

**MEN OF VALOR**

**Atheism Is Dead — God**

**IN THE NEWS**

April–June 2012

# verticalthought®

*a magazine of understanding for tomorrow's leaders*



## ***Really?***

**The End of the World:**  
Is It Real, and If So What  
Can You Do About It?

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Engaged This Summer**

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*the Easy Way!***

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## Over the Cliff

**The late autumn sun setting behind the Black Hills cast dark, dry shadows on thirsty, gumbo soil. The Cheyenne River still carried a little water, but seven years of severe drought made me marvel at the sad beauty of one of my favorite vantage points for thinking.**

Through my teens and the years since, I loved to look over the cliff. Scanning more than three miles of river valley from southwest to northeast always filled me with admiration for God's magnificent creative power. It made me feel small—in a good way.

Whitetail and mule deer lived down there in company with rabbits, red squirrels, raccoons, coyotes and wildcats. Pheasants, turkeys and doves called it home. Migrating flocks of ducks and geese took up temporary lodging on the river. Cattle, sheep and horses grazed in the pastures—except when no rain meant no grass. It was a sad valley in dry times and a lush, happy one when the rains came.

We all need a cliff to look over—a hill or a mountain to climb where we can contemplate. Even Jesus sought an overlook. He gave the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5-7) overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Another time, after a public confrontation with some biblically unbalanced religious-political leaders and after healing a demon-possessed young girl, "Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there" (Matthew 15:29).

After fighting those different forms of the forces of evil, the Savior of mankind as a human being needed a little time to reflect on His mission and ministry. From the vantage point of that mountain (perhaps the same one of the famous sermon) He could privately pray to the Father and gain both a literal and a spiritual overview of the events and challenges in His

life. Humanly, He collected His thoughts and feelings to prepare for what would happen next.

And next were the people who needed His healing of their diseases, deafness, blindness, injuries—and even more, the

spiritual healing of truth and love. A great multitude of 4,000 men plus women and children came up the hill to his viewpoint, and He miraculously fed them a meal of fish and bread (verses 32-38).

In a very real way we want *Vertical Thought* to be similar to the cliff or the mountain Jesus enjoyed. It can help you maintain an overview of life. It can help you learn the truth that Jesus taught and begin to experience the profound love He has for you personally and for all.



Take a look "over the cliff"—or, in this case, inside the cover of this issue to consider the implications of God's existence, of serving others and of increasing your brain power by reading the Bible, plus a host of other vital truths. And please check out our newly designed website [VerticalThought.org](http://VerticalThought.org). Moving forward, the website plans call for not only what you receive in the printed magazine but much, much more.



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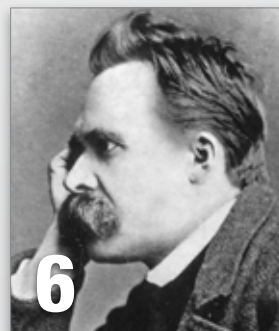
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# THE End OF THE World

■ Is It Real,  
■ and If So, What  
■ Can You Do About It?

by Milan Bizic

**2012**—a year many people have slated to be the “end of all things.” This thinking is based on an assumption that the ancient Mayan calendar predicts massive upheaval and world destruction near the end of this year. Movies have been made about it, and Internet message board arguments rage about what, if anything, will happen by year’s end.

On the flip side, others think that the world as we know it will never end—at least not for eons to come. Things are going pretty well, they reason, so why should anything happen to ruin it?

Either way, we sure hear a lot of noise and a lot of confusion about what 2012 means and whether there will ever be an “end of the world.”

As we face the issue, let’s forget about Mayan prophecies and Hollywood blockbusters. Let’s ignore the hype and hysteria and focus on what’s most important. The world is not going to end in 2012. In fact, the popular concept of massive destruction ending in the complete annihilation of the human race and life on earth is *never* going to happen!

## A cataclysmic end is coming

When we think of the “end of the world,” we get mental images of huge tidal waves demolishing coastal megacities, a giant meteor impact devastating the planet or perhaps man-made calamity such as all-out nuclear war. And yes, the Bible *does* mention events like this taking place in the future.

## Opinions are split on what will happen in 2012.

*Will it be the end of the world, or will the doomsday theorists have egg on their faces? Is it even possible that the world could really end?*

Jesus' disciples were concerned about the future conditions of the world during the time before His return to the earth. But note that they referred to this as "the end of the *age*" (Matthew 24:3), not "the end of the *world*," as some have incorrectly translated this. They were asking about the end of "*this present evil age*" (see Galatians 1:4). So Jesus told them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:7-8).

Elsewhere the Bible details those other "sorrows." The book of Revelation describes many worldwide events that are going to happen in the future, including cosmic disturbances such as the darkening of the sun and moon and the plummeting of meteors from out of the sky (Revelation 6:12-13), colossal environmental disasters impacting vegetation (Revelation 8:7), sea life (verse 8) and the atmosphere (verse 12), and the most powerful, destructive earthquake in the history of mankind (Revelation 16:18). We're talking about a pretty big deal here!

So far, it looks like the end-of-the-world folks are pretty close to the mark. Will mankind survive all this upheaval? Humanly, *we can't!*

### **It's not the end of the world— it's the beginning of a better one!**

The Bible reveals that mankind would be entirely wiped off the face of the earth but for the sudden and universe-changing rescue by Jesus Christ! No doubt sensing His disciples' rising fear of what He was telling them, Jesus gave them and us hope and assurance: "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved [alive]; but for the elect's sake [the sake of those God is working with today] those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:22).

We know that God can't lie (Titus 1:2). And we know that He will keep His promise to never again destroy all life on the earth like He did during the worldwide flood in Noah's day when He said, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done" (Genesis 8:21).

God's true and honest Word gives us confidence to know that the world won't end in the way the 2012 theorists say it will! Of course, scoffers who see no end in sight (2 Peter 3:3-4) are also wrong. With the upheaval surrounding Christ's return and the changes He will then bring, the world *as we know it* will come to an end at that future time—though the earth itself and humankind will survive.

So what happens after Jesus intervenes to set things straight and prevent life on earth from being destroyed? The planet will be in rough shape. But God has a plan for everything, and His plan for what happens after Christ's return is amazing and beautiful.

World peace will at last be realized. Ancient enemies will make peace with one another! According to one of the most profound prophecies the prophet Isaiah recorded: "In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria" (Isaiah 19:23-24). These three nations were historical enemies, fighting many wars and subjugating one another. But even the most bitter of hatreds will cease once God begins to work with all mankind after the calamities of the end time.

### **What can you do to get ready?**

Even though the world won't end in 2012, the Bible shows that there are some very difficult and dangerous times ahead. Thankfully, we also know that in His goodness and mercy God won't let mankind be destroyed, but will send Jesus Christ back to earth to intervene. Knowing what to expect from the future, then, what should we do about it?

- *Don't be afraid—even in the face of terrible circumstances.*

When the Israelites were trapped between the vicious Egyptian army and the width and depth of the Red Sea, Moses gave them these words of courage: "Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today" (Exodus 14:13).

- *Stay close to God.* Monitor your spiritual identity: "Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves" (2 Corinthians 13:5, New Living Translation). Two of the best ways to build your relationship with God are active daily prayer and Bible study. Occasional fasting (setting aside a day for study and prayer while not eating or drinking) helps our spiritual progress as well.

## **The world as we know it will come to an end— though the earth itself and humankind will survive.**

- *Pay attention to the world around you.* This was Jesus' directive to His followers: "So you, too, must keep watch! For you don't know what day your Lord is coming" (Matthew 24:42, New Living Translation). Comparing prophetic Bible passages like Matthew 24 and others with conditions in the world today serves as a "spiritual barometer" to track trends leading to Christ's return.

When the summer is past and December comes up on you fast, don't be afraid. We know the world isn't going to end in 2012! And what we know *will* happen in the future doesn't have to scare us or make us worried either. The ultimate safety and security is in your personal relationship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

So don't worry about the end of the world. Look forward to the better world to come!

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**Milan Bizic** is a proofreader and editor for the United Church of God. He and his wife Sarah live in the Cincinnati, Ohio, area.



