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verticalthought

a magazine of understanding for tomorrow's leaders

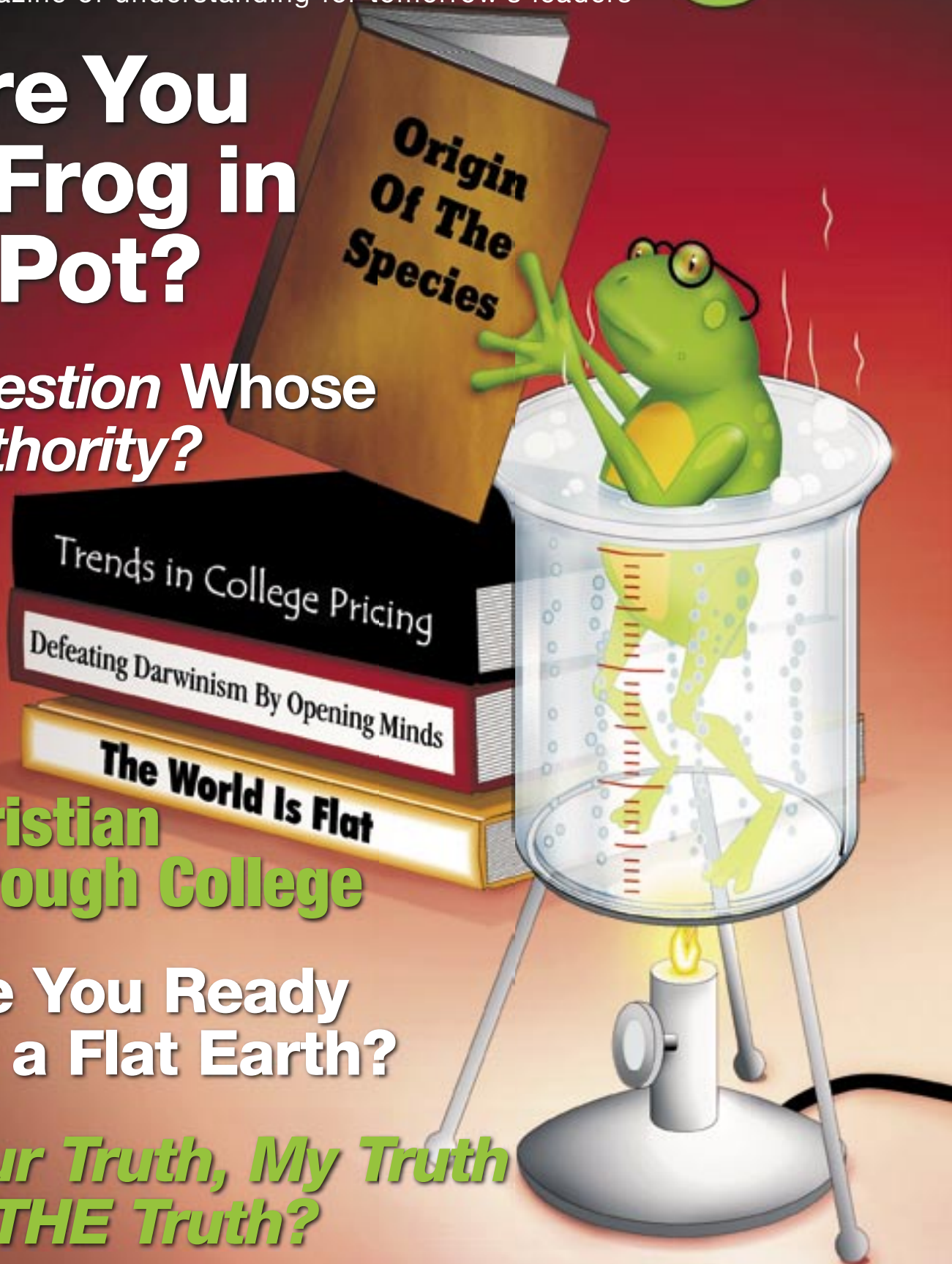
Are You a Frog in a Pot?

*Question Whose
Authority?*

**Christian
Through College**

Are You Ready
for a Flat Earth?

*Your Truth, My Truth
or THE Truth?*



Avoiding the **Whatever** Syndrome

Obtaining a formal education has both benefits and challenges. The financial rewards for obtaining a college degree are easily documented. According to U.S. Census Bureau statistics, a person with a bachelor's degree earns, on average, nearly twice as much as someone with only a high school diploma (\$51,206 a year, compared to \$27,915). Workers with an advanced degree make an average of \$74,602.

But the money is secondary. More valuable is obtaining an education and continuing to learn throughout one's life, being stimulated to think critically. Of course, while our thinking is often stimulated through higher education, we have to be careful that our thinking is also grounded in God's truth as found in the Bible.

Learning to think critically on this level—that is, to carefully analyze what is being said in light of God's Word—is one of the reasons *Vertical Thought* exists. We often refer to this kind of approach as *vertical thinking*, after the name of our magazine.

Those of us on the staff of this magazine pray that each of you will learn to filter what you hear and read through God's Word regardless of the type of education you receive—whether formal, a trade school or self-directed. This skill is necessary for avoiding the *whatever* syndrome that characterizes people who can't discern right from wrong. You're familiar with this syndrome. It's *whatever* you want to believe. It's *whatever* someone else wants to believe. It's simply *whatever*.

Whatever does not work with God. He alone makes the rules and determines truth. We only get to decide whether we will accept His authority and live by His instructions or not.

But *whatever* does not work with God. He alone makes the rules and determines truth. We only get to decide whether we will accept His authority and live by His instructions or not. We don't get to reshape His rules for life and then judge

ourselves as to whether we've been good or not. That is playing God. Regrettably, many today do play God. But that isn't going to get us very far when we each have to look the real God in the eye and give an account for our conduct.

A recent study by religious pollster George Barna is titled "Commitment to Christianity Depends on How It Is Measured" (Nov. 8, 2005, www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrow&BarnaUpdateID=203). While this study verifies what one would expect, Barna's observation about the data is most insightful: "For starters, it appears that most Americans like the security and the identity of the label 'Christian' but resist the biblical responsibilities that are associated with that identification. For most Americans, being a Christian is more about image than action.

"Further," he continued, "researchers and those who use research data must be careful how they portray people's spiritual commitment. Such descriptions are greatly affected by the way in which commitment is measured." When Jesus was walking this earth as a human being, He said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). This real, authentic Christianity of the Bible includes *action*.

Could it be that the *whatever* syndrome has led people to mistakenly conclude that they don't need to do anything to demonstrate their Christianity? Don't let this happen to you! Be a critical thinker. Be a vertical thinker. Read this issue for some inspiration on how to do this as you take responsibility for your lifelong education.

David Treybig, Managing editor



Vertical Thought is a biblically based magazine of understanding for young people ages 12-22. Our name, *Vertical Thought*, is derived from Colossians 3:1-2, which tells us to think about godly things "which are above, where Christ is." *Vertical Thought* is published quarterly by the United Church of God, an International Association, 555 Technecenter Drive, Milford, OH 45150. © 2006 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited.

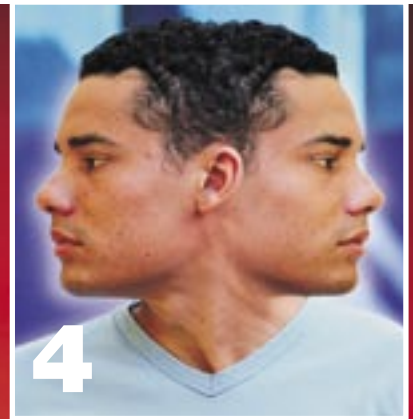
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hen Bob graduated from high school, left home and started attending a state university, a whole new world opened up to him. The freedoms were amazing! Raised in a religious home, Bob's parents had already given him some freedoms and privileges as he'd grown older. After obtaining his driver's license, his parents allowed him to take the car to the movies with his friends and pursue his various hobbies and interests. But now that he was living on his own, he decided everything himself!

While at first it seemed liberating to decide when to go to bed, what to eat and when to hang out with friends, Bob, like most college freshmen, quickly learned that he did need sleep and a healthy diet and that he needed to spend time studying—especially if he wanted to get good grades and stay in college.

Bob also noted that a few of the new students came to college primarily to have a good time, only to find out that a mixture of no studying and nonstop partying didn't work long-term. Eventually, after failing a few classes, these students either changed their habits or dropped out of school. Fortunately, Bob didn't succumb to this trap.

Bob had always been a studious person, and he liked the subjects he was taking. Sure he stayed up a little too late on occasion, but he quickly learned to manage his schedule so he could stay on top of his classes. Managing his life on this front was an easy transition.

What he wasn't prepared for was something else—something he didn't realize before going to university. It was something that would challenge his Christianity to its very core and something that was so subtle that, at first, he didn't even realize it was happening. The philosophical idea that everyone determines his own truth was insidiously permeating Bob's new life.

While exposure to different ideas has always been a part of one's college experience, what many young people don't realize is that their understanding of absolute truth—the kind found in the Bible—is going to be strongly tested when they pursue higher education. Like an undetected computer virus worming its way through a hard drive, many young people are oblivious to the subtle influences they will receive regarding this philosophy when they go off to college.

Here's the problem. The campuses of most public universities today are smorgasbords of ideas. Every imaginable philosophy, including the craziest and most extreme, seems to be represented and peddling its values. Fresh, young, impressionable minds are the targets of those holding the most radical positions possible.

Debating truth

On most campuses, debate reigns supreme with the underlying assumption that human beings should decide for themselves what is best for them. Whoever can argue with the cleverest reasoning is the winner. Of course, good debaters study both sides of an issue so they can argue a point either way. The result is that

many people today pride themselves on being able to do the same—to see things from multiple perspectives.

Though great for debate, having flexible positions decidedly isn't good when it comes to Christianity. Isaiah 5:20 says: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!"

While it is certainly good to listen to and understand others, the unfortunate result of the campus free-for-all of ideas is that people are often unable to discern between right and wrong, good and bad.

Furthermore, to publicly state that something is right or wrong is considered judgmental—a big taboo in today's secular world. The end result of this reasoning is that every choice is seen as equal and that people have to determine what is true for *them*. Ironically, this very reasoning itself *is* judgmental! It's also deeply flawed!

Give this some vertical thought. Can everyone and everything be right? Is it morally okay for a terrorist to kill innocent women and children because of perceived injustices? When a terrorist

In trying to answer complex moral questions, most people today have embraced the self-empowering myth that whatever they sincerely believe is true. They forget about God and His Word.

says he is honored to kill innocents on behalf of his concept of God, is this value system equal with biblical Christianity?

