

Three Important  
Kisses

Answers  
From Genesis

Sibling Rivalry

January March 2010

# verticalthought®

*a magazine of understanding for tomorrow's leaders*

## **Education:** Why Bother?

Does factoring God into the equation make a difference?

Finding Good  
Professors

Seven Types  
Of Intelligence

Finding a Mentor

Boring Teachers  
Or Lazy Students?

Are We Right  
For Each Other?

Spanish and More



## All Education Isn't Equal

**The world is awash in education, yet drowning for lack of knowledge in how to get along with others. The truth and irony of this statement becomes evident when one compares the increasing number of people who have graduated from institutions of higher learning with the increasing number of serious problems facing our global society today.**

Unbridled greed, of both individuals and corporations, has rocked the global economy. And as nations like Iran and North Korea scramble for nuclear technology, one can't help but wonder how long it will be before ethnic disagreement and hatred fan the flames of discontent into a nuclear holocaust.

Encyclopaedia Britannica Online says, "Education can be thought of as the transmission of the values and accumulated knowledge of a society." So why can't all nations get along? Are our values misplaced? Is our collective knowledge incomplete?

Since there is a cause for every effect, something must be wrong with modern education. With so many leaders receiving formal educations, why aren't national squabbles and disagreements fading? Why haven't the Jews and Arabs made peace? Why haven't Muslims and Christians found mutual respect and understanding?

The answer lies in the fact that humanity's most difficult problems are spiritual in nature. People's inability to get along with others is a spiritual problem that modern education can't solve.

Most colleges and universities have taken God out of the curriculum. In bygone eras God's revealed Word—the Bible—used to be accepted as the foundation or beginning of knowledge, but most education today excludes God from the classroom. So-called "enlightened" educators teach impressionable young minds that people can get along just fine without God. But the results suggest otherwise.

Does this make education pointless? Of course not. It's been amply demonstrated that, on average, the higher one's level of education, the higher one's level of income. But it's important to understand that

much of modern education is incomplete. The missing dimension on how to live a happy life in peace with others is spiritual knowledge that can only be obtained through God. Given this understanding, it's important that we each take charge of our own education.

We need to understand that going to a trade school, college or university is just the beginning of a lifelong process of education. A good formal education simply prepares us for the additional learning we will do throughout our lives. As futurist Alvin Toffler noted: "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."

Then there's spiritual knowledge. We must each determine to spend our lives learning the ways that

**People's inability to get along with others is a spiritual problem that modern education can't solve.**

lead to the peace and happiness all people desire. This, too, is a lifelong process. As the apostle Paul told the young evangelist Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15, New American Standard Bible).

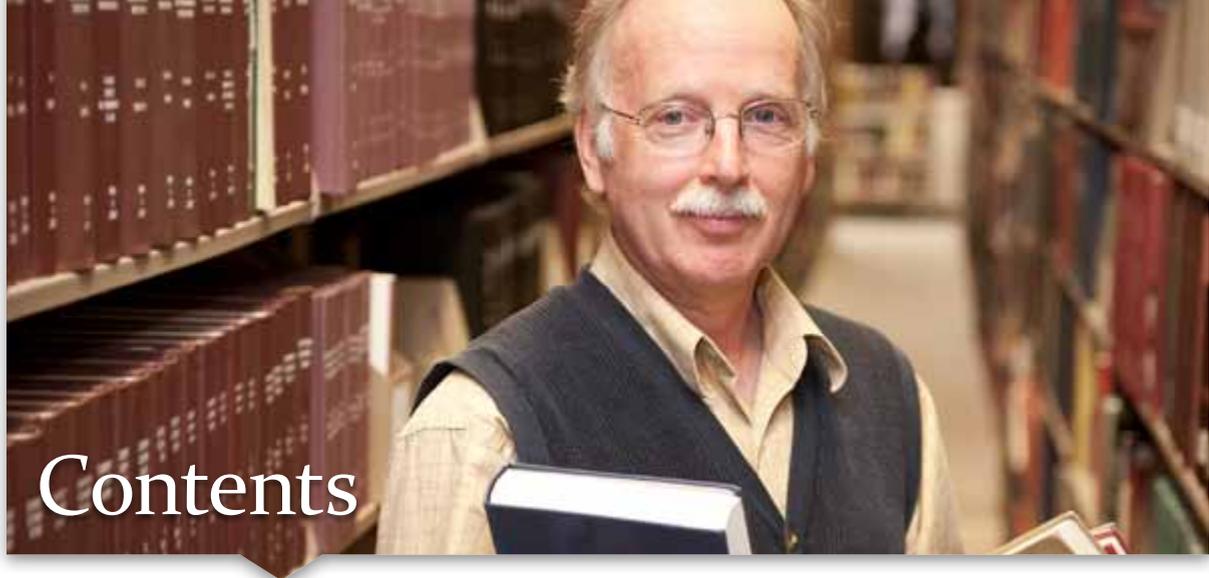
In this issue we focus on education—its importance, the various types of intelligence and how to select professors. We hope it will help you recognize and learn about the missing dimension in today's education.

### VerticalThought

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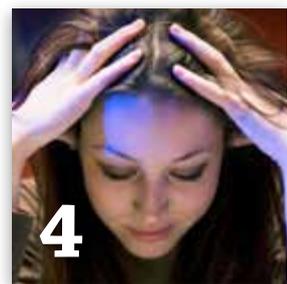
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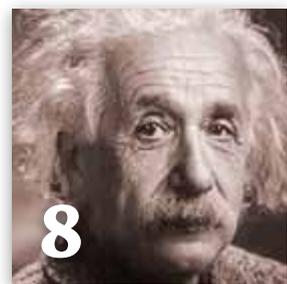
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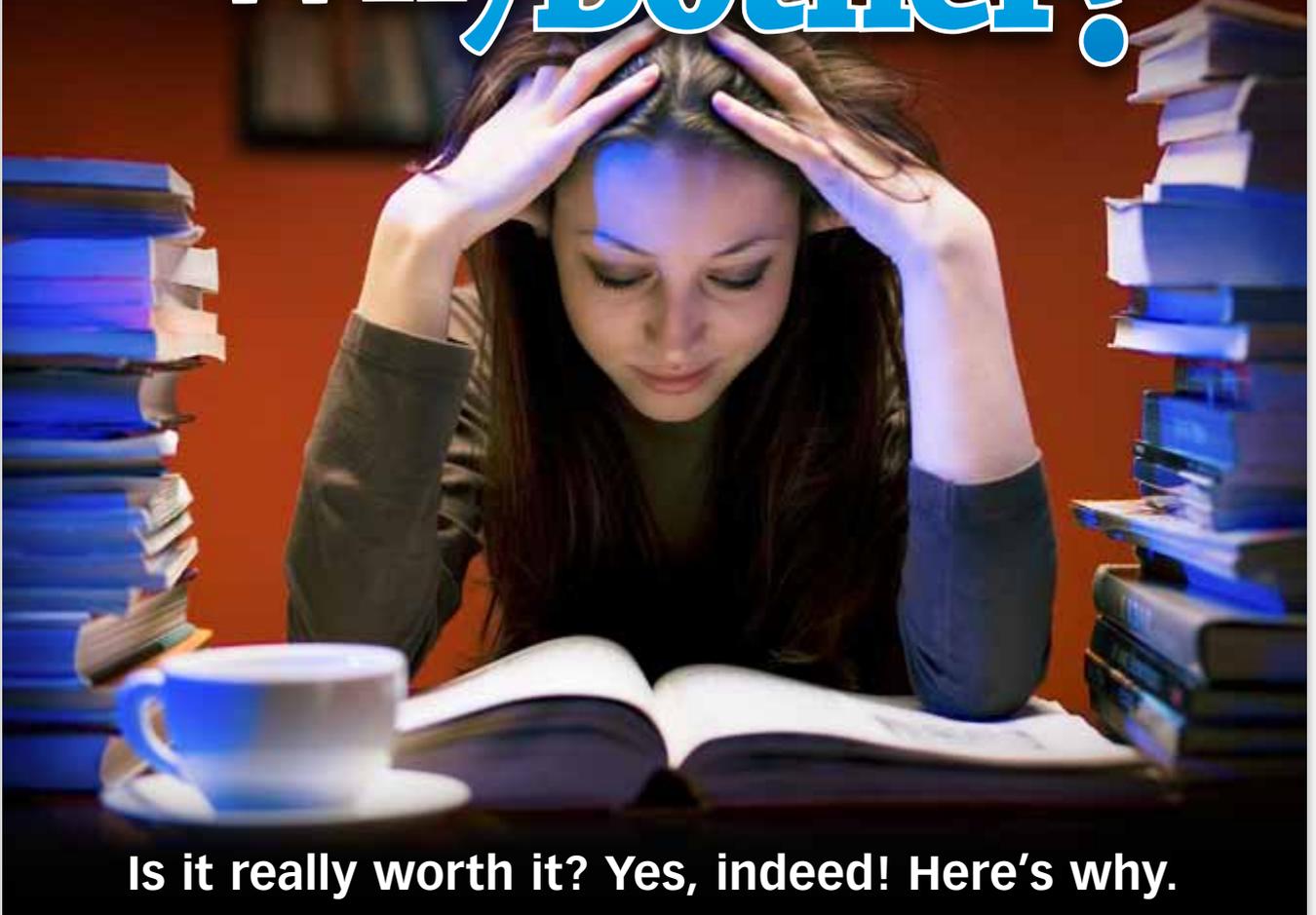
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# Education: Why Bother?