# Atheism Is Dead

God

*What's the attraction of atheism, and why has it become so evangelistic? Are we missing something, or is the atheist philosophy missing something?*

by Randy Stiver

“Is God Dead?” So asked the cover of *Time* magazine on April 8, 1966, in the midst of the sexual and drug revolution. The headline echoed the atheistic sentiments of the 19th-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (pronounced *NEE-che*).

Nietzsche wasn't the first person to reject God's existence, but he was one of the more famous to do so in the late 1800s. In his book *The Gay Science* he wrote, “God is dead,” and gave his own (obviously fictitious) account of “God's murder.” From 1859 Charles Darwin's theory of evolution attracted many philosophers and scientists. It gave them a doctrine—actually an atheistic religion—to replace any belief in God as the Creator of all things. Nietzsche's “God is dead” philosophy helped popularize the implications of the theory of evolution.

Especially in America—ironically often described as the most religious nation in the world—a battle continues between those who believe in God and the atheistic-evolutionary forces of popular culture, science and higher education. The intimidation factor of higher education has ensured that you are taught the “theory” of evolution in school as unarguable fact. (To learn the *real* facts of the matter, order our free booklets *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and *Creation or Evolution: Does It Matter What You Believe?*)

God most assuredly is *not* dead. The T-shirt of a friend of mine bore a clever message in this regard. The first line said, “God is dead. —Nietzsche.” The second line said, “Nietzsche is dead. —God.” Truth is in the second line. But here's a greater truth: *Atheism* is dead too.

Its proponents don't know that yet, but as a philosophy—actually a godless religion with evolution as its handmaiden doctrine—atheism is truly dead. However, the atheist movement presently thinks it has the upper hand. Militant atheism or atheist activism is regularly in the headlines during these early years of the 21st century. Atheism websites and publications abound. Beginning about 2009, evangelistic atheism advertisements have

been plastered on buses in many European and American cities.

Nevertheless, though popular for the moment, atheism's demise is coming—with no possibility of resurrection.

## Why is atheism dead?

For any readers who've embraced atheism, this is offered as encouragement to reconsider that philosophy.

Honestly, atheism died for a lack of truth and logic. It lacks truth because, first, God is *not* dead and, second, the godless philosophy depended on unprovable evolution to explain life. Being unprovable, evolution remains a theory—and not a good one. A viable theory is supposed to fit the facts available—yet evolution does not even come close.

Atheism lacks logic because it underestimates the complexity of life, doesn't do math well—especially fractal geometry—and it won't ask itself the really hard question. (Fractal geometry, originally called Chaos Theory, is a relatively recent branch of mathematics that discovered that the patterns of coastlines, leaves, trees, hilly landscapes and virtually anything in nature are *not random* but mathematically calculable—and evidence of a supreme Designer!)

## What is the atheist movement trying to do?

What have most great religions attempted throughout history? Answer: *dominate*. Remember, atheism is essen-



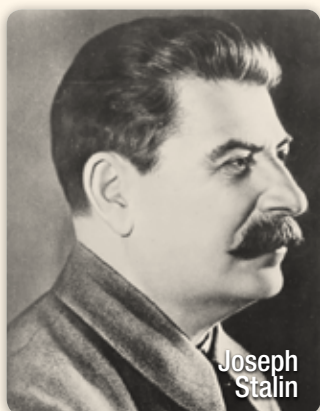
Friedrich Nietzsche

tially a nontheistic religion, and human nature is remarkably predictable.

This question was clearly summarized in a December 2011 blog titled “What Are the Goals of the Atheist Movement?” by leading atheist activist Greta Christina. In essence, the first goal as she expressed it is to “see atheists fully accepted into society, and to have atheism accepted as legitimate.” One could argue that this goal seems to have long been met in most halls of academia. The other goal is more ominous: “a world where there’s no religion”—no religion except *atheism*, of course.

### Why does atheism hate traditional religion so much?

A recurring atheistic argument against traditional religion is that all the world’s wars (and other societal evils) have been caused by religion. Sadly, this is true to a significant degree. But we must realize that these are consequences of *false* religion—not merely believing in God. Even much that has been



## Well over 100 million people were killed by their own atheist governments in the last century.

passed off as Christianity is not the true Christian religion of the Bible. Moreover, we should ask: Has *atheism* ever been guilty of wars, killing and destruction?

Dr. Rudolph Rummel of the University of Hawaii, in his book *Death by Government*, chronicled how many of their own people various governments in history have killed (not including battle deaths or capital punishment for crimes). The worst of the worst, in terms of sheer numbers, was the communist Soviet Union, which murdered nearly 62 million Soviet subjects during its 70-year history. The next most deadly was the communist Chinese government launched by Mao Tse-Tung, with 35 million killed. In third place was Adolf Hitler’s Nazi Germany, which exterminated 21 million. It should be realized that Friedrich Nietzsche’s godless philosophy infused Nazi thinking.

But the worst murderer of its own people by percentage was the Cambodian communist regime of Pol Pot, which dur-

ing the late 1970s slaughtered one third of the country’s 6 million people.

*Belief in God* didn’t cause these atrocities. They were perpetrated by fundamentally *atheistic* regimes. So atheism is by no means a panacea.

### Why doesn’t atheism ask the hard question?

Put any discussion of the divine, spiritual law on hold. Scientists—including atheistic ones—believe in, constantly rely on, and use the laws of physics (including mathematics and all the natural laws of science) to carry out their work. The hard question: *Where did the laws of physics come from, and why do they always work?*

Atheism doesn’t want to answer this question, yet science willingly assumes the certainty of these physical laws. Theoretical physicists have in recent years developed the matrix or M-Theory—an extension of string theory—to explain the universe. (You’ll have to google it, as there’s no room to address it here.) But even that has at its basis certain fixed laws of physics. Where did those laws come from?

When pushed for an origin of the laws of science, the atheistic-evolutionary answer essentially is that those laws have just *always been there*. Thus logic fails the atheist movement by the refusal to address origins.

There is an answer, though. Let’s move from the seemingly unknown (origin of the laws of physics) to the known (origin of societal laws). Where do laws governing society come from? That’s easy. They are made by legislators and sustained, albeit imperfectly, by judicial branches of governments. Societal laws don’t exist by happenstance, and neither do the laws of science—they are specifically made and dynamically sustained! Bottom line: Laws—spiritual or physical—demand a Lawgiver who is also a law Sustainer. And that would be *God*.

### The future of atheism

God is on His throne, and Jesus Christ will soon return to the earth to establish the Kingdom of God. However, there is an evil spirit being—Satan the devil—who wants human beings to reject belief in God, and as one of his many deceptions he has spawned atheism (compare John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 12:9).

On the horizon before Christ’s second coming is the worst world war in history (see our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*). And this war will arise from conflicts between world religions—*false* religions, not the true religion of the Bible. As the battle lines are drawn, the resulting fervor will draw atheists and believers alike to one worship system or another—but, again, not the worship of the true God as revealed in the Bible. Atheism as we know it today will be virtually extinguished in those troubled times.

And as the divine plan in Scripture unfolds, all will come to believe in God. The question then will be whether they choose to *believe what God says*. Either way, the conclusion is the same: Atheism is dead. —God.

**Randy Stiver** serves as managing editor for *Vertical Thought* and teaches at Ambassador Bible Center in Milford, Ohio.

# Whom Would Jesus Vote For?



Conservative, liberal, third party, Tea Party or write-in candidate—  
which would Jesus support? Which should you?

by Scott Hoefker

**A**cross the United States, the election campaign is in full swing. Tuesday, November 6, 2012, will be the 57th quadrennial election for the presidency of the United States. Once again the whole world watches because America is still the most powerful nation on earth.

Claims and counterclaims are tossed about. Advocates from one side say their opponent is merely a continuation of another man's failed policies. The other side says that the opposing candidate is too liberal and too inexperienced to serve. Nasty "mudslinging" accusations are now the norm. And what used to be just an older folks' political discussion has become heated debate even among younger people.

But what is God's perspective on presidential election? If Jesus Christ were walking the earth today, would He vote for one candidate or another?

## Jesus and human government

There is a widespread misconception that Jesus Christ's message was mainly about Himself. Very few who profess to be Christians realize that Jesus' gospel had much to say about *world government*.

A great many people think of Jesus as just the "baby in a

manger" rather than the true biblical Jesus Christ who is now at the right hand of God in heaven (Acts 7:55–56). Few consider that Jesus Christ promised to return as the very real King of Kings over the whole earth—including the United States.

