

vertical**thought**

April-June 2004

a magazine of understanding for tomorrow's leaders

A Beautiful Vertical Mind

Many don't know they're missing a critical component in their minds.

A Course in Evolution & Faith

Building a Relationship for a Lifetime

The Right One

INSIDE**thought**



Staying Christian on a College Campus



How to Survive Bull Riding and Religion



Had a Mental Checkup Lately?

Have you noticed that there seems to be an annual review for almost everything? In school or college, we usually have a final exam at the end of the year. When it comes to our health, we likely go to the doctor for an annual exam. But what about the way you think? Have you had a mental checkup lately?

Perhaps you haven't realized it, but Christians have been undergoing mental examinations at this time of year for a long time. This practice stems from instruction the apostle Paul gave in 2 Corinthians 13:5. The Living Bible's paraphrase of this passage reads: "Check up on yourselves. Are you really Christians? Do you pass the test? Do you feel Christ's presence and power more and more within you? Or are you just pretending to be Christians when actually you aren't at all?"

While striving to be genuine Christians is important every day, this time of year during which the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread fall is a time of extra introspection. These annual festivals of God that come in April this year remind us that Jesus Christ died because of humanity's faulty thinking. Of course, when we think improperly, we do things improperly. In biblical terminology, thinking or acting improperly is called *sin*. And it was because of humanity's sin that Jesus had to die.

We Christians use the time before Passover and during the Feast of Unleavened Bread to give ourselves mental (and spiritual) checkups to see if we are thinking as Christians should think. Paul told the Corinthian church in the first century to observe this feast with "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:8).

Emphasizing the importance of proper thinking, Jesus taught that evil begins in the heart—that is, in our thinking (Mark 7:21). So to help you evaluate your thinking, be sure to read our lead article, "A Beautiful, Vertical Mind," by Randy Stiver. Also note this article's sidebars about the effects of watching television and reading on our minds.

For more information on Passover and Unleavened Bread, read the article, "Personalizing Passover: What About Unbaptized Young People?" and the accompanying Q&As relating to Easter and the Holy Days of God.

Continuing the article lineup, we have an article by a student on her experience taking a college class on evolution, one on lasting marriages and another on how you will know when you find the right person to marry.

As usual, you'll also find our regular features including "In the News" and "Inside Thought" to round out this issue.

Now regarding your mental checkup: How are you doing in thinking like Jesus Christ? We all have room for growth, and this issue gives you help in preparing to pass the test.

Managing editor

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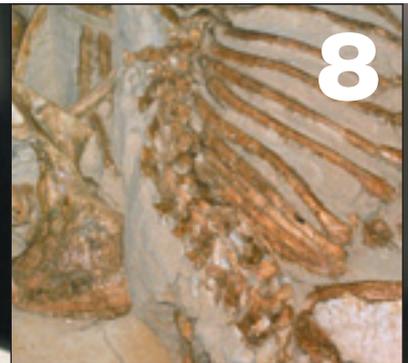
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4 A Beautiful, Vertical Mind

Did you know that when we are born, we are not all there? Something is missing—a nonphysical component critical for sound, godly thinking. If you want to think vertically, make sure you understand how to obtain this key component.

5 The Value of Reading

Turn off the TV and read this short article. It will only take you a couple of minutes, and your mind will be healthier for it. Make reading a habit and you're likely to be a lot smarter than people who don't!

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A Beautiful, Vertical

by Randy Stiver



You may have seen it. In the critically acclaimed motion picture *A Beautiful Mind*, actor Russell Crowe played the part of real-life Nobel Prize-winning mathematician John Forbes Nash Jr. Paranoid schizophrenia overshadowed Nash's mental brilliance for a time, but with dogged determination he fought back that terror of mental illness until he regained his beautiful mind.

As a pastor I've counseled many with mental illnesses and a few with paranoid schizophrenia. In their lucid moments they desire a return to full sanity. They want to have a sound mind, a beautiful mind.

What's your mind like? Do all your synapses fire in logical sequence? Can you quantify reality, then add, subtract, multiply and divide until you come to good and reasonable

God made us to need the other half of our mind that will add spiritual comprehension. "Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God" (same verse). In short, we all need God's Holy Spirit to complete the beautiful mind. This part of God's mind can be with you before conversion (as it was with the disciples—John 14:17) but is given to be *in* you sometime after you reach the age of maturity and only when you ask God for it.

That asking begins with two commands of Jesus Christ: "Repent, and believe . . ." (Mark 1:15). When you activate that inner mental change of mind coupled with positive changes in your behavior, then the Bible says you need to go through the ceremony of baptism (Acts 2:38). It is at this moment that God actually gives you His Spirit, thus providing the completing part of your personal, converted, beautiful mind.

But what defines such a mind guided by the Spirit of God

Mentally speaking, are you all there? Many people don't realize they're missing a critical nonphysical component.

conclusions? Do you have a beautiful mind?

Most people think they do. But most people are wrong. They have only *half* a beautiful mind, and it is corrupted by sinful thoughts—a form of spiritual insanity.

Two spirits

You see, as human beings we have a natural mind composed of our brain working in conjunction with a nonphysical component God gave us that the Bible calls the spirit of or in man. Scientists who don't believe in God disagree with this explanation because they don't accept anything outside the physical realm.

Within Christianity many think the nonphysical or spiritual element is an immortal soul. But they're wrong too. The Bible says, "The soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). A soul that can die is *mortal*, not *immortal*.

The spirit of man enables us to comprehend and reason far, far beyond the smartest animals. "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?" (1 Corinthians 2:11). A great gulf of intellect separates people from animals. We do have amazingly beautiful minds, but even with this unique spirit our minds are not complete.

and Christ? How is the truly converted mind in a young adult both beautiful and vertical?

Develop the mind of Christ

The most beautiful mind in the history of the world was the mind of Jesus. His was and is the ideal, the best, the brightest. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). Whatever way He thought, we should strive to think.

So what was Christ like? How did He think? Does such a beautiful mind ever laugh and have fun, or is it always soberly serious? Let's explore how your mind can reflect the mind of the Messiah.

People are intrinsically selfish. Self is the greatest problem this world faces. Selfishness retards your thinking. Especially in our age of materialism and preoccupation with looks and image, most people don't think past their own skin. They don't think about others. Self-absorbed egotism is not beautiful.

The beautiful mind loves its neighbor as itself and loves God above all else, *including self*. That was Christ's outlook—outgoing concern for others. That made Jesus interested in people, and not just the pretty people. He walked and talked

Mind

with the regular folks and the celebrities of the age alike. He helped them, sought to know what they thought about things, taught them God's truth.

Thinking past your own epidermal layer opens your eyes to truth too. We all love to be around people who think about others. The beautiful mind makes it a point to become that kind of person.

Thinking positively

The great American humorist and author Mark Twain once added his own punch line to a scripture: "Man was made a little lower than the angels . . . and he's been getting lower ever since" (compare with Hebrews 2:7).

Racked with grief in his personal life, Twain was plagued with a negative mental outlook as he surveyed the plight of human history. He was remarkably realistic about the direction of human life—that man would ultimately bring about his own destruction. Twain had an amazing, creative mind but he lacked God's Spirit, and thus lacked the beauty of positive thinking.

The beautiful mind can see the positive future beyond human failings—even our own. The beautiful mind can see the Kingdom of God coming to the earth. We all face trials, reversals and troubles, but the upbeat power of the Holy Spirit working in our minds persistently carries us through to God's green pastures and still waters.

Christ's beautiful mind in action spoke the night before His Passover date with destiny: "In Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). We can overcome too.

Thinking big

How big do you think? During His human ministry Jesus thought big. *Really* big.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of

The Value of Reading

*"Reading is to the mind
what exercise is to the body"*

—Sir Richard Steele.

Sadly, more and more people today are giving up the printed word in favor of being entertained and informed by the talking head and crystal clear imagery of the ever-larger TV set that sits as a throne in the center of their living space.

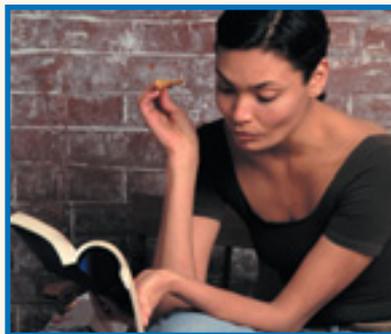
A recent news story noted that more and more infants are being subjected to TV programming, perhaps as a babysitter. More than two hours of TV time per day are now a part of *infant* development, generating physiological and mental problems that are of growing concern among experts.

At the very least, young people will learn how to process information in a much different way than those of other generations. Reading encourages thinking, reflecting and the cultivation of truth, but image-driven cultures tend toward subjectivism, superstition, hedonism and propaganda.

