

COMPASS CHECK

Helping you turn your spiritual compass toward God



| What You Need to Understand
| About Your Future Spouse

| Notes on the Way
| *Matt Miller, General Contractor*

The Highway to Addiction |

Leaving Unfit Words Unspoken |

CONTENTS



Leaving Unfit Words Unspoken

3



What You Need to Understand About Your Future Spouse

5



The Highway to Addiction

8



How Do We Approach Abortion?

10



Consider Your Future

14



Notes on the Way

Matt Miller

18

COMPASS CHECK

Compass Check is a biblically based magazine for young people of the United Church of God, an International Association (UCGIA). Our name, *Compass Check*, refers to pointing your spiritual compass toward God. Our goal is to inspire readers to respond to the gospel message.

Compass Check is published quarterly by the United Church of God, 555 Technecenter Drive, Milford, OH 45150. ©2022, United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. All images courtesy Unsplash unless otherwise noted. United Youth Camps images used with permission.

Publisher: UCGIA | **Council of Elders:** Scott Ashley, Aaron Dean, Jorge de Campos, Dan Dowd, John Elliott, Len Martin (chairman), Darris McNeely, John Miller, Mario Seigle, Rex Sexton, Brian Shaw, Paul Wasilkoff

President: Rick Shabi

Media and Communication Services operation manager: Peter Eddington

Ministerial and Members Services operation manager: Mark Welch

Editor: Dan Preston

Managing editor: Kourtney Kovanis

Content editor: Mitchell Moss

Copy editors: Robert Curry, Nicole Gard, Sandy Cafourek, Nick Lamoureux, Randy Shoemaker

Proofreaders: Sarah Auguste, David Meidinger, Hanna Lee, Lena VanAusdle

Editorial reviewers: Aaron Creech, Bruce Dean, Frank Dunkle, Ken Graham, Jay Ledbetter, Ben Light, Mike Phelps, Rex Sexton

Lead designer: Mitchell Moss

Graphic designer/illustrator: Matthew Hernandez

Masthead design: Clint Porter

Writing staff: Members of UCGIA

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

Phone: (513) 576-9796. Fax: (513) 576-9795. Website: ucg.org/members/compass-check. Email: compasscheck@ucg.org.

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

Vol. 8, No. 2

United Youth Magazine | Fall 2022

COMPASS CORNER

Dear Compass Checkers,

So, how did you enjoy your summer? I certainly enjoyed mine! It was very busy with two camps, two weddings (one was technically in the spring), and a few side trips here and there with the family. I love the summertime, but it sure wears me out!

By the time you receive this, you will likely be packing for the Feast. There's something indescribable about the feeling I get as I prepare each year. Getting out suitcases, picking out which clothes to take, buying snacks for the road trip. (I get a little crazy in that department.) If I had to sum it up in one word, it would probably be hope.

As a small child, I looked forward to the Feast with hopes of playing on the beach and maybe getting a new toy or two. As a teen, I looked forward to the Feast with the hope of making new friends and having new adventures at various places I'd never seen before. As an adult, I still look forward to these things (including toys—even at my age), but there's more to it than that.

What does the Feast of Tabernacles represent? Well, in a word—hope. It foreshadows a time when all of mankind will have an opportunity to live in a world free of evil influences. For God's firstfruits, we'll no longer be held down by physical limitations like health and energy. While this sounds good on its own, God grants us those things for a reason.

In the Millennium, the first 1,000 years of the Kingdom of God here on earth, we will have a job to do. As kings and priests ruling with Jesus Christ, we will have the responsibility to help others understand their opportunity to join the family of God. It might be a challenge at first, and some may ultimately choose not to accept their calling. But if you were to describe our job in one word, it would be to give them—you guessed it—hope.

I'm very thankful for the opportunity to spend my summer with quite a few of you at summer camp. And I look forward to the opportunity to see some of you at the Feast of Tabernacles in Panama City Beach this year. But beyond that, I am brought great joy by the hope of serving alongside you and our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, in the Kingdom of God.

Have a wonderful Holy Day season!

Your camp friend,



Dan Preston

Editor of *Compass Check* magazine



LEAVING UNFIT WORDS

 *unspoken*

by David Cobb

AS beings designed for relationships, we are constantly communicating with one another. Although spoken words are one of the most common methods in our communication toolbox, high frequency is not necessarily an indicator of high quality.

A late 1800s American author named James Lendall Basford wisely observed that “Many talk as easily as they breathe, and with quite as little thought.” It’s very true and well stated—we all quite easily speak first and think afterward. Saying things that don’t do much to “improve on the silence,” as one Spanish proverb states, is a common occurrence in our conversations.

One specific aspect that we must constantly monitor in our choice of words is the use of expressions that are socially accepted forms of things that we shouldn’t say. Such expressions are called “euphemisms,” which the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines as “the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend . . .”

The *Merriam-Webster* explanation of a word’s implications, especially as it applies to substitute phrases that Christians should avoid, is quite helpful:

“Euphemisms can take different forms, but they all involve substituting a word or phrase considered to be less offensive than another. The substituted word might, for example, be viewed as a less coarse choice, as when *dang* or *darn* is used instead of *damn* or *damned*. Or it might replace a word viewed as insulting to a religious figure, such as the various euphemisms for God (*gad*, *gadzooks*, *gosh*) or Jesus (*gee*, *jeepers*, *jeez*).”

There are many such words that easily find their way into our vocabularies and conversations—sometimes because we genuinely think they are okay, sometimes because we don’t understand what they mean. To counteract this, there are several wise word usage habits to focus on developing while excluding any form of words or phrases that are better left unsaid.

HABIT 1: SHOW LOVE AND HONOR TO GOD

It is often said that the Ten Commandments are a summary of how to love God and love one another. One of the elements of

loving God, the Third Commandment, focuses on how we think about and treat His name—and by extension, how we think about and treat *Him*. This law prohibits taking God’s name “in vain,” which has several important implications.

