

BEYOND TODAY

A Magazine of Understanding

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The New **SEXUAL REVOLUTION**

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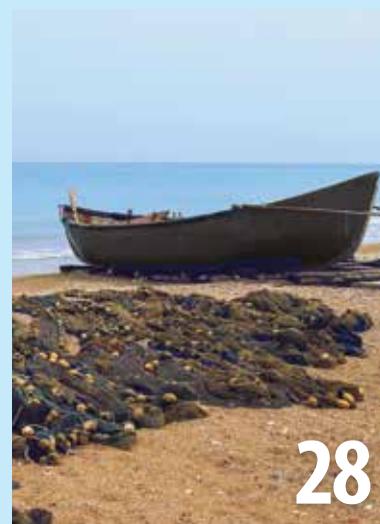
Jesus' first disciples left their lives as fishermen to follow Jesus. This commitment would be tested and renewed—an example to all of us.



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Scott Ashley
Managing editor

“We’re Coming for Your Children!”

It was only last summer that the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus was hit with a wave of backlash after the group posted an online video with members singing about indoctrinating children to accept the gay agenda. In its opening verse one of the members sang to American parents: “*You’re just frightened. You think that we’ll corrupt your kids if our agenda goes unchecked. Funny, just this once, you’re correct.*”

After the backlash, the group quickly backpedaled and issued a statement that the song was merely “tongue-in-cheek humor” and that conservatives had “taken the lyrics out of context to support a narrative that suits their intolerant and hateful needs.”

What lyrics were “taken out of context”? Apparently such lines as these:

“We’ll convert your children, happens bit by bit. Quietly and subtly, and you will barely notice it.

“The gay agenda is coming home, the gay agenda is here!

“We’re coming for them, we’re coming for your children!”

The song concludes with dozens of homosexual men singing multiple times, “*We’ll make an ally of you yet!*”

Hmmm. I distinctly remember when the U.S. Supreme Court in 2015 was hearing arguments to decide on the legality of gay marriage, we were all assured that it was just a matter of “equality” and that homosexuals only wanted the right to marry just like anyone else.

Apparently that was *not* all. For in American society the floodgates have since opened to virtually every kind of sexual deviancy imaginable and then some.

It wasn’t that long ago that we started hearing about “drag queen story hour” showing up at local libraries all across the United States. Today I learned that the famous American toy manufacturer Mattel has introduced a new collector doll *modeled after the winner of a TV drag queen contest.*

Digging a little deeper, I learned that another major national U.S. toymaker, Fisher-Price, recently introduced another set of dolls *clearly intended for an audience of young children*—drag queens with flamboyant gowns and hairdos.

Meanwhile, the U.S. state of Florida recently passed a law to prevent teachers from discussing sex, gender identity and sexual orientation with *5- to 8-year-olds.* This was largely in response to many videos and class handouts that showed up online during public school Covid shutdowns in which teachers of children of all ages were found to be encouraging their students to question and explore their sexual identity and, in some cases, how to touch themselves for sexual pleasure! (Meanwhile, as is more and more common, parents

who publicized such perverse brainwashing found themselves censored and frozen out of social media.)

American entertainment media is hard at work brainwashing your children into accepting sexually deviant lifestyles. GLAAD, the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, recently boasted that out of 775 regular series characters in U.S. primetime TV, nearly 12 percent are LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer/questioning).

If that sounds much higher than the percentage of the U.S. population that falls into those categories, it is *much, much higher*—and *by design.* This inflated representation is meant to make such lifestyles seem normal and attractive.

Is it having an effect? Consider that a recent major study found that *more than 30 percent* of U.S. Millennials—basically those today in their 20s and 30s—now identify as LGBTQ. The researchers concluded that the increase is particularly driven by social and news media coverage pushing LGBTQ as “safe and cool.”

In his powerful dissent from the U.S. Supreme Court’s majority decision to legalize homosexual marriage, Justice Samuel Alito gave this sobering warning: “Today’s decision . . . will be used to vilify Americans who are unwilling to assent to the new orthodoxy . . . [It] will be exploited by those who are determined to stamp out every vestige of dissent . . . Those who cling to old beliefs [such as the biblical foundation of marriage] . . . will risk being labeled as bigots and treated as such by governments, employers, and schools . . . By imposing its own views on the entire country, the [court] majority facilitates the marginalization of the many Americans who have traditional ideas.”

Justice Alito’s words proved prophetic. Now those who stand up for biblical values—as we do in *Beyond Today* magazine and television—are branded bigots, haters, homophobes and worse. In today’s “cancel culture,” views such as ours—based in the Bible and 400 years of national Judeo-Christian values—are routinely silenced (see our last issue on “The Conspiracy to Cancel God”).

Meanwhile, God says of cultures like ours that flaunt their sins: “*They display their sin like the people of Sodom and don’t even try to hide it. They are doomed! They have brought destruction upon themselves*” (Isaiah 3:9, New Living Translation, emphasis added).

Yes, *they are coming for your children.* And a time of reckoning is also coming. Will you be standing with God when that time comes? **BT**



The New SEXUAL Revolution

We face a serious revolution. Large numbers of young adults identify as LGBTQ. Schools are programming preteens to believe they can choose to be a boy or girl. Society is in a satanic battle against God Himself, marriage, the family, the natural order as God designed us and God's plan for mankind. This battle is already in your home!

by Darris McNeely

Do you see the words “boy or girl” in the lines above? My writing software’s spell correction kept prompting me to change it to “child,” a “more gender-inclusive term.” Where I later write “bride and groom,” I was prompted to change that to “couple.” That’s how pervasive this revolution is.

I grew up in the 1960s during a time of great cultural and social upheaval. A major transformation occurred that gave a name to the period—the *Sexual Revolution*. A main driver behind it was “the Pill,” an oral contraceptive for women approved for widespread use in 1960. With the Pill readily available, now people could engage in sexual relationships more freely without fear of pregnancy.

This was huge. Casual sex, euphemized by the term “free love,” became the clarion call among youth and older generations.

Attitudes toward traditional morality and the family structure radically changed over the decade, especially with God and prayer removed from U.S. public schools in 1962 and '63. Then in 1973 came another event connected with increased immorality and further breakdown of traditional morals. The Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision legalized abortion. Since then, more than 60 million legal abortions have been performed in America alone.

I don’t expect any of us to understand the full impact of

this fact in our lifetime. I know it has cheapened the quality of life. The fact that we go about our daily life accepting abortion—the murder of millions of unborn children—as normal has desensitized us to the sanctity of life, motherhood and the value of the family to society. It appears that *Roe v. Wade* could be overturned with a ruling soon to be announced by the Supreme Court, but incalculable damage has been done. The battle for abortion has been fought along a deep and wide cultural fault line.

Another stage of sexual revolution

Today we face another stage in the sexual revolution. We can call it a “*new* sexual revolution,” recognizing that there’s really nothing new under the sun in terms of human degradation. Previous ages have always had sexual immorality. (Ever study ancient Greece and Rome?) Abortion and forms of infanticide were part of many ancient cultures.

However, when it comes to the depths of sexual confusion, self-loathing, vile sexual perversions and denial of biology by today’s ruling media, government and entertainment elites, we may be seeing a new depth of cultural, social and spiritual perversion that would shock even those of ancient Sodom.

We will briefly examine what is happening. The news and headlines will be familiar to you, as they are a never-



empowerment through Jesus Christ.

We understand the difficulty of changing deep-rooted patterns of extreme behavior and thinking. We also know there is competent help for those who desire. We stand on God's promise that "when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, *he shall live* because of it" (Ezekiel 33:19, emphasis added throughout).

One for the ages

Like me, you were likely astounded when Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson was questioned before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee earlier this year as a nominee for the Supreme Court. When asked by Tennessee Senator Marsha Blackburn, "Can you provide a definition of the word *woman*?" the judge could only answer, "I can't . . . I am not a biologist."

I understand the normal evasion that is part of politics. But this is one for the ages. This line could define our time as one of rank stupidity. That a sitting federal judge being considered for the highest judicial role in the nation would say this is astounding. What should be even more astounding, but sadly isn't, is that she was approved for a seat on highest court in the land.

Judge Brown knew that to be confirmed by a liberal majority of the U.S. Senate, she had to appear woke or progressive. She had to show alignment with the politically correct ideas of today's elites. She would not have received her confirmation without demonstrating she was on board with the new revolution in gender and sexuality. Her answer signals her decisions on cases before the court will tilt not toward adhering to the nation's Constitution, but toward the progressive agenda.

Never mind the fact this is a highly educated woman who knows the difference between men and women—and the fact that being a woman was a stated prerequisite to her nomina-

To deny biology, genetic science and the basic sexuality of men and women, one must willingly take part in a lie perpetuated by key influencers.

ending part of today's news cycle. Readers of *Beyond Today* should understand that what is occurring before our eyes is *not* normal and could lead to a *shattering of the family structure as we have traditionally known it*. In fact, that seems to be the clear intent!

If that happens, humanity will have severed itself from the divine institution God created for perpetuating the human race. The family—the *biblical* family of a biological male (father) and female (mother) committed by marriage to one another—is under direct attack in this new sexual revolution. It will impact every one of us!

What does God say?

As we consider here the consequences of sin on individuals and a nation and culture, we'll be looking to the Bible's teaching about families, morality and the alphabet soup of LGBTQ+. It's vital to know what God says about behavior that runs counter to His eternal spiritual law. All of us

stand equally before God as sinners in need of forgiveness. God's law defines how we should live. When we cross the line into disobedience and sin, *there are consequences*. We are seeing those consequences today.

Our role in *Beyond Today* is not to condemn the sinner, but to clearly point out the sin. We want each individual to understand truth, *God's* truth, on the matter. We sympathize with those caught in behavior and patterns of thinking damaging to mind and body. To those who know they are trapped and enslaved to sin, we offer understanding concerning that struggle and the knowledge of God's love and truth (see "Sexual Identity Issues: What to Do, How to Help" on page 12).

Part of that truth is that *there is a way out of the trap*. The chains can be broken. We take no pleasure in the suffering of the many. We want to help people turn from destructive behavior and live righteously before God. All can find forgiveness, healing, hope and



tion by President Joe Biden. She is obviously willing to participate in a lie. It's that simple. To deny biology, genetic science and basic sexuality one must take part in a lie repeated so often by key influencers. Her answer shows the depth to which this new sexual revolution has taken the nation. It will be very hard to come back from such a position and its consequences.

To participate in a lie of this magnitude can immeasurably harm a culture. It goes against nature itself to deny biological sexuality within the genetic structure. A man has an XY chromosome. A female has an XX. Our sex is literally written into every one of the trillions of cells of our body.

This is how God made man and woman. Genesis tells us the first woman was taken from the side of the man and that the two are distinct. Their distinction goes beyond structure to function as well. The woman was made to carry another human life in her womb. That life can only be engendered by or from a biological male with specific distinctions. This is the natural order from God as revealed in the Bible.

Romans 1 describes the result of abandoning and denying what God has set in order: "Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity, to dishonor their bodies among themselves. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!" (verses 24-25, New English Translation).

"Don't Say Gay"

In March the U.S. state of Florida's senate took on current progressive politics by passing the "Parental Rights in Education" bill. Governor Ron DeSantis immediately signed it into law. This bill restricts "classroom discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity" in *pre-K to third grade*.

That such a law would even be



The new sexual revolution is intent on driving a wedge between parents and children, in effect breaking down the natural order of the family.

needed is staggering. Those early grade school years—spanning ages 5 to 8—used to be a time of learning to work together and show respect within the context of a normal life of boys and girls playing amid a traditional family setting.