Dr. Jane Healy cautions, "Too much television—particularly at ages critical for language development and manipulative play—can impinge negatively on young minds in several different ways including the following:

"Higher levels of television viewing correlate with lowered academic performance, especially reading scores. This may be because television

substitutes for reading practice, partially because the compellingly visual nature of the stimulus blocks development of left-hemisphere language



RubberBall

Reading encourages thinking, reflecting and the cultivation of truth, but image-driven cultures tend toward subjectivism, superstition, hedonism and propaganda.

circuitry. A young brain manipulated by jazzy visual effects cannot divide attention to listen carefully to language. Moreover, the "two-minute mind" easily becomes impatient with any material requiring depth of processing" (AAP [American Academy of Pediatrics] News, May 1998, www.aap.org/advocacy/chm98nws.htm).

Neil Postman, media critic and author of some great books, including *Amusing Ourselves to Death* and *Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, pointed out the ways that reading teaches us to think in a logically connected way. It cultivates a sustained attention span. Readers learn to think in terms of abstract ideas, objective truth and sustained reflection.

When this is replaced with graphic imagery, like television (especially commercials) and movies, there is a tendency toward shorter attention spans and a purely emotional response to what is offered. Once addicted to graphical stimulation, there is an increased demand for constant, entertaining stimulation that can hinder the capacity for delayed gratification.

If you want to prepare yourself for great achievement and have more to contribute, try reading more books. Pick up some of the great classics and search for well-researched material that can help you grow. Reading *Vertical Thought* is a major step in the right direction.

—Larry Greider

God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond-servant, and coming in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:5-7),

As a man made in the image or form of God, Jesus set His sights on returning to life in the family of God as God’s own Son. And He wants us to be His brothers and sisters (Hebrews 2:10-11; 2 Corinthians 6:18). Think of it—to make the jump from mundane to divine! That’s the biggest goal you can set for yourself.

Many successful people live goal-oriented lives. They seek new

the “voices” in his head, to ignore them as he climbed back to functional reality and mental acuity.

This is an inspiring story that in many ways echoes the muddle this world has fallen into. The more modern society rejects the knowledge of God, the more it loses even its limited grasp on the reality of the spiritual dimension of the holy angels, the unholy angels (demons) and God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Before mental beauty comes through God’s Holy Spirit, the world is our reality. After conversion our beautiful minds can

The more modern society rejects the knowledge of God, the more it loses even its limited grasp on the reality of the spiritual dimension . . .

and greater challenges, but most don’t have a handle on the greatest goal of all.

God’s Spirit also helps you set intermediate goals in your life now and helps you consistently deduce the right course of action. When you have a big, beautiful mind, it requires maintenance through regular daily prayer and Bible study. And if you don’t yet have this mind, why not develop a good prayer life now so you’ll be preparing to receive it?

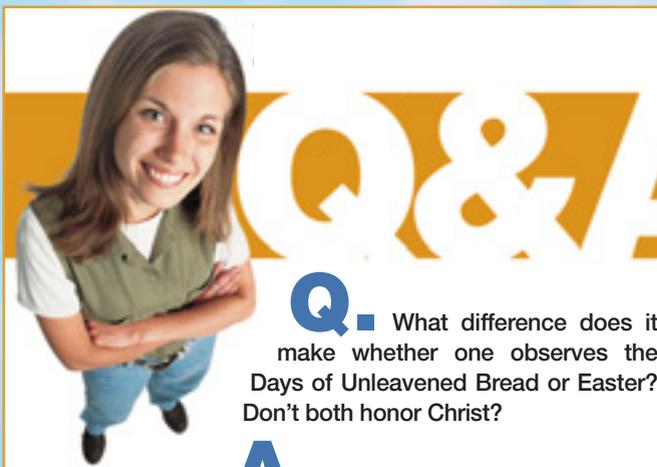
Discerning reality

As John Forbes Nash descended into paranoid schizophrenia, he increasingly lost sight of reality until he was institutionalized. In moments of clarity and discernment he then began to reject

comprehend in ever-increasing depth the reality of what God is doing in our lives and in the world—past, present and forever.

This translates into the ability to recognize right from wrong, sin from righteousness. It helps us to reject, for instance, the “voices” that tell us premarital sex is okay, and to see that God made sex for the expression of love only in heterosexual marriage to one’s own mate. What percentage of young people today can discern even that?

The beautiful mind discerns the right from the wrong and, by an act of will, does the right and rejects the wrong. The beautiful mind seeks the reality of the Kingdom of God and rejects the spiritual insanity of this world.



Q ■ What difference does it make whether one observes the Days of Unleavened Bread or Easter? Don't both honor Christ?

A ■ The simple answer is that there is a huge difference between these two observances. One is a biblically sanctioned Holy Day of God; the other is a man-made festival without biblical authorization. One teaches us how to live godly lives; the other masks this important truth.

The Days of Unleavened Bread, commanded by God (Leviticus 23:6) and observed by the early Christians (1 Corinthians 5:6-8), teach us to put sin (represented by leavened items such as bread and cake) out of our lives. This festival teaches us that we must overcome sin with the help of God’s Spirit and live righteously.

Easter, in contrast to the Days of Unleavened Bread, not only lacks biblical authorization, it was designed by men who deliberately tried to replace God’s commanded festival with one of their own. Trying to justify this deed, they decided to give this festival a Christian meaning—one to celebrate Christ’s resurrection.

As wonderful as Christ’s resurrection is, the Bible tells us to annually commemorate *His death* (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25). By the way, where do you read about using rabbits and Easter eggs to remember Christ’s resurrection in the Bible? Answer: Nowhere.

Given the history of Easter, it is quite understandable why so many people today think of Christianity as only a celebration of what Christ has done for us instead of the honorable quest to live godly lives. If you want all the facts, request our free booklet, *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?*

If you have a question, e-mail us at info@verticalthought.org

Television Facts

“By the time most Americans are 18 years old, they have spent more time in front of the television set than they have spent in school, and far more than they have spent talking with their teachers, their friends or even their parents.” *Quote from Abandoned in the Wasteland: Children, Television and the First Amendment, by Newton Minnow, former chairman of the FCC, and Craig LaMay, 1995.*



RubberBall

- There is a direct correlation between the amount of time a child spends watching TV and his or her scores on standardized achievement tests—the more TV watched, the lower the scores. *Source: 1980 study by the California Department of Education, which studied the TV habits and test scores of half a million children.*
- “We suspect that television deters the development of

imaginative capacity insofar as it preempts time for spontaneous play.” *Quote from a publication distributed by the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry.*

- Crime is at least 10 times as prevalent on TV as in the real world. *Source: 15-year study by Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania.*
 - The typical American child will witness 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of televised violence in his or her lifetime. *Source: American Psychological Association.*
 - More than 3,000 studies over the past 30 years offer evidence that violent programming has a measurable effect on young minds. *Source: Christian Science Monitor, July 6, 1993.*
 - Half of North America’s murders and rapes can be attributed directly or indirectly to television viewing. *Source: Seven-year statistical analysis study by Dr. Brandon Centerwall at the University of Washington.*
 - “Living with television means growing up in a world of about 22,000 commercials a year, 5,000 of them for food products, more than half of which are for low-nutrition sweets and snacks.” *Quote by Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania.*
 - Body metabolism (and calorie-burning) is an average of 14.5 percent lower when watching TV than when simply lying in bed. *Source: Study by Robert Klesges at Memphis State University.*
- Source: www2.localaccess.com/hardebeck/killtv2.htm.*

Personal honesty

Small minds in newspaper advice columns sometimes ask when it is all right to lie to their mate, kids, boss, friends, the government, etc. In contrast, the big, beautiful mind basks in the light of truth in all aspects of life. Lying is not a part of its vocabulary.

Sir Winston Churchill once commented on an English politician’s relationship with truth: “He occasionally stumbled over the truth but hastily picked himself up and hurried on as if nothing had happened.”

The beautiful, converted mind always improves when it stumbles over unnoticed truth. Always personally honest, it’s willing to be taught by the great or small, by circumstances or experience. But you have to be ready for the lesson of truth. Churchill recognized that challenge: “I am always ready to learn, although I do not always like being taught.”

Focus on the Father

The best has been saved for last. Just what is a beautiful, vertical mind?

The most beautiful mind in history, Christ’s, was also the most vertically aligned. He constantly looked to God the Father for

life and spiritual energy to face His daily tasks and trials. Jesus prayed with great depth of feeling. He fasted, read the Scriptures and kept the Sabbath and God’s annual festivals holy. And He gave the Father the credit at every turn.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner” (John 5:19).

As beautiful as the beautiful mind is, it becomes powerless without daily, personal contact with the Father and Son. The beautiful mind must also go vertically. “Seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1-2).

John Forbes Nash wrestled with severe mental illness to regain control of his mind and the beauty of sanity. His brilliant mathematical career began in 1947, but he won the Nobel Prize in 1994. Thus his end was greater than his beginning.

