



COMPASS CHECK

Helping you turn your spiritual compass toward God

FINDING YOUR TREASURE

HOLY BIBLE



Hypocrisy in the Church

How Should We Think About
the Palestine/Israel Conflict?

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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.

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COMPASS CORNER

Dear Compass Checkers,

By the time you receive this issue of *Compass Check*, depending on where you live, the leaves on the trees where you live will most likely be gone. But as I sit at my desk today writing, there are many beautiful orange, red and yellow leaves on the trees here in North Carolina. The coming of fall is always a reminder of how much can change in a year.

There's probably been no bigger change in the world over the last 12 months than the recent eruption of violence in the Middle East. As you sort through understanding this conflict, it's good to ask yourself, *How would Jesus look at those affected?*

Once we understand how Jesus would view things, we have an opportunity to act. Even though difficult things surround us, we can be of great service by encouraging others in all sorts of ways. In this issue of *Compass Check*, Kevin Kenady shares how a summer of lifeguarding helped him be contagious with very positive results.

One of the ways to deal with any challenge is to keep yourself motivated on the end goal. In another article, we'll explore not only what things motivate us, but also how our journey to the Kingdom of God is like a treasure hunt and how we can have big dreams to lead us to big goals.

Finally, one of the biggest challenges we face in life is witnessing hypocrisy. Sad to say, it even exists in church from time to time. How do we deal with it and what can we do to keep it from being such a big problem that it tempts us to quit coming to church?

I pray this issue of *Compass Check* finds you ready to take on and deal with all of life's changes and challenges!



Dan Preston

Editor of Compass Check magazine



IT'S TIME TO BE CONTAGIOUS!

BY KEVIN KENADY

I TOOK a job this summer as a lifeguard at an amusement/water park. This white-haired man was working with a lot of 15-, 16-, 17- and 18-year-olds. When the first hint of a storm was forecast, the lifeguards would say “I so hope we get out of work early,” and that surprised me! I was even more surprised when the lifeguard managers had the same attitude. “We can all hope the thunder and lightning will come so we can go home early.” I was confused. Everyone applied for this work. Everyone had to go through extensive physical training. Everyone knew the salary. Everyone wanted the money. Why did they want to subvert all their efforts to earn money for the summer?

Lifeguarding is an important assignment. Being at peak alertness while watching the water is vital. You are responsible for what happens under your watch. You must be awake, alert and diligently watch all swimmers. You must continually scan all areas, including the bottom of the pool, in case someone has gone unconscious. You must

stop anything that could lead to an accident. Standing in the blazing sun, a lifeguard must be ready at all times to rescue a swimmer.

Most of my fellow lifeguards were noticeably unhappy with their work. When we met at the beginning and end of each day, foul language was the norm. The supervisors seemed angry half of the time, correcting employees with foul language. I had expected to be in a job where everyone was happy. But the workers were not happy. They complained and insulted those enjoying the park. I questioned whether God wanted me to stay in this environment.

BEING A LIGHT

I believe God then inspired me with the thought that I could be a light in this situation. So, I prayed for the right attitude. I prayed that I could help others have a better day. I smiled all the time. I learned the others’ names and said hello whenever we passed. I greeted some with fist bumps. I sat next to anyone who seemed down or alone when we

began our daily meetings.

I started joking with patrons going by on the lazy river. I welcomed and thanked individuals and families for visiting the park. I spoke to the kids as I was watching the water in the wave pool. I was enthusiastic and joked with all the kids and adults while I was sending them down the slides. When I started doing this, the other slide attendant looked at me and said, “Wow, you really like your job, don’t you?”

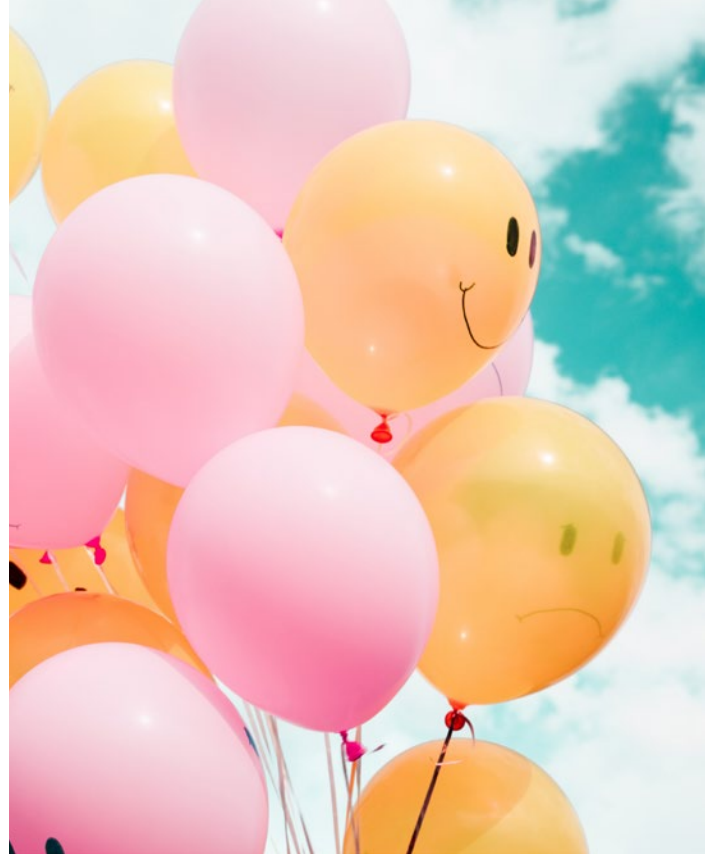
Matthew 5:14-16 says, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

When we let our light shine and have a positive and encouraging attitude, it will not only improve our outlook on our situation, but it will also spread to many who come in contact with us. Motivational speaker Zig Zigler once said, “A positive attitude will have positive results because attitudes are contagious!”