For this topic, the applicable meaning is that we should not treat God’s name as empty. It has worth and value that deserves respect. The Common English Bible’s translation of Exodus 20:7 brings this out well, “Do not use the Lord your God’s name as if it were of no significance . . .” Substitute words such as “gosh” or “jeez” and phrases such as “Oh my God” or its acronym “OMG” do just that.

This type of speaking reduces God’s name to meaningless expressions that are thoughtlessly added to conversations as a matter of habit. Ironically and sadly, the topics in many conversations that include careless uses of God’s name include things that God would certainly not agree with or approve of! God the Father and Jesus Christ both deserve far more esteem and reverence than conversations that misuse Their names show to Them.

Our example as Christians should hold to a higher standard and demonstrate a better way. Treating God’s name with the respect that it deserves is an important aspect of genuinely developing that respect in our relationship with Him. It also helps us to internalize the incredible future that God is planning—to *share His name with us* by bringing us into His family!

HABIT 2: SPEAK WITH CONSISTENT INTEGRITY

At Camp Cotubic earlier this year, one of the questions submitted by a camper in the brother and sister dorm I was working with asked whether there would be only one language again in God’s Kingdom. It was a great discussion, and especially exciting because the Bible does give an indication of what the future holds. In Zephaniah 3:9, God states: “I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD . . .”

The word “pure” in this verse is filled with refreshing hope for the future of human communication! Its various meanings

As Christians, our patterns of speech should strive for and exemplify the Kingdom level of purity and spiritual maturity now!

indicate that the language used when God's government is administered on earth will have been purged, cleansed, tested and proven as fit for use by those who are living and learning God's way of life.

None of the languages in our present world can claim this level of integrity. Under Satan's influence and the corrupt tendencies of human nature, our languages sadly reflect the reality of the human condition. They contain all manner of blasphemy, curses, euphemisms (mildly softened blasphemy/curses) and innuendo (veiled references implying all kinds of wrong thoughts and actions, often with a sexual connotation).

Zephaniah was inspired to prophesy that these things will cease to exist in the language of the Kingdom that Jesus Christ will establish at His return. As Christians, our patterns of speech should strive for and exemplify that level of purity and spiritual maturity now!

HABIT 3: STRIVE TO ENABLE POSITIVE OUTCOMES WITH YOUR WORDS

In his letter to the Church at Ephesus, the apostle Paul provides a very helpful framework for ensuring that our words are helpful, rather than harmful, to those who hear them, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

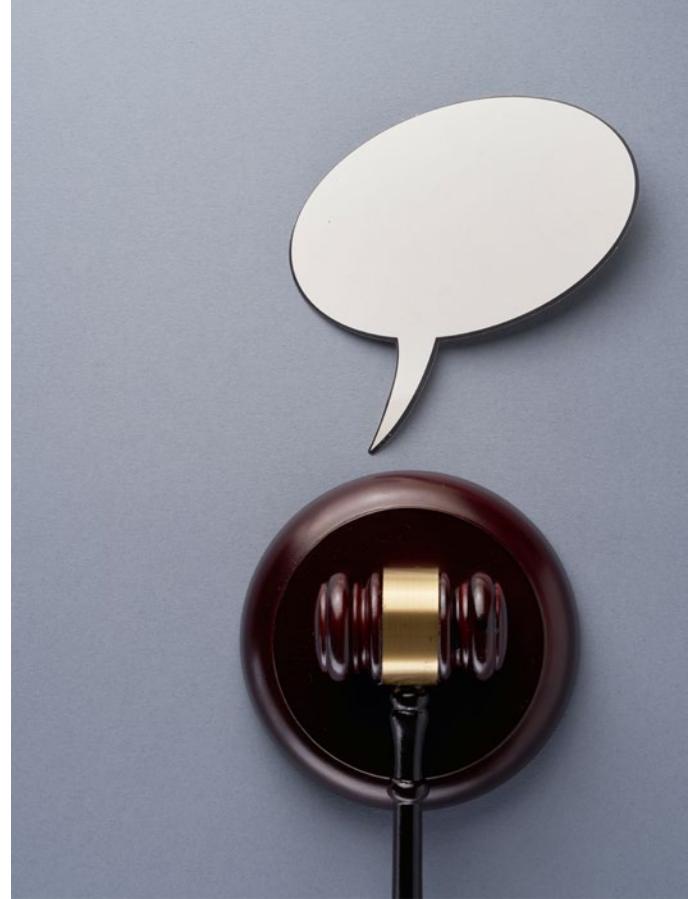
The Greek word translated as "corrupt" in this verse has a broad implication for words that are unfit for use because they lack value and worth. The *Britannica Dictionary's* definition for the English "corrupt" is instructive as well. One of the meanings is "to

change (something) so that it is less pure or valuable." Allowing euphemisms into our communication does just that.

The verse goes on to say that we can avoid degrading our communication by making sure that it provides "necessary edification," meaning it meets a need, fulfills a purpose and builds up the receiver. The final portion of the verse then addresses the most important element of any communication, which is the *motive*. Why are we saying what we say? What long-term results do we want our words to have, both in the lives of the hearers and our own lives?

Paul encourages us to pursue grace as the outcome of our words. Grace is a word filled with hope, describing a status of favor that is not dependent on what someone has earned or what they deserve. Our words and our communication are meant to *supply favor* to the hearers. This result is much easier to accomplish when we speak accurately and genuinely, leaving out words that are meant to stand in for something that is better left unsaid. As folk-rock band the Avett Brothers rightly imply, "I don't need those words to say what I mean . . ." ("Tear Down The House").

