

The Power of Habits

Do You Choose Happiness?



How Do You Think?

Talked to God Lately?

**Eating Choices—
*Does God Care?***

In the Eye of the Storm

The Power of **Habits**

Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.

—traditional saying

It has been said that we are all creatures of habit. In the absence of pressure to change, we tend to do things the same way over and over again. We live, think and act in predictable patterns. In short, our habits identify and define us.

So what are your habits? What actions make you *you*? Are you happy with your habits? More importantly, what does God think of your habits? These are important questions for vertical thinkers—people who think on godly things from above.

As we all know, habits can be either good or bad. Such habits as exercise or saying “Excuse me” when we accidentally bump into someone are good for our health and for getting along with others. Bad habits such as using God’s name in vain or being disrespectful of other people give us a bad reputation with God and our fellow man.

So what are your habits? What actions make you *you*? Are you happy with your habits? More importantly, what does God think of your habits? These are important questions.

Have you ever stopped to think about Jesus’ habits? The things He did were always predictably in line with God’s instructions. He never sinned—not once.

One of Jesus’ good habits was attending church every Sabbath. Luke 4:16 says: “So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His *custom* was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read” (emphasis added). People could count on Jesus assembling with others to worship God on the Sabbath. It was what Jesus did over and over again.

Of course, Jesus had many other good habits including working hard, showing respect to God, prayer and showing mercy to others through His preaching and healing.

In this issue we focus on habits and the way we human beings think. While these subjects are valuable ones to study at any time of the year, they are especially important for Christians to consider during the upcoming Days of Unleavened Bread, April 24-30. Christians who follow the example of Jesus, the apostles and the Christians of the first century will be observing this festival with personal examination to see whether we really are pleasing God (2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

The Days of Unleavened Bread teach us that our minds often trick us into thinking we are right with God when we really aren’t. Jeremiah teaches us that our minds are “deceitful” (Jeremiah 17:9), while Paul adds that we have to bring our thoughts into line with Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Learning to control our thoughts is the starting place for controlling our actions. And with God’s help, we can overcome wrong thinking and bad habits. Here’s to all of us replacing our bad habits with good ones!

David Treybig
Managing editor



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"I would read the Bible more," a young woman recently told me, "if it were just more interesting . . . maybe, more humorous." How about you? Most people don't realize that Jesus, the great Teacher and Messiah, was often quite funny, even pointedly so.

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I'm just not doing well in school. My grades are not good. I'm not getting my homework done and feel crummy about myself.

I'm frustrated that I can't seem to make good choices. When I'm with my friends, I just give in to what they want to do.

I always hear about how I should study and read the Bible . . . but I just can't get into it! It's frustrating, because I know it contains a lot of good stuff—but I just don't have the time and desire to read it . . .

What these problems have in common is that they are all caused by one thing—poor choices. Poor choices, when made often enough, become bad habits.

And these poor choices and habits are showing up all over. According to a just-released study based on a 2004 national survey of 24,763 high school students,

behavior would indicate. Despite these admissions, the majority of students reported high self-appraisals of their character (74 percent rated their own ethics higher than those of their peers) and stated their convictions that honesty, ethics and good character are very important. Almost all, 98 percent, said it is important to be a person of good character (Josephson Institute of Ethics survey, 2004: *The Ethics of American Youth*).

So while the majority of young people believe having “good character” is important, indicators show that their choices and their habits don't reflect the practices that produce good character.

What are habits?

Habits are the things we automatically do without thinking—whether good or bad. People brush their teeth in the

kind and courteous for years, it is easy to be kind and courteous. When a person has practiced lying and deception for years, it is almost impossible for him or her to be frank, truthful and straightforward.

We need habits

Yet we need habits. They help us to function in life. If we did not learn from doing something several times—if it were as hard the 200th time as it was the first time—life would be very different for us all! Think about it: We would still struggle at age 19 with buttoning a shirt like we did when we were 4 or 5 years old. As an adult we would continue to wrestle with the shoestrings in tying our shoes just as we did as a young child. In other words, no progress would be made in our human development.

So without habits—without being able to

THE POWER OF HABITS

How do we get to the point where we do what we know we should do? Can this really be done? The answer is “Yes!” Here's how.

by Doug Horchak



nearly two thirds (62 percent) cheated on exams and more than one in four (27 percent) stole from a store within the past 12 months. And 40 percent admit they “sometimes lie to save money.” These are bad choices—habits—that happen all too easily.

Ironically, many of these youth had a better opinion of themselves than their

morning *out of habit*. People plug in their CD player or iPod when taking a jog or a walk *out of habit*. People eat a snack before going to bed at night *out of habit*—the ultimate example of “been there, done that” in life. Habits just happen automatically!

The older we get, the harder it is to change a habit. When a person has been

automate frequently repeated actions—we could never move beyond the most simple of tasks. We would barely be able to walk, let alone perform amazing feats of multitasking, such as walking and chewing gum at the same time. Without habits, our conscious mind would be wholly engaged each time we performed those simple tasks. Yet when that task

becomes habit, it is simply performed without thinking. Without habits, the learning process would “start from scratch” each time we did something!

Habits and character

But how do habits affect the kind of person you are? Many of you have heard of the best-selling book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey. In his book Covey makes the case that effective and successful people—people of purpose—have certain ways of doing things, certain *habits* in common. Rather than the more common habits such as listening to music or reading the cartoon page every morning, Covey is referring to routines of behavior and morality. The very title of the book shows the connection between our habits and our effectiveness in life.

What, then, about moral habits? Just as brushing your teeth every morning became a habit, so moral habits are learned by practice. No practice, no habit.

Imagine *not* being in the habit of being honest. What if every time you spoke you had to consciously decide whether to tell the truth *or not*? This would be bad enough, but in real life if you don't develop the habit of telling the truth, you likely will develop the opposite habit of lying. Few people are good at this, and those few who are, are truly scary.

So we see that only through *habit*—only by *automatizing* (the term behavioral psychologists use) these moral decisions—can we actually go about living our lives. Having no habits—making all moral decisions separately, consciously and deliberately each time we are faced with a choice—would drive a person crazy! Our minds do not work that way. So it is through these moral decisions that eventually become habit that our character is developed.

Personal *character* is the word that expresses what we are and who we are. Our character is more specifically defined by the qualities we have that show our personal values and morality. And, as we have seen, our understanding about right and wrong—our conscience—is molded by the many decisions we make hour after hour and day after day. For many, this realization is scary! Many of us understand we have some bad habits that need to be broken.

Breaking bad habits

Old habits die hard. Bad habits die harder. As human beings, we've been conditioned to respond to the stimulus of a bad habit. In fact, a habit is like taking the path of least resistance. Naturally, we follow our conditioned response. In some instances, we are slaves to instant

What Science Tells Us About Habits

The human brain is amazing! From birth, millions of bits of information are funneling into our brains, yet we are able to learn to make sense of the most important information and act on it.

The brain also develops shortcuts to help us act efficiently. Imagine if we had to consciously think through every tiny decision and action, from when and how to bathe, dress, eat and do the many other activities of our daily routine! It would be overwhelming.

Instead our minds are set up to record responses that can be repeated in the same type of situation. The most important of these we call habits.

“When these habits have been so heavily learned, the under-lying neural circuitry becomes the brain's default option at any moment—what a person does automatically and spontaneously, often with little awareness of choosing to do so” (learningmatters.com/dwn/7950).

Research (and common sense!) suggests it's easier and better to start good habits and avoid bad ones when we are young.

A study by Larry Jacoby, professor of psychology at Washington University, “confirmed that the responses we learn first are those that remain stronger over time.” The study, published in the November 2004 issue of *Psychological Science*, suggests that old habits are relatively automatic, while new learning requires control. “Stress can weaken our control over memory and behavior . . . With weakened control, those automatic responses—such as eating a cookie or smoking a cigarette—can override our new good intentions” (mednews.wustl.edu/tips/page/normal/4230.html).

But bad habits can be overcome. Dean Hamer and Peter Copeland wrote: “What starts as self-discipline or will power, such as an angry person who practices counting to ten, can become a new ingrained behavior. This is the way an alcoholic keeps out of bars and a smoker gives up cigarettes for good. Each time we exercise will power, we rewire the brain to overcome inborn temperaments . . .

“Choosing good habits takes hard work, but the sharp edge of temptation can be dulled with practice. The longer we practice good behavior, the easier it becomes, until it becomes a habit” (*Living With Our Genes: Why They Matter More Than You Think*, 1998, pp. 293-294).

“Learning to control one's temper, for instance, is like learning to ride a bicycle. Understanding what needs to be done on a cognitive level only helps to a limited degree. It is only by getting on a bike and riding it, falling over, and trying again repeatedly, that one ultimately masters the skill” (learningmatters.com/dwn/7950).

Stephen Kraus, author of *Psychological Foundations of Success* who received his Ph.D. in social psychology from Harvard University, gave the following tips based on his research:

“1. Replace a bad habit with a good one. Completely eliminating a habit is much harder than replacing it with a more productive habit . . .