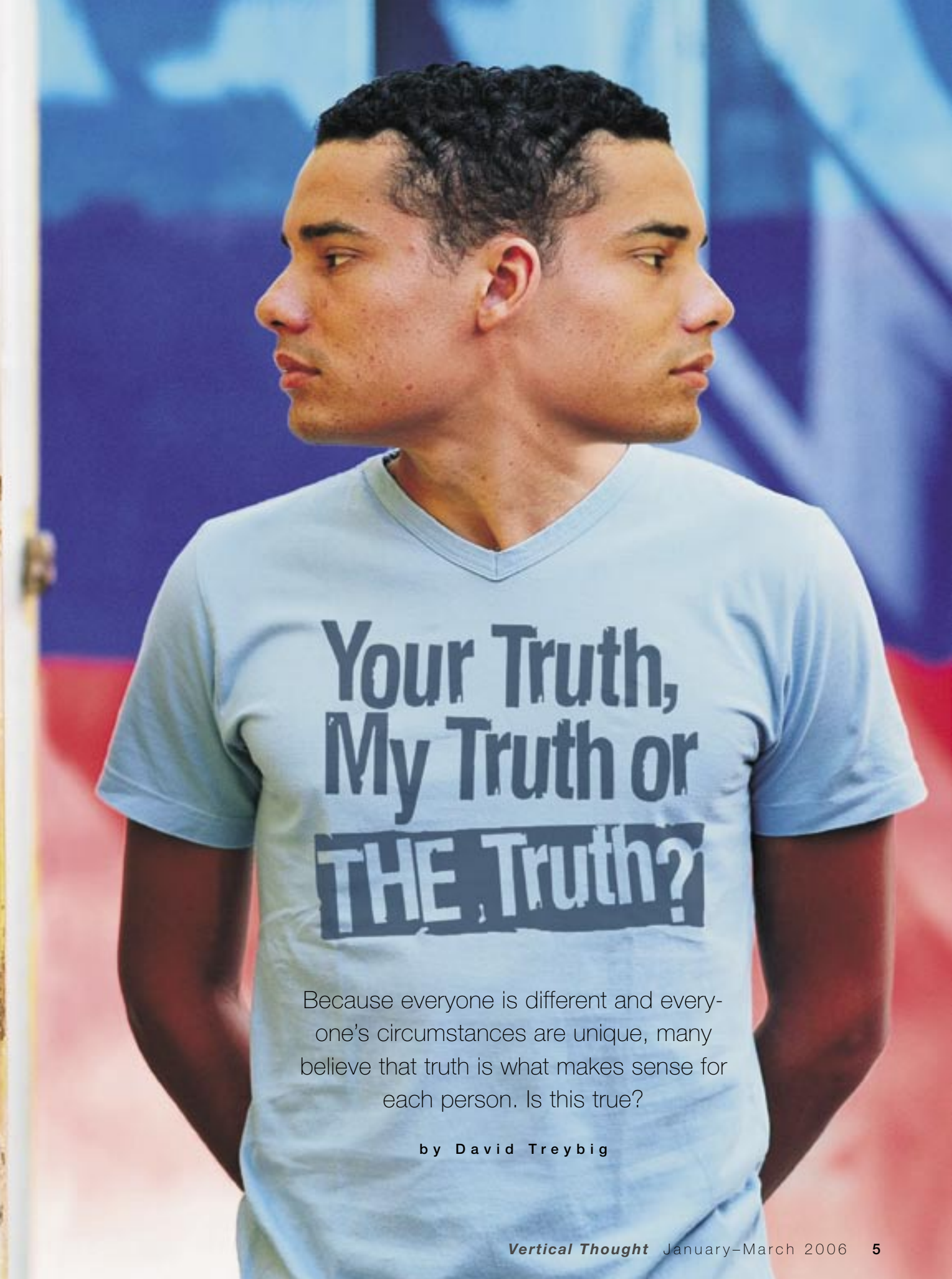
Is it morally right for a woman to kill her unborn child through an abortion because the law allows her to do so? Is it only a sin for a *Christian* woman to have an abortion but not a sin for a *non-Christian*? Is homosexuality okay for those so inclined? If two homosexuals love each other, should they be allowed to marry just like heterosexuals?

In trying to find answers to these questions, most people today have embraced the self-empowering myth that whatever they sincerely believe is true. They forget about God and His Word. After all, feelings can't be wrong, can they? Oh, but they can! If you sincerely believe that you earned an A on your midterm exam but your test is returned to you with a C, did you really earn an A? If you feel that your slice of pizza is a hamburger, is it really a hamburger?

When all one uses in making decisions are one's feelings and the human desire to give everyone freedom to make his or her own choices, the outcome is obvious. Most everyone will believe that people should make their own decisions because truth is relative. According to religious pollster George Barna, this is the majority opinion today.

Truth by feelings

In a February 2002 report titled "Americans Are Most Likely to Base Truth on Feelings," Barna wrote: "In two national surveys conducted by Barna Research, one among adults and one



Your Truth,
My Truth or
THE Truth?

Because everyone is different and everyone's circumstances are unique, many believe that truth is what makes sense for each person. Is this true?

by David Treybig

Puncturing the Sincerity Myth

In a commentary, Prison Fellowship President Mark Earley, said: “The ‘myth of sincerity’ is especially potent when it comes to life’s big questions—about God and morality. Consider abortion, for example. A few years ago, abortionist James McMahan said, ‘I frankly think the soul or personage comes in when the fetus is accepted by the mother.’ In other words, an unborn baby only becomes human when the mother sincerely believes he’s human.

“Christian students encounter the same type of reasoning on the college campus. If a classmate sincerely believes her unborn child is human, friends will call the child a ‘baby’ and congratulate her. But if she doesn’t, they call it a ‘fetus’ and encourage her to have an abortion.

“This is such an obvious fallacy. **Can we really make something true just by believing it?** How about a concrete example? If you sincerely believe your onion rings are French fries, do they become French fries? If you sincerely believe that you’re a frog, do you become a frog? You might leap in the air, but you will not be a frog.

“When it comes to concrete, familiar objects, no one falls for the sincerity myth. We all know there’s an objective reality that exists on its own, despite what we may believe about it—and no matter how sincere we are. If we accept the idea of objective truth when dealing with trivial questions, then logically we have to accept it when dealing with big questions about God and morality as well” (BreakPoint with Charles Colson, Commentary #040816, Aug. 16, 2004, “Academic Fables and Myths: Does Believing Make It So?”).

among teenagers, people were asked if they believe that there are moral absolutes that are unchanging or that moral truth is relative to the circumstances. By a 3-to-1 margin (64% vs. 22%) adults said truth is always relative to the person and their situation. The perspective was even more lopsided among teenagers, 83% of whom said moral truth depends on the circumstances, and only 6% of whom said moral truth is absolute.”

Confusion about moral absolutes has been a human problem for a long time. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve ate of a tree called “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:9). Mankind, following their mistaken example of self-determination apart from God, has generally been confused about good and evil ever since.

A nationwide study of U.S. college students revealed similar thinking on campuses. The report said: “Despite their strong religious commitment, students also demonstrate a high level of religious tolerance and acceptance. For example, most students agree that ‘non-religious people can lead lives that are just as moral as those of religious believers’ (83%) and that ‘most people can grow spiritually without being religious’ (64%)” (“The Spiritual Life of College Students,” Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles, 2003).

Real Christianity

Just believing that you are a spiritual person and accepting all values and ideas as equal would be fine—if there were no absolute truths—if there were no God—if the universe really worked that way. But it doesn’t. There is a God who really does know what is best for us, and He really wants what is best for us because He loves us.

Vertical thinkers understand that real Christians must acknowledge that *God alone determines truth*—which is found in the Bible. While praying to the Father, Jesus said: “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17). Recognizing and practicing the eternal, absolute values of God is what sanctifies—identifies and sets apart—real Christians.

Real Christians realize that the humanistic idea that we human beings are capable of determining our own way apart from God just doesn’t square with reality. It is not truth. As Jeremiah exclaimed, “O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

Real Christians also understand that they can be good neighbors without accepting the false ideas of others. They know that Jesus intended for Christians to be lights to others—inviting them to change their lives and become Christians too—rather than accepting or being overwhelmed by the world and its values (Matthew 5:14-16).

Now what about Bob? The Bob in this article is a composite character, and his

Real Christians realize that the humanistic idea that we human beings are capable of determining our own way apart from God just doesn’t square with reality. It is not truth.

story—that of a new student encountering the seductive idea that we all determine our own truth—is one that is repeated every year on just about every college campus.

In a sense, each of us is Bob, and we will determine how our story will end. It is also important to understand that we’re all bombarded with influences to determine our own truth even when we aren’t on a college campus.

The question is, will this deceptive idea overwhelm us or will we rise above it? Real Christians will recognize the myth of deciding our own truth and will instead look to God for direction. May we all so succeed!

David Treybig is the managing editor for *Vertical Thought* and pastors United Church of God congregations in St. Petersburg and Tampa, Florida.



Q&A

Q ■ Why do Bible believers fear evolution? Yes, God did indeed create man, but we should not pretend to know how. If we evolved from life's creation itself, does that deny the power of God? Man cannot create life from nonliving material, but the fossil, geological and biological records are clear. Instead of fearing evolution, why don't Christians embrace it?

Q ■ Why do Bible believers fear evolution? Yes, God did indeed create man, but we should not pretend to know how. If we evolved from life's creation itself, does that deny the power of God? Man cannot create life from nonliving material, but the fossil, geological and biological records are clear. Instead of fearing evolution, why don't Christians embrace it?

A. If Christians display aversion to evolution, it is because it contradicts the revelation of Scripture, which is the basis of Christian beliefs. Genesis does tell us how God formed Adam and Eve, and it clearly does not explain it in evolutionary terms.

In recent times some have tried to harmonize the biblical account of creation with evolution, theorizing that God used evolution as the means to bring about life, including *human* life. This perspective, called theistic evolution, is attractive to some because it supposedly allows one to believe in both God *and* evolution. In reality, however, evolution cannot be harmonized with the biblical account of creation.

Jesus reinforced the Genesis account when He stated in Matthew 19:4, "Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning 'made them male and female' . . . ?" Jesus clearly taught His followers that the Old Testament writings were true, and He is obviously referring to the account as

it is written in Genesis 1.

The apostle Paul also affirms a nonevolutionary description when he writes in 1 Timothy 2:13, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." Evolution does not claim that a man first evolved, then a woman. In the Bible, God reveals that He made Adam and then made Eve (Genesis 1-2). He did not just put an evolutionary process in motion.

The reality is that the "fossil, geological and biological records" are anything but clear in supporting evolution, regardless of what many would say. In *Vertical Thought* we regularly present some of the scientific evidence that not only contradicts evolution, but shows its impossibility.

Of course, in addition to all the scientific evidence that the evolution of the various species found on earth, including mankind, could not have taken place, we reject this theory because it is in direct contradiction to the revelation of God.