To the extent that we focus on developing these habits in our communication, we can fulfill and receive the benefits of this inspirational admonition: "The hearts of the wise make their mouths prudent, and their lips promote instruction. Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones" (Proverbs 16:23-24, New International Version). **CC**



David Cobb attends the Indianapolis congregation of the United Church of God. He lives and works in Columbus, Indiana, with his wife Mandie and their three children, HannahBeth, Joshua and Elijah.

WHAT YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT

Your Future Spouse

BY DAN PRESTON

I WOULD IMAGINE

that most of you, like me when I was your age, want to get married and have a family someday. While it's not a requirement for a Christian to be married or have children, it's certainly a fine desire to have, and a godly goal. After all, God's overall purpose is to create a spirit family in the Kingdom of God.

Before talking about marriage and relationships in general, it helps to understand our roles individually as men and women. In fact, we talked about these roles in two recent issues of *Compass Check: What Does It Mean to Be a Man?* (ucg.org/members/compass-check/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-man) and *Don't be Fooled! God's Truth About the High Value of Women* (ucg.org/members/compass-check/dont-be-fooled-gods-truth-about-the-high-value-of-women).

So, with that in mind, let's consider how God looks at family. In 1 John 3:1-2, we read: "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." It can sometimes be a little hard to understand exactly what it will be like to be a part of the family of God. John admits that, and goes on to say in essence "we'll find out when we get there." But the key takeaway from this scripture is that we *are being called* to be children of God—a part of the God family!

God is building a spirit family for the future, an important part of which is that His family will have godly character. He helps us develop that character through the lessons and experiences we gain from our physical families now as human beings (Ephesians 5:28-32). So, as young people, what's your part?

RULER OR HEAD?

When it comes to the roles of a man and a woman in a family, we often go to Ephesians 5:22-24 for guidance: "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.” This is Scripture and we take it to be the divinely inspired Word of God. But is it saying that wives never have a say in anything and that men are superior beings who rule with a fist of iron?

Let me tell you: I’ve known people who thought this way. And if I’m honest, there were times as a young man when I thought this way. But an iron-fisted husband who makes all decisions for his wife and children without considering their feelings and needs is no kind of a real man. Those are people who were fooled into thinking they were men by what the world taught them.

This is talking about a married couple—one man, one woman, bound in marriage in the eyes of God. While the mere thought of marriage being defined this way has come under attack in the past few years, we know this is what the Bible teaches (Genesis 2:18-25). But consider what this verse does *not* say. It does not say that all men, everywhere, are the head over all women. It’s talking specifically about a husband and a wife—people who have made that commitment to one another before God.

So a natural reaction for you as a reader might be something like, “Okay, that’s fine. But how does that help me now as a young person who is perhaps just starting to think about dating?” Keeping our end desire of marriage in mind, what Ephesians 5 shows us is some character traits to look for in a potential future mate, and perhaps more importantly, some character traits we need to be working on ourselves.

TO THE GUYS IN THE AUDIENCE...

Just because the Bible states that the husband is head over the wife, it doesn’t mean you can blatantly tell a woman what to think or do without regard to her feelings. A friend of mine has a sign in his kitchen that reads, “Telling a woman to calm down works about as well as baptizing a cat.” (He



What Ephesians 5 shows us is some character traits to look for in a potential future mate, and perhaps more importantly, some character traits we need to be working on ourselves.

and his wife have been married for 40 years and have a great marriage, BTW). The point being, telling someone (man or woman) to think or feel a certain way just doesn’t work!

As noted above, when she gets married, a wife is saying, “Yes, I agree to take on the biblically defined roles of marriage, including having a husband who is now the head of me.” Do you know what she just did, willingly?!?! She said, “I’m okay with giving up some of my freedom of choice and authority to this man.” As a future wife, she is putting *a lot* of trust in you to act as the head of a family in a way that considers her thoughts and feelings.

Fellas, a girl who senses a guy is trying to manipulate or control her will not be interested in pursuing a relationship with him. Understanding your biblical role as a future husband to be the head of the household, not an overlord, will go a long way in helping you pursue your goal of marriage someday.

TO THE LADIES . . .

If we continue reading in Ephesians 5:25, we read, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself

JESUS WILLINGLY DIED FOR ME. TO LOVE MY WIFE—REALLY LOVE HER THE SAME WAY GOD LOVED ME—I HAD TO BE WILLING TO “TAKE A BULLET” FOR HER IF NEED BE.



for her.” I remember at one point in my young married life reading this scripture and it hitting me like a punch in the nose. Jesus willingly died for me. To love my wife—really love her the same way God loved me—I had to be willing to “take a bullet” for her if need be. It was then that I realized being a husband was a whole lot more than being the one to make all the major decisions, or even minor ones, like what’s for dinner, what kind of car to buy, etc.

Ladies, as you start dating and getting to know a guy, consider the fact that he has been given a mission. His God-ordained role, if indeed he becomes your husband someday, is to take care of you. If he offers to open up a car door, suggests a particular place for dinner, or even gives you advice on your career and school, it doesn’t necessarily mean he’s trying to tell you what you can or cannot do. He, in fact, may just be working toward fulfilling his responsibility to take care of someone he could see as his future wife!

IN THE MEANTIME . . .

Take the thought of marriage out of it for a minute. What if you stay single all your life, like Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul did? Again, there’s no requirement as Christians to get married. How do we love others as we love ourselves? A good place to start is Matthew 7:12 where Christ taught “the golden rule,” “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

If you’re reading this article, you’re likely a teen living at home. Your parents have the authority to decide what you wear to school or church, have for dinner or if you are allowed to go out and use the family car. And while there are times they may give you firm directions on each of these things, I’m willing to bet that the vast majority of the

time, they get your input and consider your feelings. You, in turn, recognize they are doing it out of love and concern for you and, in fact, are responsible for taking care of you.

Does all that sound familiar? It should. Just as you hope to get married and start your own family someday, your parents had that dream years ago. Together, you and your parents are right in the middle of accomplishing their goal of having a family. And remember, the physical family we are a part of right now is a part of God’s goal of building family too!