CAN ONE PERSON MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

I had prayed for God to help me each day I went to work. I had asked for His help to encourage others, to change their day for the better. As the summer went on, I asked myself if anything changed with my focused efforts to present a positive attitude to the customers and other employees at the water park. Then one day the answer came.

The owner of the park was a person who never seemed to smile. Some say she worked 90 hours a week and micro-managed everything. She was always rushing from one emergency to another, “putting out fires.” I had started smiling and saying hello every time we passed each



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other. At first, she seemed a little shocked that I addressed her with a friendly voice. Then, she started giving me an uncomfortable smile back.

One day a group of us workers were walking together to our areas when the owner passed us going the opposite direction in her little golf cart. She smiled and said, “Hello everyone. Have a good day.” One of the other workers commented, “Wow. She has never acknowledged me, much less wished me a good day.”

It wasn’t just the owner whose attitude started to change. Throughout the day I rotated all over the park, but kids were continually searching to find me to return a fist bump I gave them earlier. Or they would come find me to tell me they wanted to be a lifeguard. Some just wanted to tell me they had to leave and waved

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as they went by. Adult park goers called me "A lifeguard with personality!" when I joked with them and smiled.

THE CHANGES KEPT COMING

Wherever I went, instead of me being the first to say hello to the other lifeguards, they were saying hello to me first. Sometimes a group would say "Hello Kevin" in unison. The guys all started giving me fist bumps as I passed by. I really started enjoying my job.

A 16-year-old lifeguard asked me at one point, "Aren't you hot in that long sleeve shirt?" I replied that it was hot, but I was fine. Later I overheard her talking to a supervisor offering to pay for me to have a second shirt that was a short sleeved. While at the beginning of the summer, people had been rather distant from one another, one of my coworkers was offering to buy me a shirt!

I wondered if the atmosphere was really changing or if I was just imagining it. Then, at the end of one long hot day, all the lifeguards and supervisors had a meeting. A few things were discussed and then an announcement was made. "The winner of the prize for a lifeguard who made a difference goes to Kevin!" All the lifeguards clapped, cheered and congratulated me. My prayer to make others smile and help them enjoy their day had been answered. God had helped me be a contagious light.

I heard a few other comments along the way that really drove this point home. "I want to be a lifeguard when I grow up" some children said. One administrator at the park gave me a ride in his golf cart one day and told me, "You may not know it, but everybody here loves you."

I started enjoying going to work each day. Almost everyone seemed to have a more positive attitude. There was less foul language and less complaining. Then one day, one of the managers asked me if I would be coming back next year. She needed a major

change in the lifeguard leadership—and she felt I could do it.

I never had imagined that a positive, encouraging attitude could change the atmosphere of an entire workplace. The positive attitude had become very contagious indeed.

SHINING LIGHTS

As Christians we are to be lights. A very positive change occurred in my workplace last summer, not because of me, but because of how God's Word inspired me. I thank God for His inspiration and how He used me.

We don't have to let our circumstances



control us. Being encouraging and having a positive attitude will help us improve our outlook on whatever we are doing and will spread to all those whom we come in contact with.

With God's help, we can make a difference in the world around us. It's time to be contagious! **CC**



Kevin Kenady is a part time pastor in Bowling Green, Kentucky, a retired professor and has a adult son and teen age daughter. He enjoys volunteering for UYC camps and wilderness canoeing.



DREAM ON

by Dan Preston

I love

music. I listen to all kinds—classical, country, rock, hip-hop—you name it. The music I like best, though, is music that tells a story. Something that has meaning and provides motivation.

Last year, my wife and I saw the Elvis movie. My wife grew up as a big fan, although I was not so much of one until we met. Over the years, I really began to appreciate just what a talented singer he was, especially when he was telling a story via song. A large part of the movie covers what is known today as the '68 Comeback Special. Elvis' career had been in decline. The movies and music he had been turning out had been pretty cheesy, and was not at all the kind of music he liked. The movie tells the story of the behind-the-scenes struggle over what kind of music the special would contain.

I won't go into all the details, but in the end, Elvis won out. The final number of the special was a powerful ballad called "If I Can Dream." The 1960s were a turbulent time for America, especially along the lines of race, culture and politics. During the filming of the special, presidential hopeful Bobby Kennedy had been assassinated. A few months prior to that, civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr. had been killed. The fact that citizens of his own country were killing one another over ideological differences deeply disturbed Elvis, and he dreamed of a better future for his nation. These hopes are reflected in the words of the song: "If I can dream of a better land, where all my brothers walk hand in hand, tell me why, oh why, oh why can't my dream come true?"

Elvis wanted to see a future for the world where people of all races and backgrounds could live in peace together. As you are well aware (and as you likely heard quite a bit about at the Feast!), this future can only come

under the rule of Jesus Christ, when He returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. No human government, ideal, song, march or protest will be able to solve the problems of mankind.

While we might understand why this dream cannot come true right now, we need to give Elvis and those like him credit. They didn't have the answer, but they had the dream.

The question for you and me, as people who know the answer, is: Do you dream? Do we, like Elvis and others, actually take time to think about, or dream about, the future we desire?

DO YOU DREAM OF THE FUTURE?

