

IN THE NEWS

B.U.S.Y.

Royal Virtues

October–December 2012

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*a magazine of understanding for tomorrow's leaders*

## God on War

### **Bible Villains:**

Learning From Scripture's  
Bad Examples

### **The Uncrowned King of Virtue**

How the Bible  
Applies to Science

Do We Really Have  
Useless Body Parts?

Oh, What a Feeling!

Are You Afraid of  
Commitment?

## Selfishness or Life

**H**uman history is a story of mostly failed relationships. Most of mankind's problems have been and are caused by one simple word: *selfishness*.

Think of how many marriages wouldn't have failed, how many conflicts between friends, relatives and countries wouldn't have happened, if it weren't for selfishness. So many economies wouldn't have collapsed but for selfish greed. Nations and empires fell because selfishness filtered down to the average citizen.

In simple terms, selfishness is the opposite of love—especially divine love. Godly love is all about putting others' needs before your own. God's desire is for us to love each other as He loves us (John 15:12). That's a tall order, and it requires us to think differently than human nature tends to think.

*Vertical Thought* was started with the mission of encouraging young adults to think "vertically"—to think on things from a higher perspective, to think more about and more like God (Colossians 3:1-2). The step after thought is action. That's what all of us involved in putting this magazine together want you to do—act on the Bible's instructions that we talk about.

In this issue you'll find articles about the effects of selfishness. Why is there war, and what does God want *us* to think and do about it? Why does the Bible have so many stories about people we might call villains? Do we have good examples of selfless leadership in history and even in our modern culture?

You'll also find articles about how to reconcile science with the Bible—can they agree? One of the biggest lies taught in the world is the lie of evolution. This

philosophy is a selfish denial of reality, declaring in essence, "I don't care what God says; I'm going to live my life as if He doesn't exist."

Furthermore, how do we use our emotions to worship God? Are we free to worship Him in whatever way we want, or does He tell us how to worship Him? How can we avoid letting our emotions become a selfish form of

**Selfishness is the opposite of love—especially divine love. Godly love is all about putting others' needs before your own. God's desire is for us to love each other as He loves us.**

worship? Last (but not least), are we willing to make a commitment to completely obey God, or are we still afraid or hesitant? How can we overcome that?

We invite you to not only read the articles prepared for this issue, but to think deeply about what each author has written. The *Vertical Thought* staff also encourages you to make sure what we write is backed up in God's Word. We want you to be spiritually successful in this life, so that you can inherit the promise of *eternal* life (1 John 2:25). Moses recorded that our choice is simple—life or death (Deuteronomy 30:19).

God wants you to choose life! But the choice is yours. Resist the selfishness promoted by so much of this world's culture. And above all, keep thinking vertically!



*Vertical Thought* is a biblically based magazine of understanding for young people aged 12-22. Our name is derived from Colossians 3:1-2, which tells us to think about godly things "which are above, where Christ is." *Vertical Thought* is published quarterly by the United Church of God, an International Association, 555 Technecenter Drive, Milford, OH 45150. © 2012 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited.

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# God on War

*Does God want somebody else's nation to shoot, blast or bomb your nation into submission or out of existence? You know He doesn't. But how do you reconcile the existence of God with the reality of war?*

by Randy Stiver

**S**ome people deny God's existence just because war and evil also exist. The idea is that if God is all-powerful, then He would never allow evil—like war—to exist. One might admire such idealism. But we can't admire the ignorance about the Bible that comes with the idea. The fact is that God allows war and evil to happen—for now, and for a purpose.

## God to mankind: love, not war

All of human history and culture results from what happened in the Garden of Eden.

Adam and Eve are the original parents of everyone on earth. God created within them the ability to produce all the variations of the tribes and nations on earth today: "From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands" (Acts 17:26, New International Version).

But God did not want them to make war on each other.

First God made Adam. Hours later on the same day, using one of Adam's ribs, He made Eve. Unlike the animals, they were made in God's image. From their first breath they were full grown, fully developed and able to speak—but with no clothes. Adam and Eve didn't have anything to hide from each other! God immediately performed the first wedding ceremony: "God blessed them and said to

them, 'Be fruitful and multiply'" (Genesis 1:28).

God commanded them as husband and wife to make love, but He did not command them to make war.

## When did war happen?

It so happened that there was a lying, cheating, stealing and deceiving snake hanging around the garden near the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (see Genesis 3).

The snake was actually the chief fallen angel or demon who had borne a distinction rendered in Latin as *Lucifer*—meaning "light-bringer" and signifying the "day star." He was ultimately given the label *Satan*, which in

Hebrew means “adversary.” He’s also called the devil, from a parallel Greek term meaning “accuser” or “slanderer.” He appeared as a talking serpent in the garden to tempt and deceive Adam and Eve.

The angels were made eons before man. God didn’t force His way of goodness and love on them—nor does He on us. They had to choose to do good and reject evil—which most of them did. However, Lucifer didn’t believe that good was the best way. He made himself the enemy of God (see Isaiah 14:12-15). Then he led a rebellion of one third of the angels to also sin and choose evil as their way (see Revelation 12:4). They sealed their own fate. Together, they made war on God, and that was the beginning of war.

It was an insane war. The demons were outnumbered two to one in the angelic realm. And most foolish of all, they were fighting their Creator—*Almighty* God! It’s impossible for the created to be more powerful than the Creator. What were they thinking?! Answer: They were thinking only of themselves—not caring about others or about God.

It sounds unbelievable, but in fact these unfaithful, demonic angels will attack God *again*. It’s going to happen shortly before the return of Jesus Christ: “And war broke out in heaven: Michael [a faithful archangel] and his angels fought with the dragon [Satan]; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:7-9).

The bad news is that they will also incite a human world war like we’ve never seen before.

### Man and war

So how did man get involved in war and evil?

Back to the Garden of Eden: At the serpent’s deceitful insti-

gation, Eve and Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God specifically commanded them *not to eat from it*. More than that, they *didn’t* eat the fruit of the tree of life, which God commanded them *to do* (see Genesis 2:8-9 and 15-17). Those two trees symbolized the two great ways of life: good vs. evil, give vs. get. War comes from choosing *evil* to selfishly and violently *get* things from others (James 4:1-2). War is *not* God’s way.

Although God offered to fight ancient Israel’s wars for them, His model nation ultimately chose to fight its own wars and suffer the consequences. At times God used Israel to execute His judgment (discipline or punishment) on other sinful nations. At other times He disciplined Israel by bringing other nations against it because of national sins.

But none of this changes the fact that it was not God’s desire from the beginning that human beings, His children, would fight and kill one another in warfare.

Adam and Eve cast the mold by choosing the devil’s way over God’s way. Because of that, their firstborn son Cain started the first human war. You can read all about it in Genesis chapter 4. In a jealous, religious rage (sound eerily familiar?) Cain premeditated, plotted, attacked and murdered his own brother Abel. When the population of the world was tiny compared to today, this was a major, catastrophic war.

God pleaded directly with Cain to reconsider and choose the way of peace: “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door” (Genesis 4:6-7). Sin spawns war. Throughout history there is always *another* war. But there doesn’t have to be.

### Out-of-this-world peace plan

The time is coming soon when all nations will put aside their differences and finally seek to faithfully follow Jesus Christ. Even among those today who claim to follow Jesus, very few are really *doing* the things He says to do. If you want to be a true follower of Jesus Christ—and I hope you do—then here is His out-of-this-world peace plan for you and everyone else: “Jesus answered, ‘*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, emphasis added).

Those who want to truly follow Jesus Christ won’t fight in the wars of this world. That doesn’t mean they don’t love their countries, but it does mean that they love and serve the Kingdom of

God first and more than any human nation. They know that all people are God’s children.

When Jesus returns to the earth He will stop all human wars and establish an incredible era of a totally new, warless human culture. It will be a time when “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4). The good news is that you can be part of that peace plan now!