“2. Exercise . . . helps in accomplishing a variety of goals, and in eliminating a number of bad habits. Frequent exercise helps break habits of overeating, and in kicking all kinds of addictions, particularly if exercise is substituted for an end-of-the-day cocktail or cigarette . . .

“3. Reward success . . . Actions followed by rewards are strengthened and likely to recur” (www.selfgrowth.com/articles/Kraus2.html).

—Mike Bennett

In a real way, our success or failure in life is defined by the habits we cultivate.

gratification and we are rewarded by our habit. It becomes a tough cycle to break.

Many people assume they cannot get free of a bad habit, so they give in and don't even try. This is also an act of character being formed. In this case, poor character is being reinforced by "giving in" to poor choices or bad habits.

However, bad habits *can* be broken. Good habits *can* be

learned. But we must start by acknowledging the habits we have that are not productive or good and dealing with them. Here are four steps to ridding yourself of bad habits:

- 1) Ask yourself why this bad habit seems desirable. What's been in it for you? For instance, why does watching TV for four hours every night seem "good"? What does it do for you?
- 2) Ask yourself why this same bad habit is not desirable. What price are you paying? What are you losing by continuing the habit? In fact, why do you consider it a "bad habit" in the first place?
- 3) Make a choice. Now that you've weighed the pros and cons of this particular habit, force yourself to make a conscious choice of what to do. In a sense, you have now removed



Q ■ Do you believe in using the Heavenly Father's true name "Yahweh" and the Savior's true name "Yahshua the Messiah"?

A. We do not believe God requires us to use only the terms *Yahweh* and *Yahshua* in reference to the Father and Jesus Christ, as if only these two terms spelled and pronounced exactly correctly constitute the only "true" names of God and Jesus Christ. The original text of the Bible contains not only Hebrew but also Greek, Aramaic and Chaldean. The references to God that are included are from those languages.

Even in the Hebrew it isn't possible to be precisely accurate, because the consonantal pronunciation (YHVH or YHWH) has been lost. Also, since the original Hebrew writings included no vowels, we don't really know the vowels that should go between the consonants or even whether the name has two or three syllables (for example, whether *Yahweh*, *Yahuweh* or *Yehowah*).

Furthermore, there are no ancient manuscripts of the New Testament that have Hebrew names for God in place of the Greek names.

Christ used the name for God that was commonly understood by His audience. It is reasonable to assume that the apostles in Acts 2 used commonly accepted terms as they spoke in different languages to those from various regions who were hearing the truth of Jesus Christ's role for the first time.

As to His own name, the *Oxford Dictionary* records that

"Jesus" comes from the Latin *Iesus*, which comes from the Greek *Iesous*, which is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Yehoshua* or *Yeshua* (Joshua).

An important question to ask people who have expressed concern that *Yahweh* is the only name that we may use when addressing God is, "Why is He called by several names in the Bible?" *Elohim*, *El*, *Yah*, *Eloah*, *Elyon*, *Shaddai*, *Adon*, *Adonai* and *Adonim* are various Hebrew expressions for our Father.

Moreover, the question above presumes that the name *Yahweh* refers exclusively to God the Father. While this name in the Hebrew Old Testament could refer to the Father, it often referred not to the Father but to the One who would later be born as Jesus Christ (see John 1:1-3, 14; 1 Corinthians 10:4).

Studying about and meditating on all the names and descriptions of God that we have been given in the Bible helps us better grasp the awesome greatness, power and holiness of God—both Father and Son.

This study requires translating into our own languages. Following the logic that it is appropriate to use only *Yahweh* and *Yahshua*, it would be inappropriate to address our Maker as "Father" and our Messiah as "Savior." It is not sound reasoning to believe that God expects us to speak in our own languages (which He divided at Babel), yet when it comes to saying His name, we are supposed to say only *Yahweh* and *Yahshua*, even though we may be from America, French Guiana, Borneo or Togo.

If you would like to learn more about God, go to www.ucg.org/booklets. Then scroll down to the booklet *Who Is God?* You can read it online or request a personal copy by mail.

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

it from the “habit” realm. You are now making a conscious evaluation of the fruits of this habit rather than the “automatic” response to it you’ve had for months or years that have made it a habit!

4) Replace the “bad” behavior with another behavior or choice. This should be something that is productive and positive.

In the first century the apostle Paul gave the Church some valuable instruction that is still applicable to us today. Considering what we think about, he wrote: “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

Here we find the biblical principle of filling our minds (and our time) with things that represent goodness and justness. These words of Paul are foundational in considering what we do with our time. They should affect how we make choices—choices that ultimately determine our habits.

Define your future

In a real way, our future—our success or failure in life—is defined by the habits we cultivate. Whether they be good, productive habits of choice or whether they be wasteful or

harmful habits of weakness, they will all have their impact. But it is never too late to change bad habits.

Jesus Christ taught that our choices or faithfulness in the small things determines our ability to inherit greater responsibility (Luke 16:10).

Our destiny—the purpose for which God created us—is to become part of His eternal family. That’s why Jesus gave us timeless advice about our view of the future and the way we live our lives today. In Matthew 6:33 Christ said to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

He encourages His disciples, His students, to seek the “righteousness” of God in the way they live their lives. By doing so, we are seeking the Kingdom He came to announce. The decisions we make, however small they may seem, are part of what enables us to seek “His righteousness” and ultimately inherit His Kingdom.

Seeing the link between our habits today and our destiny tomorrow, we should ask ourselves an important question: What kind of habits am I cultivating?

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Q ■ What does the Bible teach about Easter? Is it to be celebrated or not?

A ■ We should ask ourselves several questions to determine whether or not we should celebrate a religious holiday. For example: Is it commanded by God in the Bible? Do we see examples of it being kept by God’s people in the Old and/or New Testaments? What is the history of the observance of a given holiday? Do its roots lie in pagan worship, which God commanded His people not to imitate in their worship of Him?

The word *Easter* is mentioned only once in the King James Version of the Bible in Acts 12:4. Scholars recognize that this is a mistranslation of the word *pascha*, the Greek form of the Hebrew word meaning “Passover,” as it is now rendered in the New King James Version. “Easter,” as is noted in *The Companion Bible* margin, “is a heathen term, derived from the Saxon goddess Eastre, the same as Astarte, the Syrian Venus, called Ashtoreth in the Old Testament.”

Easter not only lacks biblical authority, but it was brought

into “Christianity” to replace God’s commanded festival. Trying to justify this, religious leaders gave this festival a Christian meaning—the celebration of 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). The Bible says nothing about using rabbits and Easter eggs to remember Christ’s resurrection.

Therefore, those of us in the United Church of God, publisher of *Vertical Thought*, keep the biblical Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, as Jesus Christ and the early New Testament Church did. We do not celebrate Easter.

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 would like to know more of the facts about Easter and other holidays, request our free booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?* Additional information about God’s annual Holy Days is also presented in our free booklet *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. You can read these booklets online or request printed copies by going to www.ucg.org/booklets.

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

I grew up near the world's largest American bison (buffalo) herd in the Black Hills of South Dakota. I've seen that herd in Custer State Park, but believe me, that park is no skateboard park. Buffalo bulls can be almost as cantankerous as the cows with calves. They hang out in fields of buffalo grass, not concrete or asphalt, and they leave massive hoof prints in the sand and dirt. There's no skateboarding or roller-skating there.

But enough about buffalo, because . . . you *can* be happy, if you have a mind to.

Let's consider these basic points: What true happiness is not, what true happiness is and how we can avoid misery and build the habit of happiness.

What happiness is not

Did you know that Americans consider the pursuit of happiness to be a basic human right? That is stated in one of mankind's most famous and influential documents, the U.S. Declaration of Independence, written in 1776: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident: that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

Unfortunately, many Americans and other people misread the Declaration and consider it their right to be happy, when in fact it reads, "the *Pursuit* of Happiness." The U.S. founding fathers understood the biblical principle that happiness must be pursued by personally choosing the right thoughts, right words and right actions at the right time. In short, *our happiness depends on us*.

Not everybody believes this. Some mistakenly think that others determine their happiness. This is called determinism and it comes in several flavors.

Genetic determinism blames our ancestry (like grandparents) for our unhappiness (for example, a hot temper and the misery it spreads).

Psychological determinism blames our parents for our lack of happiness because they failed to praise us enough, or whatever.

Environmental determinism blames someone or something in our surroundings, like friends, enemies, teachers, bosses, telemarketers, the economic situation, the nation's policies, our broken Palm Pilot, etc.

Determinists are wrong. Happy genes might make it easier for us to be happy, but tempers need to be controlled and our energy focused productively. A great dad and mom are wonderful, but derelict parents are just an obstacle to rise above. All the folks and things we have to deal with every day only increase or decrease the challenge of the pursuit.

Happiness doesn't come from the acquisition of money or things. Jesus Christ once said: "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15).

Lots of young people think promiscuous sex will make them happy. They don't use the word "promiscuous,"

of course, because they have sex for "love" or "fun." But does it make them happy? Does testing positive for herpes, the HIV virus or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) make people happy? Does dealing with a broken heart because a selfish boyfriend or girlfriend used you and trashed you make you happy? Does waking up half-stoned and hung over in somebody else's bed make you happy?