Is it really worth it? Yes, indeed! Here's why.

by Jeremy Lallier

# K

ing Solomon of Israel, a man of great wisdom, wrote, "Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh" (Ecclesiastes 12:12). Just a few sentences prior, he had also denounced life as "vanity of vanities," wearily adding, "All is vanity" (verse 8).

That settles it, then. If the man with wisdom imparted by God Himself describes learning as wearisome and vain, who are we to argue? The only conclusion to draw here is that education is a waste of time, right?

Well, not quite. Also recorded in the pages of the Bible are God's laments over backsliding Israel, namely, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children" (Hosea 4:6).

What we need to understand about Ecclesiastes is that Solomon wrote it after seeking knowledge and understanding through all kinds of physical pursuits. In the end, he cautioned his readers that one cannot be truly happy and successful apart from God. The melancholy overtones of the book stem from his realization that a life without God is empty.

We can see this with learning. Suppose, for example, that you dedicate your life to becoming the foremost expert on the matter of breeding whippets (we are also supposing that, for some inexplicable reason, you are big on whippets—a breed of dog). At the peak of your career, you are renowned across the globe for your invaluable contributions to the field of whippet breeding. When the world thinks of whippet puppies, they think of you. You are Dr. Whippet, legend.

But at the end of your life, you are a very dead Dr. Whippet,

## When you factor God into the equation, the question becomes not “*Why* should I learn?” but rather “*What* should I learn?”

however legendary. Even supposing your eager students compile your veritable hoard of whippet wisdom into *The Analects of the Late Dr. Whippet, Legend* and garner you an impressive cult following within whippet circles, you have no idea. Six feet under, you can no longer enjoy the fruit of your whippet labor.

In other words: Congratulations, you accomplished something and then died.

Which brings us to that age-old question: Why bother? What’s the point of learning if the end result is that you still end up as a corpse in the ground?

Here’s the answer: When you factor God into the equation, that whole death problem disappears. When you take into account that God’s plan for all humanity involves ultimately giving eternal life to those who choose to follow Him, and establishing those called in this life as kings and priests in His perfect, everlasting Kingdom, the question becomes not “*Why* should I learn?” but rather “*What* should I learn?”

What follows is practical advice for becoming an effective learner now in order to maximize your experience in this life—and the next.

### Remember the Source

It’s all well and good if you want to gain a better understanding of the world around you, but you won’t get very far unless you recognize where both the understanding and the world comes from. Solomon wrote, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7).

Without a healthy respect for and knowledge of the God who created the universe, we are limited in what we can understand about His creation. While the world’s scientists have intimate and detailed knowledge about certain pieces of the puzzle, they do not understand that what they are looking at *is* a puzzle.

Understanding the character and plan of God allows us to look at the same pieces that are mysteries to the world’s top minds, examine them and see where they fit in the big picture.

### Class is always in session

American historian George Iles once said, “Whoever ceases to be a student has never been a student.” In other words, being a student is a lifelong state of mind, not a role limited to classrooms stuffed with desks and with posters of atoms, prepositions and of famous battles. A true student’s classroom is life and everything in it. His or her goal? To find the lesson in every situation and apply it personally.

When our approach to any scenario we encounter is, “What should I learn from this?” we will haul away trea-

sure troves of useful knowledge. We may learn conflict resolution skills, refine communication skills or even come to understand ourselves better. We may learn patience, trust, self-control and kindness. There is no end to the possibilities as long as we keep our eyes open for them.

### Pursue what you love

True, not everyone is excited about breeding whippets (sorry, whippet breeders). And although we all have different tastes and interests, there is bound to be *something* that excites you—something that, at your core level, you just connect with and enjoy.

Once you’ve found that something, I urge you to pursue it. Don’t just dabble in it every now and then. As much as possible, integrate it into your day-to-day life. Whatever your something is, it can strengthen your relationship with God.

Why? Because “from the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature” (Romans 1:20, New Living Translation).

God’s handiwork is present in *all* His creation. Science teaches us about the myriad intricacies of His designs. Math teaches us about His detailed sense of order and consistency. History shows the perils of disobeying His commands and His faithfulness to His people. Languages teach us the beauty and depths of the communication He has enabled between mankind and Himself. Art gives us a glimpse into the creative ability He has designed into us.

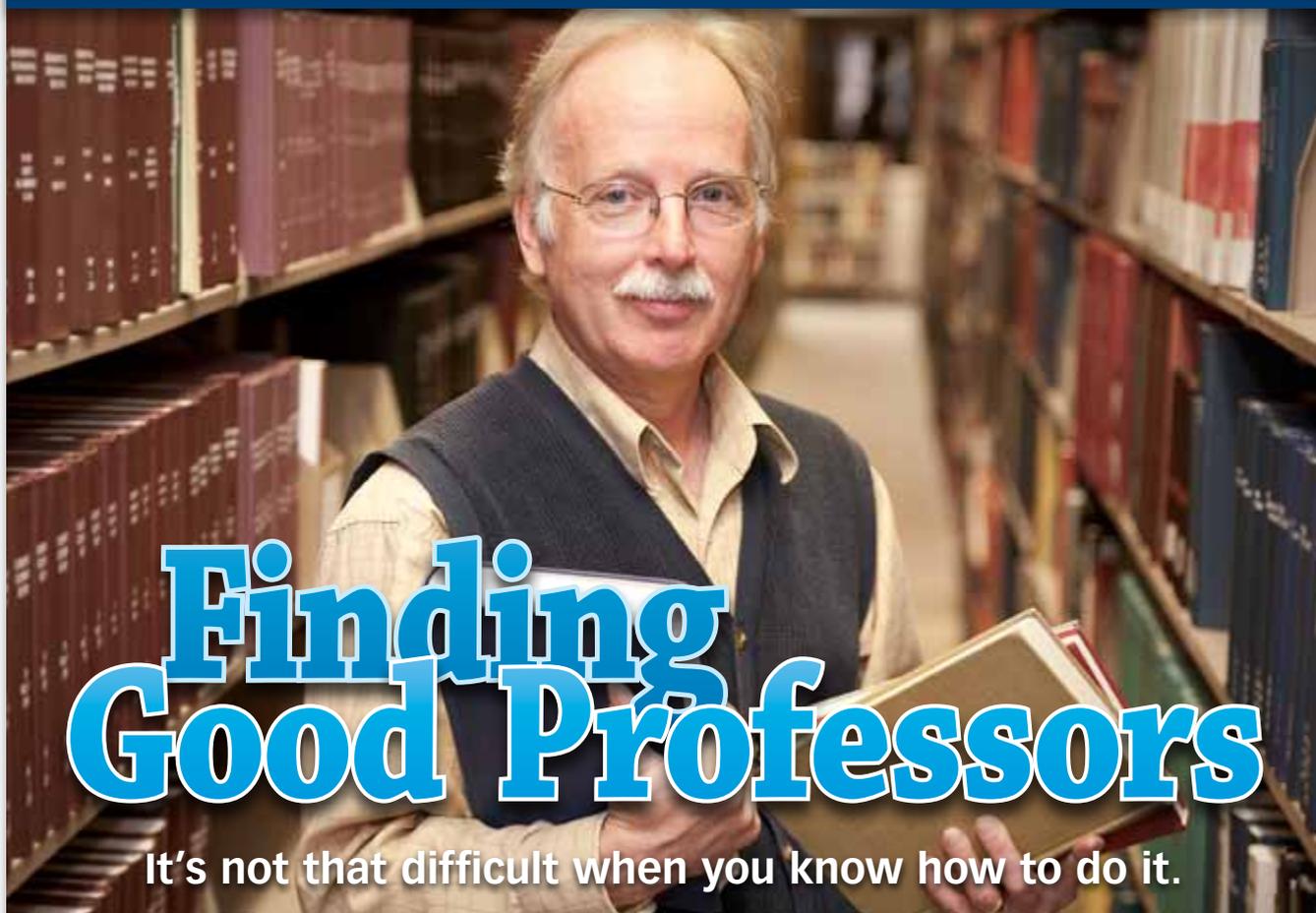
The list goes on, but the point remains: In pursuing the fields we enjoy, we will come to understand with increased clarity who God is and grow closer to Him as a result.