Much more could be said about this entire subject, and we recommend you look at our archives on the *Vertical Thought* Web site. A couple of articles you might find interesting can be found at www.verticalthought.org/issues/vt03/evolutionfaith.htm, and www.verticalthought.org/vt/vt01/evolution.htm. The United Church of God has also published a free booklet that addresses this subject, *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?* It shows how the scientific evidence doesn't really fit with Darwinian evolution and contains many startling admissions from evolutionists demonstrating the flaws in their viewpoint. You can download or request a copy at www.ucg.org/booklets.

Q ■ What is a gentile? The New Testament says, "To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile" (Romans 2:10, King James Version). What does this mean? Also, please explain circumcision in reference to Romans 2. Does this have any benefit for Christians today?

A. The word "gentiles" means "nations"—a term used by the Israelites to denote all foreign (non-Israelite) peoples. Thus, the term *gentile* would typically designate anyone who is not a descendant of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob.

Most today term someone a gentile who is not a Jew. But Judah, the father of the Jews, was only one of 12 brothers from whom the 12 tribes of Israel originated. Joseph, Benjamin, Simeon, Reuben, Dan, etc., were also sons of Jacob and their descendants would not be considered gentiles.

Later, when the locations and identities of the other family members of the northern 10 tribes (called the House of Israel) were lost when they were taken into captivity, the term "Jew" came to be used for all of Jacob's known family.

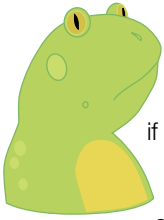
When the Bible refers to the Jews first, then the gentiles, it means that the descendants of Jacob, called Jews, were the ones who first heard the gospel message brought by Jesus. After that it went to the gentiles who lived outside Judea and Galilee.

Since circumcision was a sign of the covenant God made with the children of Abraham, it is a term often used to indicate a Jew as opposed to a gentile. Those "of the circumcision" would be a reference to Israelites. Although there are physical benefits to male circumcision, God does not require this today for Christian conversion. Romans 2:28-29 says that what God really wants is spiritual circumcision of the heart—a repentant, godly attitude.

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

Some people live their lives oblivious to the environment around them. You don't have to, and God doesn't want you to. Here's why.

by Doug Horchak



An old adage says that if you

put a frog into a pot of boiling water, it will leap out right away to escape the danger. However, if you put that same frog into a kettle that is filled with water that is mild and pleasant, and then you *gradually* increase the heat in the kettle until it starts boiling, the frog will not become aware of the threat until it is too late (cooked frog!).

I'll have to admit I've never tried to "slow cook" a frog, but the tale makes for a good lesson. We have to be careful about slowly changing trends in our environment, not just the sudden changes. The story is a warning to encourage people to pay attention not just to obvious threats or influences, *but also to the subtle, more slowly developing ones.*

God gives similar warnings to His people: "Be careful of the pot you choose to live in" (a paraphrase of God's instruction to be careful of the influence of the world in which we live).

or the things in the world" (1 John 2:15). While God wants all of His people to have a true, outgoing concern and love for all peoples, here John is actually warning that the values that are promoted in the world we live in are dangerous. Succumbing to this self-centered mind-set—where the world and its material things become our primary focus—can destroy our efforts to be in the Kingdom of God.

To put it straight, John warns us of the (all too familiar) rush to satisfy the human appetites that we are all subject to:

The lust of the flesh—the things that people seek for satisfying the physical: junk food, substance abuse, illicit sex, excessive seeking of entertainment and pleasure, etc.

The lust of the eyes—the things people look at and covet after: pornography, looks/beauty, wealth, etc.

The pride of life—the desire for prestige, fame, power and popularity.

When we think about it, all of these vices or appetites are still relevant in the 21st century. These vices are still central to the lifestyle promoted by the media in advertising, television, movies and entertainment. These are the perceived needs and appetites that motivate most people today! How very sad.

Consider this advice

What can we do to ensure that we remain "unspotted" from

ARE YOU A FROG

We live "in" the world

In praying to God the Father about the Church, Jesus Christ acknowledged that His followers must continue to live in the world. He doesn't expect (or desire) us to become hermits on a mountaintop or in some remote, dark cave!

Yet He expressed great concern about protecting the Church from the evil influence that Satan has on this world. Notice His words to His Father: "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:15-16).

Here Jesus acknowledges that we have to continue to live in a world that is under the influence of values and a power that is simply not of God. He acknowledges that we are living (physically) in the world, but that we should not be (philosophically) of the world. That, my friends, is a challenge, but one that God knows we can, with His help, accomplish.

The apostle Paul described the world that we came out of as being directed by Satan and the evil spirit world (Ephesians 2:2-3). Most people don't realize that many of their previous values and actions before they were called of God were actually of Satan's influences—*the hot water in this boiling pot!*

Don't love the world

The apostle John cautioned the Church not to "love the world

the world (James 1:27)—even while we live in it? This is a serious responsibility not to be taken lightly, and it applies to one's entire life, 24/7!

Remember the account of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32? This young man wanted to experience all that the world had to offer; it seems that he was tempted by the things John warned against. You can resist these influences if you become convinced that God's law and way of life are truly best. But *you* have to decide!

The following questions can help you evaluate what is really important to you. Consider these questions and suggestions as you make your choices living in this world:

Ask yourself: Who is influencing whom? When you interact with others of different values in school or in the workplace, who is really doing the influencing? This is a very important question to ask, since those who strive to serve God are greatly outnumbered by those who are ignorant of the true God. Remember, the potential influence on us can be far greater than our influence on others.

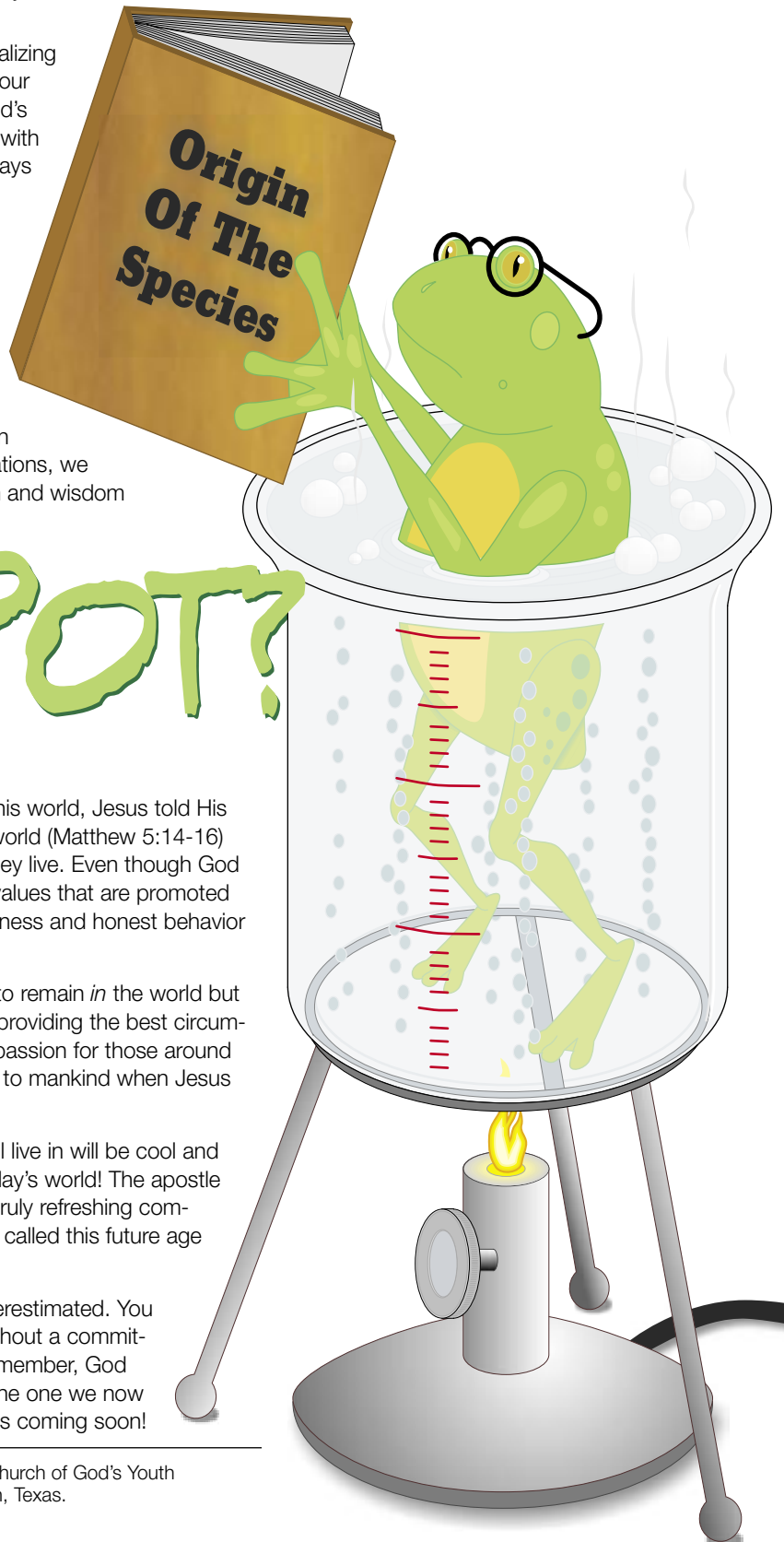
Ask yourself: Is this sin? This may seem to be a "no-brainer." However, it is a fundamental question we should ask ourselves about where we go, what we do and what we think about and desire. Are these things good or bad in the eyes of God? Is it sin, or is it not?

Ask yourself: In what direction is this taking me? Sometimes our individual decisions or activities themselves may not technically be wrong or sinful, but we should still ask ourselves about the overall direction of our life. What is the focus of the culture, social circles and people that we hang out with? Is the direction it is all headed a good one? And does it enhance the spiritual goals you have for yourself—like entering the Kingdom of God in the future? Direction is critically important when you want to get somewhere. Next time you travel somewhere, test the theory!

Dialogue with others who share your beliefs. Socializing with others who are of the same faith and who share your beliefs is an important key to remaining focused on God's way of life (Hebrews 10:24-25). However, just hanging with other young people who go to your church will not always be enough.

It's good to have some friends who will share their convictions and talk about the truth of God once in a while. History has shown that articulating what we believe is strengthening to our convictions. This influence is called *positive peer pressure*.

Ask God for help. No matter what challenges we face in life, we should never lose sight of the greatest source of help and strength: Almighty God. Living in this darkened world, coupled with its tinsel and temptations, we should continually pray for God's help and the strength and wisdom to do the right thing.



IN A POT?

Be an example

In contrast to the warnings about being caught up in this world, Jesus told His followers that they were to actually be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16) and that they shouldn't hide from the world in which they live. Even though God admonishes us to distance ourselves from the wrong values that are promoted in this society, He tells us to be good examples of kindness and honest behavior to all men (1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 1 Peter 2:12).

It's important for us to understand why God wants us to remain *in* the world but not become part *of* it. Two reasons: By this, 1) God is providing the best circumstances for us to grow in spiritual strength and in compassion for those around us, and 2) He is preserving our lives for greater service to mankind when Jesus Christ brings a new government at His return.