Others chase happiness with drugs and booze. You're young, you're bright—think about it. Does waking up on the dorm floor in a dazed hangover with your face glued down by your own foul-smelling vomit make you happy? Does coming to from a drunken stupor and not having a clue what you did make you happy?

"No," they say, "it makes me happy when I'm drunk. Everybody likes me and thinks I'm attractive when I'm high or have too much to drink. That's why it's called happy hour!" Get a life. You're not happy.

Will you learn the meaning of life when you're stoned or out of your mind on drugs or alcohol? No way.

The ancient professor of wisdom from the 50s (the 950s B.C., that is) was a much better teacher. "Keep your heart [mind, thinking ability and feelings] with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life [including true happiness]" (Proverbs 4:23).

And what is true happiness?

Happiness is one of the most elusive butterflies ever pursued. The fact is, happy people know that they are happy and that happiness is learned. It is a state of mind and peace of mind.

The English surname *Lovejoy* fascinates me. It comes from the Bible and is a combination of the first two of a list of the qualities defining the divine character, also called the "fruit of the Spirit." Love is the most important quality, so much so that the Bible says, "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). But isn't it great that God put joy next on the list?

Joy is true happiness. So what exactly is joy?



by Randy

Joy plunges much deeper than just a feeling or emotion of upbeat, positive thinking. It is a conviction. Joy has a critical ingredient—the next divine character trait on the list: peace (Galatians 5:22-23). We have peace with God because we love and obey Him. We have peace with others because we're genuinely concerned for them. We have peace of mind within, knowing that even when we feel friendless, God loves us and is working to include us in His grand future.

To build the habit of happiness, we must have inner joy and peace of mind in our lives.

A key word inspired in Scripture that translates as "happy" is "blessed."

So happiness is to be blessed by God. No matter what happens in our lives, we have life, air to breathe, food to eat, some family and some friends, a measure of health, a measure of wealth, opportunity to learn and grow, and an incredible future in God's family. With all these, we should be happy!

How to make happiness a habit

We can find all kinds of ideas about how to be happier in other magazines and books.

Some of them may help someone find a certain measure of contentment, but it takes some straight-up, vertical thinking to find and maintain true, spiritual happiness. Here are a few keys that will help:

1. Put God in our lives. Did you know that God earnestly desires that we human beings seek Him? God's purpose for creating us was that we would become His children—part of His family (John 1:12).

To know and worship God makes us happy—we are doing what we were made to do. "Happy is the man who is always reverent . . ." (Proverbs 28:14). To revere God, we need to pray and read our Bibles on a regular basis.

When we put God in our lives, we build real faith—a rock-solid, honest and trust-filled relationship with Him. As Proverbs 16:20 says, "Whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he." We can read "blessed" for "happy," as it means the same. To think "blessed," however, also

makes us think thankful, honored, loved, understood, humbled, safe and contented to the max!

2. Obey God's law. We have to study all the laws of mathematics, physics and chemistry in school. Guess who made those laws? That's right. Now do you think God would make His finest and best creation—humanity—without creating laws of human conduct that produce true happiness? Of course not.

The psychobabblers who tell us that there are no absolutes (absolute laws, that is)—or that each person has his or her own "truth"—haven't got a clue. They are the blind leading the blind. Remember, as a vertical thinker, you're not blind.

The proverb says, "Happy is he who keeps the law" (Proverbs 29:18). How does that work? Consider God's law about sex. God says not to have sex before marriage or outside of it (1 Corinthians 6:18; Exodus 20:14). The law says that sex is sacred within marriage and is sin with anyone else at any other time. In one fell swoop that wipes out tons of unhappy broken hearts, the misery of STDs and the gut-gnawing, guilty conscience.

To keep the law means to love God above all things and, as Jesus said, to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). All good happiness experts point out that a major key to the happiness habit is to look outward toward others. We take our minds off ourselves and our problems as we lend a hand to help, serve and encourage other people. When we stop thinking about our own selves so much, our spirits rise, the clouds part and the sun shines beautifully on our faces.

3. There is hope. Happiness thrives on the future. God has planned a beautiful future to share with you, me and everybody who chooses to be in it. That future is called the Kingdom of God, which Jesus Christ will soon bring to this planet at His second coming.

To know that you have exciting potential, opportunity and possibilities is the road to happiness. Contrast it to the despair of no hope, no options, only more misery that so many face in this sad world today. This aspect of happiness helps us remain realistically optimistic. It gives us practical confidence that we can get up and do great things. It fills us with hope. "For surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off," says Proverbs 23:18.

So let's build our own thankful list, stay hopeful and do the right thing before God and man, because that's what will make us happy.


These are the three basic, vertical points of building the happiness habit in our lives because they all point to our loving and happy Creator. Any "keys" to happiness we hear elsewhere must come under these principles or they are of no more value than trying to roller-skate in a buffalo herd.

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e Happiness?

Can you be happy if you've a mind to?
Can we really be happy if we want to?

Stiver



How we understand the world around us is vital to how we think and act. All of us assume certain things to be true without absolute proof. Everyone has faith in something. These assumptions help us form our opinions and beliefs.

How we think becomes important, for example, when we interact with those who claim something is true when they can't prove it. Some common assumptions are:

- Man evolved from inorganic material.
- Man is essentially good.
- Reality is material.
- When a man dies, he isn't dead.
- Whatever feels good is right . . .

The list is almost endless.

For most people in America and Western Europe in the 16th

How Do You?

by **Larry Greider**

through the 19th centuries, a Christian worldview was dominant. It was commonly understood that God did exist and was responsible for the world in which they lived. His purpose for man was examined in the pages of the Holy Bible, considered the final authority for most arguments.

Today, it is vastly different. Our world is influenced by many other worldviews, including naturalism, New Age pantheism, deism, nihilism, existentialism and postmodernism. With so many dynamic and often conflicting concepts being used to frame man's thinking, is it any surprise that conflict and misunderstanding dominate?

Feeling or thinking?

The world you live in is filled with tensions that are real and growing. How will you respond to the issues in your world?

Radio talk show host Dennis Prager commented on this subject: "I recently interviewed a 26-year-old Swedish student about her views on life. I asked her if she believed in God or in any religion.

"'No, that's silly,' she replied.

"'Then how do you know what is right and wrong?' I asked.

"'My heart tells me,' she responded.

"In a nutshell, that's the major reason for the great divide within America and between America and much of Europe. The majority of people today rely upon their hearts (their emotional feelings)—stirred by their eyes—to determine what is right and wrong. A relatively small minority uses their minds and/or the

Our heartfelt emotions are an important part of being human, but these feelings are incomplete as a method of making judgments when not guided by godly principles.

Bible to make that determination.

"Pick almost any issue and these opposing ways of determining right and wrong become apparent. Here are three examples.

"Same-sex marriage: The heart favors it. You have to have a hard heart not to be moved when you see loving same-sex couples who want to commit their lives to one another in marriage. The eye sees the couples; the heart is moved to redefine marriage.

"Animal rights: The heart favors them. It is the rare person, for example, whose heart is not moved by the sight of an animal used for medical research. The eye sees the cuddly animal; the heart then equates animal and human life.

"Abortion: How can you look at a sad 18-year-old who had unprotected sex and not be moved? What kind of heartless



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person is going to tell her she shouldn't have an abortion and should give birth?" (www.townhall.com/columnists/dennisprager/dp20040316.shtml).

Of course our heartfelt emotions are an important part of being human, but these feelings are incomplete as a method of making judgments when they are not guided by and based on godly principles.

The change in institutions of higher learning

Most American universities were established for the purpose of insuring that faith and reliance on God were preserved. For this reason, these institutions were charged with providing trained ministers to serve a nation that claimed to be "under God." A lot has changed in the last few generations in America. Since the 1960s there has been a desire to remove God from the schools and the thinking of decision makers.

Harvard University began in 1636 with a motto of "*veritas*." This concept, still evident in the seal of the university, suggests that there are three "books" of truth: the book of revelation known through the Scriptures, the book of nature known inductively through the senses, and the book of the mind—which was logic. The pursuit of *veritas* (the Latin word for truth) was considered the highest quest for a developing young mind.

Mark Roberts, a Harvard professor, reflected on changes in recent years. "When I was in college and grad school, the Harvard seal was omnipresent. On library chairs and notebooks, on sweatshirts and university signs, wherever I turned, there was VE-RI-TAS, following my every move like the eye of God.

People of the Book

As I approached Piazza Novena, scores of artists and painters littered the ancient rough stone street in the center of this village square. Little restaurants with tiny tables and animated waiters kept tourists content with food and drink as they enjoyed the sunny day in the heart of Rome.

We had visited the city several times and had already been through the Vatican Museum and St. Peter's Basilica. We had seen the Colosseum and dozens of other colorful landmarks. We had taken our pictures and dodged the beggars and street vendors as best we could. Yet this piazza fascinated me. There was so much action and enthusiasm among the local artists who were plying their wares and showcasing their talents one last time before the tourist season ended.

When I saw the oil painting, I knew I wanted to own it. My wife thought me mad (not the first time) and wondered why I would buy something so dull and dark.