Dreams—the kind you have when you fall asleep at night—are very interesting. They can be total fantasy, such as turning into a bird and flying, or they can be completely true, such as a recollection of riding your bike down the street. Oftentimes, they are a mish-mash of fantasy and truth, combining elements from past events that have happened to you, books you've read, movies you've seen and hopes you might have about the future.

Of course, God has used this type of dream to communicate His plans at times. In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar was given a dream of a statue that foretold of world-ruling empires that would exist through the ages. He was also told about a stone, made without hands, that would “break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (verses 34, 44). That stone, of course, represents Jesus Christ and the coming Kingdom of God.

But what about dreams in the sense of what Elvis talked about? “Daydreams,” you might call them, or thoughts and hopes for the future. Did

you know that God has these as well? For example, when the tribe of Judah was in Babylon, He reassured them that, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11).

Of course, our ultimate dream should be that of life in the Kingdom of God. It is only there that the future Elvis dreamed about can become reality. It will be a time of peace and perfection for all mankind, and dreaming of that future is certainly worthy of our time.

But what about your personal desires? Things you'd like to see, do or accomplish? Everyone has these types of dreams to one degree or another. As a young person, you might “dream” of getting your driver's license someday. Then of graduating high school. After that, maybe of getting a particular degree, and then a job in your field. Marriage, children . . . you get the idea.

It's good, especially for you as a young person, to have dreams for your future. Yes, we should all

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to think about, or dream about,
the future we desire?*

be grounded in reality and understand that some things can't or won't happen until the return of Christ, but in the meantime, you have a life to live. In order to have a happy and fulfilling life, you should dream about your future.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DREAMS

One of the reasons that dreams are so important is that they keep us focused on our goals. In Genesis 11:4 we read about a rather nefarious dream, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

The people at that time weren't content to be the creation of God. They wanted to make a name for themselves, and thus exalt themselves over God. “But the LORD came down to see the city

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FOR YOU AS A YOUNG
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and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the LORD said, 'Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them'" (Genesis 11:5-6).

While their goal was a bad thing, it illustrates a principle—if man dreams of something long enough, he will find a way to do it. The same can be said for other inventions, such as flight, the telephone and dozens of others over the millennia. The point is, dreams serve as a motivation that drive us to do things (for more on motivations, check out the article in this issue entitled "How Are You Motivated").

**WHAT TO DO ABOUT
YOUR DREAMS**

As mentioned, you probably have certain dreams for your future. And whether those dreams become reality or not is often determined by your actions. Some things, like falling in love, cannot be forced. But you can increase your chances of meeting that special someone by getting to know other people. This might include doing things that are a bit outside your comfort zone, like going up to someone new and striking up a conversation. Or making the decision to attend summer camp,

as opposed to staying home, where you might be more comfortable.

For other dreams, you can do your part to move in the right direction. For example, if you want to be a veterinarian, you're going to have to take certain classes, enroll in programs, take tests, etc. You must choose to go to those classes, to ask questions, to study, etc. You're not just going to wake up one morning and find that somehow you've achieved your goal, without ever working at it!

DREAM ON

Aside from the work involved in achieving your goals, take some time to dream about them. Consider, for example, Hebrews 11:8-10, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Even though the goal spoken of here was of God's design, I think it's safe to say that going to the promised land was something Abraham dreamed of. And while God's goals will be accomplished, would God have been able to use Abraham as He did, had Abraham not shared the dream?

What is it you dream about? What hopes do you have for your

future? What are you willing to do to achieve them? Do your dreams require any outside help? Could you use some advice on how to achieve your specific dream? Answering these questions can go a long way toward helping you accomplish your goals; whatever it is you dream of! **CC**



Dan Preston has been blessed to see a lot of his dreams come true, but has a few more he is still working on.

FINDING YOUR TREASURE

HOLY BIBLE

Imagine that you are a famous explorer, and you are searching for a very valuable treasure. Spiritually, in fact, that's true. The greatest treasure we could ever find is the Kingdom of God. "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44).

So if it's hidden, how do you find it? For a physical hidden treasure, you need a map and a compass. A map shows you a ground plan. It's something that gives you a clear vision of what is ahead. It shows you what you need to see. It gives you a destination and a way to follow. When you view a map, you can see marker points that lead you to your destination.

What do you use in your daily Christian life that is like this map? If you haven't guessed, it's your Bible. The Bible is the most important tool in your Christian life. It guides you in the path that God wants you on, the path you need to be on to reach this ultimate treasure. It is full of directions and guidance that will lead you as you grow in the faith. As you go through this adventure of finding your treasure, let's look at some important steps along the way.

1. PRAYER

The first step to understanding the Bible (your spiritual map) is getting down on your knees and praying that God will guide you to understand and lead you on the right path.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

2. STUDY

The second step to understanding and following your map is to study it. To go in the right direction, you have to know the truth, the way, and follow it. Think of this: how do you ace a test in school? You have to study! And it isn't just a quick run through; you have to be repetitive with it in order to get it right. So, if you do it to get good grades, how much more should you do it to reach this treasure you are searching for?

“If you seek her [wisdom] as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God” (Proverbs 2:4-5).

3. FASTING

In addition to prayer and studying, fasting is a great way to connect with your Almighty God. It is an action of humbleness and submission to Him. It shows Him that you are taking your calling seriously, that you are not giving up on the treasure. Fasting is a part of God's plan for us. It is part of His Holy Day plan (the Day of Atonement). We are commanded to afflict (humble) our souls. Fasting, however, should not only be done on this day. It needs to be a regular action within your Christian life. It is a oneness with God. It shows Him that you know you can't finish this adventure without Him.