HERE AND NOW

No family is perfect. Not the one you’re in now, the one that I grew up in, nor the one you hope to create some day. In fact, we won’t truly be the family God wants for some time. “And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God’” (Revelation 21:3).

Until that day arrives though, we can work on building family here and now. As you begin to date and think about marriage and having a family, remember how God defines the roles of husband and wife, and let them guide you as you begin to think about a family of your own! **CC**



Dan Preston is a husband, father, brother and son. He has had to, and continues to, learn a lot about being better at each of those roles.



THE HIGHWAY TO ADDICTION

There are many chemicals and behaviors that can lead to an addiction. Drugs (legal and illegal), alcohol and gambling to mention a few. Addictions usually come about gradually, and in most cases, the individual will ignore or dismiss the multiple warning signs along the road to a particular addiction. In some cases, an addicted person will be able to function quite normally for many years at their job, in their marriage and in everyday life. This story will focus on alcoholism, but the path other addictions follow is similar.

My highway to alcoholism started in college a few months after turning 18, the legal drinking age in my home state. At first, I really couldn't stand the taste of beer or hard liquor and would instead drink cherry brandy. As I got further into my studies in electrical engineering, due to peer pressure and a limited budget, I switched to beer and gradually acquired a taste for it.

As I traveled my highway to addiction, there were certain road signs that, in hindsight, documented my downward spiral. As we progress through my story, I will denote these "signs" with an asterisk (*).

Academically I did well my freshman year with my beer drinking limited to weekends downtown in the very small village in which my college was located. During my sophomore year, I joined a Greek fraternity and moved out to reside in a rather large

fraternity house off campus. And as you might expect with a houseful of 18-22 year-olds, the partying and drinking opportunities were readily available. So much so that I had to take my study times to the library in a university located in the same village. Between my junior and senior year, the fraternity voted to keep a keg of beer on tap at all times in the recreation room, which I used liberally.*

Also, during my junior and senior year, we increased from two to three people to eight to 10 engineering students in our group in the evenings at the university. We developed a precedent of stopping off at a local tavern on the way back to the fraternity house for drinks after the library closed at 10 p.m. By this time, I had progressed to hard liquor such as "Rum and Cokes," et al.,* pretty much drinking every day.* It was at this time I received my first DUI (i.e. the legal charge for driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol).* I had just returned from Florida from semester break and was out to a party. Knowing I had to drive back to the fraternity, I stopped drinking early and when I left I felt I was sober. Since I had just returned from a month in south Florida with temperatures in the 70s and 80s to northern New York with temperatures near -20°F, I expedited my return to the fraternity and got stopped for speeding, only to discover I was still over the legal alcohol limit.

After graduation, with my engineering diploma in hand, I accepted a new job in a new state. A number of intimidating

ALONG WITH EVERY ADDICTION IS THE DENIAL THAT YOU INDEED HAVE AN ADDICTION PROBLEM, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THOSE AROUND YOU NOTICE AND COMMENT.

changes took place at this time. For the first time, I was truly on my own. My parents had paid for my college but felt at 22 years old I should be on my own financially. I was at a new job in a state where I had no relatives, knew no one and had no savings. Being a relatively quiet and reserved person, after work I generally stayed at home, had a beer with dinner and drank a few drinks alone* in the evenings when I was reading and watching TV. Even after becoming involved with sports after work and having drinks with teammates, I would continue my drinking at home afterwards. But I felt I was in complete control since I never drank in the morning or during work, and always threw out any remaining drink at my 11 p.m. bedtime.

Along with every addiction is the denial that you indeed have an addiction problem, despite the fact that those around you notice and remark about how much you are drinking or using drugs. In my story, I was once visiting my parents' home when my father remarked about how much I was drinking.* Then during my late 20s, I got married and the observations of my wife as to the amount I was drinking started almost immediately. After a while, I noticed that my wife was keeping track of the amount I was drinking by making pencil marks on the label of the bottle.* This caused me to hide the amount I was drinking by buying a pint of alcohol every day on my way home from work and hiding it in my briefcase to bring home.*

This went on for 15 years until my performance at work was affected and my supervisor insisted I go to a rehab center. While there, I was introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) which would later become

my lifeline to sobriety. After leaving the rehab center, despite what I had learned, I resumed my drinking, thinking that with the tools I now had I could control the amount I drank. This short period (about two months) culminated in another DUI and car accident.* The final incident in this period was that I started missing work and one day I found my supervisor at my door and I was promptly transported to a hospital. This was, as they say in AA, my "bottom" and I was ready to admit to myself that I indeed had a problem and was addicted to alcohol.

While lying in bed in the hospital, I finally turned to God for help. Keeping in mind 1 Corinthians 6:10, ". . . nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor those habitually drunk, nor verbal abusers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God" (New American Standard Bible throughout), I sought God in prayer and asked for healing. Some may scoff at what follows, but I can only tell what happened to me. Instantly after finishing my prayer I felt God's Spirit within me, and I felt an immediate calm and a resolution in my heart and mind that I would never drink again. This took place more than 33 years ago and I have not had a drink since then.

What has helped to keep me from relapsing were the thoughts in Matthew 12:31: "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven."

This "unpardonable sin" may not be what the Bible had in mind and not applicable in my case, but in my view, it comes perilously close. I was healed by God's Spirit and to relapse to being a drunkard



is too horrifying to contemplate.

Also, a passage in 1 Corinthians 10 gives me comfort, "No temptation has overtaken you except something common to mankind; and God is faithful, so He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The other tool I use is AA. I attended multiple meetings each week and became involved with a group of AA members who would travel to and speak at different AA meetings, prisons and hospitals in a tri-state area in the Northeast. Even AA can't claim a 100% success rate, but for those who "hit their bottom" and truly want sobriety more than anything else, AA can be a bedrock on which you can build a new life. There are similar "12 step" programs for drugs and gambling.