You see, this painting spoke to me of the missing dimension in this timeless landscape of history. With the tons of chiseled stone and the devotion to the human body displayed throughout the city, there was an affront to the visual senses everywhere. Whether it was the twisted and distorted male warrior flexing his muscles or the lovely curves of a goddess, everywhere there was a tease for the eyes.

This painting, however, was that of an old man reading a book while a disciple peered gingerly over his shoulder. There it was! In the maze of majestic grandeur of idols and art, there was a haggard old man reading something important. The twinkle in his eye and the determination to understand a word or sentence resonated with me. In my mind, that was a representation of the people of the Book—the Holy Bible.



Christians are readers. They have to be, since God forbids image-based worship. To know God is to read His Word. This amazing book, almost as old as man himself, requires us to read.

Christ started His ministry by standing up in the synagogue to read the Scriptures. Christians from the beginning of the Church read the historical accounts of God's intervention with man. Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost was laced with historical references found in what we call the Old Testament. Stephen was stoned to death after sharing his knowledge of the Book and suggesting that the Messiah had arrived.

How about you? Do you read the Book often? Your faith will only grow if you connect with the timeless worldview offered within its pages. History and tomorrow's news are all there for you to read and to understand. As the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

To better understand the significance of the Bible and how it was written, request or read our booklets *Is the Bible True?* and *How to Understand the Bible*. Both are available at <http://www.ucg.org/booklets/index.htm>.

Harvard was all about *veritas*, Latin for ‘truth.’

“But it wasn’t until I was well into my college experience that I learned the truth about the Harvard seal and the motto emblazoned upon it. Yes, the motto did contain the word *veritas*. But on the official university seal *veritas* didn’t stand alone. It was joined to three other Latin words: *christo et ecclesiae*. The whole motto translated into English read: ‘Truth . . . for Christ and the church.’ This official motto, adopted by the university in 1692, was consistent with Harvard’s original vision for its educational purpose.

“Needless to say, somewhere in the last three centuries Harvard lost touch with its primary purpose, though the student body continues to include a healthy number of faithful Christians. The predominant view among most Harvardians these

We are eager for you to learn how to think vertically—that is, to think about the biblical God of heaven and what He wants us to do.

days, however, would be that truth is relative, and that there is no certain truth upon which to base one’s life. The idea that the pursuit of truth is for the sake of Christ and the church would be considered a curious antique of a premodern (or pre-postmodern) age.

“Though I spent eight years in residence at Harvard, I still believe that there is such a thing as VERITAS, as Truth with a capital ‘T.’ Moreover, I even believe that human beings should pursue such Truth for the sake of Christ and the church. This pretty much explains why I do what I do, as a pastor, a professor, and a student of Scripture. In fact, I believe with the governors of Harvard in 1646, that Christ is ‘the only foundation of all sound knowledge and Learning.’

“Yes, I may be a bit of an antique. But sometimes antiques are worth a whole lot more than newfangled contraptions. When it comes to truth, I think the founding leaders of my alma mater got it right. Truth, rightly understood, is indeed ‘for Christ and the church’” (www.markdroberts.com/htmfiles/resources/harvardironies.htm#may2904).

Choose how you will think

Today we live in a vastly different world in which discovery in many of the sciences has distracted man away from thinking the most basic of thoughts. Could there be a creation without a Creator? Could there be design without a Designer? Could there be law without a Lawgiver? Who sustains the complex and vast universe we live in?

These questions demand answers, and this requires some thinking. For those interested in expanding their thinking on science and discovery, I recommend reading the United Church of God’s free booklet, *Life’s Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and Bill Bryson’s bestseller, *A Short History of Nearly Everything* (2003).

The apostle Paul wrote many years ago: “Because they did not receive the love of the truth . . . God will send them strong

delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

I understood long ago that God exists, and have developed a respect for the Christian worldview. It is within this perspective that I strive to do all my thinking. Everyone, especially those hearing for the first time other ideas and worldviews, needs to decide which way he or she sees life. The postmodern concept being widely expressed in universities today that says there are no absolute rules for life has little room for a God who “interferes” in the lives of humankind.

Readers of this magazine understand that we are eager for you to learn how to think vertically—that is, to think about the biblical God of heaven and what He wants us to do. This God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob warns us to be diligent in our thinking.

Paul wrote to the young Timothy: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness” (2 Timothy 2:15-16).

This short article cannot debunk all the spurious ideas that abound, but it can warn of the dangers that exist in our increasingly ungodly world. Those who want to think vertically need to consider some serious matters: Can you trust in God and His Word? Do you need to become converted and be led by God’s Spirit?

If this interests you, remember what God revealed to His people: “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Hebrews 8:10).

Thinking takes effort and must start with a basic framework. Either you decide for yourself the matters of truth, justice and right versus wrong, or you put your trust in a Creator God who claims to have made you for a purpose. You could be robbed of this great opportunity by a corrupting environment under the sway of the evil god of this world, Satan the devil. Paul wrote: “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

“I think not”

Remember the philosopher Decartes? Do you know the rest of the story? René Descartes was sitting in a small Paris café one afternoon contemplating the meaning of life and the human condition. Suddenly he realized—“*I think, therefore I am.*”

He was so excited about his revelation that he started drinking in celebration. After several glasses of wine the waitress came by his table and asked if he wanted another glass. Realizing he was getting drunk, he replied to the waitress, “I think not.” And POOF . . . he disappeared. Well, not really. But it makes a good joke!

May you continue thinking vertically.

Larry Greider is a staff member of *Vertical Thought*, church pastor and national coordinator of the United Youth Camps.

Descriptions of Some Popular Worldviews

Compiled by Dale Osborne

Christian Theism	God is personal (not just a force) and created all that exists out of nothing. God has revealed essential knowledge, otherwise unattainable, in the Old and New Testaments. God is working out His purpose for mankind through his-torical events. Man must rely on God to reach his potential.
Islamic Theism	God (Allah) is unknowable, but he has given laws through his prophet Muhammad (who wrote them in Islam's holy book, the Koran) that mankind must obey. Man is basically good but is corrupted by non-Islamic cultures. Hence, societies must enforce Islamic law. Everything happens by the will of Allah, but each person is responsible to improve his condition, leaving the outcome to Allah. Knowledge is to be sought, though not as an end in itself but rather to understand higher spiritual truths and ultimate reality. An afterlife in paradise is determined by a person's works in this life.
Naturalism	Only the natural world and forces exist. There are no supernatural beings; evolution accounts for the existence of the universe. Man is free and can reach his full potential by using his intellect and the scientific method.
New Age Pantheism	Everything that exists is either a manifestation of the one Unity or Being. Thus, each person is god, but one won't experience that happy state without the raising of his or her consciousness. By meditation and through cycles of birth, death and reincarnation, a person seeks to understand and relate properly to the Unity. Truth is often para-doxical; that is, opposing statements can both be true simultaneously. Ethics is concerned with a person's relation to all manifestations of the Unity.
Deism	God created the universe, but does not intervene. God has revealed Himself in nature, but there are no inspired holy books. Man can rely on science and reason to discover truth and determine morals.
Nihilism	There is no meaning to the world. The only order in the world is what we individually give it. There is no objective foundation for knowledge or purpose of life. Life is amoral. Therefore, any values or purpose the government tries to indoctrinate into or force on a person can justifiably be resisted.
Existentialism	Man is totally free. We were neither born nor created with a purpose in life. Each creates who he is (his essence) by the choices he makes in life. He alone is responsible for his actions, so to achieve his aims society's rules need not be obeyed.
Postmodernism	Man cannot know anything absolutely. We have only limited knowledge. What we call "reality" or "truth" is only an individual's or community's interpretation of what exists. Each interpretation can be just as good as another, although conflicting because each interpretation satisfies the felt needs of that person or community. Thus, man constructs truth rather than discovers it, and there is no objective good or evil.
Reference Sites on the Web	www.iep.utm.edu/n/naturalism.htm www.iep.utm.edu/n/nihilism.htm www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/001/42.80.html www.christianity.ca/faith/sharing-faith/2004/08.003.html www.culturalorientation.net/muslims/mc2.html www.spaceandmotion.com/Philosophy-Postmodernism-Post-Modernism.htm mb-soft.com/believe/text/theism.htm www.probe.org/docs/w-views.html www.probe.org/docs/w-views2.html etext.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/DHI/dhiana.cgi?id=dv1-77 www.thefreedictionary.com/Deism

How's your prayer life? Some would answer, "What prayer life? I don't have a prayer life. I'm too busy!" Yes, we are all quite busy, but is that a legitimate excuse? Several years ago, a good friend of mine passed on a phrase that his father used to tell him: "You make time for what you value most."

What do we value most? If what we value most is a relationship with God, our Father in heaven, then we will set aside time in the day to pray to Him.