“I proclaimed a fast . . . that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions . . . The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him . . . So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer” (Ezra 8:21-23).

When you can take these three steps in your life, you start to grow as a Christian. Each one of these marker points is laid out throughout your Bible (the map). As you actively do them (the first two should be done daily, and the last one more than just once a year), you draw closer to your goal. And they lead to the next steps in your journey.



4. REPENTANCE

Repentance means to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to God. Turning from sin is to actively try to do things differently and not repeat that sin. So what is sin? “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, King James Version). Sin means going against God's laws and principles. “To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

**THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE
TREASURE HIDDEN IN A FIELD,
WHICH A MAN FOUND AND HID;
AND FOR JOY OVER IT HE GOES
AND SELLS ALL THAT HE HAS AND
BUYS THAT FIELD.**

Once you know what sin is, you can repent of it. You have likely already started this process or thought about it. It's common at this point to start asking, why is this so hard? Well, you can't do it alone. You need a helper. Something to guide you the rest of the way. But before you can get that help, you have to be baptized. Only then can you receive the help you need to make it to the treasure!

5. BAPTISM

What is baptism? Baptism is being fully immersed in water by a minister or elder, and then receiving the laying on of hands and being prayed over to receive God's Holy Spirit. It is a

symbol of burying your old self (the sinful man), and putting on the new man, just like Christ was buried and rose again.

“If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:21-24).

Baptism cannot be taken lightly. It is a lifelong commitment to God and His ways. When we repent and are baptized, there is no turning back. But when you move through the three steps, prayer, study and fasting, it prepares you for this vital last step. Mind you, this is not a “Go quickly do” thing, just so you can get to the treasure faster. It is a slow process, and it needs to be treated with the utmost respect. (For more, see ucg.org/members/compass-check/understanding-baptism.)

“... Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [forgiveness] of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the

Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39).

Imagine you are getting baptized. You are asked, “Have you repented of your sins and accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?” You come out of the water, and are prayed over. Then you look down and notice something in your hands. It is the compass!

Now you need to know how to use this compass. What is a compass? A compass is a device that points you in a direction by means of a magnetic needle turning freely on a pivot towards the magnetic north. The Holy Spirit does spiritually exactly what a compass does physically. It points you in the direction that God wants you to go. “However,

when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13-14).

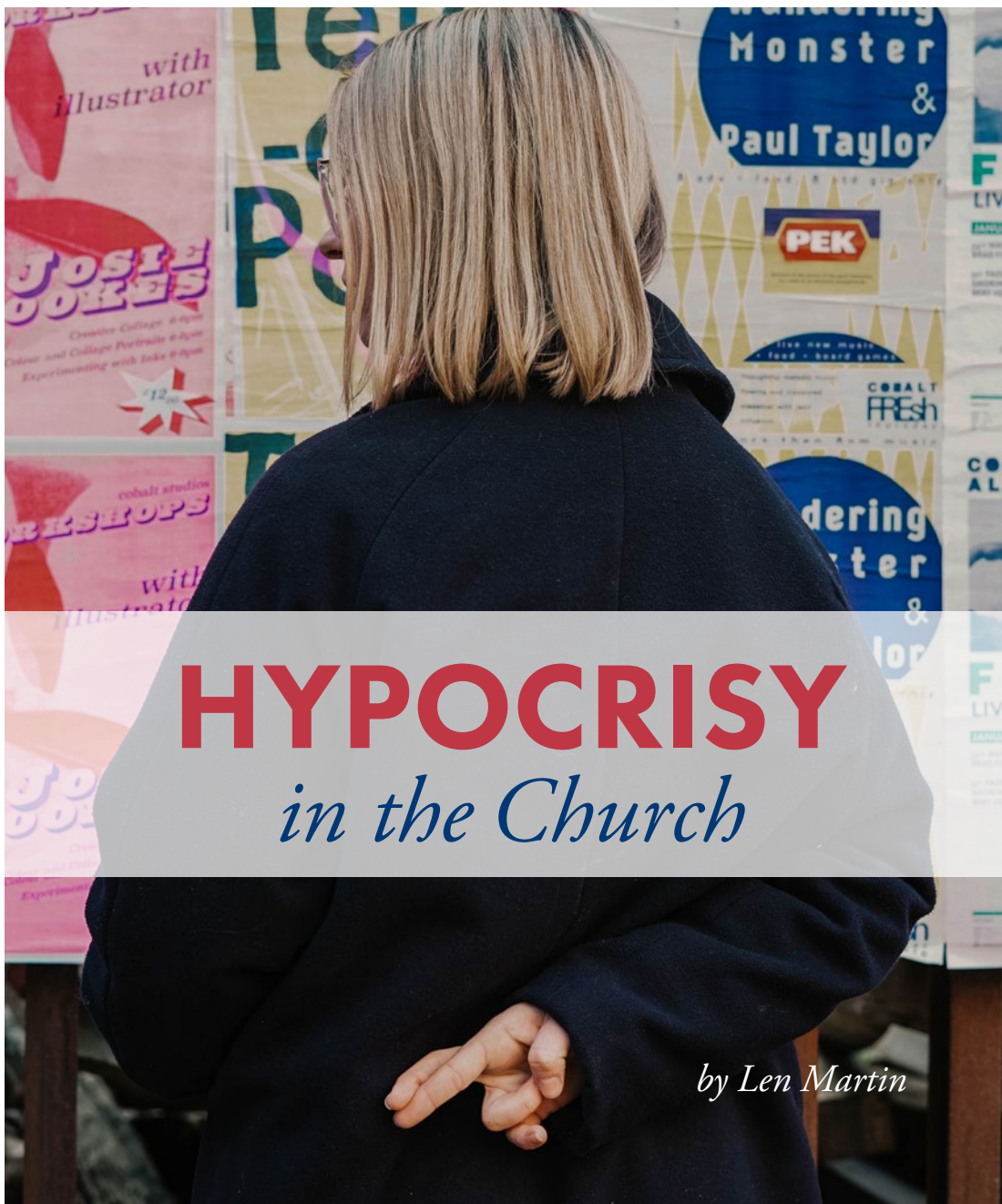
Once you have both the map and the compass, you have the tools you need to get to the treasure! While you might not have yet received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that comes with the laying on of hands after baptism, you can still pray that God will guide you. Study the Bible that is your map, along with the terrain in front of you. Trust that God will help you when you are stuck or having a hard time. Fast to strengthen your bond with God. Throughout your adventure you will be faced with times where you have to do a compass check to make sure you are still on the right path (hence the name of this magazine).