A foundational problem of the human race is that people, from the time of Adam and Eve, have desired and attempted to rule themselves apart from God's involvement and leadership.

Jesus' main message—the gospel or "good news" He preached—focused on world government and the willingness of each human being to surrender to God and eventually become part of His family. That government will soon be in place over the earth!

## Jesus and His government

The Roman governor Pontius Pilate challenged Jesus about whether He considered Himself a king. Christ's answer was: "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36). Jesus had no intention of being involved in this world's politics. He represented a different world and different government—the Kingdom of God.





## Our ultimate citizenship is not in any government of men, and when there is a conflict “we obey God rather than man.”

There is no indication of Jesus politicking or voting during His human lifetime. Instead, He taught constantly—especially in His parables—about His own future government, the Kingdom of God.

Jesus set us a non-political example during His ministry precisely by not campaigning for human leaders of His time, nor involving Himself in any political movements. Likewise, He did not teach His followers to try to change the world through the politics of human governments!

### How should Christians interact with human governments?

Although Jesus Christ did not actively participate in the governments of this world, He set an example of obedience to civil law, showing respect toward those in office. When the Pharisees (a political-religious party of

the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). That is emphasized even more by the clear statement that “we are ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20). We should conduct ourselves with love and respect for all, including those in political offices. But we always remember that our ultimate citizenship is not in any government of men, and when there is a conflict “we obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29).

Although we should serve and do good, we shouldn’t entangle ourselves in the politics of this world. The current political system of all the various nations is not God’s system!

### So what would Jesus do during an election year?

Instead of getting caught up in political debates, Jesus would be busy seeing to the proclamation of the good news of the soon-coming Kingdom of God. He would be watchful of the ongoing politics in America—or any nation—but would avoid participation in any governments of man. Jesus would know that although human governments serve the purpose of maintaining order and many participants are

well-meaning, human attempts to govern this world are destined to ultimately fail—and have been since the devil led Adam and Eve to disobey God.

The mission of true Christians is to help prepare the way for the Kingdom of God, the literal government of Jesus Christ.

It will replace the human governments of this earth. Revelation 11:15

foretells the announcement of that divine takeover: “Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, *‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever’*” (New American Standard Bible, emphasis added).

The political system we see now *is* going to change—ultimately for the better, and that’s great news. Our focus needs to be vertical, keeping our eyes on Jesus Christ and not so much on the political systems of this world.

**Scott Hoefker** and his wife Gayle live in Charlotte, North Carolina, where he pastors United Church of God congregations in North and South Carolina and has a private counseling practice.

## “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”

the time) asked Jesus about paying taxes, He answered, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21).

Jesus inspired one of His ardent followers (Paul the apostle) to write: “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves” (Romans 13:1-2). God expects human governments to provide a measure of law and order. “For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor” (verses 6-7).

Through Paul, Jesus also instructs true believers: “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

True Christians are like foreign ambassadors. “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for



# Keep Your Brain Engaged This Summer

*As warm weather approaches those in the northern hemisphere, thoughts of class work deadlines and final exam dates are replaced by two words—summer break!*

by Sue Dunkle

**H**ow will you spend your summer break? (And don't worry, southern hemisphere, your turn will come.) Will you turn into a couch potato playing video games for hours on end, or sunbathe at the pool day after day? If you're like me, those pursuits would become extremely boring very quickly. As a teacher I get summers off also. And while I do enjoy a week or two of downtime, after that I have to keep myself busy or face boredom!

So how can you keep your brain actively engaged during the summer respite? You have many options, but consider these activities to keep all your brain synapses firing in the absence of academics.

## Just for fun

First, try getting involved in something just for fun. After all, *it is summer break*—so treat yourself! Maybe you've always wanted to go rock climbing or traveling abroad or to read one of the great literary classics. Whatever it is (as long as it's worthy), as the famous shoe slogan states, "*Just do it!*"

I took this advice during the summer after my first year of teaching. I'd dreamed of traveling to the British Isles from the time I was a teenager. After saving for the whole year I explored England and Scotland in an eight-day tour accompanied by my mother and aunt. That rich experience is one I'll always remember. But even if you don't have the means to travel abroad, isn't there some other closer attraction or activity you'd like to visit? Start planning now to make it happen.

## Self-improvement

Set some good personal goals for yourself. Developing goals and striving to achieve them will help your brain stay sharp throughout the summer. For example, try developing an exercise program you could easily maintain not just in summer but throughout the year.

Learn a new skill. You'll find many non-academic courses

your local university or community college provides for a nominal fee, such as cooking, sewing, woodworking or mechanics. One summer I took voice lessons from my local college's music department. It was priced reasonably, and I was surprised at how much I learned in a short amount of time. I also enjoyed it because the instructor challenged me to try to sing out of my comfort zone.

## Earn additional income

Many or most students—especially college-age—need to work part time to help pay school expenses and earn spending money. Summer vacation provides a good opportunity for young people to find part-time employment. But you typically need to start searching for those jobs *well before* the school break actually starts!

Aside from the usual fast food and retail options, there are many unusual jobs you may have never considered. For example, tutoring companies specifically hire college students and teachers to fill tutoring positions. An Internet search will connect you to online tutoring companies. You must be prepared to take subject-specific tests to see if you qualify for such jobs.

Check libraries for job positions in their children's summer reading programs. Don't forget summer camp jobs, including some that are overseas, which allow you to travel and earn money at the same time. Closer to home you may find temporary services, factory work, internships and many other opportunities. Employ the practical wisdom of Jesus Christ—"Seek, and you will find" (Matthew 7:7).

Whether you devote your time this summer to working, self-improvement or having interesting fun, plan ahead to make the most of your opportunities. Start now, and you may have the best summer ever!

**Sue Dunkle** has taught in public and private schools for many years and now resides with her husband Frank and son Connor near Portsmouth, Ohio.





# Add Some Service to Your Summer

*Finding ways to serve others this summer can be a very rewarding and fun activity. Let's look at three areas where you can personally get involved. Discover how to serve within your regular routine. Service opportunities are all around us!*

by Whitney Creech

**S**pring is well on its way in the northern hemisphere. School will be done for the semester soon. You can almost feel the sun beating down on you and your friends at the beach.

While you're anticipating, here's something you might not have thought about for your free time: *service*—the act of giving up some of your time to help others.

Serving is important. The Bible tells us we should “through love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13). Yet turning service ideas into actions can be challenging in the midst of the busy, fun-filled summer months. So plan ahead.

**Getting involved and helping others is not only a good thing to do, but it's also the example that Jesus Christ gave to us.**

And, of course, service need not be limited to the summer. Why not make it a way of life year-round as you have the opportunity?

## Who really serves?

According to [VolunteeringInAmerica.gov](http://VolunteeringInAmerica.gov), 21.9 percent of young adults ages 16 to 24 volunteered in 2010. The website concluded that 8.3 million young adults dedicated a combined 844 million hours of service to communities across the country that year. That's an incredible amount!

Getting involved and helping others is not only a good thing to do, but it's also the example that Jesus Christ gave to us. His whole life was about serving others. Jesus' example of washing His disciples' feet on the eve of His Passover crucifixion was the epitome of serving others (see John 13). As He said, “I am among you as the One who serves” (Luke 22:27). Striving to imitate Christ in our lives should be a daily goal.

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# Prove the Bible Is True

—*the  
Easy Way!*

*The Bible is in the crosshairs at school and in the media. Can you be sure it's inspired?*

by Mario Seiglie

**C**an you prove the Bible is true? If you can, it could dramatically change the outcome of your life!

Nearly 50 years ago, two out of three Americans asked by the Gallup polling organization said they believed “the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word.” Then several years ago Gallup polls showed that only one in three believed the same thing—an alarming drop! And the percentage of people in other countries who believe the Bible is the Word of God is generally much lower.

What’s going on? Associated Press religious writer Richard Ostling points out part of the problem: “Liberal-minded university and seminary professors have labored long to lure Americans away from reading their Bible as strictly literal history. They sometimes complain that few pay heed. But Gallup Poll data suggest the professors have indeed had an impact” (March 27, 2000).

Also, most movies and TV programs about the Bible have quite a liberal slant that casts doubt on its validity.