By the time this article goes to print, I will be returning from a 2 1/2 week trip to Africa. I’m going because it’s an opportunity to serve. But I’m also going because it’s an opportunity to grow. I have no doubt that there will be much to learn from my brothers and sisters in Christ living halfway across the world—and I can’t wait to learn it.

I can think of no better way to conclude an article on the importance of learning than by borrowing from the apostle Peter’s conclusion in 2 Peter 3:14, 18: “Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless ... [and] grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”

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**Jeremy Lallier** recently graduated from Ambassador Bible Center in Milford, Ohio, and is currently working as a writing intern at the United Church of God home office.



# Finding Good Professors

It's not that difficult when you know how to do it.

by Randy Stiver

# A

n otherwise quiet university student arrived at church services beaming with excitement. “I found a conservative professor!” he exclaimed. “I didn’t know my university had any.”

His surprise was justified. That university had been on the cutting edge of the sexual and drug revolutions of the 1960s, and for decades now had been known as a liberal think tank. Yet right there in the humanities section was a commonsensical English professor.

So, how do you find professors who are worth their salt—instructors who will help you to build your knowledge base without eroding your faith? Be advised: Not all professors want you to think critically about what they try to teach you.

## Prospecting for professors

Sometimes you don’t have a choice of instructors on a particular subject, but when you do, how do you evaluate or rate a prospective professor?

I asked that question of a small focus group of young adult vertical thinkers. They’re all college students or graduates,

including several with master’s degrees, one Ph.D. candidate and another with a Ph.D. who works as a professor of American history.

Here’s a compilation of their applied insight about seeking Mr. or Ms. Good Professor, with a few direct quotes thrown in:

### Analyze the professor’s personal bias

Check for compatible values. Do you and the instructor think similarly? If not, you will have to keep your moral deflector shields up at all times.

Watch for lifestyle too. Does the professor act respectfully, both in the classroom and out?

Does he or she have a decent sense of humor? Tuition money need not be wasted on the foul-mouthed or obscene.

What is his or her religious and political perspective? Will the class be a soapbox for political action rather than a focused study of the subject matter?

### Analyze professional bias and qualifications

What are the professor’s education credentials? What school did he or she graduate from? What is its reputation or standing as an institution?

## “Try to avoid the rabid professors who want to mold you into images of themselves and don’t have respect for differences of opinion.”

Does the instructor have any real-world work experience in the subject matter of the class being taught? “Outside experience generally means they have a more balanced or realistic view of their subject than the purely academic mind-set.”

Be sure to skim or read articles or books the professor has published in order to discern his or her educational bias.

Does the professor teach the class or routinely assign an assistant to do so? Does he or she punctually correspond when you e-mail a question?

Preview the required textbooks for the class. “I remember my biology professor pushed all sorts of evolutionary books on us like *The Beak of the Finch* and *Why Geese Don’t Get Obese*. It definitely gave me a clear idea where he was coming from.”

### Analyze the teaching style

Is the prospective professor “encouraging and empowering, yet challenging”? Does he or she have a reputation for inspiring the students to learn?

Can the teacher teach? Is he or she a good communicator? Is the instructor decisive in teaching, or does he hem and haw around the topic? Is she organized? Does he logically organize the subject matter?

How about academic humility? It’s not easy to listen to arrogant pontificating for hours on end. A key indicator is whether the professor can “admit mistakes without anger.”

“Try to avoid the rabid professors who want to mold you into images of themselves and don’t have respect for differences of opinion. Demigods are hard to deal with.”

Is he or she respectful toward all students yet capable of being disciplinary in class if the situation warrants? Productive learning stops when boorish, foolish “students” can disrupt the class.

How available is the professor to students after class or for consultation during office hours? Availability tends to indicate a love of teaching.

### Where and how to get these answers

Check the university Web site and search Google about a prospective professor to learn his or her educational credentials, reputation and a list of what he or she has written on the course subject. Also, read the syllabus to see the assigned reading.

Check Web sites where students rate their professors, but use that only as possible supporting evidence for your

decision. It’s too easy to trash or overpraise through the relative anonymity of the Internet.

Talk to students who have taken classes with a particular professor. But first discern the perspective of the student you talk to. Garner the input of some who think like you and some who don’t; then compare. Ask to sit in on a class or two so you can watch the professor in action.

“Meet with prospective professors or current ones and learn more about them by talking with them. People like to talk about themselves, and you can learn a lot about them when you get them going!”

Talk to guidance counselors or student advisers about the reputations of various professors. Try to discern whether they’re giving you the straight scoop or just the bland party line. Getting to know a savvy adviser tends to open up his or her confidence to better help you chart your professor course.

### You can find good professors

Sometimes we don’t have much choice, and generally we just have to try to pick the best available option based on the time we have in which to do the research. We can still learn even if the situation is less than ideal.

But please don’t be daunted in your pursuit of excellence in education. As one member of our focus group put it: “Believe it or not, in academia today there are still a few professors out there that can fit most of that bill, though they are difficult to find. And when I do find them, I tend to latch on and take a lot of their courses.”

To bolster your search, consider this divine proverb: “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20). Choose wisely who you walk with educationally.