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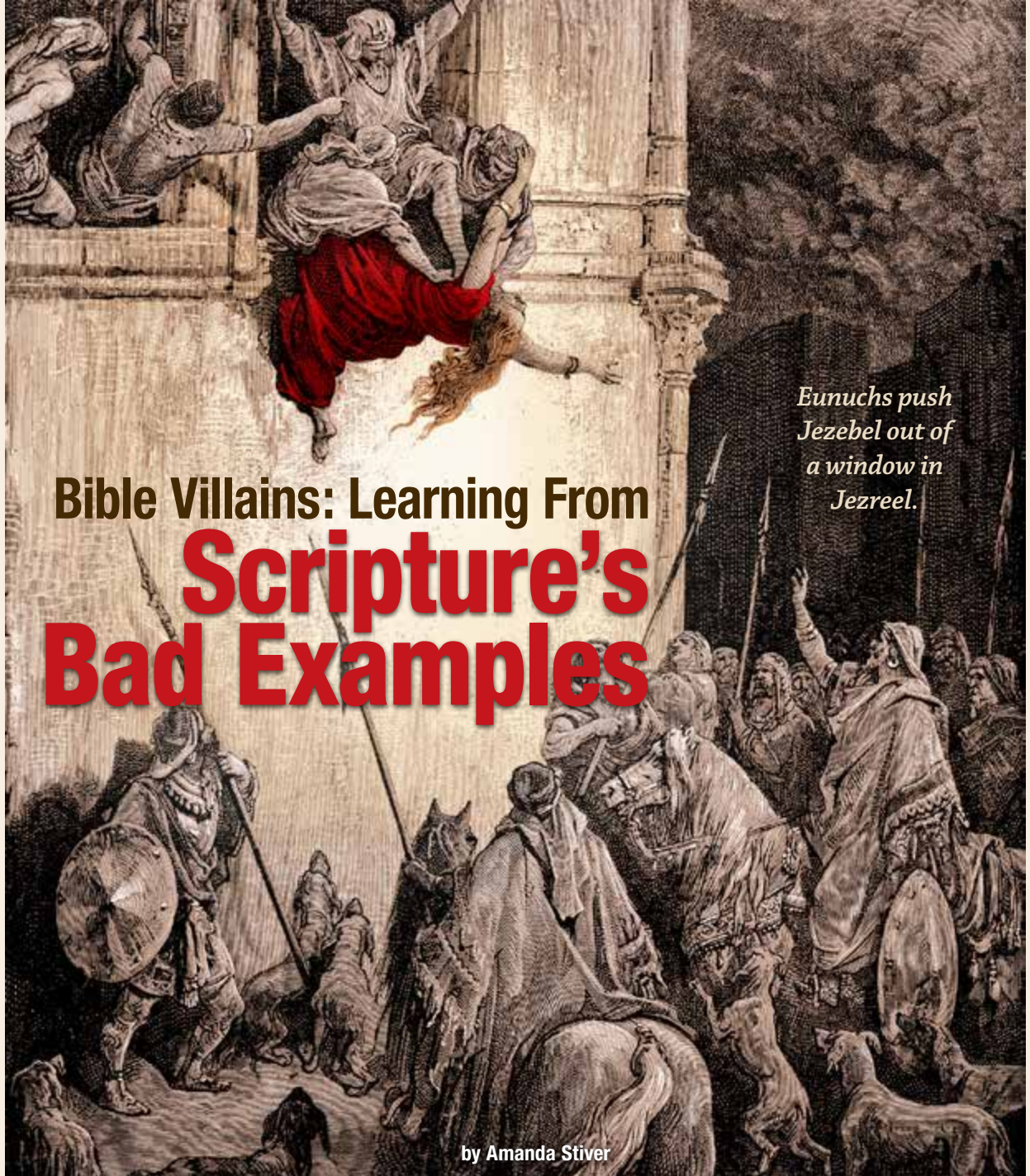
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What about nations that fight wars to defend themselves or others from attackers? You can understand why some nations have fought “for the right” as they saw it. You can





*Eunuchs push  
Jezebel out of  
a window in  
Jezreel.*

## Bible Villains: Learning From **Scripture's Bad Examples**

by Amanda Stiver

**H**eroes are easy to admire in the Bible. They're the ones God wants us to be like. Sure, they have problems here and there, but they always get right with God eventually.

But the Bible has plenty of villains too—and we may feel a little awkward about them. It might even seem disrespectful to the good guys to spend time studying the bad guys. Think about this though: Eight of the Ten Commandments define God's law by listing wrong actions and thinking to avoid. Learning what to steer clear of helps us to live a better life. God's law is the bottom line for how to act, and lessons from the Bible's bad stories can help us to know how God's law applies.

Let's extract the good lessons from the bad examples.

### **1. Know the story**

We need to get the whole story to learn from Bible villains (and heroes for that matter). The details help us understand and avoid the mistakes.

Look at the story of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, who inherited the throne over the united kingdom of Israel in the north and Judah in the south (1 Kings 12). When he came to power the northern 10 tribes of Israel were on the verge of seceding.

To pay for decades of his high-cost building projects, Solomon had levied high taxes. The



*The good guys have the only lessons we need to learn—right? Not so fast!  
There are things to learn from the bad guys—and gals—as well.*

northern tribes, with Jeroboam of the tribe of Ephraim newly returned from exile as a principal leader among them, asked for an easier tax burden (still something we often hear debated in political circles today!) as Rehoboam's first royal decision. They wanted a revived economy with personal finances restored.

Rehoboam had a good shot at becoming a great leader. He started off well by seeking the advice of the elders who served Solomon. They wisely counseled that the northerners were right and that lower taxes would be healthy for all. They said that the king would be loved for being so generous. He then asked for advice from his younger peers. They gave the opposite and ultimately fatal advice to increase taxes by leaps and bounds. It was far beyond what the people were willing to bear.

Rehoboam unwisely took the advice of his peers, raised taxes, and lost over half his kingdom. The northern kingdom of Israel split away, taking its own path separate from the southern kingdom of Judah. When all was said and done, the king lost far more income than all his taxes could have ever gained him. He chose poorly, and everyone suffered because of it.

The story of Rehoboam's mistake provides an essential lesson. Without the background we wouldn't realize that he should have heeded the advice of his elder advisors rather than his foolish peers who offered him nothing but a greedy ego trip.

*The lesson:* For important decisions, seek a multitude of counsel (Proverbs 11:14) and ask God for discernment to know what is wise counsel and what is just bad advice.

## **2. What went wrong, and why?**

We also need to sift out reasons for villains' choices. What motivated their bad decisions? Why did they sin and rebel against God?

It's hard to find a more despicable biblical villain than Queen Jezebel, the foreign wife of King Ahab of the northern kingdom of Israel. She was the daughter of the king of the Phoenician city-state of Sidon and a priestess of the false god Baal (1 Kings 16:29-33).

Jezebel led her Israelite husband Ahab into the worship of Baal rather than the true God. This was a direct affront to God, who hated Baal worship not only because it was idolatry, but also because it often required human sacrifice. Often the sacrifices were the worshippers' own babies.

Jezebel had the true prophets of Israel murdered, and she called for the assassination of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 18:13; 19:2). She schemed to have a wealthy vineyard owner murdered so that her husband could steal his land (1 Kings 21). And she fought against the true worship of God whenever she could.

Why did she do all this? We think of her as totally immoral, and she certainly behaved that way. But to learn a deeper lesson we have to analyze a bit more. Jezebel was a priestess of

her god Baal, and in that position she had power. So clearly, by trying over and over again to destroy the worship of the true God, she was trying to hold on to and increase what she saw as her source of power.

*The lesson:* Do not trust in some other perceived source of power (false gods of our own making)—wealth, authority, weapons, position, etc.—in place of God. If we look to anything other than God for strength, we may find it for a while, but ultimately it will fail.

What happened to Jezebel? She was thrown from a window and eaten by dogs. No power, no strength. Enough said.

## **3. What did the bad guy finally do right?**

What about someone who was both villain and hero? Seems complicated, but there is one such man who was the ultimate villain, only to become one of the ultimate heroes of the faith. His name was Saul of Tarsus. He is also known as the apostle Paul.

Saul was a Pharisee, a young leader within the religious and political scene of Judea during and just after the time of Jesus Christ. He was the heavy-handed type and had the authority to punish anyone he believed to be a heretic within the Jewish community. He saw the teachings of Jesus as blasphemy and all Christians as heretics. Saul tracked down and prosecuted them to the fullest extent of the local law—resulting in their imprisonment and sometimes death.

Saul is mentioned in the book of Acts shortly after the passionate speech by Stephen the martyr: "And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul" (Acts 7:58), while they threw rocks at Stephen until he was bludgeoned to death.

Saul continued to harass the Church and was on his way to the Jewish community in Damascus to arrest members of the faith and send them back to Jerusalem when God intervened and struck him down. Blind and helpless, Saul was shown the futility of fighting against God's plan. After his spiritual conversion, he went on to preach the truth with the same vigor with which he had previously fought against it (Acts 9).

Saul followed God as best he understood, but after his conversion he was able to follow God in both Spirit and truth. He saw his previous mistakes and turned to God.