Unfortunately, I did not pay attention to the many warning signs along my highway to addiction and had to hit my "bottom" before I took action. This delay cost me my marriage, damaged my health and had a negative effect on my career. In retrospect, the key was my denial that I had a problem despite the multiple warnings. The highway to addiction is wide and straight, but if you pay attention to the road signs you can escape and exit the highway before it is too late. **CC**



Fred Schatz spent a 35-year career working at the Naval Undersea Warfare Center as an engineer, and is now retired. He enjoys reading history, detective novels and studying the Bible in Greek.



I'm sure most of you reading this article have heard something recently about abortion. The overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the infamous case that federally legalized abortion in the United States, is all over the place on the news and social media. Are you unsure whether abortion is right or wrong? Do you find yourself justifying abortions? Are you basing that from the Bible, or what you hear in the world? Can you back your stance up in both a biblical and scientific way? How do you speak the truth in love when you are met with antagonism and berated for your beliefs and your God? Let's explore these questions using the Bible and scientific discovery as our guide.

LIFE BEGINS AT CONCEPTION

First things first: why are we, future members of God's family, pro-life? We get our belief in the sanctity of life from the Bible, and from there we can use science to back up this belief. God forms each of us in our mother's womb. He knows us before we take our first breath—even before our parents are aware of us! In Psalm 139:13 we read, "For You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother's womb" (English Standard Version). God knows us and recognizes us as His potential children and as life He

by *Tarra Scott*

created before we are even greeted by our parents. The moment that an egg and a sperm are joined, when a new, unique set of DNA and chromosomes are formed, God already knows us. We are a human life from that moment. Life begins at conception.

The debate on whether or not life begins at conception is a common argument we may encounter. Science indeed backs up the claim that life begins at conception (also known as fertilization): "The development of a human being begins with fertilization, a process by which two highly specialized cells, the spermatozoon from the male and the oocyte from the female, unite to give rise to a new organism, the zygote."¹

Many scholars of life and science agree that human life and development begin immediately at conception. Studies from many prestigious schools, doctors and scientists recognize that a new, unique human life begins at the uniting of a sperm cell and an egg. Not at a heartbeat or at the first brainwave; life starts at conception.²

THE FETAL VIABILITY ARGUMENT

The next argument we often encounter is the stage of viability. Have any of you ever heard something like, "It's not even a baby, it is just a clump of cells?" Again, this is not backed up by the Word of God, or by science.

First, how do you respond when someone compares

a baby to a tumor or a clump of cells? I think that scientific definitions are your friend here. A tumor is defined as “a swelling of a part of the body, generally without inflammation, caused by an abnormal growth of tissue, whether benign or malignant” (Oxford English Dictionary). Some of this could be attributed to a pregnancy, like a swelling part of the body (a growing baby bump), but the rest of it would be completely inaccurate to compare to a developing baby. Let’s define a baby as a “developing human organism.” Biological development is “the progressive changes in size, shape, and function during the life of an organism by which its genetic potentials (genotype) are translated into functioning mature systems (phenotype).”³ This defines a baby much more accurately than a “clump of cells.”

Tumors are not considered developing organisms, so why would we attribute the reverse to babies? Calling a baby a “clump of cells” is an effort to dehumanize a fully human organism. If babies are just clumps of cells, so is a toddler, a 10-year-old and a full-grown adult, as well as your favorite singer, the cashier at the store and every person you know. Viability doesn’t determine your humanity. We are all human, no matter what stage of life we are in!

A zygote (the stage before embryo) has the potential to become a fully functioning adult human. It doesn’t grow in an unorganized manner like a tumor; it grows into a fetus, then a newborn baby, then toddler, child, teen and full-grown adult.

A baby is also not a parasite, leeching off the body of its mother and harming her; her body is built to sustain human life and is not harmed by



God forms each of us in our mother’s womb. He knows us before we take our first breath—even before our parents are aware of us!

a healthy pregnancy. If left alone, a zygote will not grow into an unruly mass of cells or a parasite. A fetus will grow into an organized being. A being that is in God’s image. “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27, ESV).

WHAT ABOUT RAPE AND INCEST LEADING TO PREGNANCY?

A tough argument you may hear is, “What if the mother was raped?” These emotionally charged arguments make everyone pause. The horrible sins that people commit against each other hurt my heart, but this isn’t a good reason to abort. A very small percentage of abortions performed are terminating pregnancies resulting from sexual assault or incest, but they do happen. The Guttmacher Institute is one of the leading sources of abortion statistics; in one study we read: “1% indicated that they had been victims of rape, and less than half a percent said they became pregnant as a result of incest.”⁴ Even if it is a tiny percentage, it is an important argument to address, especially with an attitude of truth and love.

God tells us very clearly that rape is not okay. We read the law regarding rape in Deuteronomy 22:25-27, “But if out in the country a man happens to meet a young woman pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die. Do nothing to the woman; she has committed no sin deserving death. This





WHAT ABOUT THE OVER-BURDENED FOSTER CARE SYSTEM?

Something I have heard that can sway pro-life people is when others bring the foster care system into the argument. It is important to recognize the main goal of the foster care system first. Children who go into foster care because of family issues cannot always be adopted. The goal of foster care is to reunite blood-families, so sometimes children may be in the system for a while as family matters are dealt with, and they can't always be adopted.

"There are enough children in the foster

Valuing the life of that baby less because of the way he or she was made is not right and killing him or her is not our call. God is the judge, not us. It is not our right; it is God's.

case is like that of someone who attacks and murders a neighbor, for the man found the young woman out in the country, and though the betrothed woman screamed, there was no one to rescue her" (New International Version). In God's eyes, rape is compared to murder. A rapist is put to death. The woman in this case is not guilty of a sin. In the heartbreaking story of Tamar and Amnon (2 Samuel 13), Amnon disgraces Tamar by committing this horrible act against her. She is not punished.