### The ultimate Professor

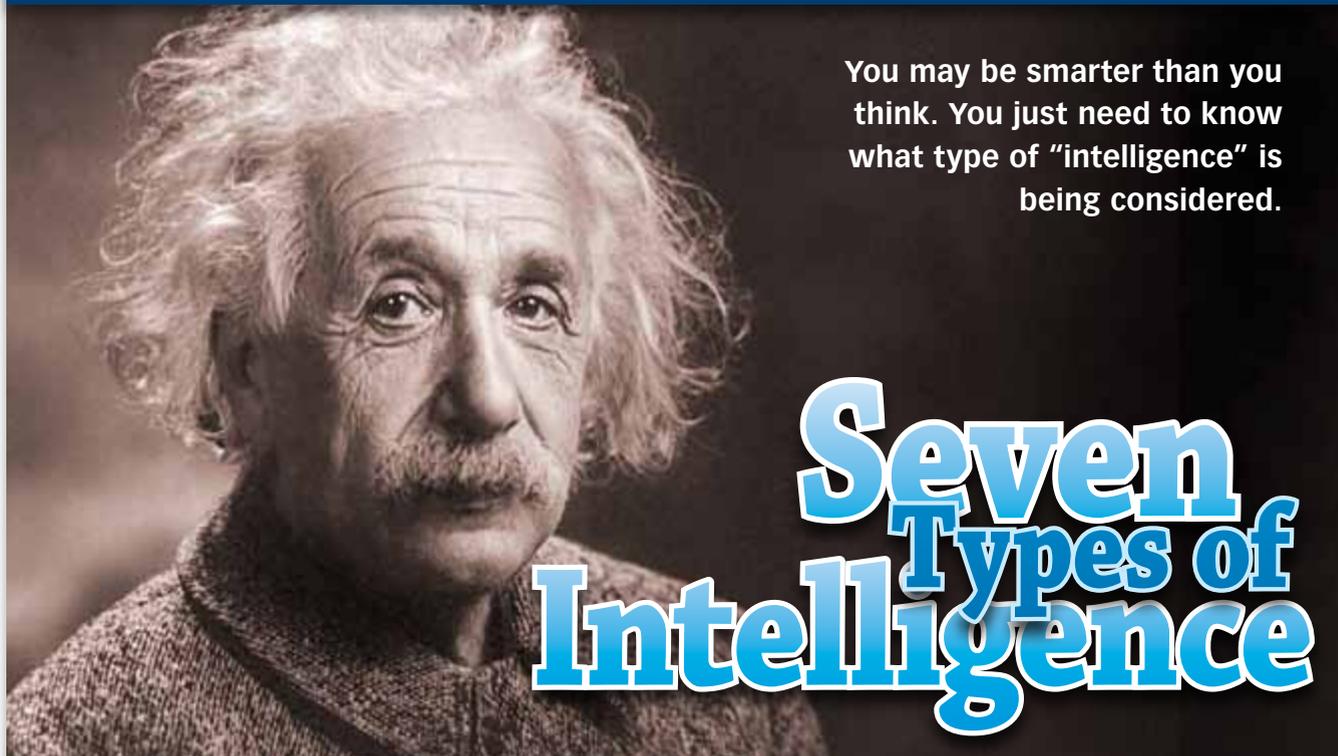
Who would be the absolute best professor or teacher you could find for your higher education years?

Jesus Christ said, “You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am” (John 13:13).

Any class or lesson that Professor Jesus Christ teaches, you should take. In fact, He’s happy to advise you along the way in any course of study—and He’ll help you pass your tests! Study His textbook, base your life on it, and you will graduate to an infinitely higher form of life and occupation!

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



You may be smarter than you think. You just need to know what type of “intelligence” is being considered.

# Seven Types of Intelligence

by Mario Seiglie

**I**magine being told by your elementary school principal that “you will never amount to much.” Years later, you end up dropping out of high school and then fail the university entrance exams.

After finally entering university, you realize most of the professors are against you. And after graduating, your classmates land nice jobs while you are unemployed. You’re turned down for all the university positions you apply for. Finally, friends help you land a temporary job in a government patent office at the bottom of the pay scale.

Doesn’t sound like a very promising career, does it?

Meanwhile, in a nearby country, a student fails miserably in elementary school. His teachers are exasperated. The boy will do nothing but draw! No matter what incentives or threats are used, he refuses to focus on reading, writing or math. He finally drops out of elementary school.

Both these descriptions are of real people—famous figures in 20th-century history. The first is probably the most brilliant thinker of modern times: Albert Einstein. The second is regarded as one of the most influential painters of his time: Pablo Picasso.

What their elementary school educators failed to see was that these individuals each excelled in a particular type of intelligence—to the detriment of the other types.

Most people are familiar with only one type of intelligence. It’s the same one that IQ (intelligence quotient) exams are based on: the ability for logical reasoning.

Yet today we know there are at least seven key types of intelligence, and they can be as different from each other as night and day. This is a reason some intelligent people have performed poorly in school; their category of intelligence was not readily recognized. Most people excel in one class of intelligence and are average in the other types.

Today, many teachers are taught to identify which of these seven types of intelligence is found in a student and to then encourage the student to focus on that strength. Most successful people, as the stories of Einstein and Picasso show, focus on their particular type of intelligence and learn to get the maximum benefit out of it. You can learn to do the same.

What are the seven basic types of intelligence, and what can they mean to your life and career?

## 1. Logical-mathematical intelligence

This is the ability to apply logic to systems and numbers. People who have this type are natural problem solvers. They usually perform well on traditional IQ tests. Engineers, scientists, economists and mathematicians have this type of intelligence. This may be one of your strongest intelligences if you ...

- Are good at solving mysteries and logic problems.
- Excel in math.
- Organize concepts and things well.
- Are acutely interested in scientific discoveries.
- Figure out how things work.
- Are good with computers.

## 2. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence

People with this type of intelligence learn best through bodily movement and usually excel in physical activities such as dancing and sports. They have excellent motor skills and balance. They often have a difficult time sitting still in traditional classrooms and want to get up and “do” the activity. Athletes, doctors, soldiers, dancers and actors are strong in this intelligence. This may be one of your strongest intelligences if you ...

- Excel in sports.
- Are a good dancer.
- Are expressive and skilled at acting.
- Can build things.
- Can accurately throw or hit a ball.

## 3. Visual-spatial intelligence

This is the ability to perceive the world and re-create it without physical stimuli. This type of intelligence allows you to literally think in pictures and draw the images on paper. Architects, designers, artists and sculptors are generally strong in this type of intelligence. This may be one of your strongest intelligences if you ...

- Are good at assembling puzzles.
- Are a good judge of art or photography.
- Grasp geometry over algebra.
- Study more effectively with charts and pictures.
- Doodle or draw.
- Notice details.

## 4. Interpersonal (or emotional) intelligence

This is the ability to empathize with people—the skill of understanding the moods and motivations of others. People with this intelligence tend to be extroverts and work in fields where they interact with others on a daily basis. This type of intelligence is generally found in politicians, teachers, managers, salespeople, church pastors and social workers. This may be one of your strongest intelligences if you ...

- Feel people’s moods.
- Are sociable.
- Are sensitive to injustices or dishonesty.
- Are a good listener and encourager.
- Have difficulty treating others unkindly.
- Engage productively in deep conversations.

## 5. Intrapersonal intelligence

This is the ability to understand yourself and your inner thoughts. People with this skill are usually introverts, have a strong sense of independence, are self-confident and tend to be perfectionists. They are the “deep thinkers” in our society.

Philosophers, writers and scientists exhibit this intelligence. This may be one of your strongest intelligences if you ...

- Are often pondering matters.
- Daydream imaginatively.
- Are self-critical.
- Really get absorbed in a good book.
- Can break down complicated ideas.
- Judge people accurately.

## 6. Musical intelligence

This is the ability to use and understand music. People with this intelligence typically have good pitch, can sing, and play different musical instruments. They like to have music playing in the background and often use music and rhythms to help memorize information. Musicians, composers and singers have this type of intelligence. This may be one of your strongest intelligences if you ...

- Can perform well in a band.
- Can read music and remember old songs.
- Will analyze a new song critically.
- Can figure out how to play a tune on an instrument.
- Are able to compose music.

## 7. Verbal-linguistic intelligence

Those with this form of intelligence can easily learn a new language and are good at reading and writing. They learn best in a traditional setting and are good debaters. Demonstrating such intelligence are writers, journalists, politicians, poets, teachers and philosophers. This may be one of your strongest intelligences if you ...

- Write well.
- Are good with crossword puzzles.
- Are eloquent.
- Tell good stories.
- Are funny.
- Enjoy debates or arguments.
- Explain things well.
- Have a great vocabulary and are keen to learn new words and their origins.

Did you note what types of intelligence you have and which ones you excel in? Once you find out where your talents lie and identify your passion, then you can better apply the wise directive in Ecclesiastes 9:10 of ancient Israel’s King Solomon to be successful in your life: “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.”

**Mario Seiglie** is the father of four adult daughters and pastor of United Church of God congregations in Garden Grove, California, and Honolulu, Hawaii.

# Finding a Mentor

Having some encouragement and guidance can make a big difference in your life.

by Larry Greider

**Y**ou've probably heard the old saying, "If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up someplace else." There's even a book by that title. The truth is, most people have, at best, only a general idea of where they are going with their lives.