David was king over the entire nation of Israel. Can we even imagine all the responsibilities that came with the job? Still, he prayed to God morning, noon and evening (Psalm 55:17). Daniel, one of the chief advisers to the Persian governor of Babylonia, found time in his busy schedule to do the same (Daniel 6:10). Both men placed God first in their lives, in spite of their many commitments. Their examples leave us without excuse.

is not intended to be recited over and over when we pray to God. Rather it is a general *outline* of the topics to cover with God as we come before Him daily in prayer. Let's take a look at what the various phrases in this prayer mean.

The model prayer

Our Father in heaven—We are to pray to the Father. In the introductory part of our prayers, we are to acknowledge Him as such. We should express our thankfulness for His role in our lives as a loving and involved Father. We can discuss with Him how He works with and helps us just as a human father looks after the needs of his own children. Reflect with Him about His glorious throne where He sits in heaven. Read passages about God's throne in all its majesty (for example, Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4).

Hallowed be Your name—We are to revere and hallow God's name. He is described in many ways by His various titles. As we talk with God about the greatness of His name, it helps us consider commandment number three of the Ten

TALKED TO GOD LATELY?

We all make time for what we value the most. Have you gotten into the good habit of praying to God on a regular basis? Need some instruction and encouragement? Here it is!

by **Andy Burnett**

Others might say, "But I don't even know *how* to pray! What am I supposed to pray about?" That's a fair question. The 12 disciples asked the same of Jesus. On one occasion they saw Jesus praying, and when He finished, "His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray'" (Luke 11:1). The instruction Jesus gave them in the words that followed we could call *the model prayer*.

This sample prayer (found in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4)

Commandments: "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain [in an empty, useless or meaningless way], for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

Here are some examples in the Old Testament of names of God taken from the Hebrew language, the language in which most of the Old Testament was written. **Elohim** is a plural term representing God as creator, connected with His



creation of all things (Genesis 1:26).

YHWH is the Eternal, the Immutable One, the One who was, who is and who is to come. **YHWH** represents God in a covenant relationship with those whom He has created. **YHWH** is connected with a variety of descriptors in the Bible: **YHWH** who provides, who heals, my banner, who sanctifies, who is peace, of hosts, our righteousness, who is there, Most High and my shepherd (Genesis 22:14; Exodus 15:26; 17:15; 31:13; Judges 6:24; 1 Samuel 1:3; Jeremiah 23:6; Ezekiel 48:35; Psalm 7:17; 23:1).

EI is the Almighty in all His strength and power (Genesis 14:18-22; 16:13; Psalm 57:2) [material gathered from E.W. Bullinger's *The Companion Bible*, Appendix 4].

All of these names give us a better understanding of our Father's majesty and greatness. We are to honor Him as we address Him.

Your kingdom come—We are to pray that God will hasten Christ's coming to establish the Kingdom of God (2 Peter 3:11-12; Matthew 6:33). We are to talk with Him about why we need His Kingdom to come, giving specific situations that we see going on in the world, in our own lives and in the lives of our friends and family (Ezekiel 9:4).

The world overflows with tragedies and God wants us to spend time reflecting on the pain and sorrow in the world today, so we can vividly see the need for Him to send Jesus Christ back to earth to set up His government, a kingdom that will yield peace, joy and abundance.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven—Here we continue to let Him know that we want what He wants. We ask Him to help us seek what He wants for us. And we ask that He do the same for others. We can also ask for God's blessing on His work being done through the Church.

This section of prayer prevents us from becoming self-absorbed. It helps us realize, "It's not all about ME." It's about God, His plan and His purpose. Jesus Christ sought God's will, not His own, as He prayed to God before His trial and crucifixion (Matthew 26:39). We must do the same, never forgetting that God always has our best interests at heart (Romans 8:31; 1 Peter 5:6-7).

Give us this day our daily bread—God wants us to continue asking Him to look after our physical and spiritual needs. He assures us that He will (Matthew 6:25-33), but He still wants us to ask (Matthew 7:7-11).

We are to be specific. It is not selfish to discuss with Him our specific needs. It's acceptable and appropriate to continue asking for something (Luke 18:1-8) if we are seeking His will. Some of our needs include protection at school and work, in the car and at home; guidance in what we say and do; an income for food, clothing, shelter and so we can be in a position to help others in need; strength to ward off the pulls of the world (1 John 2:15-17) and the influence of Satan.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors (or forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us)—We are to ask God's forgiveness for our specific sins. We ask Him to help us see areas in our lives where we don't realize we are sinning. We confess to Him our sin, how we fell short, what we

did or didn't do that got us there in the first place (Psalm 51).

We are to also thank Him for Jesus Christ whose sacrifice enables us to be cleansed of our sins. Of course we have to commit to change. We have to talk with God about the plan we will devise to keep ourselves from sinning in that area again. We ask for His help and guidance in implementing that plan.

Also, we solicit His aid in helping us to be forgiving to those who have sinned against us. We ask for His help to "let the hurt go." We must both forgive and ask for forgiveness!

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one

—This is where we pray for God's spiritual guidance in our lives and in the lives of others. Again, we are to be specific. We know what we and those close to us are battling and can talk to God about those battles. We ask for His help as we develop a plan. We can claim the promise of James 4:7, which is a strategy for victory over Satan's influence.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever

—We began with praising God's greatness, and we end doing the same. This portion of our prayer reminds us again that we are not the focus of our prayer—God is. He is great; He is love; His will is going to be accomplished; and we are thankful that He has given us a part to play in His plan.

Here we talk with God about His wonderful plan that will come to pass. Of course, we can't talk to Him about that plan unless we know what it is! Read passages such as Revelation 21 and 22 that reveal to us a much different future than what we experience now. Ask that He keep us mindful of that magnificent plan so we don't lose the vision as we experience trials in our lives.

Amen—"Amen" means "truly" or "so be it." We conclude our prayers in Jesus Christ's name as He instructed the disciples to do in John 14:13-14. He makes it possible for us to pray to the Father.

Final tips

- Become "conversational" with God, being always mindful of honoring Him as we address Him.
- God converses with us as we read His Word, the Bible. One-way-only conversations don't work—with others or with God.
- Pray in private (Matthew 6:6) at a time when there will be minimal distractions.
- It's a good idea for us to clear the cobwebs from our eyes before we pray. Otherwise, we can tend to fall asleep!
- We must strive to become totally dependent on a relationship with our Father to the point that we feel like we can't survive physically and spiritually without Him. In reality, we can't.
- We must make time for prayer *daily* for it to become a habit. It gets easier as we stick with it.

Do you value the opportunity you have to develop a strong, lifelong relationship with your spiritual Father? To do this you must pray daily. Remember, we will make time for what we value most.

Andy Burnett is the camp director of one of our United Youth Camps and pastors United Church of God congregations in New Orleans and Covington, Louisiana, and Laurel, Mississippi.

Eating Choices—Does God Care?

Vertical Thought discusses God's involvement in our eating habits with Hope Egan, author of *Holy Cow! Does God Care About What We Eat?* In her book, Ms. Egan invites readers to look at their eating habits by examining the meat-related biblical food laws and God's overall design for healthy eating.

Interview by Kamie Stoner

Vertical Thought: Would you give our readers a brief overview of your book?

Hope Egan: Most people are vaguely aware that the Bible contains food-related guidelines, but they wonder if those laws are still relevant today. Many folks associate these practices with Judaism, but when I started to seek the Christian perspective on eating, I was shocked to discover an entire Christian subculture that actually follows the biblical food laws.

The book pulls in the science perspective related to the biblical food laws. *Holy Cow!* looks at the science behind these instructions and then steps through the whole Bible to show how they still apply today.

VT: Would you please review the biblical food laws?

HE: In Leviticus 11, God spells out which animals He designed to be eaten. The Bible calls these animals “clean.”

For example, clean mammals have a “split hoof” and “chew the cud.” These include cows, sheep and goats. Pigs have a split hoof but do not chew the cud; therefore pork was not designed to be food by God's standards.

Fish that have fins and scales were designed to be food. Examples of clean fish include salmon, snapper and tuna. Catfish, on the other hand, have fins but no scales, so they are considered unclean and not

designed for food. Neither are shellfish such as lobster, oysters and shrimp, since they don't have fins or scales.

Most poultry, like chicken, turkey, duck and goose, are considered clean, since they are not listed with the unclean scavenger birds like vultures.

VT: What main point do you want to get across to your readers?

HE: God, the one who created us and intricately designed human anatomy and physiology, also designed the foods that will make us the healthiest and look and feel the best.

Scripture points to them in Genesis 1:29 (plant foods like fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains and seeds) and Leviticus 11 (certain meat, poultry and fish).

VT: What do you think are the most destructive eating habits among people in general?

HE: From a physical perspective, I think they are the habits the media ignores because they are so universal and socially acceptable, such as overconsumption of sugar and dependency on caffeine.



From a spiritual perspective, most people struggle with food idolatry: putting food and food choices in front of our relationship with God. That's what my eating struggles were (and still are) about. For example, someone who can't imagine living without _____ (Starbucks, chocolate, Krispy Kremes), and it's painful to even think about giving it up, might want to do a little self-analysis.

VT: In doing research for your book, what was the most surprising discovery?