Your quest for a beautiful, vertical mind will lead you to a wonderful, eternal future in God’s Kingdom. Can you see it?

Randy Stiver is the pastor of United Church of God congregations in Coos Bay, Eugene and Roseburg, Oregon.

A Course on Evolution and Faith

by Leslie Schwartz

Starting college is a major transitional stage in one's life. For me, it was a time filled with both excitement and nervous apprehension. For months I had been dreaming about what the experience would be like—what my dorm would look like, how the food would taste and all the classes I would take. I was especially excited about the last one; I had so many options when it came to planning my schedule—physics, sociology, political science, engineering, theater, classics, English composition . . . The list seemed endless.

So when my Church friends in my local congregation and from across the country asked me what I was taking and I replied, "Education, Psychology and *Evolution*," red lights automatically started flashing in their heads. "*Evolution* . . . why would she want to take that if she had so many other options?" many of them thought, and even a few of them outwardly

What happens when a young person who believes in God studies evolution? Read this first-hand account to discover what happened to one college freshman.

questioned. To some, it sounded wrong and ungodly. To me, it made perfect sense.

Throughout my schooling experience I was one of the lucky high school students who never had to deal with an overly liberal biology teacher forcing the theory of evolution down my throat, so I never really understood the concepts that formed its framework. I have always believed that education is one of the most powerful tools one can utilize, and that it is not only ignorant, but wrong to say you don't believe something without thoroughly understanding why and what exactly you don't believe.

I knew and had been taught throughout the years that evolution was wrong, and that I shouldn't believe it, but I didn't know the different pieces that built up this supposedly scientific theory of our existence. I was on a quest for knowledge, and thought college would be the perfect opportunity to further this journey.

(Of course, this isn't for everybody. There are other ways to get this knowledge, such as starting with the booklets *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?* and following up with some of the many books on the subject—see "The Case Against Evolution" at www.ucg.org/vt/fall2003/evolution.htm. But I wanted to get the information straight from the horse's mouth—or in the lion's den, so to speak.)

Just a theory

On the first day of lecture, my professor stood at the front of the auditorium and said, "I want all of you to understand that evolution is just a theory and hasn't been proven yet, but in this class, for the next three quarters, we will be referring to hard and fast scientific evidence that makes it a very believable and globally accepted idea of creation and how life arose."

I was happy he had acknowledged the fact that evolution was still just a theory, and although he had no idea of God's marvelous plan for humankind, he wasn't going to lie to us. I knew that learning the material was not synonymous with accepting it, and was glad this attitude was presented up front at the beginning of the year. This made me feel more at ease.

As the quarter progressed, I learned about everything from neutrinos to the Big Bang to Hubble's Law. Fall quarter consisted of the evolution of the cosmos, followed by another class during winter quarter on the evolution of life. During the fall, most of the lectures dealt more with facts that science presented (apart from the supposed Big Bang), so I wasn't always at odds with the material.

However, once we ventured into the evolution of life, questions and opposition started popping up on all fronts. The theories my professors presented just didn't make sense to me. While some of the facts could be observed, like how animals adapt to their environments, when pieced together to form the much larger picture of macroevolution, things never seemed to fit.

Though some of my questions could be answered reasonably, the majority received the response, "We simply don't know." I don't know about some people, but I don't like to think my existence depends on a bunch of unknowns that, just by chance, decided to occur and sporadically form life.

A marvelous revelation

In the middle of the quarter, as I walked to the nearest bus stop across the beautiful UCLA campus one Sabbath morning to catch the 761 metro link to services, I was struck by a marvelous revelation that made everything seem so clear to me.

It started when I began examining the patterns of a falling leaf and the many interrelationships I shared with the environment and other organisms. I realized how carefully everything is made, and how beautiful life really is. All of these thoughts left me with

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What It Is Like Being a Young Church Member in France

By Laëtitia Bernal

There are around 30 of us in the United Church of God in France, Belgium and Switzerland. We live apart from one another and gather only for the Feast of Tabernacles.

Everyone has Sabbath services at home. We receive audiotapes and have the hymns on a CD made by one of the members who is a music teacher. So even though we're not together physically, we still can have regular services every Saturday, which is a great blessing because we know that's not possible for everyone around the world.

What is necessary to understand is that France, like many Western countries, is growing less and less religious. Since World War II many people have stopped believing in a God who created mankind and loves us. They believe that with all the suffering people endured in that war and others, such a God couldn't exist.

Religion is a difficult subject to tackle. People almost never talk about this with each other. There are three main religions in France: Catholicism (which is the mainstream belief), Judaism and Islam (we have a great number of people who immigrated from North Africa to France, either in the 1950s to help in the reconstruction of France after World War II or in the 60s when those countries gained their independence from France).

Other religious organizations are generally regarded as cults and are highly scrutinized by French authorities. When we created the French association of UCG, we had to pass before a Commission. It examined our beliefs

to make sure we were not a cult before finally allowing us to legally create the association.

If you start talking about religion to anyone you don't really know, you are likely to be regarded as weird, and people may look at you differently because they don't know you enough to not be afraid.

When you talk to people, you rapidly sense that they tend to decide moral issues for themselves. Any law or command that would come from a God they have never seen is viewed as a limitation on their freedom.

When they look at European history (even back to the Middle Ages), they see how much damage, murder and suffering have been inflicted in the name of God, mainly by the Catholic Church. So they don't want God in their lives.

As a teenager, I never told any of my friends about my religious beliefs. They would not have understood. But I finally confided some of my beliefs in two school friends three years ago. They kept wanting me to come with them on Friday night and Saturday, and it was getting harder and harder to find explanations to refuse without lying. But I told them very few things, just that I believed in God and that I rest on Saturday and not Sunday as Catholics do (people understand more easily when you compare things to what they are familiar with). They didn't ask for more information and I didn't give them any.

However, six months ago I explained the whole thing to my best friend at work. It took me a year and a half

before I could take that step! In our conversations, he already knew that I believed we were created by one God. I knew that he didn't share that belief, even though he wasn't absolutely ruling out the idea of some kind of a superpowerful being as the explanation for things we don't understand.

Because my beliefs

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Photos, from left: Laëtitia with a friend at the 2003 UCG Winter Tournament; church services in Bordeaux, France.



STAYING CHRISTIAN ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS

Are you having a hard time keeping the Sabbath while away at college? Read this firsthand account by someone who successfully faced the challenge.

by Kristin Yarbrough

It was well past sunset when I arrived at my old college dorm that Friday for an overnight visit with friends. Like clockwork, the TV was turned off when I walked in the door. I was stunned. I had moved out a year and a half ago, but my college roommates still remembered. They passed up the rowdier uptown bars in favor of the quieter Bob Evans for dinner, and the giggling stopped early enough that I could get up for church services the next morning.

Granted, they don't really understand why I do what I do. There was the Friday night they invited 10 or so friends over to watch movies because they felt bad about leaving me home alone. And I recall the time my music sorority dubbed its Christmas gift exchange a "holiday" event with the hope that I could participate.

A cheesy saying tells us that college is supposed to be the best time of our lives. I admit, my only regret about college was that I couldn't stretch it out a little longer. There are ways to stay Christian on a college campus without feeling like an outcast.

I don't claim to know all of them, but I did challenge

my friends, professors and even the university president over the years, and with God's blessings I came out on top.

God established His laws for His entire creation, and that creation doesn't end at campus's edge. If we waver from the Sabbath or the Holy Days once, there's less ground to stand on the next time our professor tells us we can't make up a test that falls during the Feast. If you take a firm stance from day one, they won't

be able to say, "Well, you made an exception before; why not now?"

If you have the option of scheduling classes, try to schedule them *around* the Holy Days. You won't be able to avoid every conflict, but picking a Tuesday/ Thursday class over one that meets Monday, Wednesday and Friday will almost always have you missing fewer classes during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Even professors who have set absence policies will usually accommodate you if you explain why you'll be missing the classes or exam and offer to make it up as soon as possible. Once they know you have a legitimate reason and you aren't just playing hooky, they usually are more than happy

to work with you.

But if they aren't, you may need to regroup, get some advice and try to explain it again. Your pastor can provide you with a letter about the Feast as well. But if this still doesn't work, respectfully present your case to the professor designated to hear appeals. You may end up talking to the department head and, if that doesn't work, the dean. More than likely, one of them will straighten the situation out.

In college dorms, people of all backgrounds—from the vegetarian friend who won't sit in the same room as a pepperoni pizza to the friend who must have every hair in place before leaving the dorm—are thrown together in a group living environment.

You still have a trump card even if the dean won't listen. Almost every college or university has a diversity statement in its student handbook that says something to the effect that the school welcomes students of different races, religions, ethnic backgrounds, etc. That same statement generally says the university will not discriminate and will make every effort to accommodate differences created by those diverse backgrounds.