Opponents of the Florida bill dubbed it the "Don't Say Gay" bill even though it doesn't contain those words or the word "gay" at all. Calling it that is meant to stir emotions and cloud the facts, making it seem hatefully exclusionary to rally support in opposing it.

But polls show that a majority of people, even many on the liberal side, are against classroom instruction on sexuality and gender identity with children in that age group. And thankfully many parents are waking up to the dangers being inflicted on children within public schools. (To learn more, see "What Are They Teaching Your Children?" beginning on page 15.)

Right-thinking parents in Florida and Virginia have banded together to resist the sinister changes that have crept into today's education elite. And the reaction is not only against gender indoctrination. Parents are also seeing the absurdity of critical race theory being taught to youth.

I suspect we are watching the rising up of what may be the diminishing remnant of a generation of people who knew a different America where at least the framework of biblical morals and ethics formed the foundation of religion and education.

This is not to ignore the inequalities, injustice, racism and, yes, *sin* that has always been a part of *every* society. But there was a time when a majority knew right from wrong on matters critical to maintaining order in society. There was a time when a Supreme Court nominee would not hesitate to give an honest answer to the question, "What is a woman?"

Perhaps the biggest "canary in the coal mine" in this picture is the reaction from Florida-based Disney Entertainment. Irate Disney executives began openly saying they would inject more "queer" story lines and sexual deviancy into their entertainment offerings.

In a leaked recording of a video conference call, one Disney executive bragged about her "not-at-all-secret gay agenda" and attempts at "adding queerness" wherever she could in kids' shows. Another employee talked openly about his attempts to "explore queer stories" and introduce "gender non-conforming characters."

Astute observers of Disney have seen a programming shift from the traditional mores for some time. With the decades of family entertainment in the Disney archives, you must wonder if there will be a movement to remake much of it to fit an acceptable gender-progressive format. Will they make Davy Crockett a “trans frontiersman”? How about the seven dwarves? Will they have to go because they offend a particular group of people? Will there be male Disney princesses? One shudders to think what they would do to Mickey Mouse or Snow White.

Let's be plain

The reaction to the Florida law by activist groups and Disney is the clearest example of where this new sexual revolution is going. It is to a new world where harmful practices such as gender transformation are accepted as normal. Where society has the right to teach your children, your grandchildren, your nieces and nephews and the young kids on your block that they are neither boys nor girls but whatever they feel like at the moment.

The goal is not just to teach them they can identify as whatever gender they think they are, but that they can also undergo harmful psychiatric molding and surgery to change their behavior and anatomy. The long-term damage is incalculable. (See “Alternative Lifestyles: Are They Really Harmless?” beginning on page 10.)

We are watching a systematic effort to groom children into a perverted system teaching an unnatural, unbiblical and destructive approach to sexuality. This is being done in the open before our eyes. The record of those promoting gay pride, LGBTQ+ normalization and the acceptance of other forms of sexual perversion is clear. There have been coverups in schools of sexual assault stemming from trans bathroom policies allowing biological teenage boys to use girls' restrooms. How about the five-day workshops to teach kids to dress in drag offered by the Seattle Museum of Pop Culture?

Institutions of education, entertainment and media are being weaponized to create environments where children, without the consent or knowledge of parents, are groomed to accept or become participants in a system of pedophilia and sexual perversion.

An article at The Federalist showed from the American Bar Association the definitions for those who groom children for their predatory behavior. Listed among the many behaviors that can be sexually arousing to adults preying on children was “discussing sexually explicit information under the guise of education” (Kylie Zempel, “Weirdos Who Want to Sexualize Your Children Should Absolutely Be Stigmatized As Groomers,” April 7, 2022)

Yes, this is all unpleasant and shocking. You may think this out of place in a magazine devoted to preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. Sadly, it is not out of place. It is in line with every prophet of God

who cried out about moral corruption in ancient Israel and Judah. People of those nations went as far as to sacrifice their children in fire to a pagan god named Molech. Is not sacrificing our children's lives and minds to demonic perversion today in line with that?

If you think God doesn't see or care, remember that He cauterized the place of ancient Sodom on the earth with blazing fire from the sky (see our January-February 2022 issue for more about this event). Mankind had become so corrupt and evil in Noah's day that only the eight people of Noah's family were spared when God literally washed away the evil of that world. Should we think our evil age will escape judgment?

The new sexual revolution involves driving a wedge between parents and children, breaking down the natural order of the family. Those fomenting it are intent on teaching children sinful ideas on sexuality and morality that are starkly opposed to what the Bible teaches.

Such indoctrination used to begin in universities where hard-working parents would send their sons and daughters only to find them returning home filled with ideas based on critical race theory, immorality and an anti-god agenda. Now this teaching has crept into the very earliest classrooms, starting with children in *pre-kindergarten*. Hence the need for laws like the one recently passed in Florida. Of course, that is not nearly enough to turn the tide—especially when schools deliberately keep parents in the dark about what their children are being taught.

What can you do?

You can take steps to protect your family from this pervasive evil culture. And make no mistake, *it is evil*.

First, realize this is happening in the public-school systems where your children may attend. Teachers today must conform to curricula shaped by “experts”—with false ideologies about critical race theory, inclusiveness and social justice shaping what is taught about history, language and even science and math in some cases. The training of teachers today shapes their minds to accept and promote lifestyles quite different from what you find proper and would teach your children.

You can get more involved at your children's schools to register opposition to such ideas being injected into the curriculum. You can also be more proactive with your children about the ideas they hear at school, whether from teachers or friends. *Do not abdicate your role as their primary teacher in life.*

If you're able, you could even homeschool your children or send them to private education promoting proper values. One benefit of the Covid school lockdowns was that many parents finally could see what their children were being taught in online classes, and many parents realized they could provide their children a much better education at home.



You should also know what is on your television set or computer from streaming services like Disney+, Netflix and others. The programming today includes both subtle and blatant messaging promoting LGBTQ+ lifestyles. These are presented as acceptable and normal. Even the basic broadcast networks have joined in, featuring more and more LGBTQ+ characters and storylines.

You and your children are being groomed to fit into a culture shaped by the new sexual revolution. This is *not* God's culture. The culture has entered our homes and lives in every manner. We must be vigilant to see this and proactive to push back and push it out.

Most importantly, you need to ground yourself in what the Bible says about sexuality, family and morality. Today's new sexual revolution is a full-on frontal attack against the family, described in the Bible as a divine union of a man and a woman with children as part of the union who are nurtured, protected and taught godly morality.

Today's families are evolving against the backdrop of this revolution. More children live in homes where two parents cohabit without the benefit of marriage. High divorce rates create huge numbers of single-parent homes without the father/mother role models children need. With children being targeted at young ages to consider changing their gender, the individual blocks of the traditional families of the future are being altered.

You can arm yourself with truth about God's design for the family. Let's look at some basic scriptures to understand this truth.

A biblical worldview

A foundational scripture is found in Matthew 19, where Jesus was tested with the question, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" (verse 3). Jesus responded: "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (verses 4-6).

This passage is important for several reasons in forming our biblical worldview on this subject. It goes to the foundation of the world and God's intent for the created order. God designed two sexes, male and female—not an infinite number of genders.

When a man and woman come together in marriage, they are joined by God. Therefore, marriage is of *divine* origin. Marriage is not a humanly devised cultural institution. I have conducted many weddings. In each one I tell the bride and groom, "Marriage is a divine institution ordained of God at creation." This anchors them and their new relationship in Scripture.

When we go back to Genesis we see the first human parents, Adam and Eve, and from them family develops. This

is the pattern that expands through all Scripture. A man and woman forming a nuclear family and having children, who grow and have their own families with children. Generation after generation follows this pattern. At the heart of each generation is the family, a father and mother and their children. This development repeats and expands. The Bible contains more about family than most realize.

Many scriptures also provide teaching about how to deal with a family that might be broken by divorce. Through what He directed Moses to write, God shows how to treat broken families and ensure continuity. Where there is a widow without a husband there is a law to protect her. When there are orphans there are built-in teachings for the community to protect and provide for them.

The well-known story of Ruth contains details showing how this works. Ruth, who was a widow, and her mother-in-law Naomi were provided for within Bethlehem by laws meant to preserve a family name and property. At the heart of the marriage of Ruth to Boaz are laws meant to preserve the order, peace and security of the nuclear family structure to which Christ spoke.

Indeed, God Himself promises to fill the brokenness if we turn to Him: "A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation" (Psalm 68:5).

In the New Testament the basic covenantal duty of marriage and family is reaffirmed in the Gospels and the teaching of the apostle Paul. The family is at the heart of the gospel message. In Ephesians we have a passage that centers on the duties of husband and wife. It is worth quoting its entirety for the accurate view it gives us about how this fundamental union of the family works and what it pictures on the spiritual level. Let us look closely to see:

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no



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one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Ephesians 5:22-23).

A man and woman bound in the loving, divine union of marriage is one of the most beautiful parts of human life. Giving birth to children and bringing them up to understand love, to come to know God, and to have respect for their bodies as instruments of godly conduct, embraces the whole purpose of human life. The family is a pattern of the divine relationship between God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We come to understand the destiny of human life as part of Their family when we examine the scriptural teaching of marriage and family. We are to be spiritually married to Christ, with all of us the children of God the Father.

The confusion generated by the new sexual revolution is intent on breaking down the biblical pattern of marriage and family. Make no mistake, *it is a satanic lie that is working.*

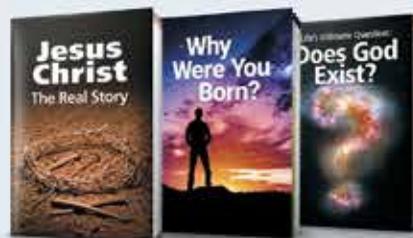
We are taught in Scripture to love one another and preach a gospel message of hope and reconciliation. Christ died for every sinner, and everyone will have opportunity for repentance and to know the love of God. But in preaching and teaching this truth we cannot deny the truth of human sexuality and marriage as God intended—and what it means to corrupt it.

Nor can you ignore this truth either. We urge you to seriously consider the culture war around us. Arm yourself with truth to protect you and your loved ones! **BT**



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Alternative Lifestyles: Are They Really Harmless?

Hollywood, government, politicians, academia, the mainstream media, corporate America and even the U.S. military are pushing alternative lifestyles as normal and even admirable and desirable. What they're not telling us is the enormous toll of human suffering this brings. What is the truth?

by Mike Kelley

In the culture war battles raging across the Western world, the issues of LGBTQ and transgender “rights” have shoved and shouldered their way to center stage. As is the case with the abortion issue, some states have begun to take sides. In April, Florida governor Ron DeSantis signed legislation outlawing the teaching or discussion of transgender issues with kindergarten and elementary school children up to third grade. This action shocked LGBTQ and transgender rights advocates, but helped bring into full consciousness the growing transgender debate.

Yet lost in all the rhetoric and emotional heat is a related issue the mainstream media have largely chosen to ignore—the *danger to physical and mental health* suffered by those who practice these lifestyles.

Penalties for violating natural laws

The issue can be summed up simply: *There are real and severe penalties to be paid for violating laws of health and morality.* Though most people either don't know about or refuse to acknowledge them, natural laws exist

that lead to good health if obeyed—or sickness, disease and death if violated.