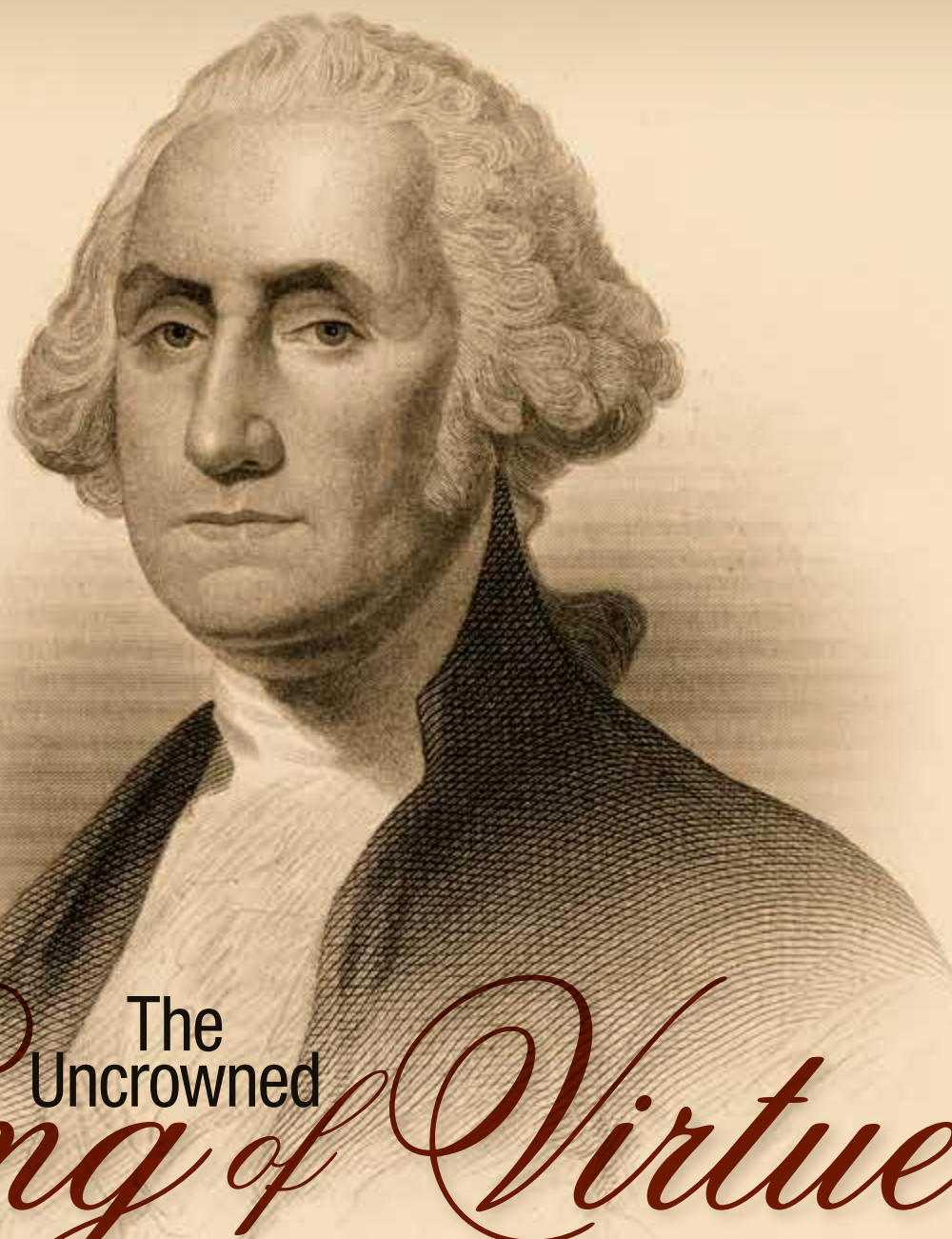
*The lesson:* When we are completely wrong, we need to be humble and willing to turn 180 degrees and do what's right. Saul the persecutor became Paul the faithful.

To learn from the Bible's bad guys, get the details of the story clearly in mind, understand what motivated people to do wrong, as well as what some bad guys did right to change their lives. Avoid the mistakes of the wrongdoers, and follow the good examples of the righteous. Being a skilled Bible student can help us lead a better life!

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## The Uncrowned

# King of Virtue

by Howard Davis

**A**mericans have always looked to George Washington, the first president of the United States (1789-1797), as one of the country's greatest leaders. He set a strong example of civic virtue—the set of ideal character traits for the exercise of freedom under just government.

He previously led American forces against the British in the Revolutionary War (1775-1783). “The other George” in the conflict, Britain’s King George III, asked American-born painter Benjamin West, who was working under royal commission in London, what George Washington would do after winning the war. Would he declare himself king? No other leader in history who created a new nation through war did not then make himself the king, emperor or dictator. But West answered, “Oh, they say he will return to his farm.” To which the king replied, “If he does that, he will be the greatest man in the world.”

And indeed, rather than seizing power, Washington did resign when the war was finalized in 1783. Yet he would be called back into further public service.

So why didn’t George Washington choose to become king? What did he stand for that made him such a great leader—second in

impact to only one other as a positive influence on the nation?

### Washington’s commitment to virtue

In 1783 many officers of the Continental Army were frustrated that Congress hadn’t paid them their Revolutionary War wages yet. They planned a coup d’état in what is called the Newburgh Conspiracy. At a meeting General Washington scolded them for losing faith in the idea of America and encouraged them to adhere to the rule of law as leaders of a free and noble people. That principle has



*George Washington is still one of the most important and respected people in American history. Why? What made him great? And whom did he try to follow?*

been described as Washington's "non-negotiable foundation of a free republic."

Washington's lifelong pursuit of virtue and idealism made the thought of seizing power, abolishing Congress and becoming the king of America repulsive to him. Those who knew him had no doubts about his integrity. They knew he would follow through on his commitment. His virtue of trustworthiness was the reason many powerful and famous American leaders—like Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams—chose him to be the president of the Constitutional Convention in 1787.

When Washington refused to be crowned king, he mentored countless American and other leaders in the standards of virtuous behavior. Few, if any, ever lived up to the standard as he did. But his intention was that we all need these traits.

Washington had respect for other's opinions and reputations. He was committed to fair and transparent procedures. Because of these virtues he carefully and skillfully guided the Constitution-building process. He helped create the remarkable governmental system—arguably the foremost in world history—that helped guide two centuries of American greatness. He dedicated himself to preventing abuse of the enormous powers of the future United States. He believed it would be the greatest nation in history *if* its citizens lived lives of personal and civic virtue.

But Washington's quality of character didn't come from a desire to be the greatest man in history. It came from his personal belief in and commitment to being a virtuous person.

## **Washington understood that living by true virtues as Jesus did was ultimately God's purpose for mankind.**

He believed in the virtue of public service, even to the point of sacrificing himself for others' welfare and freedom. He was personally and deeply committed to the act of loving and respecting your neighbor as yourself.

Of course, such commitment to virtue was not inherent within himself but was derived from a higher source—the Bible, the Word of God. With Bible-based personal conviction, Washington resisted the human tendency to abuse public power for personal advantage. He believed God wanted every man to act according to this way. By doing so he believed that America could become a positive example to all nations.

### **Was Washington America's greatest?**

In terms of what he actually accomplished and stood for, George Washington was the foundational leader in American history. He helped America become a great country. Because of his virtuous leadership, for America's first hundred years her citizens considered him the model of leadership and justice, second only to Jesus Christ in positively influencing the country.

Jesus Christ, of course, is the greatest leader in human history. As a man, He was God made flesh to be our example of living by the highest standard in the pursuit of virtue. Jesus has all virtues. We need to work to develop them all in our goal of becoming like Him (1 Peter 2:21).

George Washington believed that Jesus' example and the Bible ought to be the model of the American character and lifestyle. He wrote, "I now make it my earnest prayer that God would . . . most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific [peaceable] temper of the mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion."

Washington understood that living by true virtues as Jesus did was ultimately God's purpose for America and the world. In his 1796 farewell address after a second term as president, he made it clear that good government requires a spiritual framework:

"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports . . . Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion . . . Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

He then made the point that America needed God's virtues and morality to remain a free nation, stating: "It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?"

Sadly, America has fallen far from that ideal. But the Bible continues to be the best source of what is universally right and noble in the world. As Washington believed, it really is 100 percent necessary for true leadership and living a virtuous life.

Washington well understood humanity's need for "Providence"—divine guidance—stating, "Mankind, when left to themselves, are unfit for their own government." In essence, he predicted that America wouldn't survive without virtuous citizens and leaders. It may well be America will not survive this generation for that reason.

Washington refused to be crowned king of America. But figuratively he wears another, greater crown. He urged everyone to seek virtue. Whether American or not, we need to hear his words and consider his leadership. It is for good reason that George Washington can be called America's—and, in terms of this world's exemplary human leaders, the world's—uncrowned king of virtue.