God provides all the tools you need to find the treasure. Remember, it is a lifetime adventure. All you have to do is continue to use the map and the compass, and endure to the end. “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Revelation 3:21). **CC**



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this so hard? Well, you can't do it alone.
You need a helper.*

Wil Brubacher attends the Cambridge, Ohio, congregation. He came into the Church in 2008 and was baptized in 2009. He truly feels there is no bigger treasure than being a part of God's Kingdom!



HYPOCRISY

in the Church

by Len Martin

I came into the Church as a child, and in my 50-plus years of being in the Church, I have observed many things that made me shake my head and wonder what people were thinking. I recall a couple of occasions when I was a teenager, when my friends and I would observe people in church doing things they shouldn't be doing, or behaving in ways we knew were not right. As time went on, several of my friends began commenting about those other people, calling them hypocrites. Eventually, most of my friends left the Church and the reason some of them gave was, "They're all a bunch of hypocrites!"

One such occasion was when I played on our church youth basketball team. To improve the

chances of winning, our coach recruited players from local high schools who were not part of the Church. To play on the team they had to attend Sabbath services. It was clear from the outset, these players were not interested in being part of the Church, but were willing to sit through Sabbath services so they could play basketball.

It was frustrating to see these players pretend to be part of the Church while living contrary to all we teach. They smoked marijuana, participated in school activities and went to parties on Friday nights. One even got arrested and the coach bailed him out of jail!

As a result of these players being on our team, my friends and I frequently sat on the bench while



these other guys played. I remember talking to my mother about the hypocrisy of it all and what to do about it. My mother's advice was simply this, "You need to be like a race horse with blinders, so you can keep your focus on eternal life in the Kingdom of God." Horses wear blinders (also called blinkers) to restrict their field of vision and keep their attention focused straight ahead, blocking out any distractions around them.

If I were to ask you to name one reason people leave the Church, the word hypocrisy often comes to mind. A 2019 survey by LifeWay Research concluded that the top two most frequently chosen reasons for dropping out of church attendance were moving away for college and church members seeming judgmental or hypocritical¹. When we observe hypocrisy, it is easy to become disillusioned and even tempted to reject the Church entirely.

WHAT IS HYPOCRISY?

The Cambridge dictionary defines hypocrisy as "a situation in which someone pretends to believe something that they do not really believe, or that is the opposite of what they do or say at another time." The Merriam Webster dictionary defines a hypocrite as, "a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion, or a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings." The word hypocrisy describes behavior, but the word hypocrite describes a person. As we look at this topic, it is important to make a distinction between observing behaviors that appear to be hypocrisy versus labeling someone a hypocrite.

As it relates to Christians, a hypocrite denotes a person who has the outward show of having virtuous character, being morally pure or exercising religious beliefs or principles, when the person really does not. The Greek word translated "hypocrite" can literally mean, "an actor under an assumed character (stage player)" and occurs 20 times in the New Testament. In 17 of those occurrences the word is used by Jesus Christ to rebuke the scribes and Pharisees.

In Matthew 6, with each instruction Jesus gave regarding charitable giving, prayer and fasting, He instructed us to not be like the hypocrites (Matthew 6:1-2, 5, 16). It's worth noting that the Greek words translated "they have their reward," signify a receipt in full. In other words, they have their entire reward and there is no other reward awaiting them.

The greatest number of occurrences of "hypocrite" in a single passage can be found in Matthew 23. In this chapter, Jesus declares woes upon the scribes and Pharisees seven times, calling them hypocrites (Matthew 23:13-29). A woe is a declaration of grief or indignation.

In all 20 instances of the word "hypocrite" or "hypocrites" used in the New Testament to label a person or group, it was always Jesus speaking. Does this tell us anything?

Do you remember the story in which God sent Samuel to the house of Jesse in search of a king and seven of Jesse's sons passed before Samuel? God said to Samuel, "For man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

When we see what we believe is hypocrisy, we feel that something is wrong, or not fair. But just because we see what appears to be hypocrisy does not mean it really is because we do not know the heart of the person. The Apostle Paul, in several of his letters to the various churches, asked the brethren to imitate God. "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1). "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Most members of the Church are not "hypocrites," but rather are trying to be like Jesus Christ. They are working to imitate Him by reflecting His nature, character and behavior.