HE: I've never considered myself an environmentalist or animal rights activist, but learning about the dark side of the meat industry shocked me. Most of our meat comes from "factory farms" where animals are crammed together, pumped up with steroids and antibiotics, dipped in insecticide and given feed that can legally contain chicken feathers, plastic pellets and ground up cats and dogs.

I don't mean to be gross, but these animals live in conditions that are light years from God's original design for them, and this can have significant health consequences for us. Some think becoming vegetarian is the answer, but I can't get to that conclusion, since God seemed to design animals for us to eat.



God, the one who created us and intricately designed human anatomy, also designed the foods that will make us the healthiest.

VT: Food labels can be confusing. Can you clarify the terms "kosher" and "organic"?

HE: The term "kosher" doesn't appear in the Bible with relation to food. It actually comes from a Hebrew word that means "fit" or "proper" and has evolved into a food-related word.

The Orthodox Jewish requirements for kosher food include several things. First, only foods that conform to Leviticus 11 would be considered kosher. Second, the animals must be killed and prepared in specific ways (such as draining the blood and removing certain fats). Third, meat and dairy foods are kept separate. (This last point has very little connection with the Bible, so it's not too relevant for believers.)

Organic meat comes from animals that were raised on organic

foods and never given growth hormones, antibiotics or other chemicals. Think of it like this. With regard to meat, "organic" describes the way an animal is raised and fed during its lifetime. "Kosher" describes how it is slaughtered and processed before it reaches your dinner table. Both terms require special certification.

VT: Do you think it is important for young people to be concerned about their diet early in life, when most are not affected by health problems? If so, why?

HE: Teenagers and young adults may not be affected by disease or illness now, but most of them are concerned about their appearance. Eating the foods God designed for us to eat, in moderation, impacts our weight, our metabolism, our skin and our hair, so it impacts the way we look.

From a health perspective, it's like making an investment early. Just as saving for college, a house or a car is easier if you start early, it's easier to prevent sickness if you start treating your body well when you are young.

VT: What eating habits would be the most beneficial for young people to learn now?

HE: There are three simple principles to follow. First, try to eat the foods that God designed to be eaten (especially more fruits and vegetables). Second, eat them as close to the form that God gave them to us as possible. Finally, don't let any food or drink become your idol. These are three principles from Dr. Rex Russell's book *What the Bible Says About Healthy Living* (1996).

VT: Do you have any additional advice for young people about their eating habits?

HE: • Don't fall for peer pressure. Look to God for guidance on what to eat, not your friends. For help understanding God's perspective on this subject, read books like my book, *Holy Cow! Does God Care About What We Eat?*, Dr. Russell's book, *What the Bible Says About Healthy Living* and Jordan Rubin's *The Maker's Diet*.

• Pray. It's good to transform our minds (Romans 12:2) to learn what God's plan for eating is. Implementing it, however, is not always easy. But God is waiting with open arms for us to turn to Him with our food choices. Seek Him out and He will make the journey easier for you.

• Educate your parents. Many well-meaning parents are interested in eating right, but the pressures of work and raising a family cause some of them to abandon good habits. Initiate dialogue with them about this topic (and offer to help with healthy meal preparation) and they will likely respond favorably.

• Go slowly. You have been forming your existing food habits for years. Recognize that they will probably not change overnight. Therefore, try to make little changes (like switching from soda to tea, or ordering a side salad instead of french fries) rather than changing everything at once.

Holy Cow! Does God Care About What We Eat? can be ordered from www.HolyCowNews.com or by calling (800) 775-4807.

Kamie Stoner is a registered dietitian in Dayton, Ohio, who also believes in and practices the biblical food laws. She received her B.S. in nutrition/dietetics in 2002 and is currently working on her M.S.

In the Eye of the Storm

Hurricane Frances was on her way to our town.

Despite my almost tranquil moment roller-blading in the last sunny hours before the storm, the shopping centers were madhouses with people buying every last supply on the shelves, from water and batteries to dried fruit and cereal. Home Depot had rationed plywood to a line of people who had waited up to six or seven hours the previous day.

With all the traffic from evacuees, trucks hauling gasoline could not battle their way down to our Hess, Exxon and Sunoco stations. Cars lined up as radio stations announced the last remaining gas stations that still had fuel.

Police arrested surfers who wanted just a few minutes out on the biggest waves they had seen all summer, and graffiti painted on the boarded-up shops on the coast warned potential vandals: *"You loot, I shoot—not joking!"* It seemed as if we lived in a war zone rather than Floridian paradise.

But what was the real fear? Unlike the war-torn citizens in Fallujah, the Ivory Coast or Sudan, we feared a natural force of wind and rain that we could not comprehend or control. It was almost like waiting for a bomb to be dropped right on our town that would spread its wrath south to Boca Raton and north to Orlando with us right in the middle—in the eye of the storm.

My friends and employers Mike and Samantha Moore, fellow Church members in the West Palm Beach area, opened their office building to those of us who either did not feel safe in our own homes or could not bring our pets to the school shelters.

Being with friends during the storm was certainly more inviting than just sitting on a gym floor playing Go Fish with strangers. All together, our group consisted of 28 adults and children, three dogs, five cats and my betta fish, Nebuchadnezzar. Together we pooled our resources to make the RCI office building a second home.

A wedding?

Coincidentally, the very weekend Frances was to grace us with her presence, Tracy Carreiro, from Port St. Lucie, Florida, and Jason Brandt, from Columbus, Ohio, were scheduled to wed in downtown West Palm Beach. Wedding guests from all over the country who had already arrived had to face the realization that they too would have to ride out the storm. Others who planned to arrive on Friday encountered cancelled flights because of the drastically increased winds.

Florida experienced four hurricanes last year that wrought much destruction throughout the state. Here is a firsthand account by someone who weathered Hurricane Frances.

by Elizabeth Cannon

After strapping on my roller-blades, I headed down the sidewalk on a hot Friday morning. The fronds on the palm trees swayed gently in the wind, an occasional cloud temporarily shaded me from the burning South Florida sun, and the occasional sprinkler ticked as it sprayed water onto the green lawn.

With the humidity making the air unbearably heavy, I could not distinguish it from any other August morning in Jupiter, Florida. In the back of my mind, however, was the fear that in just a few short hours most of the trees along the sidewalk would likely lie mangled on the ground, pieces of rooftops and windowpanes would dot the streets, and floodwaters would threaten to create makeshift lakes in cul-de-sacs and parking lots.

As the Sabbath approached, we huddled by either the windows or our portable television to watch the outside world grow darker, gloomier and soon treacherous. Looking out the hurricane-proof windows of our shelter, the up-to-90-mile-an-hour wind thrashed the trees and broke them at their trunks as feeder bands passed through Jupiter. The wind was so fierce that it made the windows groan like a train was passing by, but inside the building we were safe and comforted. The frightening world outside was like the world in which we live today, which threatens our safety and grows increasingly ominous as time progresses.

The only thing we could do before the storm was to prepare ourselves with water, food and the proper shelter to weather Hurricane Frances until it passed. There are some lessons in all of this.

The same preparedness is necessary in our spiritual lives as we face the bombardment of spiritual forces and evil principalities. After all, “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities . . . against spiritual hosts of wickedness” (Ephesians 6:12).

Like preparing for a hurricane, we too must stock up on the right supplies of spiritual food including God’s Holy Spirit and find shelter in His Church, which serves as a haven from Satan’s corrupting world, so we can safely weather the storm.

Let’s draw up a survival supply list that will help see us through the spiritual storm around us.

Spiritual supply #1—water

First, one must have plenty of water. After the hurricane passed, for many of us the water was unsafe to drink since septic tanks and other mass filtration systems were compromised by damaged pipes.

Some did not have safe drinking water for a couple of weeks. If they had not stocked up on pure water before the storm hit, imagine the discomfort and trial they would have had to endure after the hurricane passed through Jupiter. The same is true for us if we try to endure a trial without God’s Holy Spirit working with us and helping us.

Jesus did not leave us unprepared to stand against the world’s corrupting ways (John 14:16-18). He promised to send us a Helper or Comforter, God’s Spirit, which is comparable to refreshing waters for someone who is thirsty (John 7:37-39). However, Paul also warns us in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 not to “quench the Spirit,” which happens when we get so bogged down with the cares of this world that we fail to listen to God.

We all need God’s Spirit to help us make right choices—especially when we go to a party with a group of friends and find some not-so-Christian activities going on. Or when we are in a class with a very crass teacher who insists that we are dead wrong in our archaic beliefs. Do we really have so much going on in our lives with school, work, clubs, sports or whatever else that fitting prayer and Bible study into our docket is impossible?

In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul says that when we are tempted, God “will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” Since God will not give us a trial we cannot handle, there will always be an out from any questionable situation in which we may find ourselves. However, if we are not close to

God, letting Him guide us throughout our lives—even in high school and college—it will be more difficult to turn away from the temptations that tug at us.

Even before baptism, God’s Spirit works with us because our parents and ministers have taught us about God’s way. Look at the end of Acts 2, past the verse we always read, “Repent, and . . . be baptized . . . and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Verse 39 says, “For the promise is to you and to your children.”