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**Howard Davis** is a *Vertical Thought* staff writer and pastor of the New York City congregation of the United Church of God.

# How the Bible Applies to Science

*Are science and the Bible incompatible?  
Or do they stand together on common ground? We consider some examples.*

by Mario Seiglie

**W**hat is science? I've asked myself that question again and again. In high school, I took science classes like biology and chemistry, but the real meaning of "science" still wasn't clear to me.

Linus Pauling won the Nobel Prize twice—once for Chemistry and once for Peace. He said, "Science is the search for truth, the effort to understand the world."

When we think of it that way, we can see that the Bible has a lot to say about science. After all, it's a book about truth. In different places, it tells the truth through history and science.

I remember how learning to think about the Bible like that changed my life. At age 17, I didn't take the Bible seriously. I thought it was just some old book that didn't mean anything to the modern world. Was I ever wrong! My father was a medical doctor, and I was excited to follow in his footsteps. I got accepted to a leading university to study premed.

My life changed when a schoolmate showed me a magazine—a predecessor to *Vertical Thought*. It explained how the Bible applied to science. I was blown away! Instead of becoming a doctor, I eventually became a church pastor.

Over the years I've been struck by many examples of the Bible applying to science. I'll share a few of these here. Then you can decide if the relationship between the Bible and science makes sense to you as well.

## **The Bible describes an accurate beginning of the universe**

In the mid-20th century, there were several theories about how the universe started. But scientists couldn't make up their minds because of insufficient evidence.

One model was that of the "Steady State Theory," which maintained that the universe had no beginning or end. It imagined an ongoing stable expansion with matter spontaneously forming to fill the void of space. This theory is no longer accepted because of several discoveries. The cosmic background radiation detected in the 1960s, the existence of quasars and the better-supported theory of general relativity all showed that the universe is expanding from a fixed point in time. In other words, it had a beginning.

This fits the biblical testimony of Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

The famous astrophysicist Robert Jastrow noted: "A sound explanation may exist for the explosive birth of our universe;

but if it does, science cannot find out what the explanation is. The scientist's pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation. This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always

accepted the word of the Bible: 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth.' It is unexpected because science has had such extraordinary success in tracing the chain of cause and effect backward in time.



**"The best data we have [on the beginning of the universe] are exactly what I would have predicted, had I nothing to go on but the first five books of Moses, the Psalms and the Bible as a whole."**

"Now we would like to pursue that inquiry farther back in time, but the barrier to further progress seems insurmountable. It is not a matter of another year, another decade of work, another measurement, or another theory; at this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation.

"For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries" (*God and the Astronomers*, 1992, p. 116).

Arno Penzias was one of the two scientists who put the final nail in the coffin of the Steady State Theory by discovering



cosmic background radiation. He admitted, “The best data we have are exactly what I would have predicted, had I nothing to go on but the first five books of Moses, the Psalms and the Bible as a whole” (interview by Malcolm Browne, “Clues to the Universe’s Origin Expected,” *The New York Times*, March 12, 1978).

### The mystery of missing matter and energy

Scientists have now determined that the universe consists of only about four percent visible matter. The rest is made up of mysterious, invisible dark energy and dark matter. These are hard to study because they can’t be directly detected. Only their impact on the visible universe can be measured.

As one astronomer put it, “This is not the case of the dog wagging the tail, but of the tail wagging the dog.” We can see the tail (visible matter), but we can’t find the rest of the dog. Scientists have no idea why they can’t detect the energy and mass that make up nearly the whole universe—responsible for its arrangement and motion.

The Bible says that God through His Son Jesus Christ sustains the universe by an invisible spiritual power—“*upholding all things by the word of His power*” (Hebrews 1:1-3, emphasis added).

Author George Sim Johnston pointed out the irony: “The book of Genesis has held up well under the scrutiny of modern geology and archaeology. Twentieth-century physics, moreover,

### The Black Death, from which an estimated one third of Europeans died in the 14th century, was finally stopped by applying biblical health principles.



describes the beginning of the universe in virtually the same cosmological terms as Genesis. Space, time and matter came out of nothing in a single burst of light entirely hospitable to carbon-based life. A growing number of chemists and biologists agree that life had its origin from clay templates . . . I would say all this is a curious development for Darwinists” (*Reader’s Digest*, May 1991, p. 31).

### Amazing health laws

In the Middle Ages, two of the most terrible plagues to hit Europe were the Black Death and leprosy. It’s estimated that

one third of all Europeans died in the 14th century as a result of the Black Death. Yet these diseases wouldn’t have spread if biblical health laws had been followed.

Dr. George Rosen, a professor of public health at Columbia University, wrote about how horrible these plagues were: “Leprosy cast the greatest blight that threw its shadow over the daily life of medieval humanity. Fear of all other diseases taken together can hardly be compared to the terror spread by leprosy. Not even the Black Death in the 14th century or the appearance of syphilis toward the end of the 15th century produced a similar state of fright” (*History of Public Health*, 1958, p. 62).

Physicians tried everything, but they couldn’t control these plagues. Some medical doctors thought they were a result of eating hot food, garlic or sick pigs. Others believed they were a result of an evil conjunction of the planets.

How were these plagues halted? “Leadership was taken by the church,” Dr. Rosen stated, “as the physicians had nothing to offer. The church took as its guiding principle the concept of contagion as embodied in the Old Testament. This idea and its practical consequences are defined with great clarity in the book of Leviticus. Once the condition of leprosy had been established, the patient was to be segregated and excluded from the community . . . It accomplished the first great feat in methodical eradication of the disease” (p. 63).

Seeing the positive results on leprosy, European countries used the same procedures to combat the Black Death, known today as the bubonic plague. Finally they were able to stem the disease. Millions of lives were saved by applying the biblical injunction: “Those who suffer from a serious skin disease must tear their clothing and leave their hair uncombed. They must cover their mouth and call out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ As long as the serious disease lasts, they will be ceremonially unclean. They must *live in isolation* in their place *outside* the camp” (Leviticus 13:45-46, New Living Translation).

As far as a happier life with good health goes, Harold Koenig, director of Duke University’s Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health, has some interesting things to say about the Bible. He and his team of scientists have conducted numerous studies that indicate religious involvement is associated with better health.

A review of his book *The Healing Power of Faith in Christianity Today* magazine titled “Take Ten Commandments and Call Me in the Morning” mentioned the results of these studies: “Using both anecdotal and research data, he [Koenig] demonstrates that there is ample evidence to show that people who regularly attend church, pray, read, and put into practice what the Bible or their faith teaches are overall healthier.

“Just for starters, they have significantly lower blood pressure, are hospitalized less, recover from surgery faster, have stronger immune systems, and are likely to live longer. Emotional health also benefits: family life is better and depression is lower in those with faith” (Archibald Hart, Nov. 15, 1999).

### Conclusion of faith

The Bible applies to science in so many more ways. Just to name a few fields of study—ecology, astronomy and archaeol-

Continues on page 13

## Royal Virtues

*She was just a young adult, but a dedication to serve helped her rule. It can help us too!*

**H**er Royal Highness Princess Elizabeth sat before a microphone and camera in South Africa during a tour with her parents, the king and queen of England. The young woman had a serious expression as she pledged herself to a life of service and dedication to the British Empire.

She was an unlikely queen. For the first 10 years of her life she was simply a princess, the daughter of the younger brother of the heir to the throne of England. If her uncle had remained on the throne and fathered a child, she would have grown up to be just another member of the royal family, able to live out a relatively quiet life.

But that was not her destiny. After her uncle abdicated the throne and her father became king, her life was never the same. She would eventually become a queen.

So in 1947, at age 21, she dedicated herself in a pledge heard by millions of people to a life of service to others—a heavy commitment for a young adult to make.

The story doesn't end there. Pledging oneself to virtuous goals, positive and important though they may be, is not enough. It's the follow-through that's important. Where does one turn for guidance—and how does this relate to the rest of us?

### Age-old instruction for rulers

Of course, the One who knows best how to rule is the ultimate Ruler—God. And His Word, the Bible, is an invaluable source of needed guidance.

**We can rule our lives diligently. Our tiny kingdom of one may be small, but it can make a big positive impact in the lives of those around us.**

The book of Proverbs is meaty—it's full of psychology, philosophy and practical direction for a productive life, the road to happiness, and eternal salvation. In short, it's a distilled selection of what the rest of the Bible has to offer. Plus, it's inspired poetry!

Notice this statement: "The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labor" (Proverbs 12:24).

For a woman who is now in her 80s and continues to fulfill a grueling daily schedule, Queen Elizabeth is certainly the

definition of diligent. It's proof of her commitment that this very year (2012) is the Diamond Jubilee celebration of her 60 years of service on the throne.