Respectfully quote their own policy to them. The policy still applies to you, even though you were born in the United States and you aren't a Buddhist. No college wants to risk being

labeled intolerant or discriminatory. And, of course, pray about the issue before you ever say a word to your professor.

Okay, so you have classes figured out. But social life doesn't have a diversity policy. And you're never going to change the overall college culture.

In college dorms, people of all backgrounds are thrown together in a group living environment. It's a time when young adults start learning about getting along in the "real world" outside Mom and Dad's house. And they learn that they must be willing to accommodate one another's needs and habits if they want theirs respected in return.

This can range from the vegetarian friend who won't sit in the same room as a pepperoni pizza to the friend who must have every hair in place before leaving the dorm. Then there's you, the friend who really would like to go out with the gang but really hopes they'll wait until Saturday night when you can come along.

When push comes to shove, do you really want friends who care so little about you that they're not willing to wait a night to go to the movies every once in a while? And sometimes your friends will even find that doing things your way (which is really God's way, but they probably won't make that connection) works better.

For years, my music sorority had its annual formal dance on a Friday night. When they found out I couldn't go, the next year they changed the event to a Saturday night. Afterwards, they all said how much they liked having all day Saturday to get to the shindig instead of rushing off after classes Friday. I was long gone by last spring's dance, but they still held it Saturday night.

Making sure people know that you're not avoiding them often makes the difference between making friends and making enemies.

If your dorm mates and classmates think you're making excuses every time they invite you to join some friends on a Friday night, they'll probably think you're snubbing them and return the gesture. Thank them for the invite and let them know you'd

like to join them on a different night. They'll usually be glad to include you in their Saturday night plans. After all, since when do college kids have fun only one night a week?

But that doesn't mean you have to totally isolate yourself from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. Why not spend some time with them, engaging in appropriate Sabbath activities?

Escape from the dining hall's tofu surprise and go out to dinner. Sit around and talk. Go for a walk around some of the scenic parts of the campus. Doing things like these with your friends on the Sabbath can spark conversations that give them a better understanding of why you do what you do, and sometimes can arouse their interest in God.

But there will be times when your friends just want to go to the Friday night party or the Saturday afternoon football game. So what can you do on the Sabbath when your college buddies are all out and about?

First of all, the Sabbath is a great time for prayer and Bible study. It's the one time that your dorm is likely to be quiet. And if it's not, most dorms have study lounges or lobby areas where students can retreat from the usual noise. The library can be your last resort.

The Sabbath can also be the perfect time to catch up with your family and your Church friends. Everyone in college takes time out to call Dad and Mom, so why not call when there's less competition for the phone?

What about Sabbath services? Most colleges are somewhat near a local church area. If you don't have a car, don't be timid about asking Church members for a ride. If you don't know anyone in the area, ask the pastor if he can help you find a ride.

Try to go to services even if noise from the party next door kept you up until 3 a.m. Saturday morning. If you

skip once, it's easier to skip the next time for a less legitimate reason. I always let my pastor know when my neighbors had been particularly loud so he wouldn't get quite as upset if he caught me dozing. If you can spend even more time on the Sabbath with Church friends and families, so much the better.

If you're so far away that you can't get to services, you can always use the day for Bible study, listen to sermon tapes or even listen to sermons on UCG's Web site. If you're shy about listening to a tape in the dorm room,



Most dorms have study lounges or lobby areas where students can retreat from the usual noise. The library can be your last resort.

take a Walkman and go out for a walk, or go to the study lounge or the library.

No one is going to make the right decision every time, and a group living environment doesn't make a Christian's life any easier. I know I made mistakes, but I did my best to continue living by God's law from the time I arrived at Ohio University to the Friday afternoon I got my diploma in a private ceremony in the university president's office—a day earlier than the rest of my classmates. Their ceremony was all day Saturday and, to attend, I would have had to miss church services.

College is a time to discover yourself, to become your own person, to truly become an adult. Start off on the right foot by doing what you know is right. God will help you find the way. **VT**

Kristin Yarbrough works at the Home Shopping Network as a copywriter. She and her husband Sean live in St. Petersburg, Florida.

How to Survive Bull Riding and Religion

by Jaime Welch



When I first heard of Sam Hines, he was introduced as the guy who survived a bull-riding accident. On Sept. 24, 2003, Sam was tossed from a 2,000-pound bull and spun above the bull's head like a helicopter before he fell to the ground. Within seconds one of the bull's hoofs was pushing Sam's spine into his sternum, bruising his kidney and lacerating his liver.

The laceration on his liver was the most serious, because if the blood clot on his liver broke, there would only be a few minutes in which to perform surgery before he would bleed to death. The blood clot held, and eight days later Sam was walking again.

I met Sam this year at the United Church of God's Lexington, Kentucky, Family Weekend, and talked to him mainly about bull riding, but also about his first two years attending Sabbath services with our fellowship. Sam began attending United Church of God services in April 2002 in Lubbock, Texas, right after his 21st birthday. He grew up attending with a small group of Sabbath-keepers for the first 20 years of his life. Although this group shares some of our beliefs, he said they forbid watching movies or going to shopping malls—and even marriage, because it is considered too “worldly.” They are also fascinated with attempting

to predict the time of the end of the world.

“I started to rebel against what I knew and believed because I felt I would explode if I didn't,” Sam said. “I kept sinking farther until

I reached a point where I knew I had to

get out or I would reject everything I believed.”

Because Sam had grown up hearing in church about complete separation from the world, for many years he didn't question the way he lived or why he was so different from other churchgoers and even other Sabbath-keepers. As he became an adult, he started to question all he heard, and much of his faith was shaken. His brother was disfellowshipped from the group for marrying, but when the children of some church leaders did the same, they received only a short suspension. At one point, his congregation wasn't even allowed to keep the Feast of Tabernacles because their leader feared they would start going to other denominations.

It was hard for Sam to separate the wrong actions and teachings from the good, healthy laws that were created to keep him happy and safe, and for a few months

he stayed away from church and forgot about religion.

Sam isn't the only person who has been pushed away from religion because of shortsighted policies or people who have manipulated the Bible to serve their own purposes. Perhaps you've been discouraged by the ways you've seen some Christians act. Maybe you have a friend who stopped going to church because he was treated harshly or wrongly judged. Or maybe you've heard horror stories about people who abused control and power.

Sam's brother Dan, who had been attending the United Church of God for several years, understood what Sam was going

Because Sam had grown up hearing in church about complete separation from the world, for many years he didn't question the way he lived. As he became an adult, he started to question all he heard, and much of his faith was shaken.

through and encouraged him to come to services with him. Sam noticed that Dan had become a happier person, and he attributes Dan's good example as one of the reasons he decided to give church another try.

When Sam started attending United, he was overwhelmed, he said, by the positive attitude of the brethren in Lubbock. He appreciated the positive approach to life rather than a focus on the end of the world. Attending United, Sam said, has given him a better

understanding of the Bible and helped him explain what he believes to others.

I learned a lot from talking to Sam. I've learned that eight seconds is an important moment of time when you ride bulls. Did you know that it doesn't matter if you stay on for 30? You are only judged on the first eight seconds, but if you are thrown off even a tenth of a second before the eighth second you are disqualified.

Sam and I came up with some correlations between bull riding and religion. Maybe we're both nerds, but we thought they were interesting.

1. First, there are lots of people who have an opinion about bull riding and religion. Sam gets lots of advice on how he should ride bulls or whether he should ride bulls, and also a lot of advice on where to go to church or whether to go to church. Sam is responsible for his life today and tomorrow, so he listens to advice, but has learned that he should do what is best for him.

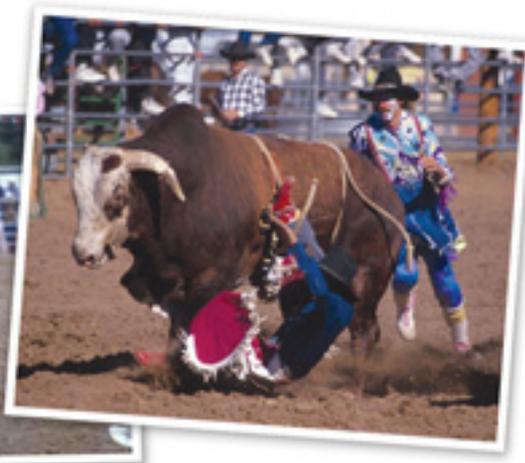
2. Sam says that riding bulls is 30 percent physical and 70 percent mental. Although I don't think there are any confirmed statistics and percentages about how to practice religion, we all know that our thoughts control our actions. When Sam is riding bulls, he controls his body by thinking and focusing on what the bull is doing.