If someone challenged you to prove that the Bible is true, could you do it? Here’s an easy way. Just use UNITY as an acronym for five clear proofs that the Bible is true (this word also serving as the first proof).

## **U for Unity**

Jesus Christ stated this proof directly: “Scripture cannot

be broken” (John 10:35). This means that what the Bible says is true and has a basic unity of thought and principles that cannot be broken or contradicted.

Although the books of the Bible were written by some 40 authors spanning some 1,500 years, they all maintain an amazing consistency. From Genesis to Revelation, the major themes never change. History progresses, but the themes of love, faith, obedience, mercy and a loving and righteous God intent on redeeming a disobedient

mankind do not change. This unity of thought and principle is unique in the world’s literary history.

What is the principal theme in the Bible? It’s simple: God is love (1 John 4:8).

From the beginning, the Bible reveals God as creating mankind not on a capricious whim, but to be His own beloved children. God is reproducing Himself through human beings to develop a family (Genesis 1:26; 5:1-2; 2 Corinthians 6:18). He lovingly placed them in a beautiful garden paradise, instructing them to populate and to have proper care and dominion over it (Genesis 1:28; 2:8).

Yet the whole Bible shows that, as a loving parent, God also has to correct mankind when human beings veer too far off course. Nevertheless, the final chapters of Revelation show that God will ultimately triumph in bringing many



children to glory and will wipe away their tears, promising there will be no more death, sorrow or crying (Revelation 21:4).

The apostle Paul sums up the underlying unity of the Bible when he says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction of righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16, emphasis added).

### N for Non-mythical

Another striking difference between the Bible and other religious works is the absence of mythical stories and legends.

Other creation accounts in the Middle East, Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America include such mythological scenarios as gods feuding and even dismembering other gods to form the heavens and the earth. The religious works of the Greeks described the earth being held up by the god Atlas, while in India the Hindu religion pictured the earth as supported on the backs of eight huge elephants.



Yet the Bible describes God hanging the earth “on nothing” (Job 26:7). This was written millennia before Isaac Newton discovered the invisible laws of gravity that showed the earth truly is suspended “on nothing.”

In contrast to every other ancient creation account, the Bible pictures the creation of the earth in a very scientific manner. In Genesis 1, the continents are lifted from the seas. Then vegetation is created and, later, animal life—all reproducing “according to its kind”—in accordance with fixed genetic laws scientists have only recently discovered. Finally we have the creation of man and woman, all done in a dignified and godly manner, without mythological adornments.

Nobel Prize winner in physics Arno Penzias remarked, “The best data we have [concerning the beginning of the universe] are exactly what I would have predicted, had I nothing to go on but the five books of Moses, the Psalms, the Bible as a whole” (*The New York Times*, March 12, 1978).

The biblical narratives are historical, faithfully reflecting society and culture as history and archaeology would discover them thousands of years later. Theologian Norman Geisler summarizes: “In every period of Old Testament his-

tory, we find that there is good evidence from archaeology that the Scriptures speak the truth. In many instances, the Scriptures even reflect firsthand knowledge of the times and customs it describes. While many have doubted the accuracy of the Bible, time and continued research have consistently demonstrated that the Word of God is better informed than its critics” (*Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 1998, p. 52).

### I for Intact

Of all the ancient works of substantial size, only the Bible comes to us completely intact. This unique character is against all the odds. In comparison, Shakespeare’s plays, written only about 400 years ago, are in much worse shape. There are numerous sections where the original words have been lost, and scholars are left to fill in the blanks as best as they can.

But the Bible’s uncanny preservation has permitted it to weather thousands of years of wars, persecutions, invasions, and other local and national disasters, yet still remain intact. As author Josh McDowell notes, “Compared with other ancient writings, the Bible has more manuscript evidence to support it than any ten pieces of classical literature combined” (*The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 1999, p. 9).

**Ancient creation accounts include mythological scenarios such as gods feuding. Some pictured the earth as supported on the backs of giants or huge animals.**

How was this accomplished? The Old Testament text was preserved by Hebrew scribes through the centuries. Scholars unanimously praise their faithful copying and transmission of the text.

Professor Bernard Ramm explains: “Jews preserved it as no other manuscript has ever been preserved. With their [scribes] they kept tabs on every letter, syllable, word and paragraph. They had special classes of men within their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity. Who ever counted the letters and syllables and words of Plato or Aristotle or Seneca?” (*Protestant Christian Evidences*, 1953, pp. 230-231).

What about the New Testament? Here the actual number of preserved manuscripts is so great that it becomes overwhelming.

McDowell writes: “There are more than 5,686 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Add over 10,000 Latin Vulgate and at least 9,300 other early versions, and we have close to, if not more than, 25,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in existence today. No other

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# The Questions of Life & God's Holy Days

## PART ONE

*What is the purpose of life? Why were we born? What is man's destiny? What happens after death? Can we answer the big questions of life—and if so, who has the answers?*

by Dan Dowd

**T**hroughout recorded history mankind has struggled with the major questions of life. Philosophers have gone many directions to seek answers to the great questions of life. In modern times the answers have come down to two opposite choices: There is a point to life (religion), or we are just the result of random natural selection (evolution).

How can we know which way to go? How do we choose wisely? As we'll later see, God provides us with weekly and annual reminders of the amazing course He has set for us.

### An atheist influences young Christians

Early in December 2011, lifelong and noted atheist Christopher Hitchens died from cancer. Hitchens rose to fame with his 2007 book *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. His premise is that most bad things in history can be laid at the feet of religion in general—Christianity primarily, though he also indicts Islam.

He was correct in pointing out that many bad things have been done under the name of Christianity. But he failed to understand that much that has been called Christian is far removed from the true Christianity of the Bible. As a result, his reactionary view blinded him to the enormous blessings legitimate Christian teachings have brought to the world—such as the end of slavery in Britain and the United States, support for the poor, hospitals to care for the sick, schools to teach across income and social levels,

etc., plus civil laws based on biblical principles.

Increasingly, misguided views such as Hitchens' are gaining traction—and not just with atheists. Young evangelicals are leaving the churches of their youth because they don't like being told how they should live their lives. They don't like being told premarital (or

extramarital) sex is wrong, that living together outside of marriage is sin, that abortion is murder or that God hates homosexuality (Laura Stepp, "Why Young Evangelicals Are Leaving Church," CNN.com, Dec. 16, 2011).

Regrettably, too many who have identified themselves as Christians have bought into Hitchens' argument. They see God as the source of discomfort in their lives. They want religion to be a support for lifestyle choices rather than a mirror to see the need to change to be more like God and to answer life's big questions.

### Betting on God

Rather than assuming that God's way of life is too demanding or the source of mankind's troubles, let's consider another perspective.

Blaise Pascal was a French mathematician, physicist, writer, inventor and philosopher who lived in the early 1600s. He is famous for his "wager" (Pascal's Wager). He argued that even if one could not prove (or disprove) the existence of God through reason, there is still much to be gained from





wagering that God does exist—and little to gain from wagering that God *doesn't* exist. Consequently, a rational person should simply “wager” that God does exist and live accordingly. Pascal contended that whether God does or doesn't exist, it's in our best interest to live as if He does. I would add that it's also in our best interest because God does answer the big questions of life.

The downside to the atheist philosophy is that it naturally progresses to “every man for himself.” Without the restraints on behavior that God shows as necessary for our benefit, we tend to favor self over others. History shows that when civilizations get to the point of unrestrained selfishness, they collapse. King Solomon summed this up almost 3,000 years ago when he wrote, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

### What is God's counteroffer?

Specifically, what does the Bible—God's Word—show as the answers for the big questions? Amazingly, God presents those answers through having us observe His weekly and annual festivals and Holy Days.

God cataloged these for all to see in Leviticus 23. They show us God's desire is to save human beings from sin and death and give us His glory—eternal life in His divine family called the Kingdom of God (see Hebrews 2:10). We'll look at each of God's festivals to see how His plan for humanity unfolds.

The first festival and Holy Day listed is the weekly Sabbath on

the seventh day of each week (Leviticus 23:3). We learn the purpose of life only by first acknowledging God's sovereignty in declaring holy time and how we should live. The Sabbath is vital to building a strong relationship with God.