The push toward acceptance of “alternative lifestyles” has been decades in the making. Beginning in the 1960s with the growth of the “new morality,” a satanic, anti-God movement has pushed in every way possible for acceptance of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning) lifestyles.

These efforts have met with much success, especially in the United States, with acceptance of these lifestyles growing rapidly. A Gallup poll conducted in May 2015 showed 53 percent of Americans had come to believe that gay and lesbian lifestyles are morally acceptable. That view has since increased: A more recent poll from early 2022 indicates that acceptance of LGBTQ lifestyles has grown to 62 percent.

Although government and most media refuse to discuss it, it's well documented that *LGBTQ people live with much higher risks of physical and mental health problems than the general population.*

They experience higher psycho-

logical distress and higher rates of smoking and alcoholism. Lesbian and bisexual women, in particular, have been found to be prone to having multiple chronic conditions. Surveys have shown transgender people more likely to be overweight, depressed and foregoing of treatment for these and other health problems than the general population (Human Rights Campaign Foundation survey and report, July 2018).

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), an LGBTQ advocacy and lobbying organization, confirms that one in three LGBTQ people suffers from mental illness, compared with one in five heterosexual adults—a rate more than 50 percent higher. LGBTQ populations are nearly *four times* more likely to suffer clinical depression, with those who are younger being most at risk. In the survey cited above, HRC reported that 40 percent of LGBTQ youth suffered from depression most of the time, as compared to just 12 percent of the general youth population. Confusion over gender and sexual identity, along with still-considerable societal rejection,

were cited as leading causes.

As might be expected from such elevated rates of depression, suicide and suicide attempts among the LGBTQ population are very elevated, also at a rate *four times* the general population.

Setting aside higher suicide rates, several studies have documented shorter lifespans among homosexual men. A Canadian study published in the *International Journal of Epidemiology* back in 1997 noted that in urban gay areas, life expectancies of homosexual men had shrunk to about 55 years, comparable to

homosexuality and bestiality (Leviticus 18:22-23, 20:13) and against cross-dressing (Deuteronomy 22:5), New Testament writers such as the apostle Paul condemned such practices.

One such powerful passage is Romans 1, where Paul excoriates the evil and degeneracy of the pagan Roman world around him. After condemning the refusal of Roman society to even acknowledge the one true God (verses 18-21), he lashes out against its evil sexual practices: *“For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is*

sex “marriages” must be recognized in all 50 states.

Deviancy has consequences

The deviant sexual practices of the Greek and Roman worlds are well documented. Some of the most well-known of the Greek philosophers, such as Aristotle and Plato, promoted certain homosexual relationships. Alexander the Great is believed to have been bisexual. Homosexual relationships were common in ancient Rome, especially among the upper classes. Roman emperors such as Hadrian, Titus and Nero, the emperor during Paul’s time in Rome, kept young male lovers.

These societies paid a price for such practices. As reported by the National Library of Medicine, most ancient societies were plagued with sexually transmitted diseases. Language too explicit to relate here describes the various diseases that affected ancient populations from their widespread deviant sexual practices.

The Israelites had lived for centuries among the pagan Egyptians, whose culture, though in some ways one of the most advanced in the ancient world, tolerated and practiced many forms of sexual deviancy. Histories of ancient Egypt show they suffered from many of the same diseases that plague our modern society, including heart disease, cancer and many forms of sexually transmitted diseases.

It seems that mankind refuses to learn from the past. These diseases are still with us, and in many cases are on the increase.

Millions still dying from AIDS

The early 1980s were marked by the worldwide AIDS plague, as the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome proliferated among much of the world’s homosexual population, ultimately killing millions. Since that time modern drugs have somewhat abated the spread of AIDS, and the general public thinks that AIDS is no longer a major threat. But is that true?

Although seldom discussed, it is well documented that LGBTQ people live with much higher risks of physical and mental health problems than the general population.

life expectancies in the 1870s. The researchers found that in one major Canadian city, life expectancy for gay men was 8 to 20 years less than the average for all men.

Natural consequence of lawbreaking

The various alternative lifestyles involve deviation from the sexual laws our Creator set in place. God, the One who designed the human body and the processes that allow human beings to reproduce, provided mankind with a guidebook for human behavior—your Bible. In this “operation manual” He clearly spells out His rules for human sexuality, rules that center on the use of sex for human reproduction and expressing love between husband and wife.

For thousands of years mankind has rejected those laws, practicing every type of abominable sexual activity imaginable. Yet God’s laws remain inviolable, with blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, as spelled out in Deuteronomy 28.

Society cannot cleanse what God declares to be evil. In addition to the Old Testament prohibitions against

against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error . . .” (verses 26-27, emphasis added throughout).

History confirms that Roman society, as was the case with most ancient cultures, was afflicted with the same sexual sins—and sexually transmitted diseases—that plague us today.

Writing to the church at Corinth, whose membership consisted largely of formerly pagan converts, Paul instructed them regarding certain evil practices: *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites . . . will inherit the kingdom of God.”* He went on to make clear to them that they could not return to their evil ways: *“But such were some of you”* (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

The United States was founded largely on Judeo-Christian principles. Yet in 2015 the U.S. Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, ignored this national heritage, ruling that same-



Figures from the UN World Health Organization (WHO) show that 2020 began with an estimated 38 million people infected with HIV, the virus associated with AIDS. Nearly 2 million more became infected that year, and an estimated 680,000 died. Perhaps surprisingly, more than half of these were women and girls who contracted the disease from male sexual partners.

Let's put this in perspective. Since its outbreak in early 2020, worldwide attention has focused on the Covid

pandemic, which is said to have caused more than 6 million deaths worldwide as of May 2022. Yet AIDS has killed almost a third of that number since the start of 2020, and nearly 36 million—almost the population of Canada—since its onset in 1982.

Many think the development of powerful drugs has largely conquered this disease. But these drugs, which have been around for more than 35 years, have only contained and slowed the disease—not stamped it out.

The same can be said about the more traditional common STDs—syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia. In spite of the pharmaceuticals available today, a 2019 report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that *new cases of these diseases have risen for six years in a row*, reaching an all-time high that year.

Also largely unreported are the links between AIDS and Covid-19. According to the UN's World Health

Sexual Identity Issues: What to Do, How to Help

With all the ever-worsening confusion and chaos in the world today, how can we distinguish fact from fiction and good from evil? In our quest for truth regarding healthy minds and bodies and relationships, our starting point, foundation and filter should be God's "instruction book" for mankind, the Bible (see John 17:17; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10).

The Bible is in perfect harmony with science. In fact, God created science! The Bible celebrates the fact that our "marvelous" human bodies and minds are "wonderfully made" by God! (Psalm 139:14).

In His perfect wisdom, God made two versions, male and female (Genesis 1:26-27). Every chromosome in a human body is proof that the body is either male (with the XY chromosome) or female (with the XX chromosome). With surgery and drugs, body parts can be altered, but an actual sex change is impossible. Sadly and tragically, however, more and more confused people—both adults and kids—are trying to "switch genders" or are at least contemplating it!

So what can we do to further educate ourselves and learn how to help family members and friends to recognize and resist deceptions and temptations and make wise decisions?

First of all, stay close to God (obey Him, pray to Him, and listen as He speaks to us through His Word). Also please read the other enlightening and alarming articles in this issue of *Beyond Today* related to this subject. And continue to seek up-to-date factual knowledge of the ever-evolving propaganda and pressures.

Regularly and earnestly pray for yourself, your loved ones and friends, and for all those who are struggling to resist the forces of deception and evil. Occasionally fast along with your prayers. For a good understanding of Bible study, prayer, fasting and other spiritual tools, we recommend our free study guide *Tools for Spiritual Growth*.

Remember that you are not alone. God sympathizes with your stresses and He wants you to rely on Him to replace anxiety with peace of mind and even joy (see Philippians 4:4-13).

God holds parents and guardians responsible to daily teach, guide, encourage and inspire their children to understand the priceless principles of God's Word and way of life (see Deuteronomy 6). Decide when to completely shield your children from bad influences and when to explain to them how God views those influences. An ever-increasing societal disas-

ter is the widespread absence of fathers in the home. A wonderful way for a caring man to help a single mother is to spend quality time with her children.

The teenage years are a time of curiosity and confusion. Don't be shocked if one of your children indicates some level of gender confusion—after all, they're being exposed to it regularly. Listen, but present to your child factual knowledge that this confusion will pass—that your child was born a boy or girl and will be much happier if he or she accepts God's design in that. God absolutely does not want us to mutilate our bodies by trying to change our God-given gender.

Be mindful of the need to help others by sharing your well-informed understanding and convictions whenever the circumstances warrant (see 1 Peter 3:15). While we are to "hate evil" (Proverbs 8:13), we must strive to be like God who loves everyone and desires that everyone ultimately be saved (John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). With everyone, be respectful, kind, compassionate and patient (see Colossian 4:5-6; 1 Peter 3:15).

Be courageous and encourage your loved ones to be brave. Courage is an essential and priceless virtue, but sadly it is all too rare. It takes courage to swim upstream, to resist public pressure and peer pressure and to stand up for what is right (see Joshua 1:5-9).

Learn about local groups and organizations that can support you or that you can support and assist. A team effort is often more effective.

Beware of "higher education," as most colleges are very expensive and many are more focused on "woke" indoctrination than true education. Many careers today don't require four-year degrees from such institutions, though some still do. Learning a skilled trade can be more financially rewarding than a university degree. A person can remain properly grounded in an academic setting, but it takes awareness and diligence.

Thoroughly check out any school you are considering for your children. Many public and private high schools and grade schools teach unbiblical and even anti-biblical ideologies. Consider home-schooling your children. It's more doable than you might think. There are numerous fine organizations that offer guidance and assistance to home-schooling parents.

Lastly, if you're a female, enjoy being a female! If you're a male, enjoy being a male! More than that, celebrate the fact that God has blessed you with an ideal and wonderful mind and body!

—Don Hooser

Organization, people “living with HIV experience more severe outcomes and have higher comorbidities from Covid-19 than people not living with HIV.” In 2021 it reported that most people living with HIV lacked access to Covid vaccines, and that for the HIV-positive, the risk of dying from Covid was *double* that of the general population.

Growing gender confusion

While the acceptance of gay and lesbian lifestyles has been longer in the making, the current upsurge in gender confusion has more recently burst onto the scene. Today, children as young as seven and eight are encouraged to



question the validity of their biological sex.

Medical and psychological journals today are filled with articles and studies on *gender dysphoria*, showing how confused so many people, especially the young, are about their identities, roles in society, the social circles they want to belong in, and even their correct gender. By the time they reach puberty, many young teens are asking questions about whether they are really male or female.

Gender identity did not seem to be an issue with previous generations. But should it be any surprise this is surging in a society where masculinity is under attack, where little boys are accused of exhibiting “toxic masculinity” and told they should develop more female traits? Where little girls are discouraged from playing with dolls, wearing dresses and encouraged to adopt masculine traits?

This crisis is real, especially among children and teen-

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Who's behind the *Beyond Today* magazine and television program? Many readers have wondered who we are and how we are able to provide *Beyond Today* free to all who request it. Simply put, *Beyond Today* is provided by people—people from all

walks of life, from all over the world, as enabled by God.



These people have a common goal—to proclaim the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all the world and to teach all nations to observe what Christ commanded (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).