We know God's stance on rape, but in cases where the terrible sin of rape does happen, God can choose to allow a pregnancy to occur. Again, God gives life and He takes it away. That rapist will absolutely be judged for that sin and atrocity. However, that does not give anyone the right to kill an innocent baby for the sins of his or her biological father. Being pro-life doesn't mean we want to force children into trauma-filled homes. Mothers always have the option to relinquish their maternal rights and give the baby up for adoption.

I cannot fully understand the hurt and violation these rape victims experience, but we can't excuse the killing of a baby because of that hurt. Hurt will not solve hurt; sin will not solve sin. Terminating a pregnancy will not make that trauma go away. Valuing the life of that baby less because of the way he or she was made is not right and killing him or her is not our call. God is the judge, not us. It is not our right; it is God's.

system already, why put even more in?" Some may use this statement to justify abortion by claiming that abortion benefits society by decreasing the resources needed to sustain those lives. This is something I have heard in reply to a pro-life stance claiming that mothers who do not want to be parents can consider adoption. Now, some may use this alternative statement to justify promiscuous sex by claiming that if they do get pregnant, they can help a couple seeking a child through adoption. None of these statements is an excuse to sin; neither abortion nor sexual immorality are part of God's plan. Adoption is an alternative to the murders of abortion.

The Adoption Network has some heartening statistics about adoption. "About 135,000 children are adopted in the United States each year. Of non-stepparent adoptions, about 59% are from the child welfare (or foster) system, 26% are from other countries, and 15% are voluntarily relinquished American babies. There are no national statistics on how many people are waiting to adopt, but experts estimate it is somewhere between one and two million couples. Every year there are about 1.3 million abortions. Only 4% of women with

unwanted pregnancies place their children through adoption.”⁵

This tells us how few people take the route of adoption, while also informing us of how many choose abortion each year. There are millions of people eager to adopt, and every year there are over a million abortions. Eighty percent of children in foster care who were able to be adopted were placed in their new homes before the age of 6.⁶

Let’s say there is a rare case where a baby in the system goes unadopted for his or her whole life. Does a “low quality” of life mean that a life isn’t even worth saving? Is it right to say that if someone may experience hardship, it is better that they do not live at all? Are poor or disabled people worth less because they experience hardship and trial? Certainly not in God’s eyes. God tells us that He will not allow us to be tested beyond what we can handle (1 Corinthians 10:13, New English Translation). Adversity and trials are part of how we grow, and what make us individuals. When you go through trials, focus on your faith in God and His grand plan for you and all of humanity. Look forward to a time where we won’t have those hardships: the Kingdom of God.

WHOSE BODY, WHOSE CHOICE?

The final, and likely most common saying we hear from pro-choice advocates is this: “My body, my choice.” This expression has been used in the fight for women’s bodily autonomy and sexual freedom and has been extended to abortion. Hook-up culture and casual sex are common among many teens and young adults.⁷ Sex was designed by God, and He created the natural result of babies. With so many people having casual sex outside of marriage, we see many unwanted or unintended pregnancies. Too many people use abortion to escape the consequences of their actions and the natural result of sex. Sin leads to more sin unless there is repentance, and this is a prime example.

How do we combat “my body, my choice” in truth and love? The first thing for me is this: it is actually **not** your body. It is not your DNA, so it isn’t your body. You don’t have any right to abort it, because it isn’t your DNA; it’s a new, unique set of DNA that your actions caused. Since it is not your body, it is not your

choice. We all belong to our Creator, and that baby belongs to God, not you.

THE GIFT OF LIFE

“Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him” (Psalm 127:3, New International Version). Babies are a gift to mankind. There is no question on whether they are wanted; God always wants them. He is the one who gives and takes away life, so for us to take it in our own hands to deem a baby “unwanted” and therefore able to terminate, is human arrogance and sin.

A pregnant woman carries a baby who is a new, individual human being created by God. Abortion is not a human right; it is a sin. When a woman willingly has sex, she consents to the possibility of getting pregnant. All forms of contraception are less than 100% preventative, so by having sex (even with contraception), she consents to the possibility of a pregnancy.

Abortion is the murder of a defenseless baby who is a potential member of the family of God, just like you. I hope that some of these counterarguments will be of use to anyone who is struggling with the worldly debate on abortion. I hope that it’s been helpful to think about the sanctity of life and that God’s plan does not involve abortion. Do not be manipulated by illogical and inaccurate, although convincing, arguments from a pro-abortion side. Check your own beliefs with God’s Word first, and science second. Pray for wisdom and understanding and that God will bless your words to be graceful, seasoned with salt, and a light to the people around you. **CC**



References

- 1 Langman, Jan. *Medical Embryology*. 3rd edition. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1975, p. 3
- 2 princeton.edu/~prolife/articles/embryoquotes2.html
- 3 britannica.com/science/biological-development
- 4 Reasons U.S. Women Have Abortions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives, Guttmacher Institute
- 5 US Adoption Statistics, Adoption Network, <https://adoptionnetwork.com/adoption-myths-facts/domestic-us-statistics/>
- 6 ASPE, Children Adopted from Foster Care: Child and Family Characteristics, Adoption Motivation, and Well-Being, aspe.hhs.gov/reports/children-adopted-foster-care-child-family-characteristics-adoption-motivation-well-being-o
- 7 Sexual Hookup Culture: A Review, apa.org/monitor/2013/02/sexual-hookup-culture.pdf



Tarra Scott is an Industrial Engineering student who likes scintillating conversation paired with stinky cheese and salty crackers.

CONSIDER YOUR FUTURE



BY RUDY RANGEL



When you think about your future and what the Bible has to say about it, you probably don't think of the book of Lamentations. But there's a scripture in the middle of this unlikely book that gives valuable insight for making decisions and planning the rest of your life.