### Answers from annual festivals

The annual festivals then begin to unfold the process of how God will bring mankind to His glory. The first step in God's plan of salvation is revealed through the first annual festival—the Passover (Leviticus 23:4). Jesus Christ was crucified on Passover, paying the penalty for our sins through His shed blood (see Matthew 26:28). The Passover symbols of unleavened bread and wine that Jesus presented before His death and resurrection solemnize a truly repentant Christian's relationship with Him.

The next festival, following immediately, is the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, marked at the beginning and end by special Holy Days (Leviticus 23:6-8). During these seven days God uses leaven to symbolically represent sin—the violation of His law—which we need to put out of our lives. Partaking of *unleavened* bread in this context represents the acceptance and development of godly character. That takes us personally on the road to righteousness by humbly coming under Christ's sacrifice and then living God's way of love and truth (see 1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

### Destiny in God's family

Have you ever heard that your destiny is to become part of the God family? Think of the meaning that understanding would give your life! You were born to have eternal life—the ultimate abundant life (John 10:10).

Jesus was asked several times what was needed to inherit eternal life (see Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25; 18:18). His answer was that we keep God's commandments, serve others and not trust in the wealth of this world. To do these things we need to think like God thinks, for which we need God's Holy Spirit. Observing the Passover pictures our commitment to following God's instruction. To make that commitment we need to seek Christ's help to change our thinking—called *repentance*—and declare it official through the ceremony of baptism. The Passover–Unleavened Bread season reflects all of this understanding.

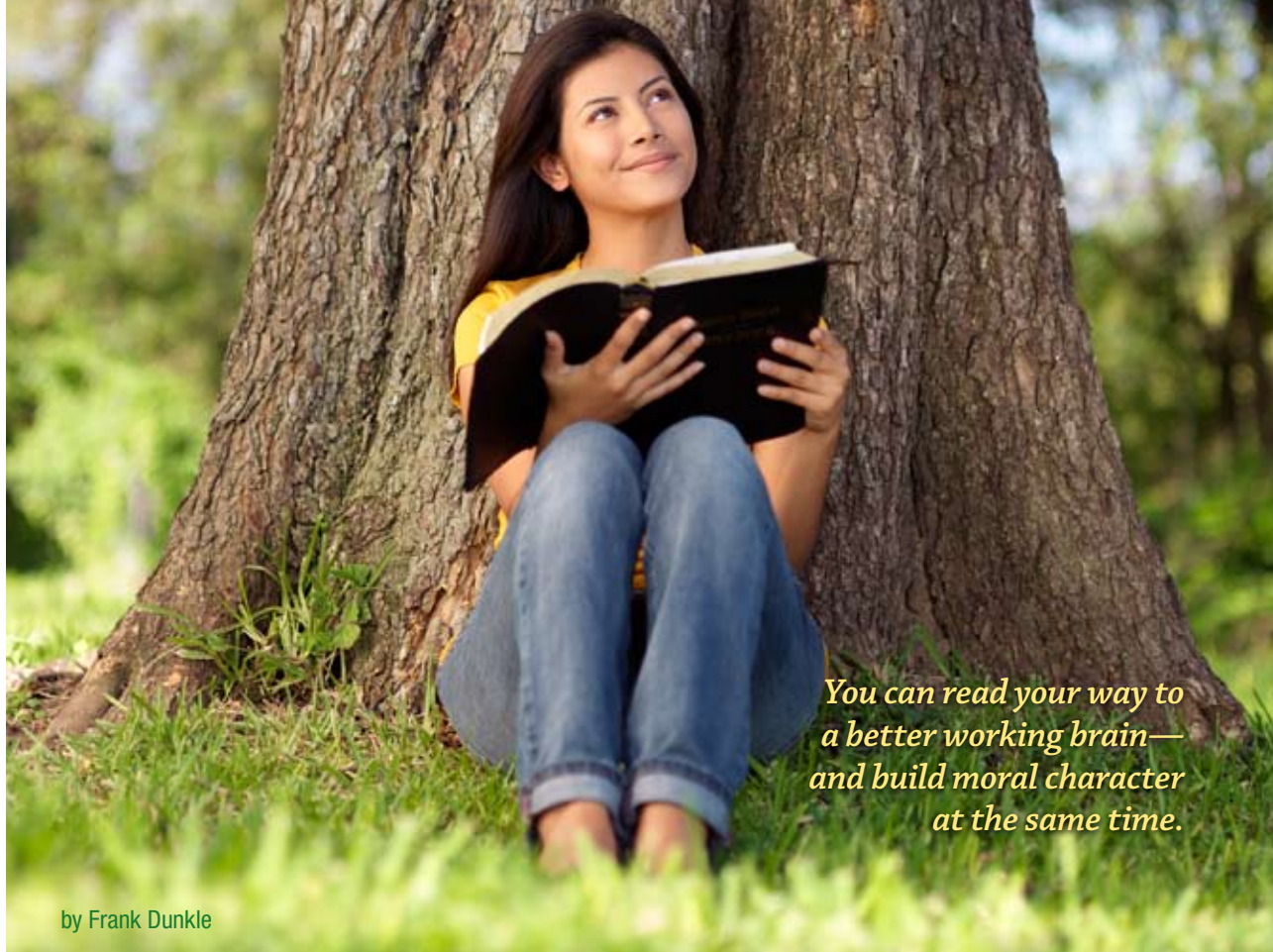
God's festivals help us understand much more of what God would have us do and become even in this lifetime. Those big questions of life will be answered in God's incredible plan of salvation revealed through keeping His festivals.

In the next installment of this topic, we'll cover the additional meaning of God's festivals, but to help you learn more in the interim, we recommend our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. Read in detail about how we can learn from God's festivals the wonderful future He desires for all humanity. Also, to help in answering the big questions of life, be sure to request our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?*

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# The Bible & the Brain



*You can read your way to  
a better working brain—  
and build moral character  
at the same time.*

by Frank Dunkle

**T**his may be an embarrassing admission for a grown man, but I have a box full of old comic books that I refuse to throw out, sell or even give away. I've been saving them for years to give to my son when he is old enough to read. But has reading become so out-of-style that he won't even bother with them when the time comes? We live in the digital age! Why read when audio and video clips are available anywhere, anytime? And *what* should we read?

## The need to read

All of us need to read. Not only can it be fun, but it's good for our brains! Our brain processes information obtained from different media in different ways. It remains fairly passive when dealing with video on a screen, but when

you read, your brain kicks into high gear and works in an entirely different way. In a book on this subject titled *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, author Neil Postman asserts that the way your brain works while reading is not just *different*, it's *better*.

Reading requires interactive, intellectual involvement. Watching a screen does not. It's as simple as that.

## Comic books beat television!

We can help our brains even more by purposely managing what we put into them. Believe it or not, reading comic books helps our brains more than watching television! And a variety of reading helps far more.



This is important to think about for those of us who live in areas where summer vacation from school will soon begin. When class assignments no longer force you to read certain things, will you spend the vacation months feeding your brain a good variety of intellectual food?

A recent study of academic achievement found that over summer break many students tend to lose much of the academic progress they gained during the school year. A statistical analysis presented in Malcolm Gladwell's book *Outliers: The Story of Success* showed two good ways to prevent intellectual loss in our brains. They are:

- Continue going to school during the vacation period—a solution that would probably not be very popular with most students.
- Actively work your brain on your own throughout the vacation. Activity programs at camps and museums and visits to historical sites and nature preserves provide great opportunities.

a wealth of inspired advice on how to organize your life, avoid painful lessons, get the most out of life, get along with other people and love God.

Speaking of other people, if you want to explore some of the great philosophical questions of all time, devote some time to the books of Job and Ecclesiastes. What makes for a happy life? Is there life after death? Why do good people sometimes suffer, while evil people seem to prosper? The answers are right there.

While you're in that section of Scripture, you'll notice that the book of Psalms is a large collection of lyric poetry written in several different styles. In the quest for other biblical poetry, most of Exodus 15 is a song of triumph to celebrate deliverance from slavery. Likewise, Judges 5 records the lyrics of a song celebrating victory in battle. The previous chapter gives the prose version of the story. Think how beneficial it would be for your brain if you analyzed and compared the two versions.