We are dedicated to proclaiming the same message Jesus Christ brought—the wonderful good news of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 8:1). That message truly is good news—the answer to all the problems

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agers. Children confused about whether they are male or female exhibit many mental health problems, including depression, feelings of isolation and desires for self-harm. In their mental confusion they try to dress in clothing of the opposite gender, and often avoid participation in gender-specific sports. Some face bullying and harassment from classmates. Many struggle with suicidal thoughts.

Suicide rates among transgender youth are particularly disturbing. A study reported in *Forbes* last spring showed 52 percent of all transgender young people in the United States seriously considered suicide in 2020. Across all ethnic groups, approximately 18 percent, nearly one in five, actually attempted suicide. These young people felt the rejection, isolation and loneliness brought on by their lifestyle made life simply not worth living.

Can we really change a child's sex?

If a child experiences feelings of gender confusion before puberty, the oft-prescribed solution is *puberty blockers*—drugs that stop or delay the onset of puberty traits, such as breasts in girls or deeper voices in boys. More intense measures can involve hormone therapy, even “gender reassignment surgery.”

Each year thousands of preteen and early teen girls—who don't feel like girls—undergo masculinizing hormone therapy. A doctor will administer the male hormone testosterone, which suppresses the menstrual cycle and induces wanted male physical characteristics. Psychiatrists and medical doctors who advocate such practices claim it reduces psychological and emotional distress, social functioning and quality of life.

Even more invasive is “gender reassignment surgery,” in which surgical procedures are employed to change the anatomy. Chosen by only one in four transgender or nonbinary people, it's designed to give transgender people a body that aligns with their desired gender. Surgeries can range from relatively minor plastic surgery to changing facial features to those of the opposite sex, to removal of female breasts and, in the most drastic cases, reworking of a person's genitalia to resemble that of the opposite sex.

In general, the American psychiatric and medical communities now support these procedures as supposedly beneficial to the emotional health of transgender individuals. But many medical practitioners think otherwise.

One is Dr. John McHugh, former chief psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. As quoted in the book *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*, Dr. McHugh states: “Transgendered men do not become women, nor do transgendered women become men.” Rather, they become “feminized men or masculinized women, counterfeits or imperson-

ators of the sex with which they ‘identify.’” In that lies their problematic future, because it's “not easy nor wise to live in a counterfeit sexual garb” (2018, pp. 101-102).

These altered people try to live counterfeit lives, and few are able to successfully pull it off. Sweden is one of the most transgender-friendly nations on earth, where thousands have undergone sex-reassignment surgery. Yet a 30-year study there documented “lifelong medical unrest” among the majority of those who had undergone these drastic alterations of their bodies. At 10 to 15 years after surgery the suicide rate of this group rose to 20 times that of their comparable peers.

We should ask: Are some of these measures going too far? For decades, gender researchers have known that the

Even in transgender-friendly Sweden, among those who had undergone sex-reassignment surgery, the suicide rate eventually rose to **20 times** the rate of their peers.

majority of transgender youth, anywhere from 65 to 90 percent, eventually *outgrow their gender confusion and cease to identify as transgender*. But those who bring out this fact risk the wrath of many among today's psychological and medical communities, with both of these now pledging allegiance to children's gender selection and affirming that as early in life as possible.

Government officials have even implied that parents who deny such gender-affirming care are guilty of child abuse and could end up with their children removed from their custody to provide the needed gender treatment and acceptance.

We reap what we sow

Although it's scrupulously suppressed by media and governments, the evidence is clear and overwhelming. These lifestyles may appear to be enlightened and give adherents a sense of sexual freedom. They may be supported by academia, the mainstream media, Hollywood, corporate America and, sadly, even the U.S. military.

But God labels them for what they really are—immoral, degenerate, destructive and unhealthy. Those caught up in such lifestyles usually experience lifelong misery, frustration and unhappiness that could be avoided if people would only follow what God says. 



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What Are They Teaching Your Children?

The battle for social change in the United States is increasingly taking place among vulnerable young people, especially in our public schools. And the stakes couldn't be any higher.

by Lewis VanAusdle

I was up before sunrise getting ready for my day. Of course, at the age of seven that mostly involved watching cartoons and making myself breakfast.

That early in the morning, I tried my best to be quiet since no one else was awake yet and for some reason my older sister didn't like to be woken up before she had to be.

We knew that by a certain time we had to be out the door, heading up the gravel road to the corner where the bus picked us up. If we were late my mother would most likely have to drive us to school, so we were sure to stick to our schedule. My parents sent my siblings and me off to school every day, trusting our teachers to give us a basic education.

When children walk through the doors of a school, parents have certain expectations. They trust that the teachers, who have gone to school specifically to learn to educate young minds, will instruct students in the fundamentals they'll need to successfully complete their education and one day find a career.

Although that concept of educating the youth in the fundamentals of knowledge is still touted as the primary goal of public education, it's increasingly evident that a major secondary goal is coming to the forefront of the curriculum in many countries.



vidual is irrelevant (even though it's literally embedded in *every single cell* of his or her body) and that everyone should choose their own gender, sex and sexuality based on their own perceptions and feelings. The proponents further maintain that "gender stereotypes" of male and female have led to oppression and discrimination and that therefore traditional ideas about gender, sex and sexual orientation must be abolished.

"Gender Theory" holds that biological sex is irrelevant. Gender, sex and sexuality are choices based on personal perception.

Reading, writing and "Gender Theory"

On top of attempting to educate the next generation in history, literature, science and mathematics, the U.S. public education system has begun incorporating the morals, values, theories and philosophies of public opinion and popular culture into the everyday education of children. Nowhere is this push—which has been subtly building through the years—more evident than in the incorporation and teaching of ideas such as "Gender Theory" or "Critical Gender Theory."

Proponents of this ideology argue that the biological sex of an indi-

For several decades such ideological discussions have largely been confined to academic circles. But in recent years these theories have been slowly incorporated into the public school curricula of younger and younger students—even being injected into areas of study that are completely unrelated.

The pushing of these philosophies is intended to influence the moral and ethical values of young children regardless of what their parents value and believe. Essentially, the role of instilling guiding beliefs and values in children is being removed from the parents and given to school districts, administrators and educators.



SIECUS, the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, is a major national provider of sex education materials. Its website, with the tagline “Sex Ed for Social Change,” boasts: “Sex education has the power to spark large-scale social change . . . Sex ed . . . connects and addresses a variety of social issues. Sex ed sits at the nexus of many social justice movements—from LGBTQ rights and reproductive justice to the #MeToo movement . . .”

As the purveyors of this material used in public schools across multiple subjects admit, the intention behind it is “to spark large-scale social change” rather than just to educate children.

Needed learning suffering amid brainwashing

According to a survey done by *U.S. News & World Report*, in 2021 the United States ranked number one in education based on a global survey that weighed “having a well-developed public education system, whether people would consider attending university there and if that country provides a top-quality education.”

And yet it is easy to find news stories about school districts with high percentages of high school students testing at elementary school levels in subjects such as math and reading. Reports regularly emerge of students graduating from high school who not only cannot read at grade level, but *cannot even read their diplomas*. Recently the Program for International Student Assessment ranked the United States 25th in the world (out of 77 countries) in average scores for math, science and reading—in spite of spending \$14,455 per pupil per year.

It seems, at least in part, that academics are pushed aside for the sake of social agendas. The methods being used to promote such ideas (i.e., social media, entertainment, school curricula, etc.) are having an effect on the youth of the country. According to a 2021 Barna study, a shocking 30



percent of Millennials (born between 1984 and 2002) in the United States identify as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning). The number is 39 percent among Gen Z (those between ages 18 and 24). The numbers among Millennials who consider themselves to be Christian are lower, but not significantly so.

Parents’ responsibility for properly teaching their children

The role of parents and family in the education and moral instruction of America’s youth is being degraded. Children are being taught from a very early age that they can choose their own sex, gender, and sexual orientation without their parents having any knowledge of or input into the decision. The God-given family structure, which includes the vital role of parents in the education of their own children, is being dismantled and replaced with educators attempting to instill values contrary to the Word of God.

Notice Jesus Christ’s words in Luke 12:53: “Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against

mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” These kinds of family dynamics can happen when there is strong disagreement about fundamental beliefs and values.

Jesus said that members of the same household would be divided over their commitment to following Him in their lives. It’s beyond the proper mandate of the educational system to teach children a set of values contrary to that of their parents. To go as far as hiding the dynamics of a child’s mental, emotional and spiritual struggles from his or her parents further promotes disunity and distrust between parent and child.

Even more dangerous than that is the pushing aside of the role of God and His Word as the guide for how mankind should live. What does the Bible say about who is responsible for the education of the next generation?

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the

training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1-4).

Having a public education system isn't in itself inherently dangerous, and not all teachers, administrators and districts have hidden agendas they are trying to force on unsuspecting children and their parents. However, parents should pay attention to what their children are being taught and do their best to be proactive in the education of their own family.

While their children are under their care as they grow, parents have the direct responsibility to teach them according to the Word of God. This

baptized, my pastor then laying his hands on my head and praying that God would give me His Holy Spirit.

I survived the public education system without becoming indoctrinated into a false way of life. I wasn't swayed by popular opinion. I've always considered myself to have been sheltered by God while being allowed the freedom to choose the way I wanted to live. I was also blessed to have been brought up by parents who were themselves committed to God.

In the time since I finished school, and even since the time I worked in a public school, the pressures to broadly

His Father just before His crucifixion about His followers, said: “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth” (John 17:15-19).

As we've seen, parents have the obligation to bring up their children “in the training and admonition of the Lord.” We must do our best to prepare our children by teaching them from the Word of God, by having our own conversations with them about what they might come across as part of their education in school, by being an example of what is right, and by helping our children in their struggles when those come.

We also must pray that, when the time comes for them to decide, they also choose to embrace the truth of God rather than the deception pushed by the world. **BT**

In their own words, education in public schools is being used “to spark large-scale social change” rather than just to educate children.

is universal for all Christian families regardless of which country they live in or what culture they come from. The laws of God are for everyone and essential to facing the deceptions of the “god of this age” who has deceived the whole world (see 2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 12:9).

Dealing with ideological indoctrination

Eventually I made my way through elementary school and middle school and graduated from high school. I went on to attend and graduate from two public universities. In the midst of my education I made the decision to formally make a commitment to following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. I repented of my sins and was

accept and embrace the plummeting values of society have greatly increased. With rising ideological indoctrination, the children and young adults who want to follow God's way of life will likely not have it so easy.

They may be faced with criticism, ridicule and disdain over what they believe. Other people may try to convince them that the truth of God and what their parents have taught them are out of date or are “judgmental” or “hateful” of the practices and beliefs of others. We cannot perpetually shelter our children from the world, which means they will be exposed to these lies. So they will need to learn to navigate through some very challenging moral arguments and difficult situations.

Jesus Himself, when He prayed to

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What does the Bible tell us about gender, marriage, sex and family? These, properly delineated, are foundational to civilized and orderly society. You need to understand God's design and purpose in them! Download or request your free copy of *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*.

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Transtrenders: a harmful spreading social contagion

A mom writing on Substack's "Parents with Inconvenient Truths about Trans" states: "My teenage daughter has decided that she is 'trans.' So have all her friends. Not some of them. Not most of them. Every. Single. One. She had never heard of trans, and had no signs of gender dysphoria, until she was moved to a new, cool trans-friendly school by her unsuspecting, politically liberal parents. There she met a group of geeky (or dare I say nerdy?), smart, slightly (but not very) gender nonconforming, artsy kids. As I understand it, they all discovered 'trans' together. The old 'cis' friends were swiftly discarded in favour of this exciting new peer group" ("Trans: A Dangerous Youth Subculture," April 11, 2022).