The book of Lamentations is an expression of grief, from Jeremiah (most likely). He was a prophet, someone who speaks for God, who went to warn Judah about the penalty of the sins they were committing. Sadly, God told Jeremiah that the people wouldn't even listen to him (Jeremiah 7:27). And yet he's sent on this mission—to warn the people—knowing they wouldn't listen. What's more, the nation of Judah was not just some country, they were a part of Jeremiah's own family. He saw the entire collapse and capture of his family. Everything that identified them as a people went under the control of the Babylonians.

Lamentations 1:8 says "Jerusalem sinned grievously; therefore she became filthy; all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans and turns her face away" (English Standard Version).

Judah was filthy because of her sins, and everyone knew it. Not even the other nations who worshipped these false gods looked at her with any respect. Verse 9 continues: "Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her future." It's that last part I want to get to: "she took no thought of her future." The people of Judah didn't consider their future. The New King James Version uses the word "destiny" and the King James Version says "her last end."

Do you see a problem with that?

What do you think happens when you live your life and take no thought of your future? What does that life look like? Sure, you might have fun in certain moments. Even in sin you can fill yourself with pleasure and fun, or fame and popularity. Hebrews 11:25 calls it "passing pleasures of sin." But is that the way to live our lives?

Your God has given you an invitation and a choice. When I say you—I mean *you*. You have been invited to become a son or daughter of God. We see in Scripture that this invitation is already yours because of your parents or your grandparents. Don't let anything make you doubt that this is a personal invitation. It is. God is inviting you.

Here's where it gets real: You have a choice.

When you think about this scripture in Lamentations, remember that a key to the downfall of the people was that they "took no thought of their future."

**YOUR GOD HAS GIVEN
YOU AN INVITATION
AND A CHOICE. WHEN
I SAY YOU—I MEAN
YOU. YOU HAVE BEEN
INVITED TO BECOME A
SON OR DAUGHTER OF
GOD.**



Throughout your life you'll face two main types of decisions:

1. In-the-moment decisions
2. Long-term planning for life

In each of these types of decisions, you need to “take thought” of your future.

You need to become a master of in-the-moment decisions. Work to become a decision maker who comes to well-thought-out conclusions in everyday situations. If you do, you will be strong when difficult peer pressure presents itself. This will also boost your ability to make the long-term decisions. Both kinds of decisions come down to choosing by what you will live your life: by God or

by the world around you.

In Lamentations, we read how the author shared his emotions about the captured people. In a later book, Haggai, they have come back from exile some 70 years later. (Haggai is a prophet of God like Jeremiah.)

By this time, the people have moved back to Jerusalem and are fixing their homes. But Haggai speaks for God and says that they are leaving the house of God untouched and in ruins.

Haggai 1:3-5 says: “Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, ‘Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways’” (ESV).

When the people came back from exile, they were faced with a choice. Just like all of us. And God has something to say about that choice.

They decided to work on their own homes first. We're not talking about providing themselves with basic shelter here. The mention of “paneled houses” indicates that they were, in essence, building themselves luxury homes for a comfortable existence. Meanwhile, the temple—God's house—was still in ruins having been destroyed when they went into captivity. He tells them to “consider their ways.” This is a lot like “take thought of your future.”

God is doing a work in the world today. Even as we see so many difficult things in our world, God is fully in charge. His work is in you. It's in me. It's in building His Church. You have a part in the building process. As Rick Shabi mentioned in his first sermon as president of the United Church of God, we are all to be “living stones” for use in the building of the temple of God. Listen to the message at ucg.org/sermons/living-stones-2.

God is building a family that will live and rule the universe for eternity. That is a promise, and one that's not just to your parents, but to you too. But the kicker is: you have a choice. You have to consider your future. This isn't just a one-time choice, but choosing to live this way of life every day.

The people of Judah came out of captivity and their priority was themselves. What they should have



*God is building a family that will live and rule the universe for eternity.
That is a promise. But the kicker is: you have a choice.
You have to consider your future.*

done was make God the priority in their lives. We can learn from this. We should make sure that we are doing our part to build the Church of God. Become the son or daughter He wants you to be!

Some of you go to smaller congregations or live in families with only one parent in the faith. Sometimes this way of life can be hard. You may face difficulties at school. God's way of life brings blessings and joy, but it's not free of trials, difficulties and overcoming.

Judah was warned of the coming doom to their nation. They were warned and chose to ignore the messenger of God. You are tasked with a choice as you go through your school years and beyond. That choice involves looking past the here and now. Become masters of in-the-moment decisions, and do what the nations of Israel failed to do. Take thought of your future. **CC**



Rudy Rangel is production supervisor for Beyond Today media. He loves music, reading, writing, film and volunteering at United Youth Camps. Out of all these things, his favorite thing to do is play with his daughter and son and spend time with his wife. He also loves pizza.

Notes On The Way

MATT MILLER

General Contractor



*A strong advocate for working with your hands, Matt Miller has turned his own love of building and fixing things into a successful business as a general contractor in the Pacific Northwest. Read how he got his start, why he loves it and how anyone can go out **today**, get a job making good money and doing satisfying work.*

What's your Church background?

I was born and raised in the Church, so I didn't have that big "aha" moment where I stopped smoking cigarettes and threw out all my bacon. Only later when I grew up a little bit did I start asking questions about my beliefs. I'm still on that journey and asking questions; I believe stronger than I ever did before, but I have more questions. It's like the more I learn, the more questions I have!

What do you do for a living? What drew you to this field?

I'm a general contractor, which means I can do everything from maintenance all the way up to building new homes from the ground up, though I'm usually somewhere in the middle—additions, remodels, bathroom remodels, helping an old lady install a storm door on her house.

