks out some winter songs so we can have something to play for the practices. Although I don't get to be in marching band, God blesses us with an equally sweet alternative—an amazing director. The blessings will come when you choose God's way and keep His Sabbath day (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Throughout the Bible people keep the Sabbath. It's clear in the stories that keeping the Sabbath isn't always easy. The Israelites had a few problems with it. God clearly instructed them not to go out to gather manna on the seventh day. But some people still tried to go out, and this made God upset. "And the LORD said to Moses,

'How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day'" (Exodus 16:28-29).

We all have weak moments in keeping the Sabbath. Something I struggle with is social media. Sometimes I'll get on my phone and scroll through Instagram for a couple hours before I realize that I spent my Friday night doing things of my own pleasure rather than God's. I have to be aware of this fact and put the phone down. His Word says, "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight . . . not doing your own ways . . . then you shall delight yourself in the LORD" (Isaiah 58:13-14).

We can all use a reminder of what God expects from us on the Sabbath and what He thinks when we break it. Seeing others' examples in the Bible can help us straighten our compasses and fully honor God by keeping His Holy Day. Whether you read the Old Testament or the New, people throughout the Bible keep God's day of rest. It's always relevant. It isn't something you can push to the side and treat like any other day. When we improve the way we keep the Sabbath, we gain a closer relationship with God, and the worldly things we give up suddenly don't seem so important. **CC**



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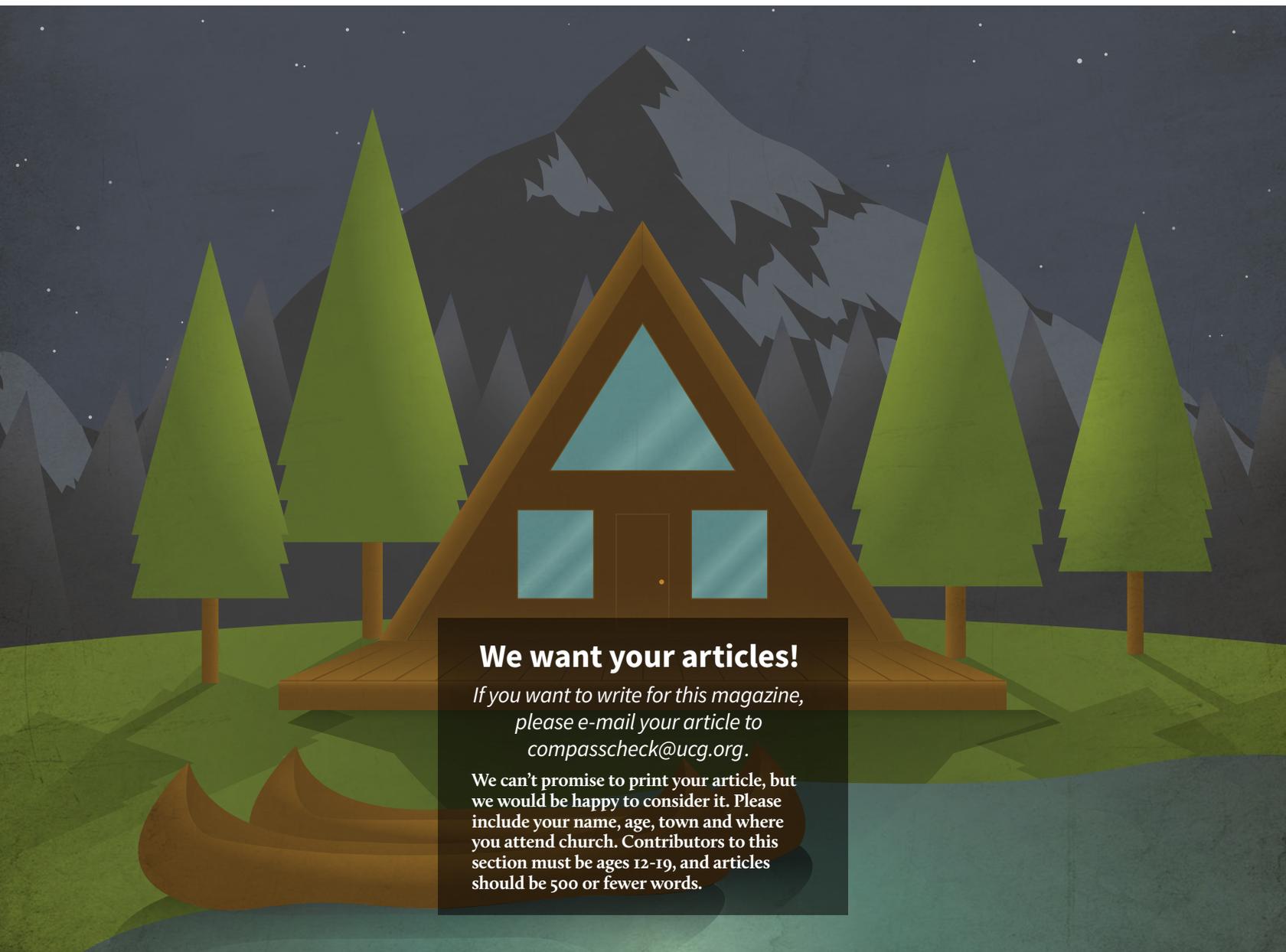
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United Youth Magazine
United Church of God
P.O. Box 541027
Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

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