Proverbs has many other points of wisdom about how kings and rulers should conduct themselves:

"The king [or queen] establishes the land by justice, but he who receives bribes overthrows it" (Proverbs 29:4).

"A ruler who lacks understanding is a great oppressor, but he [or she] who hates covetousness will prolong his days" (Proverbs 28:16).

### The ultimate royal family

So how do we "commoners" relate to instructions directed at kings and queens? Only the very few hold such positions



In this file photo from April 21, 1947, Britain's Princess Elizabeth, later Queen Elizabeth II, sits at Natal National Park in South Africa, on her 21st birthday.



# Bible and Science

Continued from page 11

ogy are addressed in the Bible. In each case, science and the Bible don't contradict but rather complement each other. While the Bible focuses on spiritual knowledge, it does so while presenting historical and scientific realities.

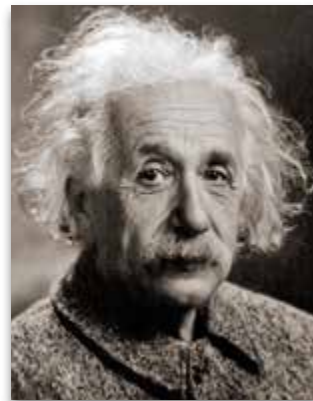
But even far more important than what science can reveal to religion, the Bible shows us how a loving Creator wants us to have faith in Him and His Word so things will turn out for our good.

As the Bible says, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible . . . Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is [that He, the God of the Bible, exists], and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:3, 6).

It was easy for me to finally see what a strong relationship science and the Bible have when viewed together. I was especially impressed by how Albert Einstein expressed the connection between science and religion:

"Now, even though the realms of religion and science in themselves are clearly marked off from each other, nevertheless there exist between the two strong reciprocal relationships and dependencies. Though religion may be that which determines the goal, it has, nevertheless, learned from science, in the broadest sense, what means will contribute to the attainment of the goals it has set up.

"But science can only be created by those who are thoroughly imbued with the aspiration toward truth and understanding. This source of feeling, however, springs from the sphere of religion. To this there also belongs the faith in the possibility that the regulations valid for the world of existence are ratio-



**Albert Einstein said, "Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind."**

nal, that is, comprehensible to reason. I cannot conceive of a genuine scientist without that profound faith. The situation may be expressed by an image: science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind" (*The World as I See It*, 1949, pp. 27-28).

Don't be lame or blind. Understand science in the light of the Bible and you too will find true purpose and faith.

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



Queen Elizabeth on a visit to NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center just outside Washington, D.C., in 2007—60 years after her historic pledge in South Africa.

in life, while most of us are just regular people. Where and how do we fit in?

First, we are all rulers over at least one person—our own self. We can rule our lives diligently, establish justice in our conduct and personally hate covetousness, just as the Proverbs direct. Our tiny kingdom of one may be small, but it can make a big positive impact in the lives of those around us.

Second, we all have the potential to be rulers at a future time when, if we are faithful to God, we will be changed from temporary physical bodies to immortal, untiring spirit bodies.

God's Son, Jesus Christ, shed His divine power to live in human form, died without sinning and was resurrected by God the Father to divine spirit existence. He did this so that every human being who has or will ever live can choose God's way and also be resurrected to spirit existence to live an amazing, productive eternal life in the Kingdom of God as a part of God's family, the most royal of all!

The book of Proverbs will give you the tools to live a life God would approve of, and the rest of Bible gives you the knowledge to make that commitment to God's way of life and stay on course to eternal life. Explore the Proverbs today, and rule your life with virtue!

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

# Useless Body Parts?

*Did chance evolution leave us with unneeded vestigial body parts—or did a Creator carefully design every part of us? As it turns out, there are uses for body parts previously assumed to be useless!*



by Dan Dowd

If you sat down and counted all the cells in the human body, you would find more than 10 million million (10,000,000,000,000) cells. About 12,000 million of these are nerve cells linked by more than 10 million million connections. The body's cells make up groups of systems that work together to sustain life—the skeletal system, the muscular system, the digestive system, the nervous system, the reproductive system and the cardiovascular system.

All of these systems have subsystems. For instance, the muscular system has involuntary and voluntary muscles. Involuntary muscles work without our conscious effort—such as the cardiac or heart muscle. Voluntary muscles are muscles that we have to think about to use—like a bicep muscle that helps us to pick up things.

Not only do the systems in the human body perform specific tasks, but they also work together to improve the work of each system. For example, the skeleton provides the framework to support the body and to protect vital organs. It also provides mobility to the body and produces red and white blood cells that move energy through the body, fight infection and remove waste material.

Despite how impressive and complex our bodies are, evolutionists have long insisted that parts of the human body are useless. They think these so-called “vestigial organs” are just leftovers of man’s evolutionary process. Believers in the theory of evolution often point to human body parts like the appendix, coccyx bone, adenoids and tonsils, claiming they serve no important bodily function.

A Discovery News article (at [Discovery.com](http://Discovery.com)), reposted at [FoxNews.com](http://FoxNews.com) Oct. 14, 2011, features a list of supposed

“useless” parts in the human body without any follow-up or consideration as to what value these body parts could have. Are these “vestigial organs” really useless body parts, or did a Creator God Himself design them with important roles to play?

## The third eyelid: *plica semilunaris*

The *plica semilunaris*, or the “third eyelid” located in the corner of your eye near the tear duct, looks like an “extra” fold of skin.

Evolutionary theory sees it as a remnant of an extra eyelid like the kind a lizard or a shark has. The fact is, it has an important job.

When we wake up we often have gunk in the corner of our eyes—the result of the *plica semilunaris* secreting sticky mucus that collects dust, dirt and other matter on the surface of our eyes. This debris is gently moved to the corner of our eye where it can be easily removed. If not removed, it could scratch or damage our sensitive eyeballs. The *plica semilunaris* also provides a first line of defense to prevent the entrance of microbes into the eye.

## Adenoids and tonsils

The tonsils are located on each side of the back of the mouth, and the adenoids are located above the roof of the mouth behind the nose. Evolution’s supporters claim that these organs are prone to infection and should be taken out early in life. After all, they think, these perform no important function in the body. Not true! Just glance in any medical reference book. It will show that these organs are prone to infection *because they trap bacteria* as part of the lymphatic system.





**Evolutionists have long insisted that parts of the human body are useless. They think these so-called “vestigial organs” are just leftovers of man’s evolutionary process.**

These two organs are situated where they are because they’re a vital part of the body’s first line of defense. Doctors have found that the adenoids and tonsils “sample” bacteria and viruses that enter through the nose and mouth to help figure out the body’s response. While they can become infected, this is more a result of the job they perform rather than being useless. On top of that, the adenoids have specialized cells that make antibodies to help fight infections.

#### **The tailbone: *coccyx***

The *coccyx* serves a very important purpose as an anchor for various muscles, tendons and ligaments. While most medical doctors know how important the *coccyx* is, many still think it’s a leftover tail from earlier primate evolution (think monkeys). The *coccyx* is actually three to five separate or fused vertebrae. As the lowermost part of the spinal column, it is designed to be an anchor while the rest of the spinal column remains more flexible.

If we didn’t have a tailbone for attaching the abdominal muscles that help us lean back and sit down comfortably, we couldn’t function. Many ligaments that cooperate in the flexing and support of the spinal column attach to the *coccyx*. It works along with muscles of the pelvic floor and muscles that help us walk. The *coccyx* also offers some protection when we fall on our rear, helping to prevent the more sensitive spinal column from being damaged.

#### **Still skirting the evidence**

Though their assumption that various parts of the human body are useless has been proven wrong, most scientists hold desperately to evolutionary teaching. Rather than taking another look at their premise, they stick to their

scientifically inaccurate guns. While they admit there are no truly useless organs, they argue that there may be some useless vestigial biochemistry, genetics or smaller anatomical features. They don’t want to be proven wrong, so many now describe these smaller features as having “no known function.”

There is no doubt that the human body is amazing. The more scientists study it, the more complexity they discover. The bodies of other creatures are of course amazing too—as we all share the same Designer. The evidence is abundantly clear that God created us, and we are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 139:14; Romans 1:20).

God made you and me, and He did so for a purpose. The next time you hear or read some statement about how evolution has shaped us, take the time to do the research and find out more about why God designed our bodies to work the way they do.

For more insight into many of the shortcomings of the theory of evolution, we recommend that you read our free booklet *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?* You can find it online at [ucg.org/booklets](http://ucg.org/booklets). You can read more about what evolutionists view as useless body parts in a supplemental extension of this article online at [VerticalThought.org](http://VerticalThought.org).