Being in the Church does not make us perfect, so we all struggle in our efforts to be like Christ and we still sin (Romans 3:23). We might observe what we believe to be hypocrisy, but we don't see that person at home in private, praying to God, repenting of their sins and asking forgiveness. When repentance is genuine, God promises to forgive (1 John 1:9). If we are not careful,

¹research.lifeway.com/2019/01/15/most-teenagers-drop-out-of-church-as-young-adults/

EVEN THOUGH WE MIGHT SEE WHAT APPEARS TO BE HYPOCRISY, ONLY GOD AND JESUS CHRIST KNOW WHO IS A HYPOCRITE VERSUS WHO IS HONESTLY TRYING TO IMITATE CHRIST.



we might wrongly label someone a “hypocrite” when they are genuinely striving daily to be like Christ and simply fall short.

A true hypocrite is not trying to imitate Christ. This is someone who is acting as if they are trying to imitate Christ, but in their heart, they really are not. A hypocrite is deliberately deceitful in their motives.

None of us has the ability to know the heart of another person. Even though we might see what appears to be hypocrisy, only God and Jesus Christ know who is a hypocrite versus who is honestly trying to imitate Christ.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT?

How can we help someone who is on the brink of quitting the Church because they see “hypocrisy” in the lives of Church members? What can we say to get them to reconsider? Maybe you have had this very struggle in your own life, so how can you resist the temptation to quit?

Let’s first call it what it really is—an excuse. Don’t use hypocrisy as an excuse to leave the Church. Yes, it is difficult to see hypocrisy, but God sees it, too, and He will deal with it when He is ready. Let’s remember nobody is perfect—everyone sins. Even diligent Christians mess up from time to time, so be patient and merciful towards them. Aren’t you glad that God is patient with you?

From the basketball team I played on as a teen, I am the only one still in the Church today. All the rest are gone, even the coach, eventually quitting the Church “because of hypocrisy.” Unfortunately, they couldn’t get past the hypocrisy they saw, and were not patient enough to wait for others to grow or allow God to work it out. It was not easy because it did not seem fair, and they ultimately gave up on the Church.

Like wearing horse blinders, we must keep our eyes focused straight ahead at the goal of eternal life in the

Kingdom of God. Do not look at how other people behave, then use it as an excuse to quit running your race! Yes, it is hard at times, but many things in life require us to do hard things.

Earlier in this article, we read Jesus’ instructions regarding charitable giving, prayer and fasting and His statement that the hypocrites “have their reward” (Matthew 7:1-2, 5, 16). There is no other reward that awaits them. However, for those who are truly striving to live God’s way of life there is a wonderful reward, and it was the focus of the United Youth Camps 2023 theme, “Race to Your Crown.”

Remember what Paul wrote to Timothy: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7-8). **CC**

POINTS TO PONDER/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Can you think of some things that appear to be hypocrisy? Are you certain that they are? If so, what should you do about it? (Matthew 7:1-5)
- Have you ever sinned or acted in a manner inconsistent with your faith? Does that make you a hypocrite or someone who is trying, but not perfect?
- Would you quit your job if a coworker were lying or stealing? Would you quit school because another student is cheating? Then why would you quit the Church and lose out on eternal life in the Kingdom of God because someone else is a hypocrite?



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HOW ARE YOU MOTIVATED?

by Kourtney Kovanis

The first real job I had was at a press release distribution company. I worked in the newsroom receiving, editing and distributing business news and financial reports. It was a big company, and their business depended on fast and accurate work by us editors. I remember feeling the pressure of an imminent deadline coming up, and the stress of wondering whether I made a mistake on a press release that was just published. So although there were some positive things that motivated me on the job (for example, the feeling of success when I learned a new skill, the excitement of making a difficult deadline, a compliment from my coworker...), the main motivation I felt while working there was more negative. I felt motivated to work hard to avoid the embarrassment of messing up and the fear of getting fired.

We all have positive and negative motivations in life. Both can be quite

helpful in driving us to do good things and avoid bad decisions. What I mean by a negative motivation is the push or urge to do something in order to avoid or minimize pain, failure or some negative result. In contrast, a positive motivation is the drive to do something because of encouragement, support or the promise of success or a reward.

In the Bible, we see that God uses both types of motivation with His people. Deuteronomy 30:15-18, says:

"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess."

But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess."

God calls out the good result of choosing His way (blessings and life), but also the negative that will happen if the people turn away (curses and death). As humans, it seems that we often need both positive and negative motivations to stay on the right track. It's helpful to remind ourselves that God will most likely use both tactics in our lives, and make sure we are aware and noticing what is or isn't motivating us. Ideally, we're motivated by the right things, in the right way, at the right time.

An example of this in the Bible is Paul (then called Saul) in the Road to

Damascus story. After he sees a blinding light, God appears and speaks to him harshly. His response is “Lord, what do You want me to do?” (Acts 9:6). An intimidating interaction leads him to respond with humility, but also a drive to action.

In learning to respond well to different motivations and follow Paul’s example, there are a couple of potential problems we can fall into if we’re not careful.

THE PROBLEM WITH ONLY BEING MOTIVATED BY FEAR OR PAIN

Fear is a powerful motivator. The knowledge of consequences and threat of punishment underpins how much of our society functions today. The idea of going to jail or paying a large fine are effective deterrents for many people to think twice about dangerous or reckless actions. But it clearly doesn’t work completely. And most of us would agree that in an ideal world, everyone wouldn’t need to be pressured by fear or potential punishment into doing good things. Work and school environments are a lot more enjoyable when everyone is mainly motivated by

When you’re only motivated by negative elements, you run the risk of having nothing left to motivate you in the right direction if the fear or threat goes away.

positive elements like the satisfaction of doing a good job and the promise of things like a promotion or good grades.