The time is coming when the environment that man will live in will be cool and refreshing as opposed to the *hot and boiling* pot of today's world! The apostle Peter spoke of this wonderful future world that will be truly refreshing compared to the violence, death and suffering of today. He called this future age the "times of refreshing" (Acts 3:19).

This world is powerful. Its influence should not be underestimated. You and I cannot live and spiritually flourish in this world without a commitment to God and the values found in His Word. But remember, God has called you to prepare for a world that will replace the one we now live in. The world we look forward to isn't here yet but is coming soon!

Doug Horchak, husband, father and member of the United Church of God's Youth Education Team, pastors congregations in Dallas and Sherman, Texas.

How educated are you? Perhaps there has never been an era more overloaded with information than today, with an influx of data, facts, figures and talking heads almost everywhere. Billboards announce the latest fads, and the radio blares news, sports, traffic and weather between the latest tunes.

However, there is a great difference between raw information and a meaningful education. Do you have what it takes to thrive in the 21st century?

The fact is that many graduates of U.S. high schools today don't have nearly the same core competencies as those who completed only eight years of schooling a hundred years ago. Yet students today need those basics and far more to succeed in this technologically advanced world that would bewilder our great-great-grandparents.

broken, flawed and underfunded—though a case could be made for each of those points for many schools. Gates explained that our schools cannot teach our children what they need to know to excel today. Using the example of computers, he mentioned that training the workforce of tomorrow with the high schools of today is like trying to teach kids about today's computers on a 50-year-old mainframe. It's the wrong tool for the times.

Gates said: "When I compare our high schools to what I see when I'm traveling abroad, I am terrified for our workforce of tomorrow. In math and science, our fourth graders are among the top students in the world. By eighth grade, they're in the middle of the pack. By 12th grade, U.S. students are scoring near the bottom of all industrialized nations.

"We have one of the highest high school dropout rates in the industrialized world. Many who graduate do not go on to col-

ARE YOU READY FOR A

Knowledge then was much more practical, usable and connected. Today, much of the education offered in our schools is abbreviated, lacking in context and, of course, "cleaned up" to be politically correct (including leaving God totally out of the picture).

Often the humanities and sciences provide knowledge that is without depth and not too exciting compared to the frenetic pace of the Internet and our instant messaging world. Americans are being ranked lower in the world in education and losing ground annually.

"America's high schools are obsolete"

Bill Gates, cofounder of the National Education Summit on High Schools, gave a speech Feb. 26, 2005, in which he stated that "America's high schools are obsolete."

By obsolete, he didn't just mean that our high schools are

lege. And many who do go on to college are not well-prepared, and end up dropping out.

"Lack of adequate preparation for post-high school education is one reason why the U.S. college dropout rate is also one of the highest in the industrialized world. The poor performance of our high schools in preparing students for college is a major reason why the United States has now dropped from first to fifth in the percentage of young adults with a college degree."

The Gates Foundation suggested that schools should be built on principles that can be applied anywhere—including the new three *Rs*, the basic building blocks of better high schools:

The first *R* is *Rigor*—making sure all students are given a challenging curriculum that prepares them for college or work.

The second *R* is *Relevance*—making sure kids have courses and projects that clearly relate to their lives and their goals.

CONSIDER THIS STRATEGY

1. Don't skip the basics. Sadly, today many college graduates struggle to express themselves in writing, and spelling has become an exercise in creativity.

Mary Clark, who collates the camp surveys from campers, staff and parents of the United Youth Camps, sent me a whole page of "creatively" spelled words used to express the camp experience.

For example, the word *Christian* was variously spelled as: *Chrischin*, *Crischtan*, *Christin*, *Cristian*, *Cristing*, *Christan*, *Christon*, *Crishtin*, *Christion*, *Chistian* and *Crystian*.

This illustrates my point! Students must learn to spell (along with the other basics of reading, mathematics, etc.)!

2. Take responsibility for your own

education. Commit to studying, reading and asking questions, and not just finishing homework assignments. The skills you might need may never be offered to you, and if they are, the course may not be very appealing. Learn the information anyway!

Education is life. Go after it with enthusiasm. There are many fine articles in *Vertical Thought* to help you discover important knowledge you will need in your life. Proverbs 24:5 says, "A wise man is strong, yes, a man of knowledge increases strength."

3. Surround yourself with educated people and stretch yourself whenever possible. Proverbs 1:5 says, "A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will

attain wise counsel." We also read, "Evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33). Find people who can add to your storehouse of knowledge, and study the habits of those who are successful.

4. Education needs values. Be sure you know the boundaries of what is right and appropriate. You should always know when you are in danger of stepping over the line.

Success often comes not only to those with high IQ (intelligence quotient) and EQ (emotional quotient), but also to those with a high "SQ" (spiritual quotient). One of the goals of *Vertical Thought* is to help you put life into the perspective of our Creator God who has made us in His image.

The third *R* is *Relationships*—making sure kids have a number of adults who know them, look out for them and push them to achieve (www.gatesfoundation.org/MediaCenter/Speeches/BillgSpeeches/BGSpeechNGA-050226.htm).

Versatility in an ever-changing world

To get the right education today, no matter where you live, you must take ownership of your own education. Don't expect to have someone else dictate what goes into your head. What is needed today is a good education that connects the liberal arts flavor with a technological specialty that allows creative thinking and versatility in an ever-changing world.

It's likely that many of the major job markets of tomorrow don't even exist today. Who would have thought years ago that most people today would spend several hours a day in front of a computer screen and be so affected by open-sourcing, outsourcing

FLAT EARTH?

and offshoring, all of which can ignore borders and operate in an increasingly connected world?

Thomas Friedman, in his latest book *The World Is Flat*, claims that "the convergence of our growing technologies is a global, web-enabled playing field that allows for multiple forms of collaboration—the sharing of knowledge and work—in real time, without regard to geography, distance, or, in the near future, even language.

"No, not everyone has access yet to this platform, this playing field, but it is open today to more people in more places on more days in more ways than anything like it ever before in the history of the world. This is what I mean when I say the world has been flattened" (2005, pp. 176-177).

As the world gets flatter, those who are better-prepared compete and win far more of the high-paying jobs. If employers have access to the top employees in the world, why would they not compete to hire the best and brightest? That is what many are doing today, and increasingly these people are coming from countries outside the United States.

Education is a lifelong quest

The most successful in today's world are those who combine traditional liberal arts skills with the most recent and up-to-date technologies.

In a technological world that pushes the complexity, speed and expectations of just about everything, you either get on board or get left behind. For example, skipping or skimping on math and science, especially physics and problem solving, could prove to be a costly error for anyone wanting to be employed in the better-paying jobs of tomorrow.

How educated are you? Perhaps better than most, but not as much as you'll need to be. Education is a quest that takes a lifetime, and the eternity that God offers is a long, long time. Be sure to open your eyes and take charge of your education today.

Larry Greider is a member of the *Vertical Thought* staff, chairman of the Youth Education Team and coordinator of the United Youth Camps. He also serves as a United Church of God pastor.

High school education in the United States has been on the decline for several years. What are the keys to obtaining a good education, regardless of where you live?

by **Larry Greider**



Whose Question Authority?

Questioning authority has been a human activity for a long time. But have you ever wondered just *whose* authority should be questioned?

by Randy Stiver

1968—The vehicle ahead of you in the university town traffic is a Volkswagen microbus that sputters and weaves away from the traffic light. Out the driver's window a whiff of odd-smelling, unhealthy smoke wafts its way back to your nostrils.

Psychedelic paintings of flowers, long-haired men and glazed-eyed girls bedeck the sides, but the item that catches your eye is the bumper sticker bearing the mantra of the college-age subculture of the hippie era: "Question Authority."

2005—The vehicle ahead of you in traffic is an old Volvo. It doesn't drive any straighter, but it doesn't sport the weird paintings of the driver's VW microbus of the '60s. Still the bumper sticker proclaims the same student-now-professor's motto: "Question Authority."

But just what do you mean, question authority?

"Question Authority" as a motto in the 1960s and today means to challenge traditional authority—of the government, corporate and religious "establishment" and particularly to question the authority of God and the Bible. For decades this philosophy has epitomized the dominant force within higher education and the culture of the bulk of America's and the rest of the world's universities. Increasingly, it has trickled down to secondary and even elementary schools.

Enter college or university and your mind and moral values will certainly face the onslaught of this aggressive mind-set. Enter the halls of higher academia and you enter a cultural and moral war zone.

How solidly grounded are you in the true culture of the Bible right now? How will you fare after four years of college? Want to obtain a useful education and remain spiritually strong? Then you'll need to get a different bumper sticker.

Hippies, sex and drugs

A portion of the 1960s and early 1970s youth viewed themselves as a generation in rebellion. They spawned acid rock music and all its subsequent versions as angry battle hymns for their rebellious mood, spirit and actions, including the antigovernment and anti-Vietnam War riots of the late '60s.

But another, darker rebellion fueled what came to be known as the hippie movement: the drug and sexual revolution. It forged acceptance within mainstream culture of the recreational use and abuse of mind-altering drugs—a cultural shift that has wreaked havoc on the bodies, minds and

character of the youth of every decade since.

The sexual revolution was also called the "free-love movement"—but read "lust" for "love" to understand the real meaning. This rebellion attacked God's law of sexual morality. It gave us bad news galore: soaring divorce rates for those who bothered to marry, social acceptance of unmarried couples living together and the many miseries of multitudes of unwed single mothers.

Aided by the militant feminist movement and other dark forces in society, the hippie movement has brought us today to a frontal attack on traditional marriage and the social acceptance of virtually any form of sexual perversion.

This profound cultural sea change came from following a 1960s proverb: "Think for yourself and question authority." It was coined by American psychologist, author and advocate of the psychedelic drug and sex culture Timothy Leary, who provided the voice of the misguided, odious bumper sticker message.

The shapers and molders of today's college professors wanted their students to question all forms of traditional authority, but specifically to question the authority of the Bible and the existence of God.

The April 8, 1966, cover of *Time* magazine echoed this approach with what was then a shocking headline: "Is God Dead?" The cover article referenced the proclamation of late 19th-century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who adamantly proclaimed, "God is dead."

If you don't know who Nietzsche was, you will. He was perhaps the key foundational thinker for what became the hippie subculture and for much of higher education today. The "God is dead" thinking is the core of the "question authority" movement.

Think for yourself

When the politically correct educators in college culture today tell you to "think for yourself," be advised—they *don't mean it*. As a vertical thinker using your sure knowledge of God's existence and His law, if you thought for yourself, you would see right through their faulty arguments advocating all sorts of sinful behavior.

As the great King David of old sang to God in his youth: "You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation" (Psalm 119:98-99).

Many of your teachers and professors view themselves as the enlightened ones and view you, the true Christian, as the gullible, shackled, restricted and foolish one. They have much to learn!