The big questions in life don't have very satisfying answers until you consider that you were made for a purpose by a creator God who formed the earth and its inhabitants. It's vital to realize that there is a God who calls people out of confusion and reveals precious knowledge. Those of us on the staff of *Vertical Thought* want to share with you what God has revealed about His amazing plan for mankind and help you build a successful, purpose-driven life.

We understand that one of the most effective ways to help people achieve their potential is to mentor them. This is not easy, nor is it done in a week of camp or in a weekend seminar.

In his book *Mentoring Leaders*, Carson Pue says: "Few are actually called to be leaders. Those who are must be nurtured and developed one person at a time. To develop—really develop—transformational leaders, the process must be highly personalized. The long-term results of large leadership or motivational events and seminars show little depth in the developing of anointed leaders. Jesus did not do it in a weekend! I am convinced that their leadership will take the right mix of calling, character and competency" (2005, p. 14).

*Vertical Thought* was created with the purpose of helping the next generation of leaders. Challenger II, our leadership training program for young adults in an outdoor setting, which has been featured in this magazine, was likewise developed to mentor tomorrow's leaders. It entails small groups in challenging venues with professional guides. Mountain climbing and wilderness adventures can create a wonderful teaching environment.

However, not everyone can take time out for these adventures and be mentored by our staff. So how can you find a mentor to help you avoid the many pitfalls of an age that is growing increasingly secular and humanistic, denying the very power of God and His plan for mankind?

First, you need to know what you're aiming for—the reason why you were born. This is laid out in Scripture.

At the beginning of the Bible is the account of the creation of Adam and Eve. All human beings are their descendants.

We are, by natural descent, their great, extended family. Adam is called a son of God (Luke 3:38). Therefore, in our natural descent, we are all the children of God. He is our Father by physical creation.

In an article that appeared in the May 1996 issue of *The Good News*, "God's Family: The Reason You Were Born," Roger Foster writes: "Paul explained that 'the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together' (Romans 8:16, 17 [King James and New King James Versions]).

"Do you grasp the enormous significance of Paul's statement? It explains why we are here, the very reason for our existence, why we were born. It gives meaning to life itself. It explains why God wants all human beings to come to the knowledge of the truth. God is creating a family, *His own family*. We have the priceless opportunity to be a part of that family.

"That family relationship—our becoming children of God the Father—is the heart and core of God's great plan for humanity. Notice how Paul expresses it: 'In bringing many sons to glory [salvation], it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy [Christ] and those who are made holy [converted human beings] are of the same family' (Hebrews 2:10, 11, New International Version)."

With our ultimate goal in mind, then, let's consider some steps one can take in finding a mentor and growing together as a spiritual family.

- **Seek out a biblically literate person.** Find someone in your family or church congregation who understands God's purpose for life and spend time talking about *your* true purpose for life. Not many young people today are exposed to this type of thinking. To be effective, mentoring requires a give-and-take in which you ask questions that are important to you and seek answers from a credible source. For Christians, that source is the Holy Bible. So find someone who is biblically literate.

- **Get involved.** Life is to be lived, and lived forever. The gift of God is eternal life, but why would you want to live if you were miserable, frustrated and unfulfilled? God reveals that there is much to learn, and we are to be growing in grace and knowledge. We learn best by doing!

Get involved in church with a youth group that shares the same goals in life!

• **Take time to reflect.** Successful people set goals and work toward them. This entails preparation involving the mind and body. But life can slip by you if you don't take time to reflect on what's important. God gives man one day a week to stop his normal pursuits and rest. The Sabbath rest was meant to be time spent with God in meditating, worshipping and reflecting on what is important.

What good is it to travel at 100 miles an hour if you are

lost, heading in the wrong direction? You should often take time to meditate and reflect on your course in life. Seeking advice from a mentor could help you make wiser decisions to develop your potential in many areas of life.

If you really want to grow, develop competencies and feel you have been called by God, seek a knowledgeable mentor to guide you.

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## A Vertical Thought Commentary

# Boring Teachers or Lazy Students?

by Zach Smith

**W**hy do we have to sit in these boring classes, listen to boring old people tell boring stories and learn about things that aren't going to affect us on a daily basis once we're finally out of this place?

To many, it seems that education is a burden. But why does school have to be so bad? Is it the teacher? The school? The material?

A college student myself, I often hear other students complain about how boring a class is or how horrible the teacher is to listen to. Yet these people *chose* these classes, these teachers and this school! Is school that bad, or are students just lazy?

### School = hard work

A simple Google search on "lazy students" brings up links like "How to Be a Lazy College Student" and [Lazywaytobettergrades.com](http://Lazywaytobettergrades.com). Seriously?

Although I get the sarcasm in the text of these sites, I know there's a natural desire to take it easy. This may be tough to hear, but the truth is that education is supposed to be challenging!

Really learning well requires a willing ear and a hardworking spirit. We can make up excuses about why we don't like a class or why we don't want to read a textbook, but that will get us nowhere. The bottom line is, we can't afford to be lazy!

### What kind of student are you?

Like nearly all recent U.S. presidents, President Barak Obama has spoken to student audiences about education. In a speech on Sept. 8, 2009, he said: "Whatever you resolve to do, I want you to commit to it. I want you to really work at it."

Because of the advice of the president of the United States, a few students just might pursue success. But vertical thinkers may be familiar with similar words from an inspired leader of great wisdom in the Bible, Israel's King Solomon: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

This principle of hard work is a critical value for all vertical thinkers!

Why take the easy way out by not turning in assignments on time, racing mindlessly through homework without really gaining anything from it or sitting in class like a lifeless blob staring at the clock? Why not follow the wise advice of doing everything with all of your might, effort and ability?

### Tips for better learning

Here are a few suggestions for the studious and mighty:

- **Prepare yourself.** Read the textbook and know the topic you're learning about.
- **Get involved.** Active engagement

in class activities goes a long way to help information stick. Chances are the class might be a bit more interesting too... much more so than staring at the clock!

• **Plan ahead.** Monumental tasks don't seem so impossible when you plan your time and break things down into easy steps. Make a list of assignments you need to complete and allow yourself plenty of time to finish them. This will relieve some stress and enable you to put more effort into each activity. (See [eHow.com/how\\_2039704\\_be-good-student.html](http://eHow.com/how_2039704_be-good-student.html) for a list of practical tips.)

Education is challenging, but with genuine hard work, your report card might show top grades this year.

Yet what about assessment on a *higher* level—a *spiritual* evaluation of personal effort? And how can you maintain and strengthen your spiritual life while acquiring an academic education? Read "Christian Through College" in the January-March 2006 issue of *Vertical Thought* to learn more ([VerticalThought.org/issues/vt10/christian.htm](http://VerticalThought.org/issues/vt10/christian.htm)).

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**Zach Smith** is in his last year of study at Cleveland State University, where he is pursuing a bachelor of science degree in education.

Read other weekly commentaries similar to this one at [VerticalThought.org](http://VerticalThought.org).

**T**rying to figure out what's in a kiss has puzzled poets, scientists and the rest of us throughout history. Since the Bible includes the stories of real people, we should naturally expect it to include kissing, and the Book of books clearly speaks of this intriguing conduct. But what it says about the subject is a little different from what many presume.

For instance, the Bible doesn't address technique—how one actually kisses. And it doesn't explain how many calories one burns through kissing or how many muscles are involved. People can figure these things out themselves. (Yes, studies have been done that reveal that smooching burns between 12 and 30 calories every 15 minutes, varying according to a person's weight, and research indicates that 146 muscles are involved in kissing.)

God, having observed people kissing idols—for He sees everything (Job 34:21)—told Elijah (who thought he was the only one remaining who served God), “Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not *kissed* him” (1 Kings 19:18).

The authority figure to whom we should give our allegiance is God. Anticipating Jesus' return to earth to establish the Kingdom of God, Psalm 2 gives the rulers

# Kisses

## Three Imp

by David Treybig

Some people don't realize that the Bible speaks of kissing. Do you know the three different types it mentions?