When we find ourselves convicted to live God’s way of life for the rest of our lives, it is up to us to answer His call. With conviction, repentance and baptism, we receive God’s Spirit to help us through the trials and to develop God’s character in our own minds. That prepares us mentally to weather life’s storms.

Spiritual supply #2—food

To survive a storm we must also have food. One will not have a pleasant hurricane experience if all he has in his supply kit are triple-A batteries and gadgets. In addition to tools such as flashlights, batteries, radios, battery-powered televisions and, if at all possible, a generator, we need food to eat. We must pack ready-to-eat foods like peanut butter, cereal, granola bars, nuts and, of course, a cooler of ice to cool fruit, juices and other semipermanishable foods.

Like physical food during a hurricane, we all need to equip ourselves with a spiritual cooler of God’s truth from the very words of Jesus Christ. He tells us that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word . . . of God” (Matthew 4:4). As we fight spiritual battles, whether they are questions about Holy Days or confronting philosophies that contradict God’s plan, we must not face them starved of God’s nutritious truth. Answering questions about our faith without studying scriptures or without having a proper handle on what God says He will do when Christ returns is like attempting to survive a hurricane with only graham crackers and a penlight.

God tells us to both “test all things” and “be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:15). This includes the many aspects of God’s Word, from His law and Holy Days to Christian living principles to prophecies and Church history.

Why do we have such hope for the future when all around us are thrashing winds of wars and widespread hunger, flying debris of divorce and broken homes, devastating floods of confusing philosophy? We have hope because God has revealed to us His plan for bringing many sons and daughters to righteousness to be a part of His family.

We have full access to this plan through the Bible. Think of the many subjects and stories to study as a whole grocery store stocked full of all the various spiritual foods we could ever need. We have our entire lives to become experts on the one book that holds the keys to the Kingdom of God. All we have to do is open it and study it.

Spiritual supply #3—shelter

Lastly, the stronger the shelter, the safer we are. Imagine someone standing outside against 90- to 110-mile-an-hour winds with leaves, gravel, glass and other objects flying past him or her! Without a shelter, he or she would likely be killed

or severely injured. This person would suffer the full effects of the storm.

Within God's Church, we find shelter from the storms of the world as we build relationships with others who want to live God's way of life. Every Sabbath, we have a chance to share our experiences from the week with people who are striving for the same goal of God's Kingdom. They understand the struggle of living in a world so contrary to that vision.

The connections we make with one another are like the building blocks of a hurricane shelter. By talking with, encouraging and serving one another, we take part in fellowship with Jesus Christ through God's Holy Spirit. So, as the storms rage all around us, we are inside the safest place possible.

As in a family, the only way to grow closer to one another is to spend quality time together. We must also do this with our Church family. In the process we learn how to deal with and love different personality types and age groups—things that help us

learn how to work together in more effectively doing God's will.

To finish our hurricane experience with an almost perfect biblical analogy, our friends Tracy and Jason Brandt got married the day after the storm passed. After enduring adversity and altered plans, the beautiful bride, dressed in her princesslike gown, walked down the aisle in the RCI office building. Those of us who had sought shelter there had tried our best to transform our makeshift haven into a beautiful wedding hall.

Tracy arrived at our shelter with a smile that made us forget that a Category 2 hurricane had even occurred. After all, she was getting married that day, and no storm was going to stop that special occasion!

Elizabeth Cannon is a junior at Florida Atlantic University where she is studying British literature. She lives near West Palm Beach and is an active proponent of United Youth Camps, having served on the staff at Pinecrest, Winter Camp in Wisconsin and, most recently, the camp in Chimaltenango, Guatemala. She is currently learning how to surf.



Q&A

Q. What does the Bible say about homosexuality?

A. The subject of homosexuality has caused a great deal of confusion

for many. It is a controversial subject in our society, but it is not a new question for the Church of God. The early New Testament Church dealt with it.

Scripture clearly shows that homosexual behavior is sin. You may be familiar with 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. The *Amplified Bible* adds clarity: "Do you not know that the unrighteous and the wrongdoers will not inherit or have any share in the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived (misled): neither the impure and immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor those who participate in homosexuality . . . will inherit or have any share in the kingdom of God."

Another plain New Testament passage that addresses the subject is Romans 1:26-27.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 6, goes on to state: "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (verse 11, NKJV).

That is, members of the Church of God in Corinth had committed some or all of the sins listed—including homosexual conduct—but later converted and turned from their sin. This verse shows that homosexual behavior can be overcome. Of course, it is surely better to refuse something that is sin

rather than to have to repent and change from it later.

Sin begins with temptation to do what is wrong. One practical necessity is to avoid exposure to material that typically provokes sexual temptations, including pornographic literature and sexually explicit television programs and movies. Paul's practical advice to the Corinthians is applicable—run away from factors that bring on temptations. "Flee sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Equally important is the necessity to put uplifting information and images into our minds (2 Timothy 2:22). Select your reading material and entertainment wisely.

The apostle Paul candidly spoke of his ongoing struggle against human nature in Romans 7:14-25. Overcoming doesn't mean that we're always able to put aside temptation, never to experience it again. To the contrary, it's more common that we have to battle against familiar temptations repeatedly.

The necessity to fight this battle shouldn't discourage us, for, as Paul brings out, we can count on victory through Jesus Christ. The battle against sin must be fought largely in the mind, before temptations give way to sinful thoughts and, eventually, sinful actions.

Think on Paul's words from 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." We must all control our sexual desires.

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

The Humor of Jesus Christ

"I would read the Bible more," a young woman recently told me, "if it were just more interesting . . . maybe, more humorous." How about you? Most people don't realize that Jesus, the great Teacher and Messiah, was often quite funny, even pointedly so.

by Randy Stiver

The fact is that we have often developed a false pattern of Christ's character. Though we do not always say so directly, we habitually think of Him as mild in manner, endlessly patient, grave in speech, and serious almost to the point of dourness" (Elton Trueblood, *The Humor of Christ*, p. 16).

Wow . . . boring. That makes Christ sound like a dry and boring professor teaching "Invertebrate Studies of the Precambrian Era" every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 7:30 a.m. Good thing it isn't true!

When you get to know the true Jesus Christ, who He really was and is, it will amaze you. Suddenly He has personality, zest, brilliant hilarity, sparkling intellect—so incredibly bright He makes us glow like dim bulbs by comparison.

Pointedly foolish

An oxymoron is a conceptual wordplay that uses seemingly contradictory words or phrases, like "cruel kindness" or "make haste slowly." It's a Greek word that literally means pointedly foolish or humorous.

Jesus often popped balloons of absurd and foolish arguments and actions of others, using the pointedly humorous pinprick of a sharp oxymoron. Here's the story of one of His favorites: "*Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!*" (Matthew 23:24).

How can you help but chuckle and groan imagining someone opening wide enough to swallow a huge humpy camel?

Then there's the oxymoron: "blind guides." Get it? How can a blind person guide another person? Blind and guide don't naturally fit together—it's funny! OK, so it's not smack-you-in-the-face, belly-laugh, punch-line funny. It's more like, "Oooh, that's a good one. What did the other guys say to bring that on?" We chuckle and think at the same time. Christ used the "blind guides" oxymoron several times. Let's find out why.

Religious leaders historically have a bad habit of taking themselves too seriously. This is a recipe for various levels of fanaticism even today in all religions of the world, including Christianity as well as the basically godless religion of "Political Correctness." The religious leaders of Jesus' day were of this ilk and their fanaticism blinded them to the truth to the point that they refused to see themselves as fallible

human beings. They had no sense of humor.

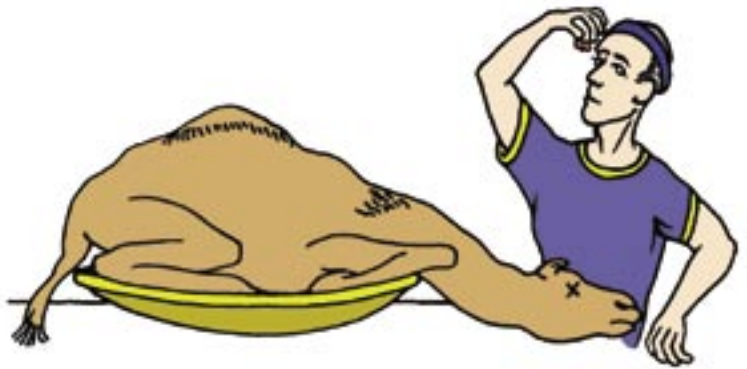
"Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, 'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.' He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?'" (Matthew 15:1-3).

The Pharisees and scribes had a ceremony of washing their hands before eating, not for cleanliness like your mother taught you to do, but as a symbol of how inherently righteous they personally were. God did not command this type of washing. Instead, they made it up and considered it equal with the written Scripture. How arrogant is that?

Appearing good, not being good

Jesus then took them to task for sinning by not caring for their own aging parents. He called them hypocrites who liked the *appearance* of goodness but didn't like to actually do good. He said their worship was, therefore, worthless.