A blatant statement comes from a Web site of a 21st-century advocate for the nonbiblical, postmodern, liberal lifestyle. His claim for the course he teaches summarizes the bumper sticker only too well:

“In this course, we will explore challenges to authoritarianism and work towards the creation of the ‘Question Authority Coalition and Education Project’ . . . We will evolve new statements for public dissemination. We will leave the class prepared to soundly thrash the Bible thumpers while defending their freedom to be stoopid” (maybelogic.org).

But we must ask this: Who made this world’s postmodern college professors boss? *No one did*. As rude a shock as it may be to many of them, they are not the governors of our morality, arbiters of our faith or the gurus of our biblically guided opinions.

There is One who is our “Boss”—and He died for our sins and the sins of our teachers and classmates to become that Boss—or Lord and Teacher (John 13:14-15). He has set you and me a perfect example—that we should think as He thought and do as He did.

The true values

As vertical thinkers, we strive to see things as God sees them. We shape our opinions with the objective truth of God’s law and Word. Our motto could be expressed as “Recapture true values.” And here is a basic list of key true values taught in the Bible that you will hear questioned and challenged during your higher education.

God is sacred. Atheistic evolution was a critical first step in creating a culture of sexual and behavioral abandon. Their thinking is: If there is no God, then there is no moral law, no evil and no guilt. In short—anything goes. A related concept, the practice of elevating “mother earth” or “the environment” to be virtually and actually worshipped, is also wrong. Yet that’s exactly what many militant environmental activists do.

Human life is sacred—as clearly taught by the Sixth Commandment, “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13). Abortion and euthanasia are in direct conflict with divine law. Likewise, mankind is the only life form made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28). Thus, to elevate animal life to be equal in value to human life is wrong. Yet that’s what militant animal rights activism stands for.

Marriage is sacred—as in one man married to one woman. In Christ’s own words: “He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’ . . . Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:4-5). Anything other than the divine formula for marriage is wrong.

Human sexuality is sacred—and that sexuality is to be expressed only in divinely sanctioned marriage, not before or outside of marriage. Sexual expression is expressly forbidden by God in any variant (1 Corinthians 6:18-20), except within the divine institution of marriage, and there He commands it (7:2-5)!

Divine law is sacred—and is called “holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12). Yet higher education “experts” ridicule God’s law as evil, arbitrary and restrictive. And what do they propose

as rules for society? Answer: Their own law of political correctness. But, we ask again, who made them boss so that they should get to make the laws? From where is their moral superiority over the rest of mankind?

Truth is sacred. As a prudent, dedicated and faithful young person, you are being set apart (sanctified) by the truth of God’s Word (John 17:17). Truth is truly objective. But beware—today’s philosophy of “postmodernism” says that truth is relative, that each person has his own “truth” and that each one’s truth is as good as another’s truth. Wrong!

So why is the truth of the Bible considered “stoopid” as compared to the postmodern professor’s truth? It’s like saying all men are created equal, but some are “more equal” than others!

The history of our time told 2,000 years ago

How does a culture lose its moral compass so completely? How can those paid to educate young minds so lose their grip on true wisdom and common sense? Answer: Question Authority—as in reject and deny divine authority.

God gave one great educator, Paul the apostle, the insight to chronicle long ago how a culture collapses. The last half of Romans 1 tells how people “suppress the truth in unrighteousness,” and bring about a dark age of immorality (verses 18-32). Here is the step-by-step formula:

1. Deny the existence of God.
2. Deny the authority of God—say there is no objective moral law to tell right from wrong.
3. Make new gods of oneself and nature.
4. Promote “freedom” for any kind of sexual activity in opposition to marriage, which God created and established for our good.
5. Exert tyrannical ridicule and pressure on any who question the new, postmodern authority.
6. Suffer the consequences of sexually transmitted epidemics and the pain of murderous misery launched by nations with no moral conscience.

The result is that everybody does what is right in his or her own eyes. True values are categorically rejected. And today, leading this charge into an age of futility and tyranny is a devastating proportion of higher education. As this reprobate culture gains momentum, there will be only one solution. And that good news is the soon-coming, “vertical” event when Jesus Christ descends from heaven to salvage and save humanity!

Question whose authority?

In the meantime, you have an education to obtain and a life to live. Navigate your way through school via a close relationship with God through daily prayer and a clear knowledge of His law in your mind from the study of the Bible. Totally defeat false moral arguments with the power of divine authority and godly logic.

And when you see the next postmodern, professorial “Question Authority” bumper sticker, create a new one in your own mind: “Question *Whose* Authority?” Question theirs.

Randy Stiver is the pastor of United Church of God congregations in Columbus and Cambridge, Ohio.

Christian Through College

Many young people have successfully retained their Christian beliefs while obtaining a degree. Here's how.

by Ken Treybig

So you'll be heading off to college or university. What an exciting time in life! And yet it can also be a challenging time, especially if you have grown up in a conservative Christian household.

High school probably had its challenges for your Christianity, as you faced pressures to go against your values in matters ranging from drugs to cheating on tests to dating practices. But while living at home, you likely had constant encouragement from your parents to stick with your values.

When you leave home to begin higher education, chances are you will face even greater pressure to step outside the moral boundaries you grew up with. After all, you'll be out on your own.

The rules of your home, though it may be just a small dorm room, will be *your* rules. And there will be plenty of pressures to "dump" your conservative Christian values and "spread your wings" a bit—be it in how much sleep to get or in issues of sex, alcohol and drug experimentation.

After all, you'll find there are young people who share your pursuit of higher education who have and perhaps are doing all kinds of things that go against your values—and they haven't died! They may even seem to be having a great time. It's quite likely your belief in God (and in His giving us absolute truth for our good) will be challenged often—both in the classroom by instructors and in the dorm and day-to-day life by fellow students.

How will you withstand these pressures? What can you do to "hold the line" in your moral values and be assured you have

indeed based your life on solid, logical, valid and rewarding values by believing in God and His truth?

Vertical Thought has published several articles encouraging young people to plan for a successful future by first getting a good education (see "Planning for Life—Part 2" in the April–June 2001 issue, available online). We have also written a lot about higher education in general, and how Christian values are challenged in many colleges (see "Christian Values Under Attack!" and "How Correct Is Political Correctness?" in the July–September 2004 issue).

Now we've asked some of our older readers to share with you how they survived their higher education experiences without losing their Christian beliefs and values. Not everyone experienced the same degree of antagonism to their Christian values—especially those who attended religious or conservative institutions. Others experienced, and learned how to cope with, considerable pressure.



★ **Cathleen Folker** holds an M.S.B.A. from Texas Tech University (1995) and a Ph.D. in business administration from Texas Tech University (1999). She also has experience teaching at seven different institutions of higher education and has found little opposition to her religious beliefs.

Her undergraduate work was done at a religious college, Ambassador University, so her early years in higher education were founded on religious principles. Perhaps that helped her have a more positive view of higher education, as she notes here:

"Perhaps my view is different since most of my higher education was at the graduate, rather than the undergraduate, level. As a new teacher I had no conflict with religion. In my first full-time teaching job we were even required to state on the syllabus that religious reasons for missing class were

okay as long as students notified the instructor a couple of weeks prior.

"As a master's student, I found a way to deal with leaving for the Feast of Tabernacles each autumn. I would ask another student in class to copy his or her notes from the days I missed and mail it to me (I gave them a self-addressed envelope containing money to mail it). Then when I returned I would be able to review what I missed prior to attending class again.

"As a doctoral student, I found that my faith was what sustained me during difficult times. God always gave me the help that I needed to keep going, sometimes in unusual ways. One time, a candidate for an open professor position at Texas Tech turned out to be an alum of Ambassador University (where I did my undergraduate studies). We connected and he encouraged me through e-mail to keep going."

★ **Frank Dunkle** earned his M.A. in history at the University of Texas at Tyler and then a Ph.D. in history from Texas A&M. He now works for a humanities council helping educators seeking grants and coordinating public educational programs in the liberal arts fields. He told us he has found many professors and administrators to be much more hostile to and condescending about Christian values than he imagined.

Yet more than a dozen years of college experience taught him that, while professors may be very intelligent in certain areas, they can still be very wrong about other things—often the most important things in life. He explains:

“For example, in studying why the American Colonies won their war for independence, my class read several books, each of which presented different views and explanations. One writer emphasized the military genius of George Washington, another insisted that economic factors were far more important, and still another stressed the intervention of the French navy.

“I realized that I could write a history of the American Revolution, analyzing the same facts as all the other historians, but supporting the thesis that the United States won its independence only because of God’s blessing and intervention. Yes, many professors would disagree with my conclusions, but that wouldn’t make my work any less valid than all the other scholarly writings out there that are discussed and disputed in academia.

“If you are a Christian going to college, remember that a person can find ‘facts’ to support any belief one chooses to hold. Faith is a different matter. It originates with God and, while advanced education will never genuinely contradict Christian faith, it can also never be its source.”

★ **Amanda Stiver** graduated cum laude in the summer of 2003 from the Robert D. Clark Honors College of the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon, with a B.A. in history and a minor in art history.

She described one of her most important lessons as learning that all professors have a bias—usually based in humanism. While they espoused the need for some laws to bring order to society, her professors were often opposed to believing all God’s instructions should be followed. Her description of what she often found was “Marxist (communist) teaching.”

She has this advice for anyone with a religious background who wants to retain his or her faith while pursuing a higher education:

“It is essential to identify each professor’s bias early on, so you will know what kind of filter all the information is coming through and actively counter it in your mind. Set up your own filter, recognizing the true bias and true values that we must have in God’s way of life. Be active in your congregation’s young adults program. Draw strength from friends who are successfully facing the same challenges.

“Seek the help of your parents, other successful college

graduates in your church, your pastor and the Church’s publications to help you uproot the bad and absorb the good.”

Amanda found that she never had any significant trouble getting off for the biblical Holy Days and the Feast of Tabernacles. She attributed her positive experience to lots of prayer as well as preparation and personal conversations with her professors to let them know as early in the semester as possible exactly which days she would be gone, that she was definitely returning to class after those days and that she wanted any assignments possible in advance to help her keep up with the class. She followed those up with e-mail and face-to-face contact with her professors.

★ **David Mörker** had a very positive experience as he earned his master’s of business administration with an emphasis in aerospace/aviation management at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Here are some of his comments:

“My experience at ERAU was incredibly constructive, including my freedom to serve God. As the center of aviation/aerospace education in the United States and across the globe, respect for all individuals representing a vast variety of countries and religions was clearly felt.

“At ERAU, the various religious organizations drew quite a crowd, which can probably be attributed to the university’s focus on science, aviation, aerospace, engineering, human factors and management, which tends to draw a more conservative crowd.

“Two elements stand out to me in regard to what we, as individuals, can do to enjoy, benefit and develop our talents to the fullest in an academic setting while maintaining and even strengthening our relationship with our Father in heaven:

“1. *Choose a university with a conservative leaning:* Regardless of the subjects we plan on studying and embracing, studying at a university with a more conservative approach is not only more receptive to God’s way of life, but also serves us better after graduation as part of a constructive alumni network.