When it comes to kissing, the Bible records three different types: the kiss of allegiance, the kiss of friendship and the amorous kiss. Let's briefly consider each one.

### The kiss of allegiance

This type of kiss indicates one's respect for an authority figure such as a king or ruler. After anointing Saul king of Israel, the prophet Samuel “*kissed* him” as a sign of respect (1 Samuel 10:1, emphasis added throughout).

The kiss of allegiance is also found in idolatry. Speaking of this sinful practice, Hosea wrote: “Now they sin more and more, and have made for themselves molded images, idols of their silver, according to their skill; all of it is the work of craftsmen. They say of them, ‘Let the men who sacrifice *kiss* the calves!’” (13:2).

of the earth some important advice: “Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. *Kiss* the Son [that is, the Son of God, Jesus], lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him” (verses 10-12).

Of all the types of kisses in the Bible, that of allegiance to God is by far the most important. In summarizing God's instructions into two great commandments, Jesus said, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength’” (Mark 12:29-30).

When we give our allegiance to God, His instructions will guide the decisions we make regarding the remaining types of kisses.

### The kiss of friendship

A kiss was a common way of showing friendship in the Old Testament. Parents kissed their children (Genesis 27:27), and there are numerous examples of relatives greeting each other with a kiss and kissing each other good-bye (Genesis 29:10-15; 31:55; 33:4; 45:15; Exodus 18:7; Ruth 1:9). This nonromantic type of kiss was offered to everyone in the extended family.

In addition to relatives kissing each other, a kiss was also common in friendships (see the example of David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20:41). Continuing this tradition of kissing as a sign of friendship, Paul encouraged Christian

of the love of Christ mutually shared and of the peace and harmony he had brought into their lives.”

In our world today, each family and culture has its own customs and traditions. If your family members greet each other with hugs or handshakes or even with just a verbal hello instead of kisses, that’s fine. The key here is showing respect and goodwill. The same is true in greeting Church brethren and friends. Go with the custom of the area and the preference of the person. Don’t make anyone uncomfortable with how you show friendship.

### The amorous kiss

The amorous kiss is a passionate experience that often stimulates the desire for additional intimacy. Instead of a simple peck on the cheek as one might give a friend, this kind of kiss is usually on the lips. As the lover in the Song of Solomon proclaims, “Let him kiss me with the *kisses of his mouth*—for your love is better than wine” (1:2).

Because this kind of kissing often leads to further sexual activity (Proverbs 7), these kisses should be reserved for marriage. As Song of Solomon 2:7 advises, “Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases.” The best time for learning how to kiss this way is when you are married.

# ortant

Of all the types of kisses in the Bible, that of allegiance to God is by far the most important. His instructions must guide our decisions regarding kissing.



brethren in the New Testament to “greet one another with a holy kiss” (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20). Of course, this was more than just a tradition; it was done in fulfillment of Christ’s teaching that spiritual brethren are to love one another (John 13:34-35).

Providing explanation of this instruction to greet brethren in Christ with a “holy kiss,” the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* notes: “The reminder that it is a ‘holy’ kiss guards it against erotic [sexual] associations. It was a token

As we’ve just seen, kissing is a pretty important subject. For more good advice on having a better relationship with God, knowing how to choose friends, and learning how to best plan your love life be sure to continue reading *Vertical Thought*. You can also search our article archives for these subjects at [www.VerticalThought.org](http://www.VerticalThought.org).

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These 10 questions can help you gauge the godly potential of your relationship.

# “Are We Right for Each Other?”

by Mary Veeneman and Aaron Henderson

**T**he minister sat down and looked at us inquiringly. We gazed giddily back at him, hands clasped tightly under the table. We had been dating for three months. It wasn't too early for a little “pre-premarital counseling,” was it? We were smitten, and we knew it.

When hopes are high and hormones are pulsing, it's easy for logic and sound decision making to get lost in all the excitement. We were brimming with questions. Are we right for each other? How can we think critically and objectively without our higher brain functions being in control? How do we know if this is a healthy relationship?

Answers weren't coming fast enough. But one thing was clear: Our dating had become serious, and we needed to ask the right questions to get the right answers.

What are the right questions? They're the ones with clear-cut answers that don't change, regardless of how “in love” you are. With the help of our parents, pastors, books and married friends, we discovered what questions to ask to gauge the godly potential of our relationship. We hope they will prove useful tools for you too.

## **1. Are you best friends or becoming best friends?**

Okay, great, you love this person. But would you enjoy being around each other if you were only friends? Couples that thrive are made up of great friends who make the decision daily to delight in and serve one another, knowing each other's faults as well as strengths. Spending the rest of your life with someone means you're going to be stuck with each other even when you are moody or stressed. You're going to have to choose to

*God tells us that if we commit everything that we do to Him, our plans will succeed. So, seek out wise counsel and God's will.*

love one another even at those moments when you don't really like each other. After all, marriage isn't a long date—it's a life-long friendship (Proverbs 17:17; Song of Solomon 5:16).

## **2. What do you talk about?**

Your dialogue reflects the state of your relationship. Aside from rhapsodizing about how great you are together and texting each other sweet nothings, what topics do you both find interesting? Are most of your conversations superficial, or do you often discuss the deeper aspects of life? Remember that after decades of togetherness, all you may have left to do is talk (Philippians 4:8; Ephesians 4:29).

## **3. Does the other person have a few good friends or at least one very close friend?**

As the saying goes, "Show me a man's friends, and I will show you the man." If the person can't maintain friendships, what makes you think he or she can maintain a relationship? If your love interest is a long-term loner, ask yourself why. There may be a sensible reason, such as frequent moves or other circumstances that prevent lasting friendships. However, getting to know the other person's friends is always a wise move (Proverbs 13:20; 22:11).

## **4. How does this person treat others?**

How the person treats you isn't necessarily evidence of good character. Pay attention to how he or she treats family members and others. Do people want to be around him or her? How does the person treat his or her parents? These are all good indicators of how he or she will eventually treat you (Philippians 2:3-4; Romans 12:10).

## **5. How do you deal with conflict?**

If you want to make yourself miserable, marry someone you're constantly fighting with. While arguments are inevitable, how the two of you deal with conflict can make or break an otherwise good relationship. You're going to need to find a constructive way of handling strife—one that works for you. If you want to learn how you deal with conflict, find some simple projects to work on together (like writing a magazine article!). You may be surprised at how soon the opportunity to deal constructively with conflict presents itself (Proverbs 19:11; James 1:19).

## **6. Do you share the same values?**

Two people who don't share the same values will inevitably grow apart over time. Putting God first in your relationship ensures that you are working toward the same goals. Begin with the end in mind, and you are more likely to follow the same path to get there. Understanding and living by God's laws and His plan must be the foundation of a lasting partnership (Amos 3:3; 2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

## **7. Is the person happy?**

If you weren't happy *before* you got together, you probably aren't going to be happy *while* you're together in the long run.

Everyone is ecstatic at the beginning of a relationship, but people eventually return to their typical level of happiness or gloom after the hormones subside. Inaccurate or poor self-image problems are a big roadblock to healthy, happy relationships. Misery is contagious. If the person you're dating was unhappy before meeting you, don't expect him or her to be joy and sunshine after the chemical high wears off (Proverbs 15:13, 15).

## **8. What do people whom you respect think of your relationship?**

This person is absolutely spectacular, right? Why don't you compare notes with people who aren't infatuated with him or her? Close friends know you, in some ways, better than you know yourself. An objective observer is able to see potential problems you may have overlooked or dismissed as trivial. These people aren't out to ruin your life. Take their opinions seriously (Proverbs 15:22; 12:15).

## **9. Are you making good use of the time you spend together?**

You should be doing more than just absorbing oxygen together. Hollow distractions can easily supplant good communication. Healthy relationships are constantly maturing because time is being spent learning more about one another and encouraging each other. If a relationship isn't growing, it is regressing. Spending time wisely building each other up will keep things fresh and exciting (Romans 14:19; Hebrews 3:13).