Spiritually, negative motivations include the potential punishment of ending up in the Lake of Fire (see ucg.org/bible-study-tools/booklets/what-happens-after-death/are-some-tortured-forever-in-a-lake-of-fire). Positive motivations include the promise of a close relationship with God, true joy and peace, and access into His Kingdom.

When you’re only motivated by negative elements, you run the risk of having nothing left to motivate you in the right direction if the fear or threat goes away. In the history of the Church, there have been times when false leaders or teachers convinced followers that there would actually be no punishment for not keeping the Sabbath and other aspects of God’s laws. When that happened, many fell away. This seems to



be partially because without the fear of consequences, they didn’t have much motivation left. What was missing was the joy and love for God’s laws, the attitude that even if there were

no consequences for not keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days, the positive motivation is there with a passion for knowing God, developing a close relationship with Him and becoming more like Him.

Ask yourself: Do I tend to learn things the hard way? Do I need to experience negative consequences to “get the message”

and change or improve? When I receive positive motivation, does it encourage me to do more good things, or do I just get complacent?

THE PROBLEM WITH ONLY BEING MOTIVATED BY POSITIVITY

This doesn’t sound like it would be a bad thing. Perhaps you love getting positive feedback and feel energized through words of encouragement. That can be a helpful motivation, and good to know about yourself. When you feel down, you can go to friends and family who you know will lift you up with supportive and comforting input.

At the same time, we will all get critical feedback at certain times in life. If you’re not getting any, it probably means you aren’t taking many risks. You might be a bit stuck in your

comfort zone. Learning to also be motivated when negative feedback comes up is an important skill.

Unfortunately, other people aren't always the best at phrasing critical feedback constructively or wording things gently in times of stress. If you only get motivated with positivity, you might run the risk of becoming somewhat paralyzed in terms of decision-making when you receive negative feedback. I have felt this way at times. I get so worried about making a mistake that I become overly cautious and very slow to act or decide on anything. But this isn't what God wants for us.

Emotional intelligence author and instructor Justin Bariso suggests remembering the phrase "use the difficulty" to shift our perspective from being overwhelmed when something negative happens to remembering that we can use it to our advantage. He writes,

"Often, when faced with challenging circumstances, you might try to focus on the end of a situation, and how things will change for the better. That can be helpful.

"But when you focus on using the difficulty, you have an additional tool—one that enables you to find reward right now. It transforms your view of the situation, allowing you to take advantage of current circumstances, although difficult, to create a positive."

In other words, not only do we know that in the long term things will work together for good (Romans 8:28), but we can also use things that seem negative to help us grow and learn right now. This kind of attitude can make us more resilient, bold and tough-skinned Christians.

Later in his article, Bariso suggests asking yourself questions like these to practice "using the difficulty":

1. What's good about this situation? What is this situation teaching me?



2. How can I use this perceived disadvantage, setback or challenge to my advantage?

We might add, "What could God be trying to help me learn?"

Last winter I injured my knee playing volleyball. It turned out to be a complete ACL tear, meaning surgery, eight weeks on crutches, limited mobility and a lot of physical therapy (still ongoing), all of which was not easy with a toddler at home. It was also a difficult event because it seemed so out of the blue. I hadn't had any knee problems before, or even any major injuries really.

It was easy to just get discouraged and say maybe I shouldn't try to play sports anymore, or do anything too intense. But I've had (a lot) of time to think and process, and I don't want to live timidly just to try to avoid another injury. And through spending a lot of time at the physical therapy office, I've started to appreciate learning how to

take care of and strengthen my body in the right way. I've also gained a lot of empathy for others who have gone through big injuries or have serious health trials. It's easy to take things for granted until they get taken away.

I could write a lot more about what I've been learning through my injury and recovery process (and maybe I will), but for now the point is that even difficult trials can teach us good things.

Review and consider the categories above; see which area you might identify as relevant to yourself (or both). Then take some time to write down your answers. This can be a good starting point for particular prayers to God asking for wisdom and self-awareness of potential blind spots that are impeding your spiritual growth. When we're aware of how we're motivated and open to God's guidance, we can learn and grow from anything that happens in life, whether good or bad. **CC**



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HOW SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT THE PALESTINE/ISRAEL CONFLICT?

As Christians who consider ourselves citizens of a different Kingdom, what should our perspective be on the Palestine/Israel question?

A militant group called Hamas carried out an unfathomably brutal attack on Israeli men, women and children on Oct. 7, 2023. Israel has responded with a major military operation with the aim to obliterate Hamas, which is a terrorist organization that overtly calls for the destruction of all Jews, everywhere.¹ Hamas has politically controlled a small strip of land in Israel called the Gaza Strip since 2007. Caught in the crossfire are civilians, mostly Palestinian but also Israeli. Enormous suffering has resulted. It's only the most recent flare-up of a centuries-long, ongoing dispute.

SOME BACKGROUND

"Palestine" is a term that essentially corresponds to a section of land in southwest Asia at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. The term is thought to have evolved from the name "Philistia," and was first used by the Roman Empire around A.D. 135 in the aftermath of a Jewish rebellion. That same territory comprises the modern Israeli state. Since declaring themselves a nation in 1948, the Israelis have developed a powerful, fertile and wealthy homeland.

But, is it their homeland? Or, is it the Palestinians' homeland? "Palestinians" is the commonly used title for the descendants of approximately 780,000 Arabs who left the area in 1948 when an alliance of five Arab nations declared war on the newly proclaimed state of Israel.