“2. *Work on your social skills:* As children of God, it is imperative that we do not come across as ‘holier than thou’ as we interact with others. Even though we do not subscribe to and partake in many aspects of extracurricular life, we need to be wise in the way we present ourselves and the way we interact with individuals who do not share the same values.”

These are just a few of the readers of *Vertical Thought* who managed to maintain their Christian beliefs and values as they studied in the world of academia. Some seemed to experience little bias at all. Others experienced a lot. Yet all maintained their beliefs—and you can too!

Ken Treybig is the director of United Youth Camp Carter and pastor of United Church of God congregations in East Texas and Texarkana, Texas.

A lot of people can't wait to "finish" their education. Imagine it! No more busy work. No more boring homework or seemingly meaningless assignments. No more tests meant to trick the unwary.

School boards, curriculum committees and teachers don't have a monopoly on education. Some cynics might say they can even hinder your education! Some of the most important things in life just aren't taught in school.

To get the most out of the time you invest in learning, you need to take charge of your own education and set your own priorities.

To really be happy and make something of your life, you can't let a bad teacher or bad school make you want to stop learning. As scientist Louis Pasteur noted, "Chance favors only the prepared mind." Give yourself the best chance for success.

With technology and society changing so rapidly, it's likely that you will need to gain additional skills throughout life just to keep up—and even more so to move ahead.

So how do you create your own educational plan? What are some of the factors to consider?

There's an entire universe of knowledge out there (and tons of misinformation as well!), so where do you start?

Spiritual dimension

How about starting with vital, foundational information seldom covered in school? The *spiritual dimension* is the true key to a happy life, and it provides the code to decipher what is truly meaningful in the flood of other information that bombards us every day.

"Happy is the person who finds wisdom and gains understanding . . . Wisdom is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. She offers you life in her right hand, and riches and honor in her left. She will guide you down delightful paths; all her ways are satisfying" (Proverbs 3:13, 15-17, New Living Translation).

God is definitely in favor of not just learning information, but of understanding its significance and using it wisely.

When we "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18), we have the framework to know the real eternal meaning of life, and the details of today begin to fit. Without that foundation, we're like those the apostle Paul described who are "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7).

Relationships 101-599

Closely tied in with the spiritual is learning about



"Why do they make me learn all this dumb stuff? I never learn anything important at school!" Have you ever felt that way? Is your education out of your control? What if there were fun and interesting ways to discover the knowledge and wisdom you'll need to get where you want to go?

by Mike Bennett



relationships with others. How can you have more friends, be a better friend, find a meaningful relationship and develop a lifelong love with a husband or wife? How can you prepare to be a good husband or wife? How can you develop the skills needed to be a good parent? How can you maintain and improve other relationships with family, coworkers and others in the community?

Many of the scriptural principles have been gathered into a couple of concise, helpful brochures: *Making Life Work* and *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. You can read, download or request free copies on the Web at www.ucg.org/booklets.

Beyond these and personal study of the biblical teachings on relationships, you can find hundreds of advice books and

Those with a dull ax may work twice as hard, but they won't accomplish as much.

Explore all the options available to you. Talk to the counselor at your school about your interests and aptitudes. Find out about any specialized classes, college classes you can take while in high school, internships, cooperative education, after-school activities, clubs, contests, scholarships, etc.

Once you have picked a career field, consider starting to read a professional journal for that field. Ask around about good books, helpful seminars and perhaps additional schooling that would put you on the leading edge. Better yet, find a mentor—someone experienced in your field who can give you advice and informal training.

Rethinking School

If school sometimes seems pointless and meaningless to you, it might be time to think differently about it.

When you're faced with a seemingly pointless "busy-work" assignment, brainstorm for ways to make it actually meaningful to your own educational goals. Sometimes just knowing that you are building the kind of perseverance that is necessary for success can help.

What about tricky tests? You can be learning to look for the traps con artists use to cheat people.

What about mean or boring teachers? You can be preparing to deal with difficult bosses and clients.

What about subjects that you don't care about? Poetry could help you understand more about how other people think. Geometry could help you develop thinking skills that will help you in seemingly unrelated areas.

Think outside the box, and see if you can't mentally reshape your formal schooling to fit your real long-range goals.

Don't be afraid to expand your horizons and try new things you may have been avoiding in the rush and grade pressures of formal schooling.

articles by counselors and psychologists. Many have helpful research, ideas and tips. However, you will soon find that many give conflicting advice. What should you believe? Here the moral compass of the Bible again provides the key to sifting the wheat from the worthless chaff.

Sharpen your saw

Most people in Western nations today also see the need for focused and continuing education in their career field. Knowledge is often a key factor in keeping a job in changing times and is especially important in gaining promotions.

Consider the biblical principle of sharpening the ax: "If the ax is dull, and one does not sharpen the edge, then he must use more strength; but wisdom brings success" (Ecclesiastes 10:10). Good lumberjacks know that taking the time to sharpen their ax in advance will pay off as the day wears on.

Vincent Schaefer did. Though he did not have university training, he became one of the world's top atmospheric scientists according to *The Christian Science Monitor*. He took an apprenticeship at General Electric to help his family earn money, and there he found a mentor who encouraged him to conduct his own experiments. He went on to discover the first method for seeding clouds and founded the Atmospheric Sciences Research Center (Emilie Tavel Livezev, "Self-Educated Scientist's Formula for Life-Long Discovery," Dec. 20, 1982).

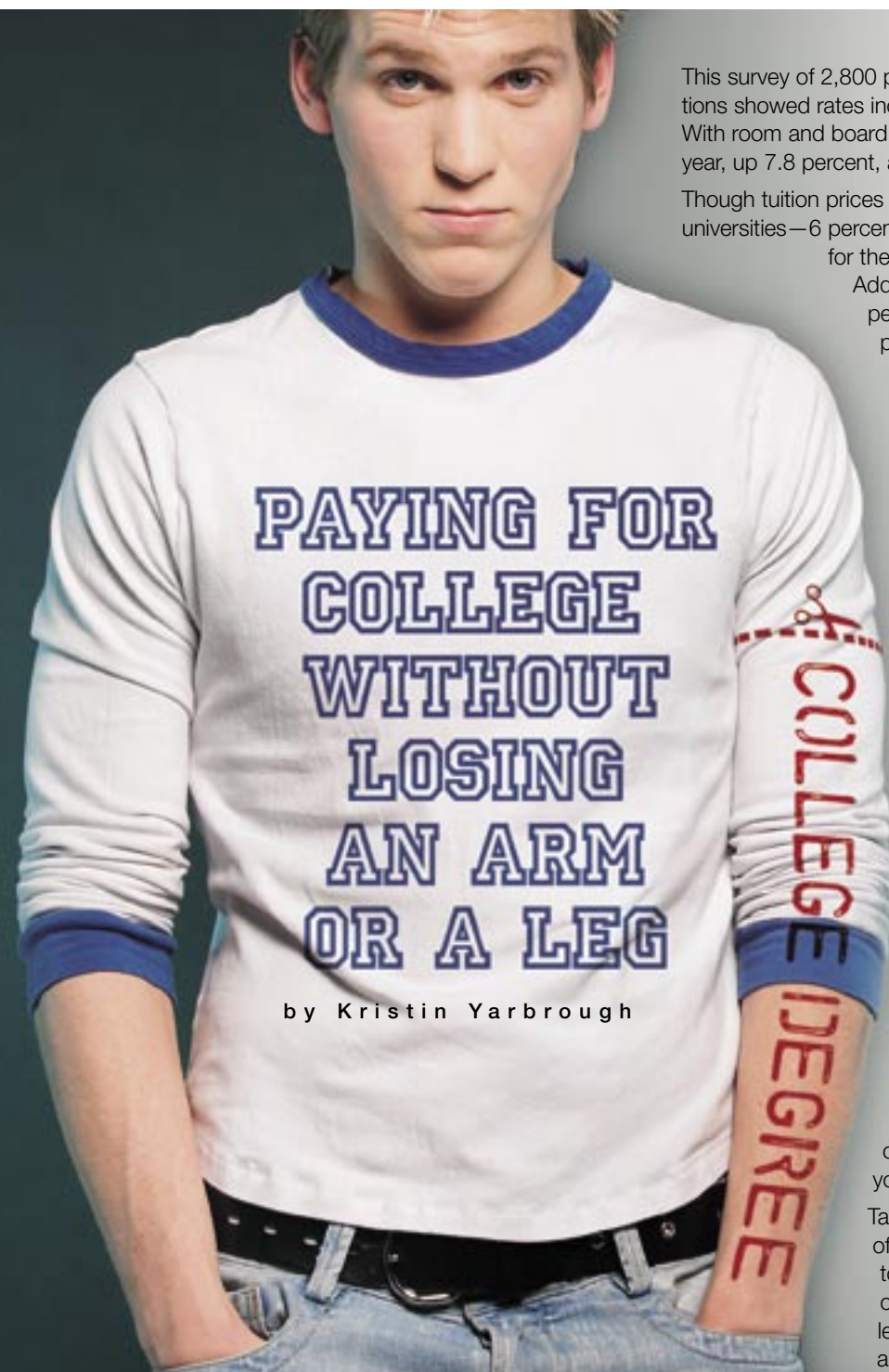
This self-educated man encouraged others to take advantage of every opportunity to learn something, to read books and to seek out worthwhile people as friends. "You have to have a sense of wonder and be aware of everything that goes on," he said. "You have to develop what I call 'intelligent eyes'—be intrigued with the world and everything in it."

Develop your interests, expand your horizons

It's likely your career will use only some of your talents, abilities and interests. Just because you get a job in chemical engineering, it doesn't mean you can't continue to develop your skills and interests in music, art

Continued on page 23

If your way is paid, you've got no worries. But if you're like most students, you'll find higher education will have a big impact on your finances. Here are some tips to help keep this cost under control.



by Kristin Yarbrough

This survey of 2,800 private and public post-secondary institutions showed rates increased by 10.5 percent, up from \$4,645. With room and board costs, the average bill was \$11,354 a year, up 7.8 percent, according to the report.

Though tuition prices rose less at private four-year colleges and universities—6 percent—this increase brought the average bill for these institutions to \$20,082 for 2004-2005. Add room and board, which increased 4.6 percent over the previous year, and you're paying \$27,516.

Keep breathing. Through careful choices and planning, you can make it through college without sacrificing an arm or leg. After all, you'll need your arm to type those late-night term papers. And don't give up on college altogether because of the cost. It's an investment in yourself that almost always pays off. So what can you do to minimize your expenses?

Start early

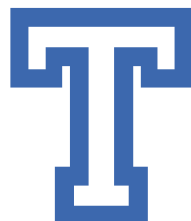
One way to cut costs before you even graduate from high school is to explore dual-enrollment programs at nearby community colleges. In many states, students can enroll in college courses that satisfy both high school and associate-degree course requirements. Some states even waive tuition and book fees for high school students enrolled in these programs.