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*"I'm saved—I can feel Jesus in my heart!" "I had an awesome experience with the Lord!"  
"Oh, the Spirit leads me with feelings overwhelming!" Emotion-based religious sentiments seem to be the norm  
these days—but is that a good thing?*

by Scott Hoefker

**“E**motion” and “religion” appear to go together like bread and butter—or do they? Is emotion in worshipping God wrong? Is the alternative just cold, meaningless indifference? Some seek the extremes in both directions, but what is right in God’s sight?

### Emotionalism

Emotions are necessary. After all, God created them. Human emotion plays an important role in our lives. But we know that emotion can cloud people’s thinking. It can be confusing, uncertain and even dangerous. Emotions do have a scriptural, and thus religious, role in our lives. But when emotions become *emotionalism*, beware.

As defined, emotionalism is “when emotion becomes an end to itself” or “an undue indulgence in or display of emotion.” When “undue indulgence” is given to emotion, the result can be more like a carnival than a worship assembly.

### Do feelings prove truth?

Many accept or reject their religious beliefs on the basis of emotion. One young adult said that she depends more on what she feels in her heart than on what she reads in her

Bible and that “this feeling in my heart is the most awesome experience in the world!”

“It can’t be wrong when it feels so right,” a once-popular song intoned. Some today still seek *feelings* of rightness in religion rather than evidence from the Bible. They view faith

as a “leap in the dark” based on those feelings.

After attending a “revival” with rhythmic music, hypnotic preaching, clapping and people claiming to “feel the Spirit moving,” some have emotional experiences that convince them they’ve been “saved.”

Some with guilt have prayed to God for help, then heard a religious teacher and assumed this was God’s answer. They received a sense of peace and warmth, by which they “felt sure” they were saved. The experience has been described in such terms as “better felt than told, but if you ever *feel* it, you will *know* it,” with such insistence as “I wouldn’t trade *this feeling* for a stack of Bibles!”

This is the danger: Religious emotionalism can cause people to decide on doctrines of faith on the basis of feelings rather than on the clear teaching of the Bible.



## Can we trust our feelings only?

Mankind's emotions have led to many mistakes and sins—sexual immorality is a classic example. Movies, books and songs urge people to “follow your heart.” *Star Wars* characters said, “Reach out with your feelings” and “What do your feelings tell you?” It makes good entertainment, but in real life we often regret it.

The Bible teaches us to control our feelings because emotions can lead to trouble if they control us: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). And: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). How can this be harmonized with the idea that “it can't be wrong when it feels so right”?

To believe that we can know right from wrong by praying for or following a feeling distorts the purpose of emotions.

## Emotion is good, but working up emotions for the sake of being emotional is not sincere worship. It is just self-focused emotionalism.

God alone reveals how we determine right from wrong: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5). And where do we gain this trust? “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

Faith—inner spiritual conviction and trust—doesn't simply come from feelings or by praying for emotional experiences. Rather, the Bible, which is God's Word to all mankind, imparts truth and faith. Christ's apostles *reasoned* with people from the Scriptures (Acts 17:2). Our emotions alone cannot teach us right from wrong. The Scriptures must be our guide.

### Testing for religious emotionalism

Our emotions should not overrule our intellect. However, the Bible describes an intrinsic mind-heart connection combining both our intellect and our emotions. Emotions expressed in worship must be a balanced response to our mindful acknowledgement and acceptance of God and His ways. When we let our emotions overpower our thinking, then our worship is no longer praise to God but mere emotionalism. Emotionalism is intoxicating and, like drunkenness, puts us at risk.

We must *choose* to do what God says regardless of what our feelings suggest. As we obey God, we'll develop a true sense of joy based on the conviction that we love God and are pleasing to Him. This is completely different from religious emotionalism.

Emotions can enhance or cloud understanding at a worship service. If emotional response is the primary goal,

many things will be done or said to excite and thrill—regardless of whether they are reasonable or lead to spiritual understanding. The interplay of clapping, shouting, strong musical rhythms and what some call “tongues speaking” arouse powerful feelings but fail to convey understandable truth from the Bible.

The repetition of “Amen!” and “Praise the Lord!” can lead to excitement with little thought to the meaning. The word “Amen” occurs less than 80 times in the King James Bible. It's not used in the middle of sentences or in ways that repeatedly interrupt a train of thought. Those 80 “Amens” amount to about one occurrence in 20 pages. Yet some teachers and audiences repeat it so much that it takes 10 minutes of a 20-minute sermon! Jesus warned against “vain repetitions” in worship (Matthew 6:7).

Singing and prayer must also be understandable at church services (see 1 Corinthians 14:15-17). True worship must be conducted and experienced decently and orderly (verse 40) because God is not the author of confusion (verse 33). When our emotions serve their proper role, then our ability to understand and believe God and His way is enhanced.

### How to use healthy emotions to worship God

How we can express *healthy* religious emotions? Emotions do have a place in worship when kindled and handled properly so that worshippers and God are edified and glorified.

Worshipping God produces a variety of emotions in us:

- A fervent desire to be in His presence.
- A trembling awe of the glory of His presence and greatness of His power.
- Remorse and sorrow over sin.
- Thanksgiving for His blessings.
- Rejoicing and hope for the salvation that only He supplies.

Emotion is good, but it is *not the basis* of our faith and worship. Nor is it an end in itself. Working up emotions for the sake of being emotional is not sincere worship. It is just self-focused emotionalism.

But if we diligently study God's Word, worship and give glory to Him and encourage others, then good emotions will certainly be stirred. Those feelings will not come from human manufacture, but naturally from our desire to faithfully follow God and His truth.

Oh, what a *feeling*—when given and guided by God!

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

**A**llen was a funny kid, and making people laugh became his passion. As he got older, he followed his passion and became an actor and comedian. Along the way, whenever he thought there was going to be a conflict with his spiritual beliefs, it worked out each time so he could obey God. God kept opening doors for him to follow his dream. When he got older, Allen moved to New York City and started performing with an entertainment troupe.

Things were looking up for Allen. But the longer he worked with his comedy buddies, the more often he had to opt out of acting in the videos they were producing due to content that didn't fit in his relationship with God. It was only a few times at first, but over time it became more frequent. He got to a point where he had a choice to make between what *he* wanted and what he knew *God* wanted. He could see clearly down the road that his spiritual life and comedy life would be more and more at odds.

And that's what the fear of commitment to God so often comes down to, right? Realizing we have to put *our* plans

and desires second and *God's* will for our lives first. If you're having trouble committing to God, some perspective will help.

### Why fear of commitment?

People talk a lot about commitment. Maybe you're studying hard to get into your dream university. Or maybe you're training every day so you can make the varsity basketball team. Both require lots of time, energy and commitment to accomplish.

Sometimes we talk about commitment in a different way. You probably know people you'd describe as having "commitment issues" because they're holding off on going to college until they feel more "ready." Or maybe they're afraid to commit to the emotional attachment to someone else necessary for marriage.

However, some are afraid of committing to the *most* important relationship. You should ask *yourself* the question, "Am I afraid of committing to God?"

What makes committing to God scary for people? Maybe they're afraid of how following God will affect the way they live. Or maybe it's a fear of failure that's standing in the way.

# Are You Afraid of Commitment?

by Milan Bizic

*We live in a commitment-phobic age, and it especially affects young adults and teens. Do you have commitment troubles—especially the most important commitment of all?*





“Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid . . . for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.”

### God is committed to you

Here's another hugely important spiritual commitment question to ask yourself: “How can I be committed to God if I don't know whether He's committed to me?” Let's look at God's commitment to you and me.

Consider what He says through the prophet Jeremiah: “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). Peter, one of Jesus' apostles, wrote that you ought to be casting all your cares on God, “for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

It gets even better! God is 100 percent committed to those He loves. Look at this exciting thought that God inspired Paul the apostle to write: “And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love . . . Indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39, New Living Translation).

No question about it—God is totally committed to you and your future!

### What are you afraid of?

If you haven't personally and fully committed to following God yet, ask yourself what's getting in the way.

If you're like Allen and afraid that you'll have to give up your dreams, take your worries to God in prayer. Talk to Him about your dreams, and ask Him to show you a way to accomplish them with His blessing. Allen did exactly that, and God answered his prayer.

Allen realized that committing himself to God must be his number one priority. So he asked God to show him how he could use his talents to serve and honor *Him*. Now he has a job using his creative gifts to serve God—living his dream while being fully committed to God and His way of life.

### Fear of failure

Fear of failure holds many people back from commitment—including commitment to God. You might think, “What if I determined to follow God and then find that I can't live by His standards?”