How can a group of teens all become trans at the same time, especially when actual

gender dysphoria is extremely rare? As she goes on to say, it's a social contagion, with everyone imitating each other to fit in, the new subculture providing a sense of identity and



belonging. They can bond together in their "victimhood" while they are increasingly celebrated as brave and special. Various clinicians and psychologists have sounded an alarm over the

viral spread of this identity.

A Canadian sex neuroscientist argues that "these sharply increasing numbers are the result of the social capital gained nowadays from identifying as something other than a heterosexual woman or man . . . This is in tandem with educators' growing obsession with teaching sexual and gender identity curriculum to students at as young of an age as possible, including those in kindergarten" (Debra Soh, "Doubling of LGBT-Identifying Americans Is Due to Trendiness," *Washington Examiner*, Feb. 25, 2022).

While some of these "transtrenders" may yet transition out, psychological harm is being done, and some may be persuaded into hormone drugs and physical alteration with permanent effects. Let us all pray for the healing of the minds of today's confused generation.

Feminist author decries fruits of sexual revolution

In a recent series of articles in Britain's *Daily Mail* excerpted from her new book *The Case Against the Sexual Revolution*, feminist author Louise Perry argues that the sexual revolution has been a disaster for women:

"For younger women in particular, today's sexual culture is destructive, divorcing love and commitment from sex and favoring one-night stands, casual 'hook-ups' and 'friends with benefits' arrangements. Worse still, it pressures them into promiscuity, bombards them with violent pornography and tells them to enjoy being humiliated and assaulted in bed . . . Once you permit the idea that people can be product, everything is corroded . . .

"The sexual revolution that began in the 1960s certainly freed women from the burdens of chastity and motherhood . . . But it also brought the triumph of the playboy, pretending they were liberating women when in truth it was their own libidos and depravities they were liberating" ("Why the sexual revolution has been a disaster for women today—but a gift for men," May 27, 2022).

Yet it has also been terribly corrupting and harmful to men as well—consigning many to different varieties of trouble and heartache.

In the next extract she takes on other feminists who deride marriage. Per the article

teaser: "Yes, it's hard work, she says, and most don't live up to a romantic ideal, but it still offers the best protection possible for a woman and her children" ("Get married and do your best to stay married," May 28).

Perry makes many valuable observations here, and what she says is well worth reading—though she does not, unfortunately, make it all the way to the biblical counsel of avoiding sex outside of marriage altogether.

She does point out that "while the monogamous marriage model may be unusual, it is also spectacularly successful. When monogamy is imposed on a society it tends to become richer and more stable, with lower rates of both child abuse and domestic violence.

"Birth rates and crime rates both fall, which encourages economic development, and wealthy men, denied the opportunity to devote their resources to acquiring more wives [in polygamous society], instead invest in property, businesses, employees and other productive endeavours.

"A monogamous marriage system is successful in part because it pushes men away from cad mode, particularly when pre-marital sex is also prohibited. If a man wants to have sex in a way that's socially acceptable, he has to make himself marriageable. That means

holding down a good job and setting up a household suitable for the raising of children. In other words, he has to tame himself. Fatherhood then has a further taming effect, even at the biochemical level . . . A society of tamed men is a better society to live in—for men, for women and for children.

"The monogamous marriage model is also the best solution yet discovered to the problems presented by child-rearing . . . Such a model allows mothers and children to be physically together and at the same time financially supported . . .

"Which is why—as a feminist—the most important piece of advice I can offer to the young women of today is this: get married and do your best to stay married. Particularly if you have children . . . These directives are hard to follow because we no longer live in a culture that incentivises perseverance in marriage. But it is still possible for individuals to go against the grain and do the harder, less-fashionable thing."

For more perspective on the sexual revolution and to see what God has to say on these matters, be sure to read the other articles in this issue of *Beyond Today* and our free study guide *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*.

Another horrific school shooting

On May 24, 2022, we saw another terrible school shooting, this one in Uvalde, Texas, when an 18-year-old crazed gunman sprayed elementary school classrooms with bullets, leaving 19 children and two teachers dead. There is no answer anyone can give to assuage the deep hurt families have suffered with this kind of senseless loss. Our hearts go out to them all.

In considering such incidents we are struck with how things have changed in America over the past few decades. These kind of events remain relatively rare, and the odds of being killed



this way very low, but there was a time when such an event was unthinkable. Now it's sadly not.

Many have an unshakable sense that something is terribly wrong with our society, as it drifts farther away from God. But the needed changes are a leap too far. A similar sense no doubt gripped ancient Israel. The people then were both fearful and complacent about the direction of the nation. And horribly, they were willingly misled to forsake the laws of God, their leaders leading them to destruction.

Likewise, in the United States and the Western world today we are seeing a great betrayal of our people more than at any time in our history. And we need to brace ourselves for more and more bad news.

What causes a young man to have such bitterness and rage that he would lash out to shoot his grandmother and then gun down all of those children and the teachers? We should realize that the majority of people in this world would

not be willing to hear it.

The answer isn't getting rid of all the guns, as some suggest. Apparently, this youth was very troubled—abusing animals, threatening others and making cuts on his face. Beyond his family traumas, there was likely demonic influence. And the wayward society no doubt helped to shape the way he was.

The fact is, while mankind has achieved amazing technological advances in this age, our spiritual development is abysmal, our problems being spiritual in nature.

Many of our political leaders, educators, and ecclesiastical leaders have no real spiritual understanding, and many seem openly proud to stand with those who reject God's laws and commandments (see Isaiah 3:9). They have willingly participated in the destruction of the family and of the roles of men and women in marriage. Many of them willingly support the perversion of the institution of marriage and the murder of the unborn in abortion.

When we obey God there is hope and happiness, and not the horrible despair so many suffer. The way of life most people live produces brokenness and ungodly character. Thankfully, there is great hope for everyone in God's plan, and it involves a transformation of character (see Romans 12:2).

The work of the Church is to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God as a witness and to warn this world of the destructive direction of the way of life they are living. After we have done this, the end will come (Matthew 24:14; 7:13-14).

Let us all pray: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Of that coming time, God tells us, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). To better understand why God allows the world to continue on its painful course for now, download or request our free study guide *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*

Overestimating U.S. population subgroups

Polling data from YouGov (Jan. 14-20, 2022) reveals that Americans seriously miscalculate the size of demographic groups within the United States—overestimating minority population figures and underestimating the majority. This is likely due to media portrayal of society, helping to drive certain narratives and agendas. Some of the estimates follow, along with true proportions drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. No doubt this happens in other countries as well.

- Native American: estimated 27%; actual 1%
- Jewish: estimated 30%; actual 2%
- Black: estimated 41%; actual 12%
- Hispanic: estimated 39%; actual 17%
- Asian: estimated 29%; actual 6%
- White: estimated 59%; actual 64%
- Household income over \$500,000: estimated 26%; actual 1%
- Left-handed: estimated 34%; actual 11%
- Vegan or vegetarian: estimated 30%; actual 5%
- Transgender: estimated 21%; actual 0.6%
- Gay or lesbian: estimated 30%; actual 3%
- Bisexual: estimated 29%; actual 4%
- Atheist: estimated 33%; actual 3%
- Muslim: estimated 27%; actual 1%
- Christian: estimated 58%; actual 70%
- Live in New York City: estimated 30%; actual 3%
- Live in California: estimated 32%; actual 12%

Source: "From millionaires to Muslims, small subgroups of the population seem much larger to many Americans" (YouGov.com, March 15, 2022).

How can you make sense of the news?

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Sex, Marriage and Family: The Spiritual Significance

God created human beings male and female so that we might enjoy a loving sexual relationship in marriage leading to families. But what is the spiritual significance and purpose God has in mind?

The hope for a happy, fulfilling marriage to the person we most deeply love is one of the most entrenched desires of men and women. Happily sharing our hopes, dreams, fortune and the breadth of life's experiences in the most intimate way is one of the most fulfilling endeavors of all.

A good marriage further blessed with happy, respectful, successful children who provide the same kind of grandchildren is the crowning touch of a good life. And what a life this is! We'd all love to have this story be *our* story. Everyone wants the results. But not everyone wants to live the life that produces them.

From the beginning God revealed that marriage was a special union between a man and woman because, to put it bluntly, that was the way to have children. Sexual intercourse between a male and female united in marriage produced children within that family. Yet the benefits of traditional marriage extend beyond reproduction.

Studies continue to show that men and women generally live longer and happier lives when they are married to someone of the opposite sex. In these traditional unions, children likewise generally grow up more socially adept and financially successful than children who grow up in alternative arrangements.

There is definitely a strong social case to be made for traditional monogamous marriage between one man and one woman. There is an incontrovertible biblical case for

traditional unions. Experience has shown time and again that these biblical guidelines for relationships and parenting are the ones that work best.

Are there any rules?

However, many people aren't sure whether God really exists or whether His instructions are relevant today. Some believe that human beings came into existence by evolutionary forces, following blind natural selection and the survival of the fittest. This theory postulates that people are simply higher-level animals and that there are no spiritual laws to guide human conduct, no requirement that sexual relations be solely within marriage.

Experimenting from this perspective, or because they simply didn't want to follow the biblical instructions, men and women through the ages have tried many different sexual relationships, including premarital sex, adultery, polygamy (one man with multiple wives), polyandry (one woman with multiple husbands), homosexuality and group marriages.

Today premarital sex, adultery and homosexual relationships have all gained greater acceptance—challenging and undermining traditional marriage. The assumption among many, including governments and judges legislating acceptance of all views and people regardless of their practices and lifestyles, is that all choices are equal—so people can do whatever they want. Sadly, this approach is presumed to be morally superior to all others.

Were we designed for marriage and family?

Yet with all the sexual experimentation, almost everyone wants the same good life, including children. It seems as though people were psychologically wired to desire marriage and family.

But why are we like this? Is it possible that we were designed this way from the beginning by a Creator? What would have happened to the human race had men and women not been created with a desire for sexual activity that would ensure procreation, a longing for intimacy both emotionally and physically with another person and a desire for offspring?

Was it pure chance that things worked out this way? For those who have eyes to see, these inborn traits are simply additional indicators among many that all point to the inescapable fact that humanity was designed and crafted by God. The Bible explains that we were made in God's own image (Genesis 1:27)—meaning in our general appearance as well as with minds to think.

An important principle is also revealed here that is continued in marriage and family—that human life is patterned after spiritual, nonphysical, unseen realities. Just as human beings were made in the image of God, marriage and family are patterned after spiritual concepts.

God, the Designer of sex, marriage and family

To understand the spiritual significance of sex, marriage and family,



To understand the spiritual significance of sex, marriage and family, we must turn to our Creator, to learn what He had in mind in making us.

we must turn to God, our Creator, to learn what He had in mind in making the human race.

While we could go to the first book of the Bible, Genesis, to learn about marriage and *how* God created the first human beings, we must go to other sections of God’s Word to learn *why* He created us as we are.

When we turn to these passages, we learn of a plan that God had not only for Adam and Eve, the first human beings, but for all of humanity—every person who has lived or will yet live. We also find that human marriage and family reflect this plan, which was determined before the foundation of the world.

Shortly after Jesus Christ came to earth and lived as God in the flesh, one of His followers, the apostle John, wrote a book to prove to his contemporaries and humanity today that Jesus was indeed God.

In this work, John says of Jesus: “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to *become children of God*, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:10-12, emphasis added throughout).