For example, when he comes out of the gate, he

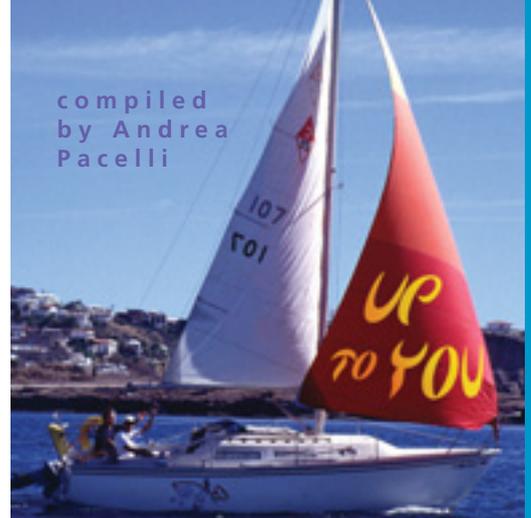
begins by watching the bull's hooves to see which direction the bull will go. In life, we partly control our actions by noticing others and adjusting ourselves accordingly (like learning from someone else's good or bad example). We also spend time meditating and thinking about what we know and believe and where we want to focus our energy. Sam says that riding bulls isn't just a battle with the bull, but also a battle with himself.

3. Bull riding and religion can be painful. When Sam made a mistake on the bull in September, it took him almost four months before he could ride in another rodeo. Because of the wounds inflicted on Sam by others and by his own mistakes, sometimes he suffers spiritual setbacks as well, as we all do.

Whether you're riding on the back of a crazy bull or attending church services every Saturday, courage is a requirement. Sam could have become a victim. He had some good excuses. He could have stopped trusting in God or others because he was taught errors and exposed to hypocrisy. He could have given up doing something he loved because it almost killed him. But Sam knows that in the end he will answer for the choices he makes, so he has decided to someday ride bulls professionally and, more importantly, you can count on seeing him at church services as well. **VT**



compiled
by Andrea
Pacelli



The person who advances is one who is driven to do as much as possible to the best of his ability.

– B.C. Forbes

A failure is not always a mistake; it may simply be the best one can do under the circumstances. The real mistake is to stop trying.

– B.F. Skinner

There is no brotherhood of man without the "Fatherhood of God."

– H.M. Field

Nothing happens unless it is first dreamed.

– Carl Sandburg

We need to restore the full meaning of that old word, duty. It is the other side of rights.

– Pearl S. Buck

Self-esteem soars in direct proportion to our forgetting the "self" part.

– Eileen Harley Wigginton

Do not wait for someone else to begin to change things. Start changing things yourself.

– Norman Vincent Peale

Love is a force. It is not a result; it is a cause. It is not a product; it produces.

– Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Happiness is doing with a smile what you have to do by deed anyway.

– Andrea Pacelli

What is Repentance?

By Ralph Levy

Repentance. It's a strange-sounding word. It gets used a lot in religious circles: People speak of it as something essential, and Jesus Christ taught that all who are without it will perish (Luke 13:3, 5). But what exactly is repentance? What does it involve? If it's so essential, you need to understand it to be able to do it.

As a teenager growing up in London, England, I began to read the literature of the Church of God and was fascinated with the subject of prophecy. I read all I could lay my hands on concerning the end of the age and the return of Jesus Christ. But the articles often ended with a reference to the same subject—repentance.

I couldn't understand what repentance really meant. I think I toyed with the idea of walking through deep snow with a heavy burden strapped to my back. Perhaps this was repentance? Or maybe it involved fasting, and getting very hungry, so God would accept me and spare me. Was that repentance?

Years later, I came to understand that the definition of repentance is, in fact, quite simple. Perhaps the clearest and most basic definition is provided by King David in one of the Psalms. He wrote, "Depart

I couldn't understand what repentance really meant. I think I toyed with the idea of walking through deep snow with a heavy burden strapped to my back.

from evil and do good" (Psalm 34:14). The same words are echoed in Psalm 37:27, with a related thought in the second part of the verse: "And dwell forevermore."

So repentance seems to have something to do with our future, and dwelling forevermore.

Yet if we are going to depart from evil and do good, we obviously need to know the definition of both terms. The definition of these, too, is provided in the Bible.

God's commandments and laws reveal what is good in His sight, since only He has the ability to determine right from wrong. Evil is breaking God's laws, while doing good is living in agreement with them. (If you don't have a copy of our free booklet *The Ten Commandments*, we invite you to contact our office nearest you and request one. The booklet will help you understand the definition of right and wrong, good and evil, as laid out in the Bible.)

So repentance involves learning, in order to find out what evil we need to *turn from*, and what good we need to *turn to*. But when, and how often, must we repent?

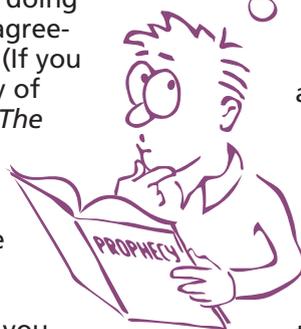
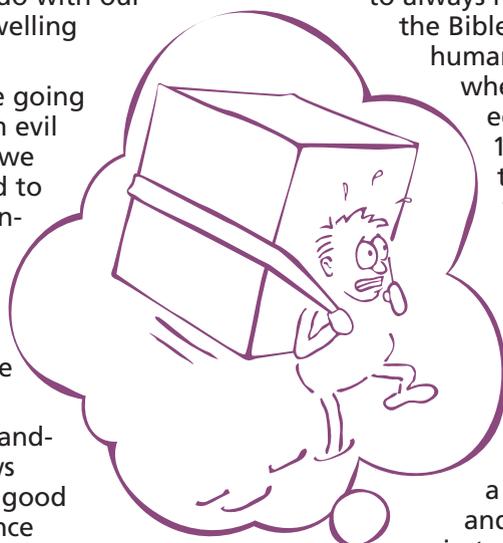
The answer to this question is

simple too: God commands us to always repent! In fact, the Bible shows that all human beings everywhere are commanded to repent (Acts 17:30). This scripture is directed to Christians and non-Christians, churchgoers and nonchurchgoers. Everyone!

Repentance isn't just for adults. When a child fights with a brother or sister, and the fight ends in tears, if the child decides never to mistreat his or her brother or sister in that way again, the child, in doing so, repents!

When a teenager gets drunk and feels shame but then determines that he or she won't allow that to happen again, that, too, is repentance. When an adult who has committed some terrible sin determines not to make that mistake again, that is true repentance as well.

The Bible tells us repentance is something a person must do before he or she becomes a Christian. Note the exhortation of the apostle Peter in Acts 2:38: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Human beings have to repent before receiving God's gift of the Holy Spirit, which is what makes a person a true Christian (Romans 8:9). It is required!



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have such an importance in my life, I had come to feel more and more that I wasn't being truthful to him, as if I wasn't really showing him who I was. Moreover, we had reached a point where he knew me well enough that nothing I might tell him would change the way he saw me. So I made up my mind and found a way, last summer, to explain everything to him. We talked a lot about it. He was interested in knowing how important it was in my life and the influence it had on my daily conduct.

He still doesn't believe in God, but he respects my opinion and only sees me as I am. He told me that the most important thing, as far as he is concerned, is that this way of life makes me and others around me happy. He was particularly impressed by the wonderful family relationships I have thanks to what we share. Indeed, I have 11 members of my close family in the Church and that's a great blessing and strength in my life.

I feel relieved that he now knows about it. We sometimes talk about some particular points, more as a philosophical exchange, knowing that neither one of

us could convince the other.

My friend is not called. I can see that now. But I also know that the day will come when he'll know the truth and that he will accept it. And I want to believe that I will have played some role in that—that I will have made a difference in his life.

I have discovered that if we don't see any fruits of our work right now (as currently seems to be the case in France) we have to go on anyway and keep being a good example to the world. We never know when our example can touch someone and make a difference. When people are called, whether now or later, maybe they'll be more ready to accept God because they remember us and that little something we did for them or said that one day.

Whatever your age, know for sure that you can make a difference in people's lives by just living God's way! **VT**

Does this mean that once a child has repented of fighting with a brother or sister, he is ready to be baptized? No. There are different levels of repentance, and a special, deep repentance is required of adults before they can be baptized.

Repenting of sins as we grow up is good and pleasing to God, but the special repentance that precedes baptism is a unique experience that leads to the greatest commitment in life—to offer one's life to God as a living sacrifice and become a Christian for as long as one lives. It's not a commitment to be taken lightly, or a commitment for anyone who hasn't yet reached adulthood.

If the thought of baptism and questions about repentance have been on your mind, we recommend you talk to your pastor. He will be able to help you understand this subject more fully and determine if you are ready to take on the lifelong commitment of becoming a true Christian.

In the meantime, remember that repentance is for everyone. "Depart from evil and do good" is the definition. Are you following that instruction? **VT**

Want to know more? Request your copy of the free booklet *The Ten Commandments*, from the United Church of God, an International Association, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, or from our office nearest you listed on page 22. You can also download an electronic version of any of our booklets from <http://www.ugc.org/booklets>.