When the Israelites were getting ready to take over the Promised Land, they were led by a man named Joshua. He had to face powerful armies and violent battles in order

to follow God. No doubt he was seriously concerned about what appeared to be an uncertain future. But God encouraged him: “This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9, NLT).

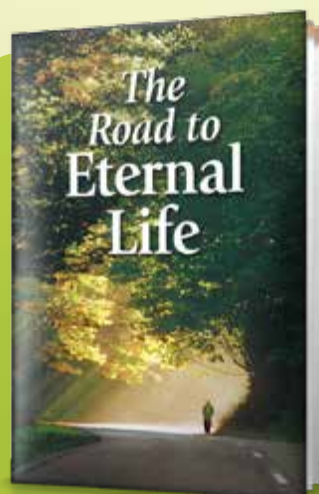
God was *with* Joshua—and He will be with you as well when you commit your life to following Him and living His way. “Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid . . . for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6).

### Face your fear and trust in God

Lose the fear. Spend time getting to know God by studying the Bible and praying to Him every day. Recognize that He's totally committed to you and your future. Then when your time comes to decide to commit to Him, you'll be able to step out on faith without fear of failure. And remember the story of Allen: You can chase your dreams *and* please God—just make Him a part of your life and take your hopes and fears to Him in prayer.

God has already committed to you, and He's waiting for your commitment to Him. To learn more, be sure to read our free booklet *The Road to Eternal Life*.

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



## GOD'S GPS

Set **DESTINATION**:  
Eternal Life, Kingdom of God

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# BUSY

*“Oh sorry, I meant to get ahold of you, but I’ve been really busy!” “Hey, I wanted to do that, but I’ve just been so busy.” Have you ever used this excuse? Why are we always so busy?*

by Corbin Rose

**I** live in America. It’s the wealthiest nation on the planet (for the time being). Keeping in mind the old saying “Time is money,” think about how rich Americans *really* are. Compared to many developing countries, America is rather poor in its “time” reserves. No one seems to have enough!

Why are so many of us *so* busy, and what can we do about it?

Despite the desire for time to relax and reflect, many are tangled in hectic schedules that suck up their time like an industrial-strength vacuum! Rushing to make appointments, meetings or sports practice, we should ponder how we can change our lives to have time to think.

Something works against our desire to find that kind of time. But there are positive steps we can take. Both the negative and the positive can be represented by using the word “busy” as an acronym, each letter standing for another word.

## **Brought—Under—Satan’s—Yoke**

Here is the root of the problem. There *is* a devil. His name *Satan* means “adversary.” This powerful spirit being is evil and cunning, and he hates us. (See our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?* to learn more.)

Satan knows that if he can’t get us to actually reject God and His laws, then he can prevent us from having a close and active relationship with our Creator by keeping us super busy!

We give in too easily, and thus we have “no time” to seek God. But strangely enough we find the time to check Facebook, e-mail, watch movies, hang out, travel and read novels.

So let’s move on to the positive—a way to save our time going forward.

## **Breathe—Understand—Simplify—Yearn**

**Breathe!** It’s impossible to create extra time in the day! Trust me, I’ve tried! Spending some time in Africa I noticed



the cultural difference in terms of time management priorities: Relationships came first, then deadlines and punctuality. While there needs to be a balance, it was interesting to note that life didn't have to be as crazy busy or stressful as mine was in America!

Sometimes at work I literally have to remind myself to breathe. This is *not* how God planned things! Our bodies were not meant to be constantly this busy. Take time to step back from stress and breathe!

**Understand** God's plan. Sounds daunting, yet young people need to seek God wholeheartedly! *"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them'"* (Ecclesiastes 12:1, emphasis added).

Understanding God's ways and seeking Him first will help us to have the right perspective on life. Obeying God brings us into His time rhythm, which greatly revolves around the seventh day of the week—the Sabbath—as a rest day. Faithfully taking that day off to vertically orient ourselves toward God greatly refreshes our lives and shields us from the devil's influence.

**Simplify** your life. In an age of distractions, we are far too easily influenced by society's norms and trends. Video gaming, hyper-social networking and television add to the cloud of devices, events and activities that steal our precious time. The tempting but trivial smorgasbord of distractions leads us

away from the more important things in life.

Several years ago I began a life without cable television—a big step for me! Next I freed more time by nixing my Internet movie service. These things aren't always bad, but they can become our go-to activities when we have an ounce of free time. What is there in your life making you unnecessarily busy and keeping you from connecting with God and family?

**Yearn** for the right things. Ask God to help you focus. We make time for what's important to us, so it's important to have the right things be important! "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalms 90:12, New International Version, 1984). After a long day of work, my heart yearns to play video games to relax, but wisdom reminds me to find something more fulfilling to do instead, including reading the Bible a little and praying a while to God.

***There's a cloud of devices, events and activities that steal our precious time. The tempting but trivial smorgasbord of distractions leads us away from the more important things in life.***

### Time offering

These steps can help us to reprioritize our lives. However, you might think that your priorities are fine; I did. But Jesus Christ wants us to make Him and His way of life our top priority, to "present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is [our] reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

Today we typically think of sacrifices and offerings in financial terms, showing that God is more important than our money. Yet our *time* is extremely important to God as well. Instead of being *so busy* with everything else, our great Creator wants us to be living sacrifices by giving Him the right amount of our time.

We are busy today—possibly busier than at any time in history. Satan the devil will constantly try to consume our time to distract us away from God. But you can take steps to use time wisely. What will *B.U.S.Y.* stand for in your life?

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## Archery Hits the Mark



With the popularity of recent movies like *The Hunger Games* and *Brave*, among others, the popularity of archery among girls and women has increased. Membership in USA Archery has gone up 20 percent and may rise even higher. It's an interesting development for a sport that usually gets little coverage in the media.

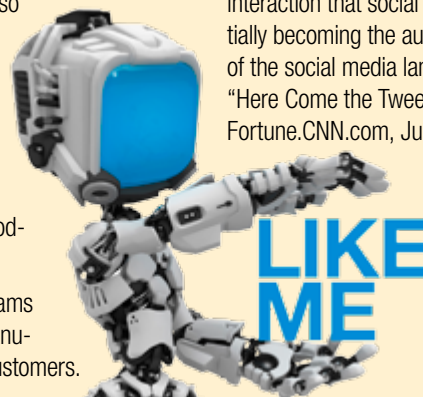
Archery store owners are also being barraged by interested new clients and their parents. Archery appeals to women because it's more about skill than sheer strength, and both men and women can compete together (Olivia Fleming, "Take a Bow (And Arrow): How The Hunger Games, Snow White and Now Disney's *Brave* Has Sparked Soaring Demand For Archery Lessons," *DailyMail.com*, June 21, 2012).

There are many references to archery in the Bible—this having been a way to hunt animals and fight enemies in the ancient world. And aiming to hit a target was used metaphorically. Biblical Hebrew and Greek terms for sin have the sense of missing the mark.

## Robots Invade Social Media

A new layer of robotic programming is being developed to help businesses deal with social media queries from customers. Some of these new virtual machines will help sort out the most urgent questions so that companies can respond quickly and accurately, while other programs will try to forecast the best time to post a social media update about a new product or service.

However, certain programs allow businesses to manufacture responses to customers.



Some even create robotic accounts that invent posts and gain followers without human help. This has led some in the industry to wonder if such programs will eat away at the human interaction that social media is built on, essentially becoming the automated telemarketing of the social media landscape (Ryan Holmes, "Here Come the Tweeting Robots," *Tech. Fortune.CNN.com*, July 23, 2012).

It's important to remember that God said to love your neighbor—not your social media program—as yourself!

## The Smell of Space

It's one of those questions we never knew we wanted to know until someone asked it: What does outer space smell like? Fortunately astronauts have the answer. As they reenter spacecraft after space walks outside, the odor of space is discernible on spacesuits and equipment.

Apparently the chemical reactions way up there smell like burned steak and melting metal, according to reports. Some have even compared it to the fumes from welding, while others add that it has a hint of cooked beef. Experts are now making the effort to recreate it on earth for astronaut training (Life's Little Mysteries, "What Does Space Smell Like?" *FoxNews.com*, July 23, 2012).