The phrase “*children of God*” tells

us that *God is creating His own family*. Additional passages reveal this same astounding truth. In Hebrews 2:10 we find that Jesus was and continues to be involved in God’s plan and purpose of “*bringing many sons to glory*.”

The apostle Paul also wrote of “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole *family* in heaven and earth is named” (Ephesians 3:14-15).

God designed us to be part of His family

Paul also encouraged God’s people at Corinth with His specific promise: “Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, and *you shall be My sons and daughters*, says the Lord Almighty’” (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

Just as human families have children born to them who are part of their families, God initially created Adam and Eve and their progeny—all of us—to *become part of His family*. Physical families are thus a type of *God’s own spiritual family*.

Continuing this theme, Revelation 21:7 adds, “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and *he shall be My son*.” These scriptures and others tell us that God’s plan from the beginning was

to first create people as temporary flesh and blood beings, subject to death, and then give us the opportunity to live forever as spirit beings in His eternal family. If we will respond to God in love and obedience, God offers us this great promise.

God eventually is going to make this offer to become part of His family to every human being. Explaining God’s love for all His children, another of Christ’s followers, the apostle Peter, wrote: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, *not willing that any should perish* but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). God doesn’t want anyone to lose out on this opportunity of a lifetime—the opportunity for an eternal lifetime!

This is God’s overall, transcendent purpose for creating humanity—to offer us the opportunity to become part of His eternal family, His own children. If we will repent and be baptized, we can receive this marvelous gift. When baptized, we receive God’s Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)—something that sets us apart as His children. Paul, in Romans 8:14, explains that “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are *sons of God*.”

Becoming children of the Father

Of course, when we respond to God’s command to repent and be baptized, we still live as physical human beings, not yet changed into spirit. To reassure newly baptized Christians, Paul likened this process of becoming children of God to the manner in the Roman world of his day by which one came to receive all the rights and privileges as a son and heir within a family.

In verse 15 Paul continues, “The Spirit you have received is not a spirit of slavery leading you back into a life of fear, but a Spirit that makes us sons, enabling us to cry ‘Abba! Father!’” (New English Bible). In addition to the promise of becoming God’s sons, this verse shows that our



relationship to God can become very close and personal.

Paul goes on to explain in verse 17 that “since we are his children, we will share his treasures—for everything God gives to his Son, Christ, is ours, too” (New Living Translation 1996).

In the Roman world of Paul’s day, a father would declare his son to be fully his son and heir when the son reached a certain age of maturity in young adulthood. Before that declaration, the son was held in a very inferior position to his father. But when this coming of age was declared, the son would be legally invested with all the rights, powers and privileges of a son and heir of his father.

Paul refers to this process in Romans 8 (and Galatians 4, where he uses very similar language to make the same point). The process wasn’t complete until the son reached this coming of age and received full rights and privileges.

Continuing this theme, Paul wrote in verse 23: “And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as his children, including the new bodies he has promised us” (NLT 1996).

Paul explains that our status now is like that of children who haven’t reached that point of having all the full rights of sonship yet—though we will attain that status in the resurrection to immortality at Christ’s return (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

God’s inspiration of Paul to use this analogy underscores the reality and absolute guarantee God makes that we can indeed become His children, ultimately living forever in His family. God’s promise of full rights of sonship will be bestowed at the resurrection or change from mortality to immortality, at which time we will be invested with all the powers and privileges of a divine son.

Echoing these same thoughts, John writes in 1 John 3:1-3: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called *children of God*! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are *children of God*; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, *we shall be like Him*, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself.”

The astounding truth revealed in this verse is that we, like Christ, will have life eternal in unimaginable power and glory! To get a glimpse of what our glorified appearance will be like, read Revelation 1:12-16, where Christ’s glorified appearance is described. (To learn more about what it means to purify oneself to become a child of God, request our free study guides *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* and *What You Need to Know About Baptism*.)

Simply put, God’s plan for humanity is a *family* plan. Now what about marriage?

The spiritual implication of marriage

Similar to the way a human family reflects God’s plan to have a family, human marriage also reflects a *spiritual* relationship. Human marriage is modeled after the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church.

Notice how Paul explains this concept. After discussing the responsibilities of husbands and wives and the relationship between them, Paul says: “This is a great mystery, *but I speak concerning Christ and the church*. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Ephesians 5:32-33).

What a beautiful example the relationship between Christ and the Church is! Paul explains that Christ loved the Church so much that He gave His life for her (verse 25). How could those of us in the Church ever doubt His love for us? How could we not respond to the things He asks us to do?

The fact that marriage between a man and a woman is a type of the relationship between Christ and the Church is further understood through a vision Jesus Christ revealed to John recorded in the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation.

After Jesus returns to take over the kingdoms of this earth and establish the Kingdom of God, He reveals that He is going to be involved in a very special marriage.

Here is how John recorded the vision: “‘Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.’ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”’” (Revelation 19:7-9).

The faithful saints who have obediently followed Jesus Christ will collectively become the Bride of Christ. Their righteous behavior is likened to fine, costly linen.

A happy human marriage gives us insight into a greater marriage—one that will truly last forever because both parties will be immortal spirit. Similar and closely related to family, marriage also gives us a window of insight into God’s love and plan for humanity. Because human marriages are patterned after this spiritual relationship, they can help us comprehend this present and future God-plane relationship! **BT**



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God's Instruction Manual for Sex and Marriage

God made us male and female and gave mankind the institution of marriage. He also gave us an instruction manual for sex and marriage so that these might work as He designed to fulfill His purpose.

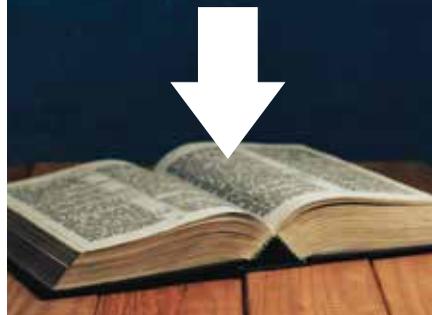
When we buy a new appliance or tool, it's common to see on the outside of the box: "Some assembly required. Instructions inside." Of course, many of us don't bother with the instructions. We just put together the item as best we can. Sometimes that works, but if it doesn't, we have to go back and read the directions to find out what we did wrong. As the old saying goes, "When all else fails, read the instructions."

When it comes to sex and marriage, many have used the same approach. They do it without bothering to read the instructions. Sadly, the result is that many relationships and marriages aren't working. Husbands and wives find they can't live together in peace. Because couples don't read or heed the instructions, marriages are failing at abysmally high rates. The tragic result is that more and more children are being raised in single-parent homes.

We could bury ourselves in the statistics concerning the failure rates of marriages from around the world, but the overall picture would remain the same: Divorce, or the dissolution of marriage as some prefer to term it, plagues humanity in almost every nation.

Faced with these numbing reports, many are choosing to forego marriage and simply live together. Under these conditions, because there are no marriages, there are no divorces to report when couples break up. But these same broken relationships

When all else fails, read the instructions!



bring heartache to the adults and children alike—with the children especially suffering when separated from one of their biological parents. This is true no matter the age of the children when the parents split up.

Instructions for marriage

Recognizing the failure rate of so many marriages today, a logical person will examine the causes for the failures to see what might be done to save his or her relationship from a similar fate.

When we make the decision to examine the instructions, we also face the critical matter of *where to turn* for such instruction. If man is

simply an animal and there is no God, then there are no divine directions! If there are no divine directions, logically, we'd want to get the best statistical information available from research so we could make decisions based on the greatest likelihood of happiness and success.

Yet some people don't want to be told what works. Apparently, they'd rather take their chances (and poor chances they are) on their own without any guidance whatsoever. Does that make sense?

We can be grateful, however, that the Bible does provide instruction on marriage. And not only that, but the validity of this instruction is continually being backed up by research. Do you want to know what these instructions are? Will you be willing to live by the guidelines? Or are you committed to the path of least resistance and willing to suffer the sure consequences of broken laws?

We each must choose what we will do. Remember, *no* choice is also a choice—usually a poor one. So what does God say? Where can we find His directions?

Background to the first marriage

When God created human beings, He made two "models"—one male, one female. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Reflecting on His creation, including making us male and female, Genesis 1:31 says, "Then God saw everything



that He had made, and indeed *it was very good.*”

Sexuality in human beings was not designed to just be okay; it was designed to be extremely good! And it’s great and wonderful when we use this special gift of God in the way He intended. Sadly, many people do not respect their sexuality (or others’) as they should. Through immoral sexual behavior they belittle what God intended to be a very special experience.

The account of the first marriage is recorded in Genesis 2. Here we read that God initially created Adam as the only human being. In mankind’s earliest beginning, there was no Eve to be found: “But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him” (verse 20). At this time Adam was single, isolated, the only human being anywhere.

The Bible reveals that something was wrong with this scene. After God created Adam, He “put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it” (verse 15). So Adam had a responsibility. Adam explored and learned all about the world—animals, plants, the beautiful and intricate variations of God’s creation. Not only was he learning, but God gave him the privilege of naming all the birds and animals and other living creatures (verse 19).

Whether Adam realized it or not, God knew something about him was incomplete. “And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him’” (verse 18). Let’s think for a moment about why it was not good for Adam to be alone. He, of all the physical living creation, was without a helper on his own level (verse 20).

Imagine how Adam must have felt when he observed that animals had their mates. Through his observations of the animal kingdom, in its maleness and femaleness, he was reminded that he was the lone human being on the planet. He was a

male with no corresponding female.

God creates Eve

Single people often find themselves in lonely circumstances. They want friendships and feel the isolation of being alone. Because of situations all too common in our world, even married people can experience loneliness. God recognized that Adam had a problem and provided him the



A marriage exhibiting a godly bond is characterized by two people who are willing to listen to each other and talk about their differences in a spirit of humility.

perfect solution—a woman to be his wife. God knew just how to form the woman.

Scripture emphasizes another aspect of the first marital relationship. Because God made Eve from Adam’s side, an undeniable bond existed between Adam and Eve. This point was undoubtedly significant to Adam. His first recorded words regarding Eve were, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman [Hebrew *ishah*] because she was taken out of Man [Hebrew *ish*]” (verse 23). Adam recognized his link to this wondrous creature named Eve. She was part of him, and he was part of her.

The first marriage

This account does not tell us what

Adam and Eve were thinking or how they felt while they got to know each other. But in the next two verses we learn the outline of marriage as established by God.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (verses 24-25). Let’s

examine this outline more closely.

Leave one’s father and mother

An important aspect of marriage is leaving “father and mother,” as God instructed, to establish a new family unit. Adam and Eve did not have physical parents to leave, but future generations would need to apply this instruction. Honoring parents and seeking their advice is advisable, but newlyweds need to remember that they are a new family unit. Just because things were done a particular way in your family does not mean your spouse will want to do things the same way.

Two people must learn to work together in marriage, showing respect and love to each other. Such an approach follows the biblical

principles of wives submitting to their husbands and husbands loving and honoring their wives (Ephesians 5:22, 25; 1 Peter 3:1, 7). Establishing family guidelines and traditions in an atmosphere of love and respect gives the newly married man and woman a foundation on which to build their lives.

Be joined together

Another principle from Genesis 2:24 is that a husband should be “joined” to his wife. Today we would say he should *bond* with her. Other than God, *she should be his highest commitment*. A man should build this special, close relationship with his wife. The idea of clinging to multiple partners is foreign to this account.