Top and bottom: Laëtitia with friends at the 2003 UCG Winter Tournament.

Middle: With other Church young people in France.

Have You Thought of This?

A Word to the Wise

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CAN WE BE

WISER THAN SOLOMON?

by Barry Kenavan

Even though Solomon was wiser than everyone (1 Kings 4:31 tells us that “he was wiser than all men”), did he ever make decisions that were not wise?

Some things he did caused him serious problems when he was older. In 1 Kings 11:1-3 we see that Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Verse 4 tells us that this led to major problems for king Solomon in later years. “For it was so, when Solomon was old [around 50 years of age], that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God . . .” His wives encouraged him in turning from his God to their false gods.

Is there anything we can learn from this?

The dating years are full of the chemistry that makes us want to spend time with the opposite sex. The chemistry and the fun are important, but is there something else we should consider? Verse 2 of

1 Kings 11 tells us that this wise man failed to consider what God told him. “From the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.’ Solomon clung to these in love.”

As a result of this, we see that “his wives turned away his heart” (verse 3) and Solomon “did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD . . .” (verse 6).

Even though he may have loved these women, Solomon made the choice to let the chemistry of attraction rule instead of the words of God in 1 Kings 11:2. His heart was not perfect with God.

In our dating years we will be attracted to many people, but there is something that goes beyond attraction when it comes to being successful in the eyes of God. We need to consider that God has given us some directions as to

whom we should date and eventually choose to be our partner in marriage. Even though Solomon was wise, he did not remain upright in God’s eyes because he failed to apply what 1 Kings 8:61 said to him: “Let your heart therefore be loyal to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments . . .”

When Solomon was considering potential wives he forgot to apply this knowledge to the people he kept company with. Eventually the company he kept wore him down (compare Proverbs 27:15-16). He gave in to what *they* wanted rather than what *God* wanted him to do.

If we choose to keep company with those who are upholding the instructions given by the One who created us and knows far more than Solomon, then we will not make the mistake Solomon made. His story is recorded so that we can make wiser choices than he did. **VT**

Evolution

Continued from page 8

no doubt that a Creator must exist who has a wonderful plan for all of this.

I look at life and at the world, and know that although things are not optimal in many cases, there will be a time when Jesus will establish His Kingdom and all of humanity will recognize the true and right way to live in peace. This is the hope I hold—not the hope in chance DNA mutations to form an advanced eye structure or the possibility that flying, instead of running, developed in birds in the Jurassic period. I now had the facts I had been searching for through my study of evolution, and the final answer reaffirmed my faith in God's existence and the proof that He is working in all of our lives.

I don't regret taking an evolution class; for me, it was a way to become better educated and informed. Everyone should be educated on what they say they don't believe so they can hold intelligent conversations with people who have different beliefs and ideas. I always hated not having a good response to someone's attacks and wanted to know my opponent's side well, if not better than they know my own.

The knowledge I gained through this class has helped me do that. It not only helps me relate better to people in the world now as I strive to live a Christ-centered life, but will eventually help me work with unbelievers in God's Kingdom, who have grown up with false beliefs like evolution.

Taking this class has strengthened my prayer life and the amount of time I spend doing Bible study because I am more

inspired to prove to myself why I don't believe something directly through Scripture, rather than blindly accept what I have been taught. My attitude toward studying evolution clearly parallels my attitude toward studying the Bible—I wanted to know the subject well so I could prove the truth to myself and figure out what I do and do not believe. Every good student of the Bible should take a similar approach.

Closer to God

As I left the lecture hall after my final at the end of winter quarter, more than ready to travel home and begin my much-awaited spring break, I realized that although I was very glad the class was finally over, I had learned more than I bargained for because I had a deep interest in searching for God's truth.

Yes, it may have sounded weird or been hard to admit that I enrolled in a class on evolution, but to me, learning is about knowing the most you can, and then choosing the right way from your knowledge. This class helped me gain a better understanding of evolution and helped bring me closer to God and the truths He offers through His promises and fabulous plan of salvation for humankind. So while I might get an A in my evolution class, God's way offers a much greater reward!

Recommended reading: If you'd like to examine the existence of God compared to evolution in greater detail, read the free booklets *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?* Both may be ordered or downloaded at www.ucg.org/booklets.

Leslie Schwartz is a student at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), majoring in Mass Communications and double minoring in Education and Applied Developmental Psychology.



Q&A

Q. My geology tutor tried to prove to me that we all evolved. I told him that I believe we all came from Adam and Eve. He said that Adam and Eve only had two sons, Cain and Abel. He then asked me where we came from. I didn't know what to say. Can you help me?

A. It appears that your tutor has not read the biblical account very carefully. Genesis 4:25 states very clearly that after Abel's death, Adam and Eve had another son, named Seth. The Bible goes on to say in Genesis 5:4 that Adam fathered "sons and daughters" after Seth was born.

We can infer from the account that Cain's wife, mentioned in Genesis 4:17, was a daughter of Adam and Eve. In those early days of the human race, Adam and Eve's sons married their

sisters, as there were no other human beings.

Your question actually touches on a broader topic—the debate in some schools over whether to allow the teaching of "intelligent design" as an alternative to evolution. What is sad is the degree to which some educators go to imply that evolution is the only "intelligent alternative" in the debate! It most certainly is not!

Actually, the "intelligent design" explanation is the only one that can satisfactorily explain how *any life* ever appeared or how this planet even appeared. So stand your ground and don't let yourself be intimidated or be made to feel that what you believe is somehow "uneducated." Many intelligent and thoughtful people do not agree with the basic premise of evolution.

See the article, "Darwinism in the Classroom," which appeared in the Fall 2003 *Vertical Thought*, for a more complete treatment of this subject. Find it on the Web at: ucg.org/vt/fall2003/darwinism.htm.

If you have a question, e-mail us at info@verticalthought.org

How would you like the benefit of more than one thousand years of experience from people who are enjoying fulfilling and happy

marriages? With about half of all marriages ending in divorce, it might be good to learn from those who have made this God-plane relationship last.

“He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD” (Proverbs 18:22).

A survey of those who have been married for at least 20 years was taken at the 2003 Feast of Tabernacles in Branson, Missouri. Those who responded represented 1,082 years of marriage. The average couple had spent 27 years together and their advice was real and heartfelt. If you want to find a soul mate and grow old together, why not read what these veterans of married life have to say?

When asked to list some keys used to keep marriage viable, R.S. responded: “Marriage is a lifetime commitment. Have respect for the differences that your mate has. Kiss and make up when you quarrel and learn to be tolerant.”

M.K. commented: “The attitude of ‘once

perfect mate. A morsel of wisdom from J.J. suggested that we “look at the big picture and don’t dwell on small stuff. Choose your battles; they are not all worth fighting for. Sometimes a ‘victory’ is worse than taking the loss.”

Although it might seem daunting to think about decades of shared living, one veteran, J.K., suggested: “Love each other; looks fade but love lasts forever. Build

your marriage one day at a time and learn from mistakes. Pray each day for each other.”

The most important attributes

Another part of the survey was a list of 12 attributes. They included in random order: patience, love, sex, kindness, wealth, conversion, mutual hobbies, attractiveness, sense of humor, nice car, good job and forgiveness. Mates were asked to rank these attributes in order of importance.

The top three were forgiveness, patience and kindness. The second tier included conversion, love, sense of humor and good job. Those that ranked last

keep a mate, T.T. said, “Take time to get to know the person. Determine compatibility on an objective level before becoming emotionally involved.” Another anonymous comment was: “Find someone whose values are close to your values.”

A.J. added, “Ask God for His help first. Look for someone who shares the same goals and interests. Wait until you are mature and let God find him or her for you.” F.T. said, “Know the person before marriage and don’t go into marriage with the plan to change your mate.”

The Holy Bible also has a lot of valuable advice. It tells us not to “awaken love” until the time is right (Song of Solomon 3:5; 8:4, New Living Translation). Pressure is everywhere for young people to have sexual relationships before marriage. You can’t find much entertainment today that isn’t dripping with lurid sexual innuendos. No wonder so many relationships are only skin deep, because that is all that seems to matter. Ironically, so many people today yearn for the solace and security of a caring, symbiotic relationship founded on the right premise that goes much deeper than sex.

The mystery of marriage

Perhaps the most vital ingredient in a marital relationship is to understand the



married always married’ is important. So ask yourself, ‘Do I want to spend the rest of my life with this person?’ You will be spending it together through all of life’s trials.”

A.J. added, “Always consider each other’s feelings and have some goals in life. Marry someone in the Church, have lots of love, laughter and hugs.”

There were many comments about the need for commitment and compromise in dealing with the struggles of an imper-

fect mate. A morsel of wisdom from J.J. suggested that we “look at the big picture and don’t dwell on small stuff. Choose your battles; they are not all worth fighting for. Sometimes a ‘victory’ is worse than taking the loss.”