## **10. What fruits has your relationship yielded?**

In the end, you can evaluate a relationship by what it produces. What character traits have you gained because of your friendship with this person? What impact has your relationship had on others? A healthy relationship involves two people who both challenge and sharpen each other, positively affecting themselves as well as the people with whom they come into contact (Proverbs 27:17; Hebrews 10:24).

Whether that first twitterpated "counseling" session was a premature pipe dream or prudent forethought, it sent us down the right path. After nearly three years of questions, there's only one more to ask. We're pretty sure we're going to like the answer.

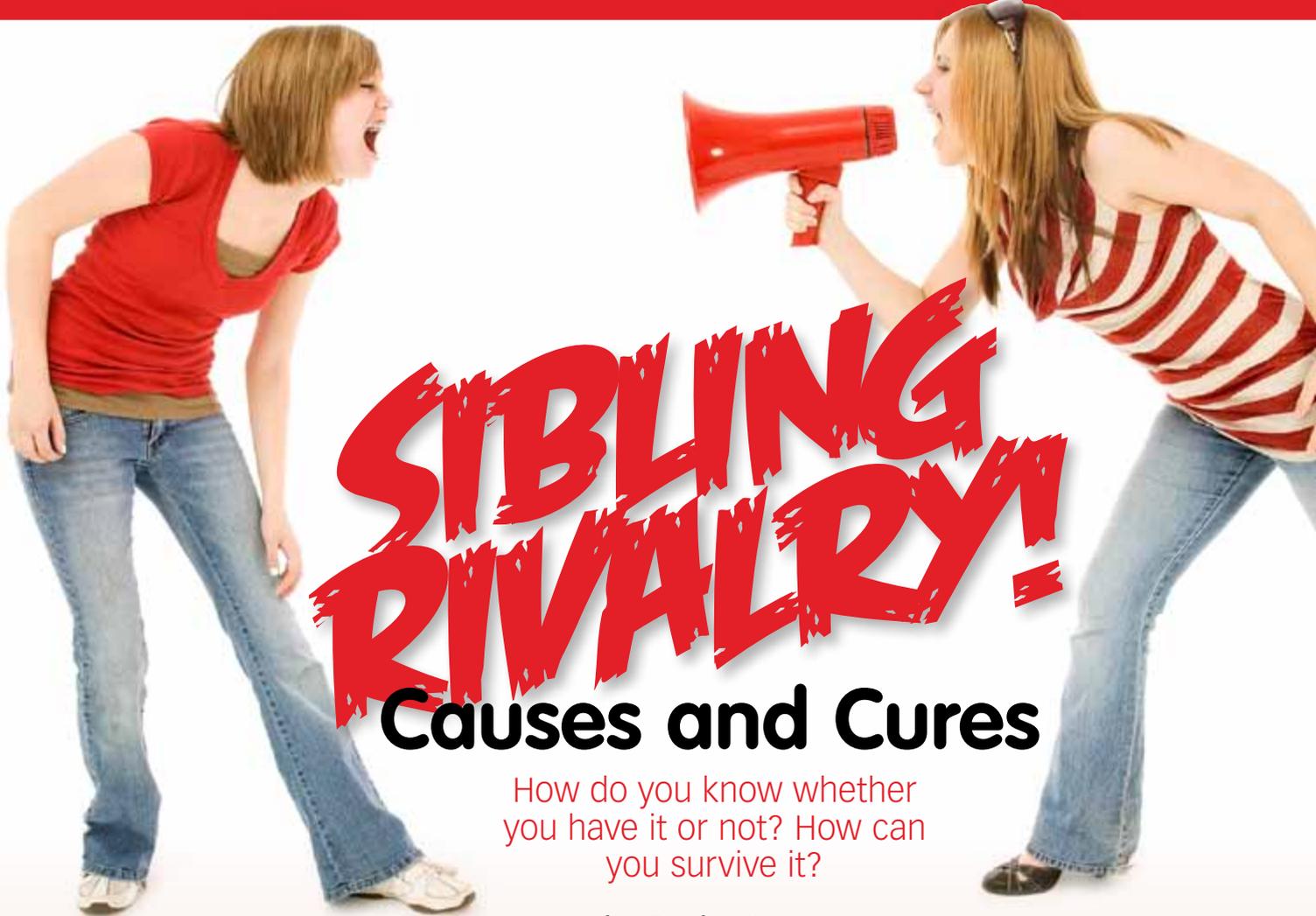
God tells us that if we commit everything that we do to Him, our plans will succeed (Proverbs 16:3). So, seek out wise counsel and God's will. Ask the right questions, and you, too, will find the right answers (Luke 11:9).

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# SIBLING RIVALRY!

## Causes and Cures

How do you know whether you have it or not? How can you survive it?

by Becky Sweat

**B**e honest. Do you ever tease your brother or sister? Do you ever feel envious of your siblings? Are you resentful when your sister gets a lot of attention from Mom and Dad? Does it seem like you and your brother are always trying to outdo each other?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you’re involved with sibling rivalry, which entails brothers and sisters competing with one another, often for their parents’ attention, affection and approval. Most teens experience at least some sibling rivalry.

If it’s only a little friendly competition, that’s not necessarily a bad thing. Sometimes it can keep you working hard. For instance, your brother may have become really good at shooting hoops, which motivates you to brush up on your own basketball skills.

Sibling rivalry becomes a problem when the competition gets so intense that it leads to fighting or arguing between siblings, or when one sibling feels upstaged by the other and starts harboring resentment or hostility. They may even resort to taunting or playing cruel tricks on each other.

### The causes

So what causes teens to view their siblings as rivals? Often it’s due to parental favoritism (perceived or real). “One sibling may think the other is getting more than his or her

fair share of attention, privileges, space or other perceived limited resource,” says Charles Thompson, Ph.D., professor of counselor education and counseling psychology at the University of Tennessee.

Adds family counselor Joshua Straub, Ph.D., of Lynchburg, Virginia: “Parents may not even realize they’re doing it. But a lot of times their personality clicks better with one child than the other. So they give the favored child a lot of special treatment or are easier on that child in terms of punishment. There may already be some bad feelings between the siblings, but this favoritism just adds fuel to the fire.”

Two of the most well-known examples of parental favoritism leading to such rivalry are found in the Bible. The first is that of fraternal twin brothers Jacob and Esau. Their father, Isaac, enjoyed wild game and preferred Esau, who was a skillful hunter. Their mother, Rebekah, loved Jacob more because he was a homebody, staying among the tents. When Rebekah learned that Isaac was going to bestow his blessing on Esau, she tricked Isaac into giving it to Jacob. When Esau heard what happened, he wanted to kill Jacob, who fled to safety.

When Jacob became a father, he repeated the mistake his parents made. He openly showed favoritism to Joseph, his 11th son but the firstborn of Rachel, his favorite wife. When Jacob gave Joseph a special gift—a brightly colored coat—his brothers resented their father’s partiality and

consequently hated Joseph. It was not long before the brothers threw him into a pit and, dissuaded from killing him by one of the brothers, sold him into slavery.

Of course, parents showing favoritism is not the only contributor to sibling rivalry. Contention is particularly intense when children are within three years' age of one another and of the same gender, according to Straub. Moreover, if the parents are stressed or if the home life isn't stable, the kids pick up on that anxiety, making them more agitated with each other. Also, if there's an increase in conflict between a child and his father, that child will be more quarrelsome with his siblings.

With teens, there are common factors at work. "The teenage years are a time of identity formation," Straub says. "Teenagers are constantly asking the question: 'How am I doing?' They want to know that they're doing well, and that they have the approval of their parents. They're also trying to differentiate themselves from their family and find their own identity." Through it all, he says, teens compete with and compare themselves to their siblings because "they're trying to find their own place in the world."

## The cures

A playful rivalry and some lighthearted ribbing with your siblings is one thing. But if you're always embroiled in heated conflicts with your brother or sister, that's something that needs to be dealt with—before a permanent rift develops between the two of you. Try taking the following steps:

### • Pray about the situation.

Pray for your brothers and sisters and for your relationship with them. Ask God to help you see your part in all this, to see if there's any way you're interacting with them that you shouldn't be. Ask Him to give you the power to overcome this problem. He will.