Even though God allowed the practice of polygamy to go on during the Old Testament period, with some biblical characters having multiple wives at the same time, such arrangements were not God’s intent from the beginning. In listing the qualifications of bishops, or overseers, of the Church, 1 Timothy 3:2 makes it clear that such a man must follow God’s instructions and “be blameless, the husband of one wife.”

How can husbands and wives “join” with each other and make their relationships loving and lasting? Simple actions like hugs, kisses and pledges of love build and strengthen the bond God intended for marital partners. When husbands and wives constantly work at building their relationship, they find it easier to agree on practical options in settling their family disagreements.

Some people think love is a magical, mysterious emotion that two people fall into or out of for no apparent reason. The truth is different: Loving relationships must be *nurtured*. They require *effort*. Love is care and consideration directed toward another person, not just an ethereal emotion over which we have no control.

However, the work involved in

building and preserving the marital bond is well worth the time and effort. Husbands and wives who are committed to this process often see their marriage partner as their best friend. This is simply another way of describing the kind of bond God desires for every marriage.

A marriage exhibiting this godly bond is characterized by two people who are willing to listen to each other and talk about their differences or problems in a spirit of humility. If they cannot solve their problems on their own, they seek counsel because they value their relationship and don’t want to lose it.

Studies confirm that measuring the level of conflict in a relationship can accurately predict whether a marriage will survive. People whose marriages are failing often say they have lost the desire for a special relationship with their mate.

Some marriage partners have rekindled this desire by asking God for a loving, humble attitude and doing things to show love to their mate, even when they don’t feel like it. Many married people have found that the feelings they long for *return* when they start doing the things that bind two people together.

Become one flesh

The next principle from Genesis 2 says that a husband and wife shall become one flesh; that is, enjoy an intimate sexual relationship with one another (verse 24; compare 1 Corinthians 6:16).

The steps that lead to a loving sexual relationship are vital to a successful marriage. While God wants those planning to marry to develop a deep and lasting friendship, He also teaches that we should not indulge in sex until after the marriage ceremony. Regrettably, many people today fail to follow God’s instructions in this matter. “Dating” someone now has often come to mean having a sexual relationship with that person.

In Western societies the majority

of young adults of both sexes engage in sexual intercourse before marriage. Many couples believe they should do this before marriage to know whether they are “sexually compatible,” thinking this will improve the odds of their marriage succeeding. However, studies have conclusively shown that when people live together and have sex before marriage, this action actually *increases* the likelihood that when they do get married, their marriage will fail.

God intended sex to be part of the marriage relationship and that it not take place outside of marriage. Only in the married state does God permit sexual relations (Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 18; 7:2-5). His instructions for us to refrain from any kind of sexual activity before or outside of marriage are safeguards for the marriage relationship.

God intended sex to be an intimate experience that will bind a husband and wife together. In marriage it certainly can, and following these instructions helps marriages survive and flourish.

But disregarding God’s instruction carries a price. Engaging in sex with multiple partners before marriage dramatically lessens one’s ability to form that kind of close and lasting bond after marriage. Since so many men and women engage in sex before marriage, it’s no wonder so many find it difficult to build and maintain that kind of closeness after marriage.

The way to reverse the trend of broken marriages and safeguard one’s own relationship is simple: Accept and practice God’s instruction to restrict sex to marriage. Such an approach shows honor and respect for the sexuality God has given us.

In this approach, sex is not cheapened or lowered to a common animal behavior. Instead it is an honorable act reserved for the most intimate human relationship of all, entered into with the most honorable intentions.



Not ashamed

The last principle from God's first guidelines for marriage reveals that Adam and Eve were naked but not embarrassed by their nakedness (Genesis 2:25). Since they were the only two people on the planet, privacy was not an issue. Sexuality was not and is not intrinsically dirty or shameful.

Within marriage a husband and wife should feel comfortable with each other's masculinity or femininity. But revealing too much of one's body to other members of the opposite sex outside of marriage invites breaking God's commands against lust and unlawful sexual relations.

Jesus warned that "whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). Men and women alike need to control their minds and dress modestly to discourage sexual arousal and temptation outside of marriage.

Godly leadership within marriage

In Paul's explanation that marriage is modeled on the relationship that would ultimately exist between Christ and the Church, he also teaches us about leadership within the husband-wife relationship. Just as Jesus is the head of the Church, husbands are to be the leaders within their marriages: "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church . . ." (Ephesians 5:23).

The way Jesus leads the Church is the way husbands should lead their wives. Jesus was and is ". . . the Savior of the body"—the Church (same verse). He literally gave His life in love for the Church.

With this thought in mind, Paul instructed husbands in the way they should lead: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

"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" (verses 25-29).

When a leader exhibits the kind of love and commitment that Jesus showed the Church, it's easy to follow such a person. We know that this kind of leader always has our best interests at heart. Paul's teaching to husbands was that they needed to be the kind of leaders who would also be easy for their wives to follow.

Based on this expectation of husbands, Paul taught wives to "submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything" (verses 22-24).

Mutual submission in love

Not understanding the beautiful context and loving leadership these instructions are built on, some wives have refused to say they will submit to their husbands. Sometimes men and women alike have mistakenly assumed these instructions were sexist and demeaning to women. But in the context of Paul's explanation, this instruction is most respectful of both sexes and represents an important key for happy marriages.

Husbands and wives who are continually fighting each other over authority and control experience a level of conflict and misery that often leads to divorce. Husbands and wives who fully and mutually submit themselves to the pattern Paul reveals usually find happiness and peace.

When genuine love and respect prevail in a marriage, the husband and wife learn much from each other. Each brings strengths into the relationship. For example, wives often excel in relational needs. Husbands often have a strong orientation toward problem solving.

Husbands and wives who become aware early in their marriage that each brings strengths to their relationship and discuss how they can use those strengths to their mutual advantage gain the most from His instructions.

But mates who "beat each other over the head" with scriptures intended to *benefit* their relationship miss the point. Some abusive husbands, with little or no respect for their wives' feelings or contributions, will command them to submit, and some indignant wives retort that they'll submit only when their husbands start acting the way they should. The key here is that each person must do his or her part.

Each must apply the instruction given him or her. Although individuals can positively influence their mates by their unilateral actions, it is far better when both the husband and wife accept and live by God's instructions for their respective roles in marriage.

As one might expect, God's instructions for marriage have proven to be the best way to experience peace and happiness. Marriage is one of God's most wonderful gifts to mankind. It is a treasure worth working on, cherishing and sustaining. His instructions are as valid today as ever. To follow them is to make the honorable, godly choice. No shame comes from following God's instructions—only beneficial and lasting rewards! **BT**



LEARN MORE

This article is excerpted from our free study guide *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. This valuable guide will help you discover what the Bible says about marriage and family, dating, bringing up children and much more. Download or request a copy today!

BTmagazine.org/booklets

Is Homosexuality Acceptable to God?

What does the Bible say about homosexuality? “Homosexual” can be defined as a person with an ongoing same-sex attraction (SSA) instead of opposite-sex (heterosexual) attraction (OSA). Most homosexuals believe they are unable to change this orientation.

Because many homosexuals have experienced their SSA from an early age, it seems “inherent” to them—that they have always been that way. Consequently, growing numbers of people are being conditioned to accept homosexuality as a normal variation of human sexuality.

The Bible does not address the subject of homosexuality from the standpoint of sexual orientation. But it clearly has laws that address choices people make regarding sexual activity and relationships, because those are things that people can control.

God made human beings male and female, and His Word tells us that sex was designed for only male-female relationships within marriage. Because adultery, fornication (premarital sex) and homosexual activity are all outside of male-female marriage, all are violations of God’s instructions.

The Bible forbids homosexual practices in several places, including Genesis 19:1-25, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, and Judges 19:1-25. Every violation of a law of God is a sin (1 John 3:4; 5:3). All sins must be repented of for one to have a right relationship with God.

In the New Testament, Romans 1:24-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10 refer to homosexual activity in the same way. The passage in Romans condemns both male and female homosexual activity. The only two sexual options God approves of are heterosexual marriage and abstinence outside of that.

Flawed reasoning

Some homosexuals argue that God made them the way they are and that He therefore must approve of homosexuality. Such reasoning is flawed for several reasons.

First, God made all of us with free moral agency—we choose what we will think, believe and do. We are not robots incapable of making our own choices or governing our own behavior.

Second, one’s environment and childhood experiences have been proven to have a great impact on a person’s developing sexuality.

Moreover, studies of identical twins where one twin is homosexual and the other is not prove that homosexuality isn’t determined by genetic makeup. No “homosexual gene” has been found in years of searching. These factors show that SSA is developed after birth, sometimes being rooted in early childhood circumstances.

Third, regardless of any conditions that may predispose a person to homosexuality, we are all expected to make moral decisions regardless of our circumstances. God doesn’t permit us to rewrite His rules simply because our corrupted nature is inclined toward sin.

We *all* sin, having minds that are set against God and His ways (Romans 3:23; 8:7; Jeremiah 17:9). The challenge for each of us in responding to God is to repent of our sins—to change our lives, with His help, in conforming to His standards (Romans 12:1-2).

Change with God’s help

God can change the life of a person involved in homosexual behavior. In 1 Corinthians 6, the apostle Paul addresses men and women in the church at Corinth. He lists many forms of behavior—including homosexual acts—that will keep a person from being in God’s Kingdom (verses 9-10). Then Paul makes this statement: “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (verse 11, New International Version).

Paul apparently knew former active homosexuals in the church at Corinth. So the message that homosexuals can repent of a sexually active lifestyle is not new. Homosexuals have been experiencing change in lifestyle since the Bible was written. God’s Word presents the approach of hating the sin but loving the sinner and treating everyone with respect and kindness, acknowledging that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23; compare John 3:16).

What is the responsibility of one who wants to be a Christian but struggles with a deeply ingrained attraction to members of his or her own sex? That person is obligated to control his or her sexual desires in the same way that heterosexual adults must exercise self-control over their sexual desires. Recognizing that sin begins in the mind (James 1:13-15), a person

struggling with this or other sexual sins must strive to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV). All must refrain from giving in to sexual temptations—whether motivated by lust or a desire to love and be loved. All should avoid placing themselves in situations where they might be tempted to engage in sinful behavior (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Again, it is important to remember the difference between homosexual orientation or same-sex attraction and active homosexual lust and behavior. The same-sex attraction is not in itself a sin, but fantasizing about and giving in to sexual temptations are. While many people in our society today reject God’s instruction on this subject, there are many others who feel same-sex attraction who are coming out of the homosexual lifestyle to live in obedience to God’s instruction.

We understand that struggling against homosexual temptation is difficult, and can be painful. We understand that the developmental factors of homosexuality are complex and that people with homosexual orientation are also God’s children and are worthy to love and be loved.

Importance of right friendships

Our loving Creator created human beings male and female—designing man and woman specifically for intimate sexual connection in a loving marriage relationship. Sexual activity outside of this context “misses the mark” of living according to God’s intent for creating us male and female. However, God also designed us for affectionate non-erotic love between people of the same sex. (The close-knit love between David and Jonathan is a well-known biblical example of non-sexual love between two men.) As love and sex are not the same thing, a person struggling with homosexual attraction can learn to experience deep affection and love for another member of the same gender in a non-sexual way.

To make lifestyle changes, it’s very important for men with SSA to have good male friends and for women with SSA to have good female friends—all committed to live by God’s moral standards.

Several enlightening articles are posted on our ucg.org website that are dedicated to helping Christians struggling with homosexuality, addictions and other dysfunctional behaviors. One thorough article is titled “Homosexuality and Same Sex Attraction (SSA).”