Of course the Bible also provides lots of *my* favorite type of reading—biography and history. You can read the life stories of famous people like Moses, King David, the apostle Paul and, of course, Jesus! The books of Joshua and Judges

are full of military history, not to mention some stories of individual heroics that were captivating enough to make me put the comic books aside years ago.

Along with reading the Bible, you can also read material to help you understand it better—such as this magazine. The publishers of *Vertical Thought* have also produced and offer free of charge many booklets you might add to your reading list. One you can use as a study guide about the Bible is called *How to Understand the Bible*. It and other booklets are available on request or to read online at VerticalThought.org. Still, as helpful as biblical literature is, it's no substitute for reading Scripture itself, the very Word of God.

### The best reading

That brings us back to where I started. Compared to watching videos on the computer and television, even reading comic books seems like too much work for most people looking for entertainment. But remember, reading is good for your brain, and a better brain will give you advantages in school, your career and just about every aspect of your life.

Reading anything will give you a cerebral advantage, but reading the Bible and material to help you understand it will make you a better person. This doesn't need to be the only thing on your reading list. Enjoy a variety of good reading, but make sure to include a lot of the best and most important reading of all—the Bible.

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**Frank Dunkle** lives with his wife Sue and son Connor near Portsmouth, Ohio, where he serves as a United Church of God pastor.

## Reading anything will give you a cerebral advantage, but reading the Bible and material to help you understand it will make you a better person.

Or you can read! It's an inexpensive and easy way to develop and preserve your brainpower and be on top of your game when school restarts.

### School vacation reading list

Good summer reading includes a variety of material. Visit your local library or bookstore and stroll up and down the aisles to begin building your list. Find some novels, perhaps action-adventure or high drama—being careful of course to avoid anything that glorifies immorality or promotes wrong values. A self-improvement book could be useful, as might a how-to manual. Works based on scientific or social research, such as those referenced above, can be quite interesting. And don't forget to include some poetry. Good poetry can lift your spirits, and its rhythms are—you guessed it—good for your brain!

Finally, let me suggest one more book to add to your school break reading list that truly has something for every taste and is truly for everyone. It's *the Bible*.

### Read the Bible

The Bible already has all the genres I just mentioned, and it has the benefit of also being the Word of God that can lead you closer to Him. Do you like high adventure? How about a story in which the son of a king plots to overthrow his father? The story of King David and his son Absalom is filled with political intrigue and family tension, and it reaches a climax with a tumultuous battle. It's all there in the book of 2 Samuel. Do you want to read some self-improvement tips? The book of Proverbs is just what you need. In it King Solomon, the wisest man to ever live, gives



**O**n May 14, 1804, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led the Corps of Discovery on the journey westward from St. Louis. Their mission: scout the vastness of the recently procured Louisiana Purchase and find a route to the Pacific Ocean—or die trying.

They hoped to find a water route to the Pacific Northwest. This would provide a more efficient way to conduct the fur trade—helping America to compete with Britain’s dominance in that market—besides increasing U.S. commerce in general.

## ➤ MEN OF VALOR: ➤

# Lewis and Clark & Joshua and Caleb

*How do you boldly move forward in faith when faced with challenge and adversity?  
Consider these American and Israelite men of valor when you need extra courage!*

by Amanda Stiver

It was an enormous trip lasting more than two years until September 1806. Those of the Corps, co-commanded by Lewis and Clark, only vaguely knew what they would encounter.

Similarly Joshua and Caleb in the Bible were part of a group of 12 scouts or spies sent by Moses, the leader of ancient Israel, to explore the “Promised Land,” the Israelites’ new homeland in Canaan where their forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had dwelt. This land was now being given to Israel by the Eternal God who owns the entire world and determines the times and boundaries of the habitations of all peoples (see Deuteronomy 32:8). The scouts’ mission was to gather information about current conditions in Canaan.

Let’s compare these two sets of explorers. Though far removed from one another in time, they provide us with important lessons for our lives today.

### **The report on Canaan**

The Israelite scouts faced challenging odds. The land of Canaan contained powerful native peoples like the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites,

Hivites and Jebusites (see Deuteronomy 7:1-2). Plus, an extremely tall and strong people, the Anakim, presented a formidable obstacle for Israel during a time when possession of land hinged on hand-to-hand combat.

All the scouts agreed on their return that the land was full of rich produce, including grapes, figs and pomegranates—a “land flowing with milk and honey” (Numbers 13:27). In fact, a single cluster of grapes had to be carried on a pole between two men. It must have been a stunningly productive land—beautiful, green and fertile.

So it was appalling that 10 of the 12 immediately proclaimed the futility of claiming the territory God had already promised Israel. This was, after all, *the* God who had dealt the 10 plagues to Egypt and had so astoundingly parted the Red Sea at the Exodus! Yet the 10 declared that, because of the Anakim giants, Canaan was unconquerable, and they actively promoted returning to Egypt.

Joshua and Caleb, however, stood against this



onslaught of defeatism. They declared that, giants or no, with God on Israel's side the land would be theirs. God had promised it. Yet they were shouted down, and the Israelites threw themselves into rebellion, rejecting Moses' leadership and outrageously plotting against him and God by choosing a new leader to lead them back to Egypt!

Of course, this provoked God's anger, and He was prepared to destroy the bulk of Israel and start over. When Moses pleaded for God to be merciful, God relented. But He justly exacted punishment on the rebels who actively and vehemently rejected Him. The 10 unfaithful scouts died in a plague, and the rest of their generation—except for Joshua and Caleb—died in the desert during 40 years of wandering. Only the children of the adult generation inherited the Promised Land—led into it by the two faithful scouts.

### Team spirit on the northwestern journey

While things went badly for ancient Israel, the exact opposite happened for Lewis and Clark in the early days of the



Lewis, Clark  
and Sacagawea

American expansion. The two captains, in an unusual co-command scenario, were in almost complete accord. They had served together before and knew that their personalities were such that each could rely on the judgment of the other. In that respect they were much like Joshua and Caleb.

The men who made up the rest

of the Corps of Discovery noted and respected this unique command style. They also shared a rare sense of unity and of the importance of the venture. When hard work was required to row upstream, portage heavy equipment over difficult terrain or make mountain crossings on short rations, they did so without mutiny and with all the signs of enthusiasm.

Unity was critical to the mission, and so was their sense of relative restraint when dealing with armed Native American tribesmen. Had they been unwise, the Lewis and Clark expedition would not have survived and would be but a small footnote in the pages of American history—instead of a defining moment.

None of these relatively peaceful negotiations with the natives would have gone well without the aid of interpreters. Among them was Sacagawea, the young wife of a French trapper who had freed her from the Hidatsa tribe. She was pregnant and gave birth on the course of the journey. Her presence among the expedition helped cre-

**It boils down to this: Do what is right. Trust God. Be of good courage, and God will deliver you from fear to the “Promised Land” of His Kingdom soon to come!**

ate an impression of peace toward the tribes encountered since war parties rarely brought women with them. Indeed, when the Corps came into contact with the Shoshone in the mountains of Idaho, it was with amazement that she realized her long-lost brother Cameahwait was in fact the primary chief of that nation.

Myriad blessings and apparent divine intervention occurred throughout the expedition, and without the generosity of many native tribes, Lewis and Clark would never have made it to the Pacific and back.

### The great mission

What can we learn from these men of valor? Lewis and Clark completed their mission with flying colors and were celebrated when they returned to the East Coast. They opened the door for a flood of westward migration by Americans over the course of the 19th century.

They proved by balanced, shared leadership that a unified team of men could survive even the most difficult extremes. Sharing leadership requires skill and discernment of when to submit to the wisdom of others, and when to stand up for your own area of expertise.

Lewis and Clark relied on the expertise of others. Sacagawea provided a crucial linguistic link, and the geographical knowledge of the native tribes was respected and relied on by the Corps.

Joshua and Caleb fulfilled their personal mission to Moses, to Israel and to God by dutifully scouting and accurately and faithfully reporting on the land to their people. Later they also faithfully trusted God to intervene with the invasion and settlement. The rest of their team, however, was not unified and spread discord that damaged the nation. The fate of the unfaithful scouts was dire, and they fulfilled their own defeatist speeches by dying in the desert.

It boils down to this: Do what is right. Trust God. Be of good courage, and God will deliver you from fear to the “Promised Land” of His Kingdom soon to come!