Depending on when you start, you could have your associate's degree completed before high school graduation, shaving as much as two years of tuition, books and room and board off your college costs.

Taking advanced placement (AP) courses offered at your high school is another way to chip away at that bill. These courses often transfer to college credits, which leaves you with fewer credits to pay for, and puts you on track to graduate earlier.

Apply for financial aid

According to the College Board, almost 75 percent of full-time undergrads receive some sort of financial aid. While much of that aid is awarded in the form of loans, grants are also widely available. Colleges and universities themselves, along with federal and state governments, distributed more than \$46 billion in grant aid for the 2003-2004 school year.



The price of a college education can look daunting, to say the least. Last year (the 2004-2005 academic year), tuition and fees averaged \$5,132 for in-state students at public four-year colleges and universities, according to the College Board's *Trends in College Pricing 2004* report.

Estimates show the average two-year college student received \$2,300 in grants and federal tax benefits. Students at four-year institutions averaged \$3,300, and private school students averaged \$9,400.

So how do you get this aid? Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The application can be submitted—either online or through the mail—after Jan. 1 of the year you want to begin college. This puts you in the running for loans, grants and work-study programs.

Many private colleges and universities will also expect you to fill out the College Scholarship Service Profile to determine your eligibility for non-government financial aid (the institution's own grants, loans and scholarships). This profile is submitted in the fall.

Often high schools and local groups also offer scholarships to students who meet certain requirements, such as grade point averages or participation in certain activities. Talk to your high school guidance counselor about these opportunities and keep your eyes and ears open.

Start local

Don't turn a blind eye to community colleges even if dual enrollment isn't an option for you in high school. Getting your associate's degree from one of these schools can save you money on tuition and room and board (if you continue to live at home).

In addition, attending community college can push you to the front of the line for admission to the school of your dreams later. Many state universities turn to the pool of students from community colleges before accepting applications from the general public.

If you don't have your heart set on a particular college, check whether your bachelor's degree is available at your community college through a partnership with another school. It's a great way to extend those community college savings beyond your associate's degree.

If you plan to transfer to another college after your first two years at a community college, check in advance to make sure all your credits will transfer. This way, you won't have to take and pay for similar courses after you make the switch.

Look ahead

It's a good idea to carefully plan your course schedule, whether you're transferring or starting off at the school where you plan to complete your degree. Make sure you're fitting everything in and can complete all your course requirements by the time you plan to graduate.

Most students planning their college budgets base their calculations on four years. But statistics from the U.S. Department of Education show that only 40 percent of students graduate from college in four years. If you're one of the remaining 60 percent, and are a course or two short at the time you thought you'd be graduating, you'll be adding additional expenses.

Another way to finish early is to take an increased number of courses each quarter or semester. While most colleges have a minimum number of courses students must take to be considered full-time, consider taking up to the maximum allowed, as long as you can handle the workload.

Moving out

Going to college away from home doesn't have to doom you to a life of debt. While you'll definitely pay more for room and board, there are ways to keep the costs in check. If your college permits you to live off campus, rent and groceries can be less expensive than dorm and cafeteria life. Splitting bills with a responsible roommate or two can reduce costs even more.

But make sure you're ready for the responsibility of living on your own. Fines for damaged property, fees for late rent or electricity payments and too many late-night pizza runs can quickly eat into any savings you gain from skipping the dorm. Transportation is also important to factor into your budget (you may not need a car if you stay on campus).

If dorm life is a requirement or a better fit for you, fear not. With a little planning, you can get the most for your money. When selecting a meal plan, consider your eating habits. If you usually skip breakfast or grab fruit, yogurt or a granola bar, skip the full plan. The weekly trip to the grocery store, and even a dorm-sized refrigerator, could be well worth the savings.

Whatever meal plan you buy, use it. That's not to say you can't ever go out for a meal or ice cream, but remember that your meal plan is money already spent. Some colleges allow you to use the prepaid meal fees for other campus expenses, but many don't, and you'll lose the money at the end of the quarter or semester.

Be on the lookout for student discounts and freebies at local stores. Consider whether you always need the brand-new textbook. Sometimes a used one will do the job just fine. Recognize the difference between "needs" and "wants" and buy accordingly. When it comes to needs, be frugal. When you need jeans, skip the mall and head to the discount store.

Working

Consider being a resident assistant (RA). If you can balance the responsibilities (typically organizing social activities for your floor and being on call for emergency situations a couple nights a week) with your classwork, it can get you a discount on room and board—often much better pay than other campus jobs. But before you commit, make sure the schedule is flexible enough to avoid Sabbath conflicts and time off for Holy Days.

If being an RA isn't for you, consider other campus employment or work-study jobs. Since they're college-related, these types of positions are more likely to accommodate your class and study schedule than those that are off-campus.

If campus employment doesn't work for you, you can probably find a job in a nearby office, hangout or restaurant. Most college towns have many of these. Look for one that fits your schedule and skills, even your major. Real-world experience often makes your resume stand out after college.

Apply these principles and you'll keep your college costs under control. Many others have successfully applied these concepts. So can you!

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

Vertical Thought (VT): How do choices lead to success or problems in a student's life? What are some of those traps that face students in today's educational setting?

Mr. Salcedo: We understand that there is a right way and a wrong way to live. Students who choose things that are not in their best interest are going to have problems in achieving success in life and in school. These problems will occur sooner or later.

The girl-boy relationships, of course, are always a challenge. Peer pressure is tremendous in schools in this day and age. It seems that students often get into cliques or into groups where those particular friends aren't the best. I'm not just describing young people who are doing drugs and all that, but normal, average kids who, when it comes to the pressures of living, pull their friends the wrong way.

That influence is sometimes very, very subtle. I have seen many students in my career who have the potential of doing very well but find it difficult to focus on what they should be doing. They end up allowing the peer pressure to take them elsewhere. By this I mean drugs, gangs, pregnancy, etc.

positive and happy people who may struggle in their classes, but perform to the best of their ability. They may have a hard time understanding the difficult concepts of the subject matter. However, they work hard and still pass their classes. I respect these students very much. They are polite, well mannered and confident in dealing with adults.

Of course, I have also met many young people who are at the top of the class and also have developed these mature and positive skills of living. These young people are bright student leaders and intelligent and humble high school students. It is obvious that they have learned many of these positive values at home from their parents, and that speaks very well of how they live at home. These students are on their way to success in the academic world.

Solid moral and positive conduct in a school, in a business or in any organization does eventually lead to a successful person. As we know, God places a lot of emphasis on people living their lives with the positive values of good behavior. That is an area that I believe is extremely important for all young people to understand and to value in relationships with other people.

In the Principal's Office: Secrets of Success

VT: How would you define success in school and in life?

Mr. Salcedo: Success can be looked at in different ways. I'll answer it this way. I have observed some young people who have actually been at the top of their class, but when one tries to get to know them it is difficult to communicate with them. They appear to withdraw and don't seem to want to converse or to become friends with others. They find it difficult to give of themselves to a formal conversation. That is sad because they could really share their talents and successes with others and become outstanding examples and leaders in the school.

Grades can be important for successful students, but there is more to success than good grades. Some questions to ask could be: How do students behave themselves in a school setting? What are their values, their manners? Do they display confidence in how they speak and show respect to their fellow students, especially the guys with gals? How mature are they with adults or with their peers?

I believe that students who understand how to live positive lives in a school setting, regardless of whether they score at the top of their class, can also be successful. These students have solid moral values and avoid the negative approach to living. They do not use the profanity that is so common, or the vulgar jokes, or the put-downs of others.

I have had the privilege of becoming acquainted with young people who are so-called "average" students, but as I have gotten to really know them, I have found them to be mature,

Vertical Thought discusses the pathway to a positive high school and college experience with Dan Salcedo, principal of Santa Ana High School in Santa Ana, California.

Interview by Amanda Stiver

VT: What choices did you make as a young person that led you to where you are today?

Mr. Salcedo: I grew up in a home of six sisters and three brothers—10 children. We lived in a loving home filled with children and young people throughout my young life, and I am grateful that our parents were loving parents who cared deeply for their children. They placed great emphasis on developing good manners, high moral values, a love for God and His way of life and a love for our parents and for one another. We developed the skills we needed to work and get along with one another. To this day, my family of siblings is still very close.

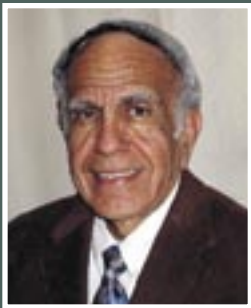
During my youth, around the eighth and ninth grade, I began to understand deeply the importance of applying great effort to earn good grades in school. I was able to do very well in high school and was accepted at UCLA and, from there, I completed my B.A. at California State University of Los Angeles.

When I started my first job in administration in Santa Ana, I was selected as an assistant principal. I obviously missed being in the classroom, but it wasn't long before I realized that, as an administrator, I could work not only with young people, but also with adults. It didn't take much time to realize that I loved my new line of work with young people and enjoyed immensely the opportunities that I was being given.

I believe that the more a person develops a love for his work, the more he will become motivated to strive toward excellence and quality in fulfilling his responsibilities.

God provides positive principles of living in harmony with one another, whether it is at home with parents, brothers and sisters, or in a school setting. These standards and principles are real, and they work! I believe that it is important that I lead by example in the role that I have been given, which is to be a principal of a large urban high school. This example would of course involve my relationships with students, staff and parents and, without a doubt, my relationship with our loving God.

VT: How can a student successfully balance a social life and an academic life? What is the top priority?



With over four decades of experience in education and administration, **Dan Salcedo** is principal of the 4,000-student Santa Ana High School in Santa Ana, California. He has been a principal for 34 years on the elementary, junior high and high school levels. Mr. Salcedo is the winner of the 2003 Vision for Excellence Principal Award sponsored by Project Tomorrow: Enhancing Science Education and is also a United Church of God elder serving in the Garden Grove, California, congregation.

I believe that the more a person develops a love for his work, the more he will become motivated to strive toward excellence and quality in fulfilling his responsibilities.

Mr. Salcedo: Young people should enjoy whatever socializing they can fit in, always keeping in mind who they are. Young people who have been taught how to live according to God's way, which involves respect for God's laws and respect for their fellow man (the two major concepts that encompass the Ten Commandments), should make sure that they include God in their lives and strive to obey His law of love. They should also make sure that they respect their parents' advice.

VT: What should a student do to prepare for the challenges of college?

Mr. Salcedo: I believe that it is important for students in high school to focus on placing a high value on a strong work ethic in learning the basic core classes of English, math, science, social studies, the fine arts of music and art, and other electives.

They also should be in close communication with their parents, teachers and counselors for advice.

In California, as in most states, students must pass a high school exit exam or they will not graduate from high school. Therefore academics are very important.

A key area in preparing for college is for students to recognize the importance of learning to write academically. Displaying excellent academic writing will help them to become successful students in college.