Later Christ was told that His confrontation had offended



the Pharisees. Generally, people who take personal offense at those who disagree with them lack a healthy sense of humor; they're basically insecure. And that's when Jesus lowered the pointedly humorous, oxymoronic boom as simultaneous instruction and enjoyment for His disciples:

"Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (Matthew 15:14). Blind leaders are the same as blind guides. Picture this: The disciples smile and nod knowingly. They got the point.

What can we learn from this humor strategy of Jesus—the best Professor?

- Take God's truth and law seriously.
- You must do good to be good.
- Don't take yourself too seriously.
- Good humor can deflate arrogant arguments.

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



IN THE NEWS

Compiled by James Capo

Are Teens Better Drivers?

By most physical measures, teenagers are the world's best drivers. Their muscles are supple, their reflexes quick, their senses at a lifetime peak. Yet car crashes kill more of them than any other cause. Auto insurance rates, based solely on statistics, are super high for teenage drivers and continue so until the mid-20s.



Now, a National Institute of Health study may help explain the statistics. It suggests that the region of the brain that inhibits risky behavior is not fully formed until about age 25.

"We'd thought the highest

levels of physical and brain maturity were reached by age 18, maybe earlier—so this threw us," said Jay Giedd, a pediatric psychiatrist leading the study (*Washington Post/LFF*, Feb. 1).

This could help explain the temptation toward risky behavior for everything from driving to sexual activity to drug use.

Still, wisdom is a choice we can make. The book of Proverbs, written by Solomon to give "the young man knowledge and discretion" (Proverbs 1:4), says that "a prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple [or foolish] keep going and suffer for it" (Proverbs 22:3, NIV).

What Makes Us Happy?

Wealth? Research shows that once basic needs are met, more income does little to raise one's sense of satisfaction with life.

Youth? Older people more consistently say they're satisfied with their lives than the young, and they are less prone to dark moods.

Marriage? Maybe. Married people are generally happier than singles, but that may be because they were happier to begin with.

On the other hand, religious faith was found to "genuinely lift the spirit" and a 2002 University of Illinois study found that "the 10% of students with the highest levels of happiness and the fewest signs of depression [had] strong ties to friends and family" (*Time* magazine, Jan. 17).

The Math of High School Sex: One Partner + One Partner = 288 Partners

The first "map" of teen sexual behavior gives new meaning to the old warning that you don't just have sex with a person, but with everyone that person ever had sex with. A Jan. 24 Reuters news agency report said researchers found a chain of 288 one-to-one sexual relationships at a high school in the U.S. Midwest, meaning the teenager at the end of the chain may have had direct sexual contact with only one person, but indirect contact with 286 others.

Sociologist James Moody, who led the Ohio State University

study, said: "They might know that their partner had a previous partner. But they don't think about the fact that this partner had a previous partner, who had a partner, and so on."

This means that teens need a different approach to sexual health education and especially prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, the researchers said. Abstinence before marriage and fidelity afterward is certainly the safest approach to sexual behavior!



Driving the Drunks for Bucks

Would you turn over your car keys and your money to a stranger on a scooter? Three enterprising (and sober) college students in Colorado have found a way to lighten the pockets of their determined-to-go-partying colleagues and neighbors.

Three years ago they founded NightRiders, a designated-driver service that safely deposits the inebriated and their cars back home after a night out. They use collapsible scooters that fit in a trunk or back seat to go from one pickup to another.

Last New Year's Eve, 350 people caught a ride from the 'Riders, paying a flat rate of \$15 plus \$2 a mile for the trip. The company's most effective marketing tool is a poster that compares their fees to the cost of a single DUI conviction, which in Colorado can run into the thousands of dollars.

"The sad fact of it is," says cofounder Brad Dickerhofe, "people are more concerned about being busted than about putting lives at risk."

NightRiders is expanding their company, and similar businesses are popping up across the country (*Time* magazine, Jan. 17).

Earthquakes: Coming to a Continent Near You?

Last December's undersea earthquake in the Indian Ocean measured 9.3 on the Richter scale and spawned the tsunami that killed more than a quarter of a million people. It was one of the four largest earthquakes measured since 1900 and the most devastating natural disaster of them all. It left tens of thousands of children either separated from their parents or orphaned. Relief workers are calling these kids "the Tsunami Generation."

What are the chances an earthquake will strike where you live? Surprisingly, the National Earthquake Information Center (<http://neic.usgs.gov>) measures an average of 50 earthquakes a day. Most of them are small or happen in remote areas. Still, major quakes (those measuring 7.0 or greater) happen on average 18 times each year.

The largest recorded earthquake in the United States was a magnitude 9.2 that struck Prince William Sound, Alaska, on March 28, 1964. The largest recorded quake in the world was a magnitude 9.5 in Chile on May 22, 1960.

The Bible foretells that earthquake activity will increase before the second coming of Jesus Christ and will culminate at His return with "such a mighty and great earthquake as had not

occurred since men were on the earth" (Revelation 16:18).

For more information about what to expect, read our booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*.

Three Paths Found to Happiness

In the book *Authentic Happiness*, author and University of Pennsylvania psychologist Martin Seligman identifies three components of happiness: pleasure ("the smiley-face piece"), engagement (the depth of involvement with one's family, work, romance and hobbies) and meaning (using personal strengths to serve some larger end).

Of the three roads to a happy, satisfied life, which is most significant? Pleasure is the *least* consequential, he insists. "This is newsworthy, because so many Americans build their lives

around pursuing pleasure. It turns out that *engagement* and *meaning* are much more important," he said.

This is the same conclusion King Solomon came to thousands of years ago. After spending a lifetime pursuing pleasure of every sort, he concluded: "Vanity of vanities . . . all is vanity!" (Ecclesiastes 12:8).

Nothing is wrong with pleasure enjoyed within God's law, of course. It makes life full and stimulating. But if that's our primary source of happiness, its temporary nature fades and leaves us feeling empty and craving more. "Our eyes can never see enough to be satisfied," Solomon said, "Our ears can never hear enough" (Ecclesiastes 1:8, Good News Bible).

But he does identify the one thing that genuinely brings us lasting *meaning* and joy—knowing and being fully *engaged* in God's purpose for our lives. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).



Q ■ What is the New Age movement all about?

A. The New Age movement is very broad and therefore not easily defined. It is a humanistic movement

(that initially spread through occult communities in the 1970s and 80s) rather than a philosophy with a specific set of beliefs. Still, there are some general issues that seem to be consistent throughout.

The "New Age" referred to is the Aquarian Age where man is supposed to evolve spiritually. In this, the focus is very much on man rather than on God. Man is considered divine, inherently good and in need of reaching his potential internally.

Man is also to be in harmony with nature. This plays out as more than just being careful and responsible. It can actually be a form of spiritism. Nature is considered to be spiritual as well. Overall, this movement is characterized by moral relativism and universal tolerance. Each person is to find his or her own reality and, through tolerance, produce peace and love. Regrettably, about the only thing that is not tolerated is the true God.

New Age philosophy incorporates elements of pagan worship including Eastern mysticism, astrology, palm reading, crystal healing, pyramidology, Western European paganism (Wicca), Native American spiritism, pantheism and nature worship. It sometimes includes linking up with aliens in an

intergalactic consciousness. Some forms do acknowledge a cosmic Christ—that Jesus was a yogi and that he was trying to show us all how to be "Christs" like him. Some New Age practices also include psychic powers like levitation and efforts to contact the spirits of the dead. There is an emphasis on the acquisition of mystical knowledge.

There are many dangers here. For one, the New Age worldview is unbiblical and false, leading people away from the truth of God. For another, the occult practices mentioned above are really dabbling with evil spirits. Demons pose as the spirits of the dead, and they are also the ones supplying the power behind occult supernatural acts, often at first unbeknownst to the occult practitioner.

Moreover, the New Age movement runs directly counter to God's instruction. Notice what God told the Israelites when they entered the Promised Land. He had given them His laws and made it clear how they were to live. The people of the land they were entering had their own religious practices. God's warning to Israel was: "Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them [the native people], after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise'" (Deuteronomy 12:30).

He then told them: "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it" (verse 32). The same instruction applies to us today. We are not to engage in or adapt any of the religious practices of the peoples around us into our worship of God.

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

Is the Bible True?

Understanding the answer to this question is one of the most important pieces of information we can possess. Yet many go through life unsure whether the Bible is fact or fraud. They simply don't take the time to address this life-altering question.

Some say the Bible is just a collection of stories and fables. Some acknowledge that the Bible is good historical literature, but they don't think it applies in today's world. Others think it is OK to read as long as you don't have something else to do. But is this really a good way to treat information that can make a difference in this life as well as the one to come?

Some people don't turn to the Bible until they find themselves in a severe crisis. Many a person in prison, held hostage, recovering from a drug addiction or experiencing a terrible tragedy finally turns to the Bible for encouragement and direction. But what good is this if we aren't sure that what the Bible says is true?



As a young person, you don't have to wait until you are in the middle of a severe crisis to read or prove the Bible's validity for today. Our free booklet *Is the Bible True?* provides solid answers to the questions you are most likely to hear. To understand how the Bible harmonizes with science, is verified by archaeology, and offers insight for the best life possible, order your copy today or read it online at www.ucg.org/booklets/BT/.

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