I was drawn to it because I grew up fixing things with my dad. Whenever something broke we fixed it. I just love fixing things, and also the connections I make with people. Somebody will call me and ask if I can help them, and when I say yes, I can hear the excitement in their voice that they found somebody who answers

the phone and can communicate clearly. When I come out and fix their problem, they're just blown away; it's like I have a superpower! It feels really good.

What has been your career path (i.e. how did you get there)?

I've never worried about work or what I was going to do. My dad instilled that in me. When I moved here (to Salem, Oregon) a guy in the Church was building houses, so I called him and asked if he could give me a job. I took it even though it was a pay cut, but for three years I learned how to build houses. Then when I started having kids, I needed more money, so I started doing maintenance on some rental properties, which was fun. Then a couple years after that, I had this urge to start my own business. I wasn't anxious about it, because I tend to think it'll all be fine, but I did spend some time working on my wife so she wouldn't worry about it. At this point it's been seven years and it's going well.

Do you enjoy your work?

Besides all the things I mentioned already, another thing I love reminds me of that scripture: "those who by reason of use

have their senses exercised" (Hebrews 5:14). A lot of business owners in the Church I've known have advised me to never hire people in the Church, or family members. I'm doing the opposite of that, hiring friends and family all the time. I've always wondered why they say that, and I think it's because people don't like having those hard conversations when an employee violates a rule or does something wrong. But I love that whenever a problem arises, I'm put in a position to have that awkward but crucial conversation, because it helps me grow and learn how to get better at doing that. If I weren't in this position I wouldn't be forced to have those conversations with people I already have a relationship with.

Why is that so important to you to have those types of difficult conversations?

I think those are the same skills we'll need to have in God's Kingdom. If we don't know how to talk with each other, how will we judge the world? If there's a matter between me and my employee, or church member, or friend, and we can't solve it, what hope do we have to solve problems on a large scale in the world?

Have you ever felt like you didn't enjoy your job at any point along the way? Have you ever made a job or career change? If so, what did you do to pivot to something different?

Yes, definitely. One in particular, when I was working for a property maintenance company, I loved the work but not the job anymore because the owner was micro-managing and really toxic. After a while, it wore me down. My first approach was to keep trying, just to make sure I wasn't a quitter. But after seven months, I decided to leave. I just put in my notice and went to work for a different company doing the same kind of work, and I ended up making more money.

Was there a time where you were exploring what you liked and figured out you didn't like a certain type of work?

After high school I went to community college. I had some friends who liked auto mechanic stuff, so I took a course to be an auto tech. About halfway through the course, I realized it was not what I wanted to do. I didn't even finish the course, and instead just went to work. So I kind of got that out of my system way back then. I still feel like I can do anything. In some senses it's a blessing, but it can also be a curse because it's hard to choose. It's easy to get distracted and start down no path at all, or to second-guess what I could be doing.

Does your work ever create potential conflicts with your faith?

Yes, in a couple of different ways. When I was just a small company, people would ask me to install their Christmas lights. I'd already be on the site doing something else and they'd offer me a little extra money to install their lights for



them. In those instances, it was an opportunity to either say something or just pretend like it's no big deal. I would say no, but then explain why. I looked at it as a chance to build a rapport with a client.

Now that I have sub-contractors working for me, I've had to make sure they don't work on the Sabbath or even the Holy Days during the Feast. I make it super clear that they won't get paid if they work on a Sabbath, and if they do it anyway and I find out I'll fire them. I give them paid days off on the Holy Days since it's a day out of their week.

I just make sure, as best I can, to draw the line and set them up for success to avoid doing so. At the end of the day, though, I control what I can control and I don't worry about the rest.

What explicit advice would you give to someone in junior high or high school about pursuing a career that's fulfilling?

It would be to do something like a self-authoring program; find out where you see yourself in a few years, etc. There are aptitude tests to find out what you're naturally good at and to help you find a path.

But generally, make the decision of what you want to do, regardless of what the stereotypes are, or what people think about it.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to do the same kind of work as you?

If you look at the trades, especially

right now, there are so many holes opening up. Our society has made people think college and a desk job are the only ways to live your life. And because of that there is a lack of good workers. If anybody has inside of them a desire to go out and solve problems with a positive attitude,

to show up and work and get a sense of accomplishment from that—that is a rare gem. For anybody who feels that way, you can get a job *today* in any of the trades. In smaller privately owned companies, you don't have to go do an apprenticeship, or go to college or do any of that. If you're 18 years old, you can go get a job and start making money *today*. I know that because I talk to my fellow contractors and they all need help. But everybody seems to be stoned or disinterested, or doesn't show up. Yet the pay rates are higher than they've ever been; new guys who know almost nothing are starting at nearly \$20 per hour. It's crazy.

Even if you have no experience, you can get on-the-job training. I just hired a guy who's 17, with zero experience. The fact that he came to the job and is working is something. And if you keep at it, within a couple years, you will have the skills to have your own business if you want it.

I think the best places to find jobs are super small companies when you're starting out. They can be harder to find, so look up a list of all contractor businesses in your state, which is publicly available information. You could also look for Craigslist or Facebook listings; the small companies will post completed jobs that they're proud of on Facebook, and just try reaching out to them privately to see if they're hiring, or if they know anybody who's hiring. I've had people do that with me and they've gotten jobs that way.

Thanks so much for your time, Matt!

COMPASS CHECK

United Youth Magazine

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

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
United Church of God
an International Association

For spiritual tidbits and uplifts, follow

@COMPASSCHECK

on Instagram or Twitter

It's like a safe harbor in a storm

What's the best way to avoid the worst of the social web?
Actively fill your feed with better, more uplifting content!

And that is exactly what we're doing on the
Compass Check Instagram feed.

Follow and you'll see thought-provoking commentary, impactful video clips, behind the scenes access to what's happening at the Home Office and even a meme or two to lighten and brighten your day.

Feel free to DM us with your questions and requests, or if you'd like to contribute something of your own to share!