Photos: Photos.com

# 88%

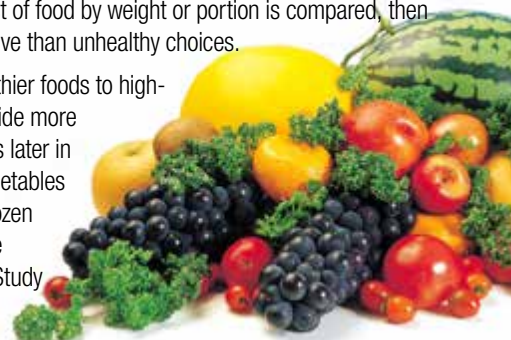
**Percentage of those who read an e-book in the last year who also read printed books.**

—Lee Rainie, Kathryn Zickuhr, Kristen Purcell, Mary Madden, Joanna Brenner, "The Rise of E-Reading," *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, April 4, 2012, *PewInternet.org*

## Eating Healthy Won't Break the Bank

A study by the United States Department of Agriculture found that by some measures healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables do in fact cost less than foods higher in fat, sugar and salt. Researchers found that if price per calories is used to measure cost effectiveness, then sugary pastries and such appear cheaper, but if cost of food by weight or portion is compared, then grains, produce and dairy foods are less expensive than unhealthy choices.

Also, when comparing the nutrient value of healthier foods to high-fat, high-sugar treats, the healthier choices provide more nutrition and contribute to fewer health problems later in life. Experts recommend choosing fruits and vegetables that are in season for a lower price and using frozen or canned versions in order to stock up and save (Sam Hananel, "Healthy Eating Can Cost Less, Study Finds," *APNews.MyWay.com*, May 16, 2012).





## Discovered: Artifacts Shed Light on Biblical Era

Two recent finds in Israel help verify a biblical location and reveal more details about life in the ancient world.

In Jerusalem, at the City of David excavations, a “bullae,” or clay seal impression, with the name of “Bet Lechem” (Hebrew for *Bethlehem*) was discovered by Eli Shukron and a team of archaeologists for the Israel Antiquities Authority. This find dates to the latter part of the First Temple period, mentioning the seventh year of a king—unclear as to whether that’s Hezekiah, Manasseh or Josiah.

It verifies the existence of the city of Bethlehem and, because the bulla was a seal on tax documents, connects Bethlehem to the government in Jerusalem (Nir Hasson, “Israeli Archaeologists Find Earliest Evidence of Bethlehem’s Existence in Jerusalem Dig,” *Haaretz.com*, May 23, 2012; Todd Bolen, “Seal Impression From Bethlehem

Discovered in Jerusalem,” *BiblePlaces.com* blog, May 23, 2012).

In northern Israel, a jug full of ancient jewelry was found at the site of the ancient city of Megiddo. After being cleaned, analyzed and dated to around 1100 B.C., Israel Finkelstein and colleagues at Tel Aviv University believe the jewelry probably belonged to a wealthy Canaanite family.

The earrings, rings and beads are made of precious metals and are very beautifully crafted. They are thought to be Egyptian in style, and as the metals are not from the region, the find illustrates the significant level of international trade at the time (Daniela Berretta, “Israeli Archaeologists Find Rare Ancient Jewelry,” *News.Yahoo.com*, May 25, 2012). Once again, archaeology continues to substantiate and illuminate the Bible record.

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## Cohabiting Doesn’t Guarantee a Happy Marriage

Marriage as a divine institution is again validated by a recent study.

Living together before marriage doesn’t necessarily lead to a long, happy marriage, recent studies find. Though commonly believed to be beneficial, some psychologists find that many cohabiting couples simply slide into living together, and when their relationship becomes rocky they try to save it by getting married. This ultimately leads to a troubled marriage and a stronger likelihood for divorce.

A *Journal of Family Psychology* study found that 19 percent of those cohabiting before marriage looked to divorce as a solution as opposed to only 12 percent of those who moved in together after marrying. The rosy outlook of newlywed love also seems to help just-married couples over the hump of setting up house together, a benefit lost to previously cohabiting couples (Lydia Slater, “Does Living Together Before Marriage Make You More Likely To Divorce?” *DailyMail.co.uk*, June 10, 2012).

God, as the eternal Creator, knows the details of the human mind and what will lead to the strongest potential for peace and happiness. He created the marriage institution between man and woman to succeed.

## Fountains of the Deep: African Aquifer

A large aquifer—water stored in porous rock layers underground—in Namibia was recently found. Experts estimate that it’s capable of supplying the region with fresh water for up to 400 years. Currently Namibia relies on water from a channel fed by its neighbor, Angola.

The aquifer is filled with water believed to be 10,000 years old, though still drinkable. It will help to supply water for agriculture on a much larger scale than has yet been possible. However, because a saltwater aquifer rests just above the new find, careful drilling will be

necessary to avoid contaminating the fresh water below (Matt McGrath, “Vast Aquifer Found in Namibia Could Last For Centuries,” *BBC.co.uk*, July 20, 2012).

The book of Genesis relates the story of Noah’s Flood, stating that “the fountains of the great deep were broken up” (6:11)—feeding, along with rain, the waters that covered the whole earth. Yet God also promised that the earth would never be destroyed this way again.

God made the earth to sustain life, and these great aquifers contribute to this vital purpose.



# Teen Girls

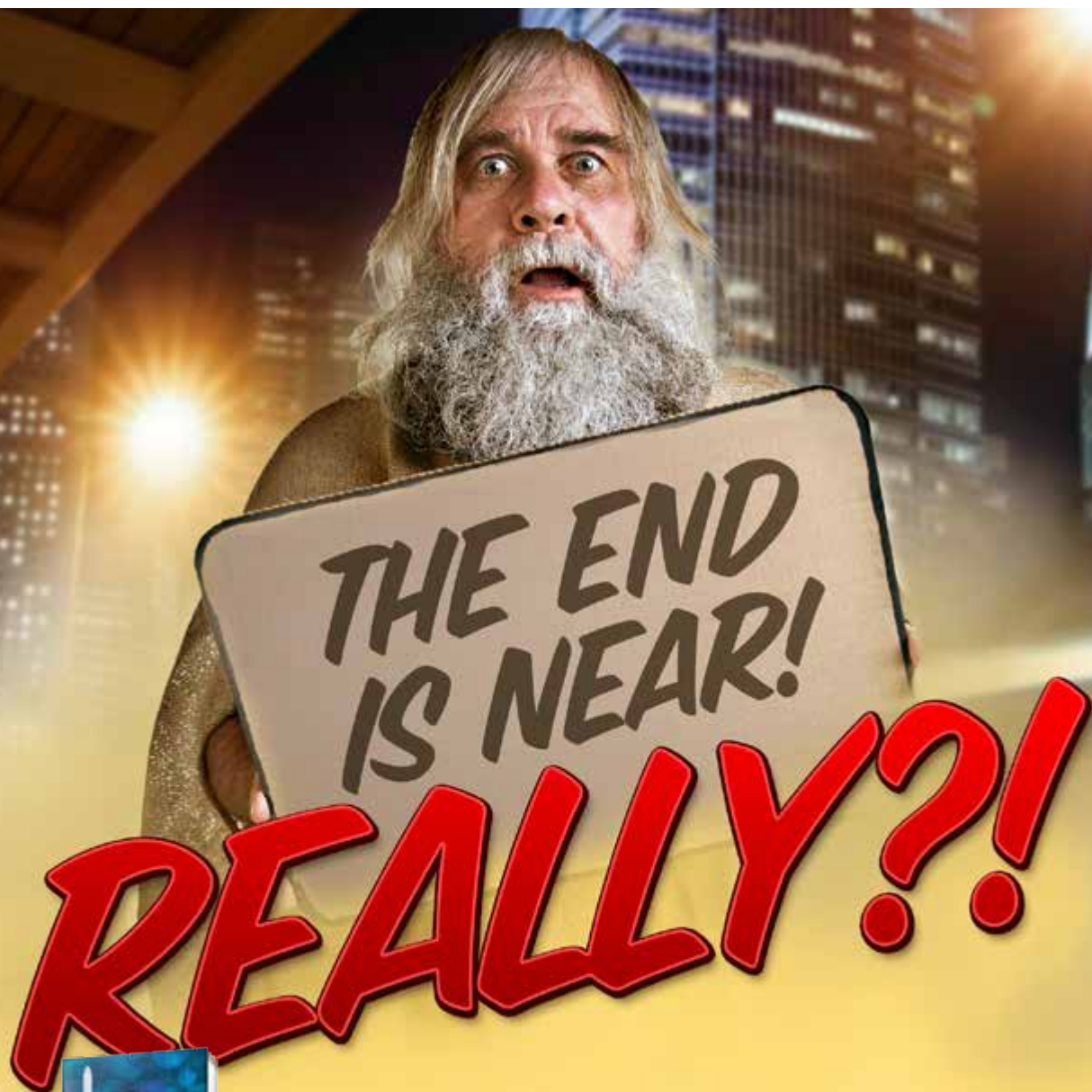
are more likely than boys to use online video chat programs like Skype, Google Talk or iChat.

—Amanda Lenhart, “Teens & Online Video,” *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, May 3, 2012, [PewInternet.org](http://PewInternet.org)

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