In a throwaway age where nothing seems to last very long and where people change jobs, houses and mates at a growing pace, it is nice to see that there are some who have found the secret of relational success. Where do you find such a potential mate?

The advice from our pool of marital heroes is incredibly practical. When asked about what advice could be given to young adults to help them find and

mystery of marriage. God created the first man and gave him a wife. As the Author of this bond, He is the One who defines its intent. God told man to leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. They were to become one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

The apostle Paul rehearsed this same message in Ephesians 5:31-32 and commented that this relationship is a great mystery. He went on to explain that it symbolized the relation-

ship of Christ and the Church.

This bride is the Church of God, made up of those who are committed to Christ and follow the laws of God. While this might seem simplistic, it really is a key to finding happiness in a marital relationship. A man and woman in marriage are designed to have a shared mission or goal of developing holy, righteous character.

When it works, it looks like this: "Let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:33). With love and respect you get longevity wrapped in the fruit of joy and peace. How sad that many marriages are hollow shells of what God intended!

As a young person, it is natural for you to want a lifelong relationship. God made us to want and need the companionship of a soul mate who will encourage and inspire us. One famous writer once summed up the needs of a man and a woman by saying that a man would charge hell with a bucket of water if he knew somebody cared, and that a woman needed the security that her man would not desert her.

Marriage takes planning and preparation as well as lots of hard work. May each of

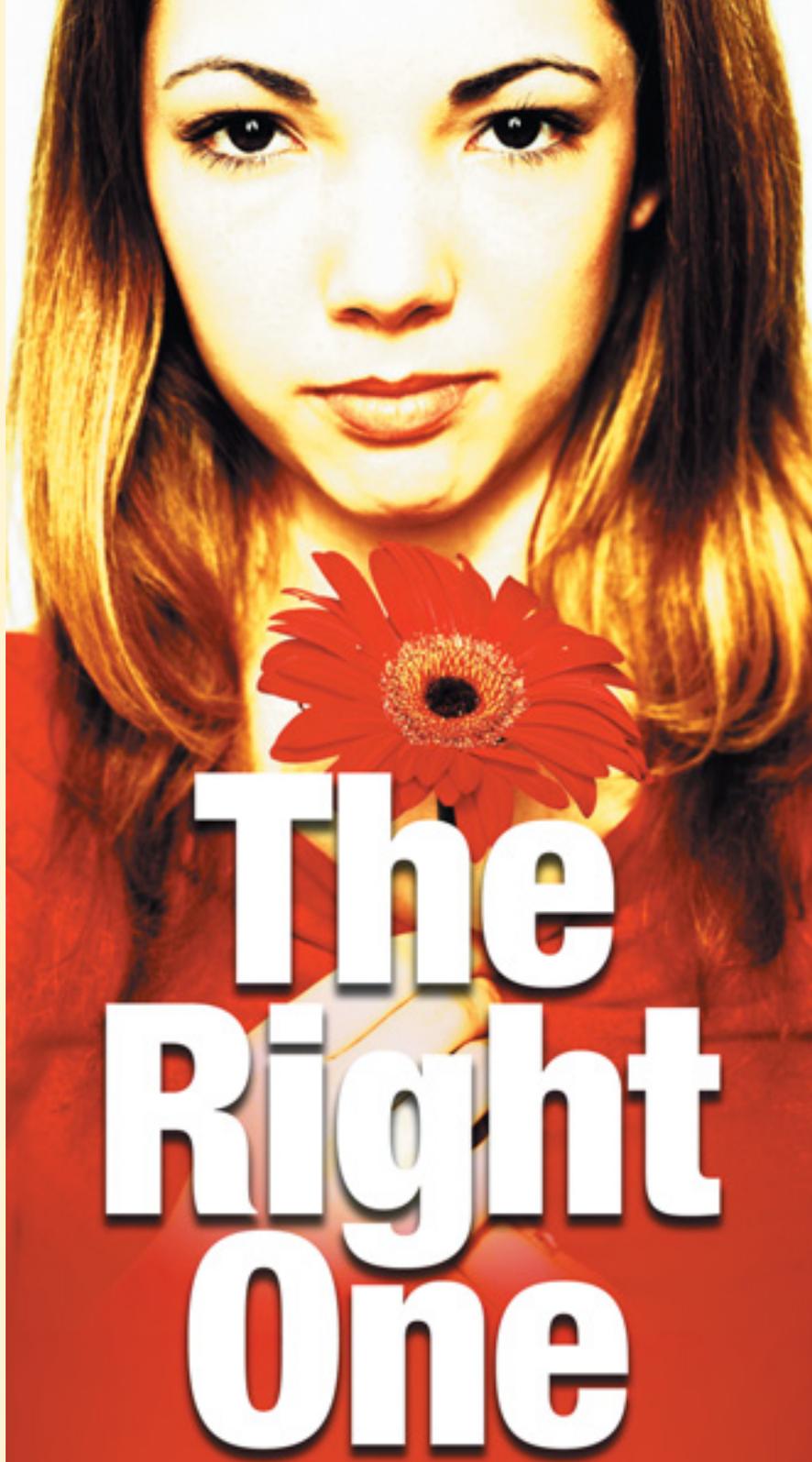
by Larry Greider

Building a Relationship FOR A LIFETIME



you reading this article be blessed with the gift of a happy marriage. When that happens, determine to do your best to keep it viable, righteous and long-lasting. Remember that relationships are not discovered as much as they are developed. This will take work, but the payoff will be a best friend with whom to share life's greatest joys.

Larry Greider is the overall coordinator of United Youth Camps. He also pastors congregations in Collinsville and Salem, Illinois.



The Right One

by Howard Davis

Is finding your “one true love” an impossible dream? How can you know when you have found “the right one”?

“Don’t let him break my heart,” the young woman prayed to God. She is like countless young women and men who have wanted the guys or girls of their dreams. After all, the passion for companionship, romance and, ultimately, a happy relationship that never ends lives in virtually every young man or woman’s heart. It certainly did for me before I was married.

But today many are so fearful and even cynical about the prospect of finding their “one true love” that they believe that finding a lifelong mate is a lost cause, an impossible dream, no more real than the Disney animation of *Sleeping Beauty*. It may happen to some people. But it won’t to them, they are convinced.

I sure don’t want my three daughters and son to think that way. The reality that there are great lifelong marriages proves that it is possible to have such a relationship.

Even young people who believe in God sometimes fear they will have a relationship that will break up instead of lasting “till death do us part.” Some are so fearful at the prospect and possibility of disappointment, they never open up enough emotionally or intellectually to allow potential mates to get close enough for genuine love to develop.

How unfortunate because if you know what to do and to look for, you can increase the likelihood of having a lasting marriage. Certain principles can help you understand if a particular person is “the right one.” You can be secure in the process. You can be growing, outgoing and confident because you understand what you are looking for and know how to tell when you find the one for you. Here are some ways you can know when you have found “the right one.”

Realize the spiritual

Relationships are spiritual in nature. Those who build positive spiritual qualities into their relationships are more likely to find their right mate. These attitudes are all spiritual characteristics flowing from the heart.

So commit yourself to building positive spiritual attitudes and qualities of the heart. Attitudes are the first building blocks of all relationships, and can either draw or repel others—whether upbeat, positive, warm, friendly and outgoing or deadbeat, negative, cool, aloof and inwardly selfish. Positive attitudes become your strength as you develop

as a person and the magnet that will draw “the right one” toward you. When a man and woman with the right outgoing attitudes are drawn together by common values and purposes, with the special “spark” of attraction, they begin to think about commitment. And you know what happens then. Bingo.

But this is much more than a game of chance. It brings up the necessity for you to have positive faith. You must believe that you will be rewarded in a relationship if you grow in the positive attitudes that bind people together. So finding “the right one” must be understood as first and foremost a spiritual process.

Character counts

Finding the right mate for life is not a matter of luck nor is it a matter of selfishness. It comes because you have prepared yourself to be the right one for somebody else. This means

You want to marry a person ready, willing and able to fulfill all your hopes and dreams in life and make you very happy. So be that way yourself. Have high goals and live them now.

that you are ready because you have taken the right course, lived an action plan and are capable of making right decisions and following through on them. In other words, you have *character*.

Think about it. If you want the best person for you, isn't it only fair that you need to *be* the best person for somebody else?

You might ask, “But how can I know what to prepare for when I don't even know who the other person is?” The answer is simple. You have to get yourself ready by becoming the kind

of person you would like to marry. After all, the greatest law in human relations is what Jesus said, “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12, New Revised Standard Version).

You want to marry a person ready, willing and able to fulfill all your hopes and dreams in life and make you very happy. So be that way yourself. Have high goals and live them now. Know how to make plans and fulfill them. Develop an outgoing, giving personality that does good to others.