Both the Jews and the Palestinian Arabs have a name for that event. Israelis call it *Yom Ha'atzmaut* (Day of Independence in



Hebrew), while Palestinians call it *Nakba* (catastrophe in Arabic). And both people groups lay claim to the land as rightfully theirs with competing interests dating back centuries and even millennia.

The modern history of the dispute dates back roughly 100 years to the time when empires ruled the world. The British Empire took jurisdiction over the area when its previous ruler, the Ottoman Empire, collapsed during World War I. Jews had begun moving there in the 1890s to escape persecution in Europe, ramping up during the overt anti-Semitism of the Nazi period in the 1930s and 40s. This great influx of immigrants resulted in escalating conflict with the Arabs who called it home already. In 1948, with steadfast Palestinian refusal to accept a two-state solution as proposed by the United Nations, and the withdrawal from the region by the British Empire, Israel declared its independence.

Much of the present-day animosity derives from these events, as well as the outcomes of the periodic military

confrontations between Israel and their Arab neighbors (Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and others) since then. It also derives from the historic animosity between Muslims and Jews, which dates back to Islam's founding in the eighth century. And if you go back even further, we know there's a tribal element as well—Arabs descended from the line of Ishmael, Jews descended from the line of Isaac.

LOOKING FOR A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE INSTEAD OF A GEOPOLITICAL ONE

In the present conflict between Israel and Hamas, we see a war for the hearts and minds of the world coming from both sides. Palestinian sympathizers lament the low quality of life and lack of opportunity in the Gaza Strip, and the great displacement of their people that took place in 1948. Jewish sympathizers remind the world of the atrocities committed against Jews that led to their immigration to the area, the continued terror attacks against them and the five times Palestinians have rejected peace deals that included a Palestinian state over the past 90 years.

Knowing how to respond to all of this and determining the right way to think about it all is extremely challenging. The default way society likes to think about issues is to find the victim and take their side. But in this situation, there's plenty of victimhood to go around on both sides, just as there's plenty of death and destruction on the innocent caught in the middle.

In this article I want to try to look at the situation from the perspective of a

Christian who wants to do the right thing and think the right thing. At the end I'll share some resources that helped me understand the history from a geopolitical perspective.

WE ARE TO HAVE COMPASSION ON ALL WHO SUFFER

Jesus calls on His followers to love all people, no matter who they are. The second great commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:36-40). In response to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan. In it, the righteous, religious people ignored the suffering of a man left for dead, while a hated foreigner—a Samaritan, who had a false religion—had compassion on him, and took care of his needs. Jesus explicitly tells his followers: "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37).

Where the rubber meets the road here is that we are to remember this and have compassion on *anybody* who's unjustly suffering—whether an Arab who just happened to be born in Gaza and is now suffering for it, or an Israeli whose child was murdered by Hamas terrorists. Of course, compassion is shown in different ways. For those unjustly suffering, we might pray that God heal them and give them peace. For those who are suffering as a result of sinful actions, we might pray that they repent of their ways and cease hurting others.

ONLY GOD WILL BE ABLE TO ULTIMATELY SOLVE THIS DILEMMA

It will take God to solve this problem once and for all. Sometimes that can sound like a cop-out, but in this situation the hardness of heart in these peoples confounds every attempt at cooperation. We know from Jesus' Olivet Prophecy in Luke 21 that at some point, armies will surround Jerusalem with the intent to make war there. Jesus will return and He will conquer them all, establishing His Kingdom. Remembering this fact can help in relinquishing our mental and emotional need to feel like we have to somehow help solve this issue.

That doesn't mean we don't do what good we can now—that's the point of the parable of the Good Samaritan. But since we don't live there, our options for how to mitigate suffering are limited, and fraught with unlimited moral quandaries. For instance, with Hamas in charge, money given to help civilians in Gaza for the past 20 years was used by Hamas to build infrastructure and buy armaments to carry out terrorist attacks against Israel.² In this kind of environment, how in the

It will take God to solve this problem once and for all. Remembering this fact can help in relinquishing our mental and emotional need to feel like we have to somehow help solve this issue.

world are we supposed to help the actual victims?

With limited options, I've gradually become more okay with mentally relinquishing my feeling like I have some responsibility to help solve this crisis on my own. Instead, it's really brought home the power of the apostle Peter's admonition to cast "all your care upon [Jesus], for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

THE ULTIMATE HOPE OF LIFE IN GOD'S KINGDOM WILL INCLUDE ALL PEOPLE, EVEN BITTER ENEMIES

In Isaiah, there's an incredible passage that describes the peace that will come when Christ returns. At the end of a proclamation against Israel's bitter enemy Egypt for its idolatry and evil behavior, God paints this picture of peace through the prophet: "In that day

there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria [another of Israel's bitter enemies] . . . In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, 'Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance'" (Isaiah 19:23-25).

Right now, with nothing but hatred and division leading to violence that seems incomprehensible, those promises feel urgent and more relevant than ever. Let's keep in mind—ultimate power to solve these problems is in God's hands. And let's use that sense of urgency to motivate us to embody the values of the Kingdom now, as we sigh and cry over the abominations we see done.

And above all, fervently pray, "Thy Kingdom come." **CC**



Mitchell Moss is the design production manager of Compass Check as well as a personal image consultant. He works hard to think through things from a Christ-follower's point of view first.



ADDITIONAL READING AND VIEWING TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THIS TOPIC

Scan this code or go to ucg.org/ccw23

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