**Amanda Stiver** is a *Vertical Thought* staff member and a freelance writer and editor in Cincinnati, Ohio.



# Prove the Bible Is True

From page 13

document of antiquity even begins to approach such numbers and attestation. In comparison, Homer's *Illiad* is second, with *only* 643 manuscripts that still survive. The first complete preserved text of Homer *dates from the thirteenth century*" (p. 34, emphasis added).

Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matthew 24:35). His words have become a prophecy that is still rock-solid today. With *billions* of Bibles in more than 2,000 languages now distributed around the world, God's Word will by no means pass away.

## T for Time revealed in advance

Fulfilled prophecy is the fourth proof of the inspiration of the Bible—accurately foretelling what will happen ahead of time. The Bible is unique in boldly proclaiming many specific events to come. No other religious book dares to lay out the future in this way.

As the book *A General Introduction to the Bible* says: "No unconditional prophecy of the Bible about events to the present day has gone unfulfilled. . . . Other books claim divine inspiration, such as the Koran, the Book of Mormon, and parts of the [Hindu] Veda. But none of those books contains predictive prophecy. As a result, fulfilled prophecy is a strong indication of the unique, divine authority of the Bible" (Norman Geisler and William Nix, 1986, p. 13).

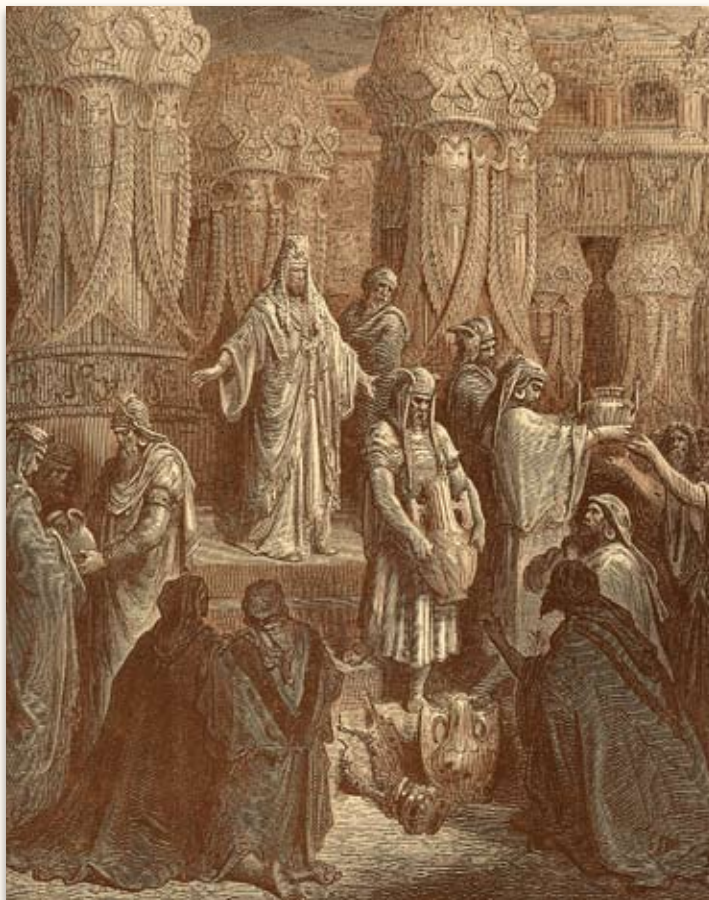
One incredible example of prophecy is found in the book of Isaiah. The date of the book is fixed by its first verse: "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." Through history and archaeology, the dates of these kings are well known—from 767 to 686 B.C. Yet, in Isaiah 44, God revealed to Isaiah a coming conqueror who would permit Jerusalem to be rebuilt after its destruction—although in Isaiah's day Jerusalem was still standing! So here is a prophecy so ahead of its time that only future generations in Jerusalem would first witness the city's destruction and then its rebuilding!

Jerusalem was destroyed around 587 B.C. by the Babylonians some 100 years after Isaiah's day. And work was not begun to reconstruct it until 539 B.C., when the prophesied king conquered Babylon and decreed that the captive Jews be freed and allowed to go back to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the temple.

In Isaiah 44, God reveals to Isaiah the actual name of the coming conqueror who would allow Jerusalem to be rebuilt—Cyrus, known in history as Cyrus the Great. "Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer . . . : 'I am the LORD, who makes all things, who stretches out the heavens all alone . . . who frustrates the signs of the babblers, and

drives diviners mad . . . who says to Jerusalem, "You shall be inhabited," . . . who says of Cyrus, "He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built,' and to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid'" (Isaiah 44:24-28).

This is only one of the hundreds of Bible prophecies that have been confirmed. Dozens of specific prophecies deal with Jesus Christ and were fulfilled in precise detail. Again, no other ancient and supposedly sacred book even dares to present predictive prophecy—making the Bible unique. Its prophetic foretelling proves it is not the work of mere men.



**After conquering Babylon, Cyrus the Great returned the captured furnishings from the Jerusalem temple to the Jews and decreed that they would return to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, just as the Bible foretold.**

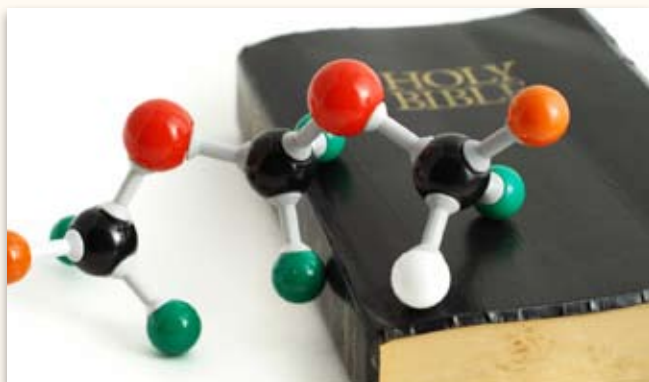
## Y for Yield

The Bible produces results! It has yielded fantastic outcomes in the lives of so many, and it can do the same for you. It is a practical book, explaining God's will in virtually every facet of life and how to achieve true success. As U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt remarked, "A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education."



However, reaping its blessings does take faith—an active belief that God’s Word is true and that applying it will yield positive results. The Bible puts it this way: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). Thankfully, studying the Bible is itself a way to increase faith (Romans 10:17).

The Bible has had a positive influence on society. Modern science owes much to it. Philosopher Francis Schaeffer explains: “The rise of modern science did not conflict with what the Bible teaches; indeed, at a crucial point



the Scientific Revolution rested upon what the Bible teaches. Both Alfred North Whitehead and J. Robert Oppenheimer have stressed that modern science was born out of the Christian world view . . .

“As far as I know, neither of the two men were Christians or claimed to be Christians, yet both were straightforward in acknowledging that modern science was born out of the Christian world view . . . In other words, because the early scientists believed that the world was created by a reasonable God, they were not surprised to discover that people could find out something true about nature and the universe on the basis of reason” (*How Should We Then Live?* 1976, pp. 132-133).

Personally, you will experience many great benefits from following the teachings of God’s Word. “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him” (Psalm 34:8).

Yes, the bottom line of proving the Bible is true and should be taken at face value is—it works!

So when anyone asks you for proofs that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, just remember the first key word of the first proof, UNITY, because each of its letters contains the first letter of the rest of the proofs. Now you have five simple keys at hand to prove the Bible is true.

(A longer version of this article appeared in the July-August 2004 issue of *The Good News* magazine, available online at [GNmagazine.org](http://GNmagazine.org). Be sure to also read our free booklet *Is the Bible True?* It’s available at [www.ucg.org/booklets](http://www.ucg.org/booklets) free of charge.)

**Mario Seiglie** pastors the United Church of God congregation in Garden Grove, California, and is the church’s regional representative for Latin America.

## Summer Service

From page 11



### Get prepared—and then get out there!

How can we actually get started? Researching in advance for areas needing volunteers can help you to schedule your time wisely. It’s important to learn the policies and needs of different service organizations. You will enjoy your service time more if you key into your interests when browsing various serving opportunities. Some of the most common areas where teens can volunteer in America include the Ronald McDonald House, Habitat for Humanity, animal shelters, local libraries, food banks or other charities.