Develop a career so you are a provider and a capable worker. Working hard is important as a personal character trait because a great relationship with the right person for you will be a matter of two great workers working together to build a great life.

Be a person of balance. Be diligent, flexible, financially independent, serving and positive and treat life as an adventure in progress, learning lessons along the way for the ultimate purpose.

Reality check

Mature people live in reality. They know the difference between what is right and what is wrong, what is real and what is fake, and what it takes to really be “the right one” for you. Maturity takes time. Immature people can be relatively older or compar-



Q ■ Why don't youth take part in Passover services? What does the Bible say?

A ■ When we examine the Bible we find that observing this important festival was for those who had entered into a covenant relationship with God. Under the Old Covenant, the symbol of having entered into this solemn agreement with God was circumcision of the males. Baby boys were circumcised when they were eight days old and thus, the entire family (assuming all the males over eight days of age were circumcised) was eligible to partake of the Passover—a festival that pointed toward Christ's coming crucifixion (1 Corinthians 5:7). If a new family wanted to observe this festival, their males had to first be circumcised (Exodus 12:48).

Under the New Covenant, Paul taught that “circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal” (Romans 2:29, Revised Standard Version). Under the New Covenant, entering into a covenant relationship with God occurs when a person's heart is convicted to repent of his or her sins and he or she is baptized and receives the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-38). When we receive God's Holy Spirit via this process, we then “belong” to God (Romans 8:9, RSV)—we have entered into a covenant relationship with Him.

When young people mature and undergo heartfelt repentance and baptism, they enter into a covenant relationship with Jesus Christ and are then ready to observe the Passover—an annual reminder of this covenant (Matthew 26:26-28). If you are a young person not yet baptized, why not ask a minister if you can come watch the Passover service (without participating) to learn more about this solemn observance?

If you have a question, e-mail us at info@verticalthought.org

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actively younger, so age is not the only factor in maturity when it comes to finding “the right one.” Age, however, is still an important factor.

Those who marry in their teen years get divorced at much higher rates than people who marry later. One reason for this is that most teens have not yet fully developed their personalities and in today’s society are generally not prepared for lifelong commitments to marriage.

Developmentally, we now know that young men’s final spurt for development of the frontal lobes of the brain does not start until about 17 and is not completed until about age 25. This area of the brain is the most important for the development of values, long-term planning and decision making. This doesn’t mean that a young man can’t make good decisions, have strong moral values or make long-term plans before he’s 17. He can, and some do. But the point is that this final spurt of brain development is impor-

tant for the ability of a young man to create and sustain this most important relationship.

Relating to the right one

When you have reached a level of maturity, the right person for you is one who relates to you in a special way—perhaps like no one else you have ever met. What develops with the right one is a fantastic friendship.

It is not based on a fanatical lust. Relating properly to the right person is not portrayed in pop culture’s displays of romance or Hollywood’s model of marriage. Pop culture’s version of the mating game has created a very bad model of love. She may be a bombshell and he may be a hunk, but mutual lust for great bodies and faces will not sustain a relationship.

Look at Hollywood for the past 80 years. It seems that most of the world’s most beautiful people are incapable of sustain-



IN THE NEWS: Fewer Teen Moms

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sta-

tistics show that the teen birthrate in the United States declined by 30 percent over the past decade (source: *Births: Final Data for 2002*, from CDC’s National Center for Health).

Still, teen abortion rates are high, and sexually transmitted diseases are rampant. But it seems that more and more teens are choosing abstinence, avoiding the emotional, physical and spiritual scars that come from sexual activity outside of marriage, and are saving sex for the safety and sanctity of marriage. “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18, New International Version).



IN THE NEWS: School’s in—at Home

An increasing number of American families—at least 850,000 children nationwide—are being schooled at home, up from 360,000 a decade ago, according to the U.S. Education Department. Some do so because of shortcomings in public education or concerns over social trends. More women are abandoning careers to stay home with their children. And many families yearn for a less frantic schedule and more time together.

The top three motivations for homeschooling in the survey were the prospect of a better education (49 percent), religious beliefs (38 percent) and a poor learning environment in the schools (26 percent) (source: *The New York Times*, Nov. 10, 2003).

ing marriages. Many of these people seem to think that fulfillment lies in finding another beautiful or handsome face and body to bolster their egos. A true relationship that develops with the right person is based on compatibility in character, heart and personality, not superficial looks.

Compatibility may seem magical and mysterious, but underneath its comfort and excitement are the fundamentals of each of your backgrounds, experiences and personalities that make you “click.” He or she becomes your special friend, a friend with whom you have the most satisfying fun. Your friendship is uplifting and makes you feel stronger, supported and fulfilled in a way that is new and complete.

But most of all you learn to care about the welfare, the future and the happiness of this special friend. You really care about what this person feels. You appreciate her or him so much that you spend time listening, expressing your deep

thoughts and sharing your inner self. You want to protect and never to hurt. Over time, he or she becomes your best friend. But there is an added something beyond great friendship.

The book of Proverbs says you can't really put into words the almost magical energy between a man and woman who are being drawn into lifelong love. “Too wonderful for me” to explain, it says (Proverbs 30:18), is “the way of a man with a woman” (verse 19, New Life Version).

You will want to marry this best friend whom you really care about. You will want to enhance, to make life better for and, above all, be loyal to this person. He or she is that person you will never want to betray in any way because you think so highly of him or her.

In this friendship you become aware that if you marry this person, you will have a great companion because you know his or her character, dreams, principles and heart. You also trust that it will take

you to exciting places and adventures together. For good reasons, you sense you will be safe and secure forever with this person even though the exact details of the future are uncertain.

Recognizing the blessing

Ultimately, marriage is a divine blessing and a gift from God. He is the one who said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner” (Genesis 2:18, NRSV). As you are drawn to this great relationship with the right one for you, you become aware that God is revealing His will to you.

She is the one. He is the one. Your hopes, dreams and prayers are answered because you have walked down a godly path, a process designed to make you one. You, together, are the right ones.

Howard Davis is a husband, father, United Church of God minister and producer of the *Tomorrow* television program in Portland, Oregon.



IN THE NEWS: Gay Marriage Breeds Confusion

The Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled on Feb. 4 that full, equal marriage rights for gay couples (not just “civil unions,” which are recognized in the state of Vermont), must be allowed according to their reading of the state constitution. The ruling paved the way for the first official same-sex marriages in the United States, beginning in mid-May, according to the Associated Press. (Canada, Belgium and the Netherlands already recognize same-sex marriages.) But on the very same day, a *New York Times* article reported that the Ohio State Legislature voted on Feb. 3 to ban same-sex unions. Ohio is the 38th state to officially prohibit same-sex unions.

The Associated Press, in a separate article the same day, reported on two women who were united in a “civil union” in

Vermont in March 2002, but are now seeking a divorce in Iowa where they live. As of press time, the Iowa Supreme Court is trying to figure out if a divorce can be granted to a couple that, well, isn't married, according to Iowa law. Iowa “recognizes only a man and a woman in a marriage, and that would also mean that a judge could not dissolve a marriage between a same-sex couple,” said Neil Schuerer, a state senator.

All this confusion could be eliminated if we simply held with God's definition of marriage. In the beginning, He made man and woman to be united as “one flesh” in marriage (Genesis 2:24). Those struggling to overcome same-sex attraction and live according to God's laws can request a free subscription to *Anchor: A Publication of Hope for Christians Struggling With Homosexuality* by visiting its Web site at www.anchorhelp.com.

IN THE NEWS: Study Says Sleep Essential for Creativity

A recent German study is considered the first hard evidence to show that creativity and problem-solving abilities are linked to adequate sleep, scientists say. This is good news for overtired workers and students—sleep often *is* the best medicine.

Scientists at the University of Luebeck in Germany found that volunteers taking a simple math test after eight hours of sleep were three times more likely than sleep-deprived participants to figure out a hidden rule for converting the numbers into the right answer. Researchers concluded that sleep makes a huge difference in mental performance. The results “give us good

reason to fully respect our periods of sleep—especially given the current trend to recklessly curtail them,” they said. Findings were reported in the journal *Nature* (source: Associated Press, Jan. 21, 2004).

Overwork, anxiety and fears often keep us from sound sleep. But having faith in God and keeping our priorities straight can help us keep our lives in balance. “Unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep” (Psalm 127:1-2).

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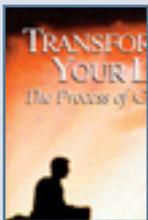
There you'll find an interesting article titled, "The History of Dating." If you've ever wondered what dating was like a century ago, read this article to gain historical insight regarding arranged marriages, courting and how current dating practices evolved.

You'll also find additional Q&A that we simply ran out of room to include. And speaking of Q&A, if you'd like to submit a question, use the button at the top of the page and you'll receive a personal

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