Students should develop the strong work ethics of good attendance, completing their homework, being actively involved in classroom learning, displaying much respect to their teachers and obeying the rules and guidelines of the school.

High school students should also take speech classes if possible. If they do, they will learn how to speak in front of groups and in classroom settings, which is a skill that is very important at the college and university level.

At our school, we also have what we call a higher education specialist. This person focuses on helping students to prepare for college and university. She is a counseling specialist who understands the academic world and what courses a particular student needs to prepare for college. She also gives valuable advice in how to obtain scholarships for college or university.

Obviously, students would also need to realize how God could fit into their picture to fully understand what true success is. God can be with all students if they seek Him. Students should not leave Him out of their lives. They should ask God for His help and to give them the wisdom to properly conduct themselves in and outside of school. Students should read and study their Bibles, especially the book of Proverbs and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. Young people should pray regularly and ask God for His protection and to help and guide them to live according to His will.

I recommend *Teenagers: Preparing for the Real World*, by Chad Foster, as a good resource for young people to use in successfully planning their transition from high school to college and beyond.

VT: What is your favorite aspect of being an educator?

Mr. Salcedo: I love my work. Every new morning that I get up, I ask God for His guidance, direction and protection through that day. Every day after I arrive at school, I observe our students walking from class to class (thousands of them) excited, enthusiastic, talking and chatting with one another, and I am motivated and thankful that regardless of how I feel, these young people are following through on their responsibilities of school by simply going to their classes and doing what they are supposed to do.

I am blessed to be able to work in such a delightful educational setting with so many young people and teachers, and am grateful for this unique opportunity that I have been given.

Amanda Stiver earned a B.A. in history from the Robert D. Clark Honors College of the University of Oregon and currently resides in Columbus, Ohio.



IN THE NEWS

Compiled by James Capó, Amanda Stiver and David Treybig

More Britons Believe in Ghosts Than in God?

More Britons believe in ghosts than in God, according to an informal survey published on—yes—Oct. 31. The survey wasn't a true random sample, so the results can't be considered scientifically accurate, but of the 2,012 people who completed a questionnaire for the British home entertainment retailer ChoicesUK, 68 percent said they believed in the existence of ghosts and spirits, while 55 percent said they believed in the existence of a god (source: AP).

Of those who believed in ghosts, 76 percent said that films and TV reality shows about the supernatural helped convince them that ghosts exist. But what does the Bible say? It reveals that there really is an active spirit realm—not of ghosts, supposedly disembodied human beings, but of spirits, fallen angels called demons that seek to influence and deceive people against the truth of God. These may sometimes pose as the ghosts of dead people. The dead, however, are unconscious, awaiting a future resurrection (compare Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10). For this and other reasons, the Bible warns against any involvement with the spirit world apart from contact with the true God.

Our booklet *Is There Really A Devil?* reveals how this spirit realm is the real source behind so many of the world's problems and explains how God will overthrow this power and establish a kingdom of peace. Jesus Christ overcame Satan (Matthew 4; Luke 4), and through Christ we can too.

Exercise Boosts Your Brain Power

A 2005 study reported in the *Journal of Exercise Physiology* compared how nearly 900,000 fifth-, seventh- and ninth-graders scored on a state-mandated fitness test in California, with the reading and math performance of those students on a standardized achievement test. Guess what? The fittest students had the best test scores. For example, the average math score of students who met only three of six fitness goals was 48; kids who met all six fitness goals had an average math score of 60.



"Results indicate a consistent positive relationship between overall fitness and academic achievement," said the study (*The Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 30, 2005). This study is one of many that have recently documented the benefits of exercise

not just for your body but for your brain, with improvements in short-term memory and the ability to process data.

"Acute bouts of exercise" have also been found to reduce depression and anxiety. Now researchers are trying to determine how much and what type of exercise produces the best brain benefits. While they're trying to figure it out, how about going for a jog? Like the apostle Paul said, "Bodily exercise profits a little" (1 Timothy 4:8).

Moral Absolutes?

Most Americans consider themselves to be Christian, but surprisingly few base their moral decisions on the Bible or even believe that absolute moral truth exists, according to a survey conducted by the Barna Group (Barna.org, Aug. 9, 2005). According to the survey, just one out of every six adults (16 percent) claim they make moral choices based on the content of the Bible.



That means a lot of "Christians" are making decisions without regard to what Christ taught. Jesus once said to the people of His day, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

When asked whether they believe moral truth is based on absolute standards or is relative to the circumstances, about one third (35 percent) said that moral truth is absolute—that is, it is not dependent on circumstances. Another third (32 percent) said that morality is always determined by the situation. The remaining third (33 percent) said they do not know if moral truth is absolute or relative.

You can know, though—absolutely! Pontius Pilate, struggling over the immorality of condemning an innocent man to death, asked Jesus Christ, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Jesus, though, while praying to His Father, clearly stated that God's Word is truth and that we are sanctified by it (John 17:17).

Evolution Loses Ground; Evolutionists Angry



The Kansas Board of Education recently voted 6-4 to approve new science standards for the state's public schools that leave evolutionary principles in the curriculum but also include new phrasing that encourages students to question evolution's validity.

Rather than admitting the scientific flaws in the theory of evolution and welcoming the opportunity for critical thinking, many evolutionists have responded with anger and arrogance.

A news report at CNN.com intimates that all scientists are against the decision by the Kansas Board of Education and that people who support the board are just ignorant of science. But a growing number of scientists are now acknowledging that science itself disproves evolution, and an increasing number of people are learning that evolution is not true, factual or scientific. As much as they hate to admit it, evolutionists are starting to find themselves losing on scientific arguments.

Although Kansas has been stealing the headlines in the latest clash between proponents of creationism and intelligent design (ID) and those supporting evolution, other states, including

Michigan, Kentucky and Georgia, are also experiencing efforts to challenge the weaknesses of this theory.

“ID [which teaches that an intelligent higher power created life on earth] is making enormous progress,” said John Calvert, a Kansas City lawyer and ID proponent. ‘Is it going to happen overnight? No. Is it going to happen? Yes.’

“Calvert said museum exhibits such as the one in Lawrence [Kansas, which says chimpanzees and humans are ‘cousins in life’s family tree’] are flawed because they ask visitors to believe humans evolved randomly, with no specific purpose or design by a higher power—a theory polls show a majority of Americans do not believe” (“Kansas Evolution Vote Nears, Scientists Fight Back,” Nov. 7, 2005).

Calvert is right. Evolution is doomed. See our free booklet *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?* for the details (www.ucg.org/booklets).

Dirty Dancing Disturbs Parents and Students

School dances have become a recipe for dirty dancing and degradation, according to parents from Columbus, Ohio, area schools. The kind of dancing that goes on disturbs and saddens the parent chaperones. The trend for pelvis thrusting and grinding between boy and girl and between girl and girl has developed out of the extremely sexualized environment American teenagers have grown up in—television, print advertisement, movies, Internet and music.



The problem is widespread throughout the United States, and school administrators are increasingly taking strong measures, including expul-

sion of students from dances, cancellation of offensive dances and addressing of the situation through school assemblies.

Music styles contribute to the problem. “We find if they don’t play rap music, the kids don’t dance in that style. If they play a lot of oldies music or what I might term Top 40s popular tunes, they dance in different styles we don’t find offensive,” said Grandview Heights High School principal Steve Andersson.

The core issue, however, was addressed by student Brian Carpenter speaking about his fellow students: “I don’t think they think they’re doing anything wrong. It’s the only way they’ve grown up knowing because no one has taught them or shown them any other way to dance.”

This is where young people following God’s way of life have a duty and an advantage. The duty is to reject immorality in all forms from their lives, including wrongful dancing, by abstaining from those activities. The advantage is that the right way is clearly shown through God’s word in the Bible. You simply need to ask to be taught properly. God’s way trades degrading behavior for positive, energetic usefulness. Have you tried it lately? (Kristy Eckert, “Grinding Their Teeth,” *The Columbus Dispatch*, Nov. 4, 2005).

Get Smart

Continued from page 17

or sports. Many community centers and community colleges have classes and workshops in a variety of interests. If none are available, consider teaching one yourself. It’s amazing what you can learn by teaching! (More on that later.)

Don’t be afraid to expand your horizons and try new things you may have been avoiding in the rush and grade pressures of formal schooling. Perhaps you wouldn’t have received a high grade in a ceramics or water polo class, but outside of school your goal can be to broaden your experience, not get a grade.

Exploring the world

Speaking of broadening your experiences, nothing does that quite like traveling. Explore your options here as well. Some have set goals to visit every continent, while others have specialized in getting to know a region of the world in depth. Whatever you do, make sure you learn as much about the country, customs, languages and safety tips in advance as you can. Who wants to be seen as a tourist or the proverbial “ugly American”?

“I think I learned more in my one year abroad than in my entire life,” said Erika Pedersen, an American whose fascination with France began when she was 15. “That probably sounds exaggerated, but that is sure the way it felt!”

Prepare to teach

All learning has a purpose, in developing us into better, more interesting, more fulfilled, multidimensional people. Another great purpose of learning is to be able to share what we’ve learned and experienced with others. Not only does teaching reinforce our learning, but it also helps us to develop additional skills in communication and leadership.

The Bible shows that God expects His students to prepare to teach others. (Consider the rebuke given to those who should have been ready to teach, but who needed to hear the very basic lessons all over again—Hebrews 5:12.) The pattern God designed is for the older to teach the younger.

What can you do today to prepare to teach? Perhaps your church has a club that involves speaking. If so, volunteer to speak and use the feedback to help you improve. Also, consider working on your writing skills. This can also develop your teaching skills. And learn all you can about child development and how to be a successful parent. That role is one of the most important teaching gigs anyone can ever have.

So, you may feel like you’ve had enough of busy work, quizzes and tests. But don’t turn your back on education altogether. Instead, embrace it, make it your own. Develop an educational program unlike any other on earth. Give yourself an eclectic, fun, meaningful and fulfilling program of lifelong learning that will serve you well from now till eternity and beyond!

Mike Bennett, a minister of the United Church of God, is the managing editor of *United News*. He, his wife, Becky, and their two daughters live near Cincinnati, Ohio.



Are my sister's kids your cousins?

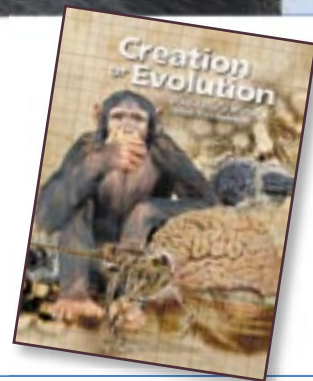
Maybe they act like it sometimes, but you know and they know and I know—we're **not** related! No offense.

I'd really like to see this relative mess cleared up.

Please order your copy of the **FREE** booklet *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*

It really matters to me that you know—I'm not your mother.

Read the free booklet and we'll both feel better.



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