One of the easiest ways to get involved is to see what you can do in your local church congregation. Lots of “behind the scenes” work needs to be done to ensure that church services run smoothly. Find out who typically serves in the area you are interested in helping out in—and then go help! The best way to learn a job is to “shadow” the person in charge of that duty. Some things that you could volunteer for include setup for services, helping the sound crew, assisting with snacks and distributing announcements or hymnals. Think proactively to be alert for upcoming social events where you could help out with a meal or decorations.

Teen and preteen summer camps will take you outside of your typical summer routine. They offer great opportunities for staff members, as well as campers, to work towards a collective goal and achieve great accomplishments. While serving as a camp staff member, you build relationships with the campers as you instruct them in your activity or lead discussions as a counselor. Giving campers the opportunity to see young adults living a godly lifestyle for an entire week helps to build their personal foundation for life.

### Serve for life

Serving has the potential to become a way of life as you strive to live God’s way. When you take time to help others with the right attitude, you will experience great satisfaction about what you’re doing. Have fun, help others and grow in your commitment to a vertical life. Find your passion in service—then serve others with passion!

**Whitney Creech** works at the home office of the United Church of God and attends the Cincinnati East congregation with her husband Aaron.

## Cyberbaiting— Disrespect in the Classroom

Cyberbaiting: Students provoking teachers into angry outbursts in the classroom and then recording and posting video of the incident to social media. This trend has seen two teachers pushed to the edge of sanity and subsequently fired for their outbursts (Melanie Smith, "Cyberbaiting: A New Teen Trend That Humiliates Teachers," TakePart.com, Dec. 8, 2011).

The temptation to misuse technology as it becomes easily portable and accessible everywhere is significant. Of course, teachers must take care to not become quickly riled, and some who become completely unhinged may well show themselves unfit to be teachers. But many people can be caught losing it if intentionally ambushed.

The Christian approach is to imagine how each of us would feel if others treated us the way we intend to treat them. Would we want our worst moments recorded and shared? How would we feel if someone egged us into an angry outburst? The Bible speaks against setting traps for others (Psalms 38:12; 54:5-6; 119:110; 140:5; 141:9-10; Proverbs 26:27; Jeremiah 5:26).

Teachers and students are sometimes at odds, but respect for those in authority is a part of good character (Romans 13:1-7; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 2:17). If we develop respect for others, we are building a foundation for respecting God and His will for us. Of course, truly abusive authority on the part of teachers should be reported to parents and school administration.

# 86%

**of online and cell phone-using  
teens receive advice about  
responsible use of the Internet  
from their parents**

Pew Internet and American Life Project (Amanda Lenhart, et al, "Teens, Kindness and Cruelty on Social Network Sites," PewInternet.org, Nov. 9, 2011)

## "Good Divorce" Not So Good

A popular theory holds that "good divorces"—where separated couples remain on relatively good terms—are harmless to children and parents. But a recent study shows this idea has no basis in reality.

The study from Pennsylvania State University, which examined 1,000 families, found that the children of friendlier divorces faced the same sort of problems as those kids from bitter, acrimonious divorces. Although children of non-hostile divorces had fewer behavioral problems during their teen years, they nevertheless had, like their peers from unfriendly divorces, self-esteem problems, dissatisfaction with life, tendency to smoke and try drugs, and lower grades.

Experts hope these findings will prod divorce

counselors to make greater effort to encourage couples to try harder to save their marriages and to provide better counseling for children of "good divorces" (Fiona MacRae, "A Divorce Can Never Be Good for Children No Matter How Amicable It Is, Says Study," Telegraph.co.uk, Feb. 2, 2012).

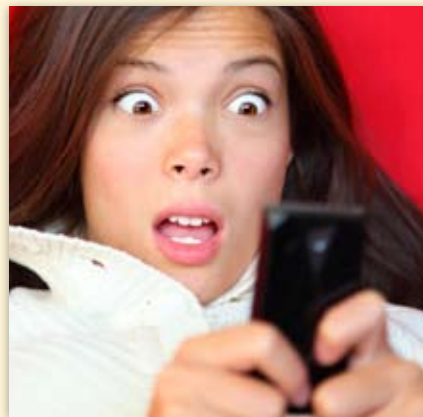
God created marriage as a binding union between man and woman for life. Believing that breaking this physical and emotional bond carries no consequence is sorely naive. Marriage is serious. Premarital counseling and even pre-engagement counseling with a minister or wise counselor is important for young people considering marriage. Going into marriage with divorce as an easy-out option isn't a stable foundation for building a future and a family.

## Sexting Percentages Lower Than Thought

A new study by the Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire on youth culture in America found that one percent of minors over the age of 10 had sent "sexting" text messages or explicit pictures of themselves and that only 5.9 percent had received such images. This is a shift downward from previous figures that put sexting percentages up as high as 1 in 5 young people.

Experts agree that, while this is better, even a small percentage of young people engaging in this behavior is dangerous. This is particularly so if such images get posted on the Internet, where they can be spread as child pornography. Indeed, those *receiving* such texts and images can be prosecuted for child pornography if those pic-

tures are under 18 years old (Michael Pearson, "Sexting May Not Be As Widespread As Thought, Study Says," CNN.com, Dec. 5, 2012).



## Asteroid Close Shave

Experts predict that on February 15, 2013, a near-earth asteroid called DA14 will make an uncomfortably close pass by us. NASA has predicted it will come within about 12,680 miles, somewhat closer than some man-made satellites, but further out than others like the International Space Station, which orbits at just 240 miles up (Mike Wall, "Mid-Size Asteroid Won't Hit Earth in 2013: NASA," MSNBC.com, Mar. 6, 2012).

This event has caused concern for some and predictions of catastrophic impact. Yet right now it seems nothing will happen. Still, we should realize that the Bible does indicate coming meteoric and other devastation in the book of Revelation. We don't know exactly when it will happen though—but many signs point to our now living in the end time (see our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*). In any case, despite coming calamity at some point, humanity and the earth will survive. For more perspective on this, be sure to read our lead article, "The End of the World: Is It Real, and If So, What Can You Do About It?"



## Tablet Posture

Tablet devices like iPads and other similar products came under scrutiny in a recent study by the Harvard School of Public Health. Researchers had subjects use the iPad 2 and the Motorola Xoom and studied the angle of their necks and other body postures during different types of use.

They found that setting the tablet device up at an angle, resting against its case, was the most likely to promote good posture. Other ways of holding the devices, such as on the lap and hunching over to view it and using both hands on the screen, were more likely to result in scrunched shoulders and neck pain.

Though tablets are very popular, ergonomic testing has not yet caught up with their widespread proliferation so as to provide recognized guidelines for promoting healthy user posture ("Can Tablets Give You a Pain in the Neck?" Breitbart.com, Jan. 25, 2012).



## Read My Mind ...

Research into the potential for brain wave reading devices for patients who cannot talk took a big leap forward recently. Researchers from the University of California at Berkeley played a word for patients, and a computer was then able to analyze brain wave patterns of the patients and replicate sounds similar to what they heard.

If and when perfected, this technology could be used in a device implanted in the heads of those with hearing deficiency caused by brain damage, allowing them to communicate. Such devices would register into electronic speech words the user merely thinks of (Nick Collins, "Mind-Reading Device Could Become Reality," Telegraph.co.uk, Jan. 31, 2012).

These technological innovations are amazing, but one day hearing will be restored to the injured by the power of God: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped" (Isaiah 35:5). This refers to a time in the future when Jesus Christ will return to establish His Kingdom on the earth. With Him will come great healing for all people.

Hello



## Creation News: The Song of a Mouse

Apparently, bursting forth into song when overcome by love isn't merely a *human* habit found in movies and musical theater. *Mice* sing too! Male mice specifically have distinct vocal patterns, which we perceive as squeaks but in reality resemble the songs of birds, according to digital analysis by researchers from the University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna, Austria.

Each male mouse produces such a distinct tune of his own that scientists feel this variety may be the means by which female mice avoid inbreeding ("Male Mice Sing Melodic Tunes to Attract Females," Telegraph.co.uk, Jan. 27, 2012). These melodies attract female mice and are a part of the marvelous mechanism God created to help animals in reproduction.

## The portion of American teens who are active online

95%

Pew Internet and American Life Project (Amanda Lenhart, et al, "Teens, Kindness and Cruelty on Social Network Sites," PewInternet.org, Nov. 9, 2011)

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