Leaving Our Nets for Christ

Jesus' first disciples left their lives as fishermen to follow Jesus. This commitment would be tested and renewed—an example to all of us.

by Robin Webber

Nearly 2,000 years ago several fishermen were going about their generational heritage of casting nets into the Sea of Galilee. The rhythm of life, like the lapping of waves on the shore, was slow, steady and reassuring. Once on shore they would clean and mend their nets and hang them to dry. These nets were precious, their families' survival depending on them. Practically speaking, their nets meant everything!

But all was about to change. Jesus would enter “their turf” and declare that now was decision-making time! This dynamic moment, related in Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16 and Luke 5:1-11, offers meaningful consideration for us today about what it means to heed Christ's ongoing and expanding call of “Follow Me.”

Miraculous intervention

Jesus stood on the shore watching the fishermen going about their trade. He was no stranger to them. Besides rubbing shoulders amid lakeside towns, brothers James and John were related to Him, their mothers being sisters. Andrew was present at the Jordan River when John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29-36) and was afterward directly asked by Jesus, “What do you seek?” and invited to come and see more at His lodging (John 1:35-39). Believing Jesus to be the Messiah, Andrew brought his brother Simon, later called Peter, to meet Him (verses 40-42).

But now came a momentous day when Jesus walked into their world to share a miraculous lesson and grant a life-changing invitation. The brothers had been out all night on the lake, having given their all with nothing to show for it. James and John were nearby mending their own nets in their boat.

Jesus seized on the moment as He stepped into Simon's boat, spoke in front of a crowd and challenged the fisherman, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch” (Luke 5:1-4). Peter initially balked, declaring it a waste of time since it was now daylight and the fish could see and avoid the nets, but he further replied, “Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net” (verse 5).

What followed is a snapshot moment of amazement. In following Jesus' directive, Peter and Andrew's net

became so full of fish it almost broke. Their business partners, James and John, came to the rescue in their boat to save the plenteous catch that almost sank both boats (verses 6-7). Imagine the smile on Jesus' face and the awe, laughter and joy of the watching crowd.

Realizing the need for Him

In this moment Peter grasped the emptiness of the works of his own hands and that his well-mended nets alone could not save him. He cried out for Jesus to depart from him, as he was a sinful man feeling guilty and unworthy. This fisherman knew he was as personally empty as his nets had been (verse 8).

But Jesus was not deterred. He was here to fill Peter's life and that of his companions with another assignment—to follow Him and become fishers of men (verse 9). He'd just shown them that they didn't need those nets; what they needed was *Him!* “Do not be afraid,” He said, “From now on you will catch men” (verse 10). Jesus knew the moment was ripe. They were ready to “launch out” to wherever He would have them go on land or sea, and He would always be on board with them.

The four fishermen's response? They immediately left their boats (Matthew 4:22; Mark 1:20) and “forsook all and followed Him” (Luke 5:11). Pulling up their personal anchors, they dropped their nets, got out of the boat and handed over their past, present and future to the beckoning Man on the shore.

Fully committing—now and through life

So, what does this have to do with you today? Perhaps you've shown some interest in the teachings of Jesus Christ, passing near Him like the Galileans of His time. Perhaps you've even had short visits with Him like Andrew and Simon first did. But is that all that's desired of you? Or have you come to a “reality check” like Peter in realizing all our personal efforts through our own resources resemble Peter's nighttime fishing—nothing to show for it?

God doesn't want to just rub shoulders with you or simply settle for a drive-by visit. What He wants is that you—with all your heart and immediacy in heeding His

words—pull up your anchor of self, get out of your leaking boat of life, leave your nets and obey Christ's directive of "Follow Me." And not just once but *again and again and again*—wherever He takes us and no matter what comes our way.

Some of us may be saying: "Been there, done that. I'm in!" Peter said as much, but more would come his way after that initial trusting response. Peter would take his eyes off Jesus in walking with Him on the water and starting to sink (Matthew 14:22-32), in chiding Jesus when He spoke of being killed (Matthew 16:22-23), in running away like all the others at Jesus' arrest (Mark 14:50), and in

times asks Peter, "Do you love Me?" (verse 15). The first time He words it, "Do you love Me more than *these*?" (emphasis added).

Barclay comments that this can mean one of two things. On one hand, the term "these" may be referring to Peter's fellow disciples, so that the question is if Peter loves Jesus more than the other disciples love Jesus—referring to Peter's earlier slight of the others in notoriously saying, "Even if all are made to stumble because of you, I will never be made to stumble" (Matthew 26:33). With Jesus pointing to the gathered disciples, Peter's words haunt him and he must admit in his heart that He didn't live up to his professed commitment.



It's time to launch

But here Barclay proposes another thought—that the scope of this first inquiry is wider than that. He suggests that the risen Christ sweeps His hand over a broader landscape as Peter visually follows His Master's gestures and

What He wants is that you heed His words, leave your nets and obey His directive of "Follow Me."

denying Jesus three times that same night (Luke 22:54-62). Peter stumbled. We all stumble even after initially committing to "get out of our boats" for Christ.

Renewing the relationship

Perhaps some of us have gradually resettled into the familiar, comfortable world of our past nets, despite Jesus' assurance that we don't need those nets—that we need *Him*. Yet God is patient and won't let us go. Meeting us on our turf, Christ keeps on knocking on the doors of our hearts (Revelation 3:20). Often life is a circle, with Christ bringing us back around to drive home the lesson.

William Barclay, in his commentary on the Gospel of John (Vol. 2, p. 285), paints a powerful picture of Peter's return to the point of life-changing encounter. The now-risen Christ meets the disciples (now for the third time—John 21:14) at the spot in Galilee to which He had directed them to go (Matthew 26:32). But why? While waiting for His appearance they went fishing again, and their nets once again came up empty. Christ appears on the shore and comes to the rescue, again performing a miracle of filling their nets with fish (John 21:3-8).

But now Jesus desires Peter to "launch" into a deeper relationship with Him and knocks (pounds?) on the door of His heart with point-blank questions. Jesus three

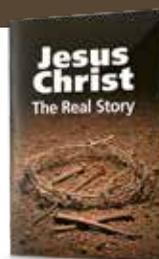
beholds the familiar waters set before them, the beached boats on the shore, and the drying nets, with Jesus asking, "Do you love Me more than [you love] these?"

Regardless, Jesus in this place has created the perfect teaching moment: *Peter! Remember this is where it began. You left this seashore with Me. And here we are again. Remember: You walked toward Me out on this same water at one time. And yes, you sank but for a moment and I pulled you up. Just as I told you when we first talked right here, it's time to "launch" once again.*

He was pounding home the eternal reality: *You don't need these—you need Me!*

Whether you are just now responding to Jesus' invitation of "Follow Me" or responded long ago but somehow, somewhere have lost your way, this message is for you. It's time to launch, with Him at your side! **BT**

LEARN MORE



Jesus Christ extends to us the invitation "Follow Me"—meaning to follow Him and be His disciple. But do you truly know who and what Jesus really was and is? To learn the answers, download or request our free study guide *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*.

www.BTmagazine.org/booklets



Reader comments about *Beyond Today* magazine, television and study guides

I have recently begun watching *Beyond Today* programs and have found them to be a blessing and encouragement. Please pass along my thanks to Mr. McNeely, Mr. Myers and Mr. Petty for sharing their knowledge and insights. They are gifted speakers and ministers of the Word. The program "Has God Given Up on America?" is a perfect example of the alarm bells we all need to hear. Thanks to God for pastors such as these men who will boldly stand and contend for biblical truths that are so badly needed in our society today. I do love, honor and respect our country, but we are in desperate need of divine intervention and direction. I humbly and sincerely pray for you and with you, "Your Kingdom come!"

From the Internet

I am writing this letter to let you know that I have received the Bible study aids you sent me. I am very grateful to you for your kindness for sending them to me. I am very blessed, and am sure reading them will help me to know God more deeply as I walk with him. God bless the United Church of God.

Reader in India

I don't know what church you belong to but you always seem to get things right in your articles. Thank you for the recent, brilliant, and very unusual perspectives in *Beyond Today* magazine. I am 1 of 20 marines—out of 70—who made it in Saigon in 1972. I always knew that it was no accident that I survived. Carry on, please!

From the Internet

Comment on "Growing State Tyranny: Foretaste of the End Time?"

Unfortunately, things are going to escalate very rapidly, there is going to be a serious food shortage even in the United States, possibly within a year. Lots of things happening at the same time are creating a perfect storm for catastrophe. We definitely need to prepare spiritually and physically.

From the Internet

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I really enjoy Beyond Today magazine. It gives a good understanding of the Bible and highlights information not given in mainstream Christian faiths. I highly recommend this magazine to all.

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Trinity, and your articles seem to go a long way to disprove it. Pray for wisdom and understanding of the Scriptures, and Jesus will enlighten your mind to the truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

From the Internet

We're sorry to see you go. For anybody interested in the biblical evidence against the traditional three-Persons-in-one Catholic doctrine of the Trinity (and why we believe the Bible reveals God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son as a divine family whose Spirit is Their power and essence), read our free Bible study guide Is God a Trinity? online at ucg.org/booklets, or request it from the office closest to you listed on page 31.

Looking for a church with the same beliefs

Thank you so much for all the enlightening online information on all the feasts and how they are observed today. I have only recently decided to observe the feasts (still knowing little) and am about to move to a new location in Texas. I know zero people there who walk in covenant with God. Do you have any advice on how I could find or connect with like-minded people somewhere? Thank you very much.

From the Internet

Our full list of congregations and contact information for the pastors can be found at ucg.org/congregations. Whatever the closest congregation to you is in your new home, reach out to the pastor and he can help you out. We hope we'll see you in person soon!

I've been following the teachings of the United Church of God for more than two years through your booklets, *Beyond Today* magazine and television, your website, sermons, and more. But I am in agony because UCG is not here in my region. I cannot join the congregation to worship God on His Sabbath day. What should I do? My family and I long to worship God on the Sabbath day with the assembly. Thank you.

Follower in Indonesia

While it's disappointing that we don't have a congregation close to you, we encourage you to stay in touch with our office in your region to let them know you're keeping the Sabbath and want to know others of like mind. We also encourage you to watch live or recorded webcast Sabbath services at ucg.org/webcast. Even though no other UCG members are close by, God sees your faithfulness and honors your worship of Him, even if it's just your family.

Greetings! I just wanted to say thank you so much for your hymnal app. All day long I can listen to the wonderful hymns and the wonderful choir. I also tune in online to church services on the Sabbath. I am looking for a congregation near where I plan to retire to live out the rest of my days. Hallelujah! Bless you all and thank you for your church.

Follower in Tennessee

How nice to hear you're enjoying the hymnal app (for others interested, it's available on both Google Play and Apple App Store platforms—search for "hymnal United Church of God").

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Then another.

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a very real question: Is the whole world
coming apart?

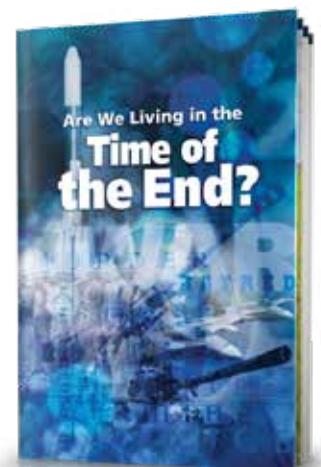
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