### • Change your perspective.

Look at the situation from your sibling's point of view. That helped 19-year-old Brianna. "I was upset when I found my parents were giving my sister \$50 gas money every weekend when she comes home from college," she admits. "They don't give me gas money. But then I started thinking, I live at home and I have a job. My sister doesn't work, and she has a lot of college bills. My parents are just giving her money so she can afford to drive home on the weekends and visit us." When you objectively look at the facts, you may realize there's no favoritism going on at all.

### • Show your support.

This may seem like just the opposite of what you want to do, but try to encourage your brothers and sisters to do their best and build them up. Congratulate them on their achievements and share their happiness. Sincerely compliment them. Take a genuine interest in their lives. If your sister is working on a school project, ask her to tell you

about it. If your brother is on the school swim team, go to some of his meets. If this seems hard to do, ask God to help you. If you're sincerely cheering on your siblings, most likely they'll reciprocate.

### • Don't compare yourselves.

You may look at your brother's abilities and think to yourself, "He's better than I am at everything!" But realize he may be thinking the same about you. Everyone has talents, and no one will succeed in everything all through life. Let your siblings shine in their own areas of strength. Rather than wish you had the same strengths and abilities as your brother or sister, look for your own talents and work on developing those. Focus on achieving your own personal best rather than competing with your sibling.

### • Build positive interactions.

Ask your sibling to take part in some kind of fun, noncompetitive activity with you. Go to a movie or take a walk together. Spend several hours at the park or pool. Treat your sister or brother to pizza. Give yourselves a chance to do something enjoyable and positive with each other so you're not always getting on each other's nerves.

### • Talk to your parents.

If you feel like you're being ignored at home or that your brother or sister is always in the spotlight, share your concerns with your parents. They may not even realize how they are coming across. But don't attack your parents or accuse them of "playing favorites." Just tell them how you've been feeling. Together you can figure out ways to remedy the situation.

### • Look at the long term.

Realize that no matter how frustrating your siblings might be right now, it doesn't always have to be that way. "Many adults who are close to their brothers and sisters will tell you they didn't get along with each other growing up," Thompson says. He says a lot of times, as people approach adulthood, they start realizing how much they need their siblings and work harder at these relationships. The sooner you start doing this, the better.

Chances are, your siblings will be the ones you turn to for support and encouragement in your adult years. The Bible tells us that "a brother is born to share troubles" (Proverbs 17:17, Revised English Bible).

Unlike friends who come and go throughout your life, your siblings are always going to be your siblings. "They're the only people who know what your family was really like and have that history to share with you," Straub says. "There is a bond with your sibling that is different from any other."

Sure, your siblings might be irritating to you right now, but don't give up on them. Remember the big picture. You're family, and over the long haul you're going to need each other. So try to keep a sense of humor, a positive mind-set and apply some of the tips in this article. If you do, things are bound to get better.

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# Answers for Genesis

**T**he authors of a 2009 book titled *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do to Stop It* have found that up to two thirds of young people eventually leave their church. Why? One of the primary reasons, these authors discovered, was that the youth quit believing that the first chapters of Genesis are true. With the constant bombardment from schools and the media against the veracity of the book of Genesis, it's no wonder this is the result.

This ongoing dilemma is one of the reasons we continue addressing some of the questions young people have about the book of Genesis. Of course, even apart from that, this book that lays the foundation for the rest of Scripture merits a lot of attention.

## Some believe the table of nations in Genesis 10 is mostly fictional. Are they right?

Genesis 10 traces the genealogies of mankind after the Flood through the descendants of Noah's three sons up to shortly before the time of the Hebrew patriarch Abraham. The chapter has been called the table of nations because the descendants listed fathered the 70 nations that eventually overspread the earth after the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel.

But how accurate is the record, really?

Here are some quotes from some prominent archaeologists and historians about the table of nations.

- William Albright, often referred to as the father of biblical archaeology, stated: The tenth chapter of Genesis ... stands absolutely alone in ancient literature, without a remote parallel, even among the Greeks, where we find the closest approach to a distribution of peoples in a genealogical framework... Many of the names of peoples and countries mentioned in this chapter have been discovered on the monuments for the first time... The Table of Nations remains an astonishingly accurate document (*Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, 1955, pp. 70-71).

- *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* notes: As a literary and historiographic document the *Table of Nations* is without parallel in the ancient world. What makes it even more remarkable is its contrast to the parochialism [local focus] that tended to plague the Israelites throughout their history. In one quick stroke the

'table' puts the nation's history into its proper perspective. Although the Hebrews were the specially chosen agents of divine revelation, they were but one member of the universal family of nations, all of whom had a common origin (1988, Vol. 4, p. 712, emphasis added throughout).

- Anthropologist Arthur Custance, an author dedicated to bridging science and theology, wrote: Had this Table been designed for propaganda purposes (to establish Israel's position as of equal dignity though not sharing some of the glories of the surrounding peoples) or had it been merely the work of some early historian creating his own data with a comparatively free hand, then almost certainly some device would have been adopted for deliberately setting forth not only the high status of his own ancestors, but the very low status of that of his enemies ...

"In complete contrast, it would be difficult to prove with certainty of what nationality the author of Genesis 10 was. We assume he was a Hebrew, but if the amount of attention given to any particular line that is traced were used as a clue to his identity, he might have been a Japhethite, a Canaanite, or even an Arab. This is remarkable and shows enormous restraint on the author's part, *the kind of restraint which suggests the hand of God upon him* (*A Study of the Names in Genesis 10*, 1975, chapter 1, online book edition).

- Again from *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: "If the 'table' is allowed to speak for itself in its present canonical context, several themes seem to be emphasized or implied. (1) The providential fulfillment of the Noachian blessing and the population of the earth after the flood proceeded in the main along ordered lines. (2) The world is one united family, all of whose members trace their origin back to a common ancestor, Noah. (3) The segmentation of Noah's family is reflected in the present existence of separate nationality groups, recognizable by their distinctive locations, languages, and political structures. (4) The call of Abraham and Israelite history in general take place within the context of universal history, thus the effects of patriarchal revelation are felt throughout the earth (1988, Vol. 4, p. 712).

Even after being subjected to extensive analysis by noted scholars, the table of nations has stood the test of time.

## Was there really a confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel?

Secular teachers often dismiss this biblical account as a

# Genesis

## Part 7

Here are more frequently asked questions about Genesis, the book of origins.

by Mario Seiglie

myth, but when we examine the evidence we find that a great deal exists about both the confusion of languages and the Tower of Babel.

Many linguists (those who study languages) readily admit they have no feasible explanation for how or why there are so many languages on the earth.

For instance, Dr. Mario Pei, a world-renowned linguist and author, states: If there is one thing on which all linguists are fully agreed, it is that the problem of the origin of human speech is still unsolved... Human language, in contrast with animal cries, displays infinite variability, both in time and in space... In one sense, the reason for the changeability of language is as mysterious as the origin of language itself (*The Story of Language*, 1965, pp. 21-23).

Presently, we know of some 5,000 different languages, with seven main branches, spoken around the world. About 1,000 are doomed to disappear within the next two decades, due in large part to the major languages growing in cultural and economic dominion.

Surprisingly, as it may seem counterintuitive, the more advanced a culture becomes, the *simpler* the language gets, since people tend to simplify and abbreviate their concepts and words. Inversely, the most primitive tribes have *the most complex languages*. For example, the African Swahili language has 26 different functions for nouns!

Dr. Pei notes, It seems at least partly established that language changes least rapidly when its speakers are isolated from other communities, and most rapidly when they find themselves, so to speak, at the crossroads of the world (*ibid.*, p. 23).

This remarkable feature shows that language has not evolved, as many assume, but instead has actually devolved from a very sophisticated system. The diversity and complexity of language is evidence that God, not human beings, is the original author of languages.

What about the fabled Tower of Babel? The Babylonians, or the inhabitants of Babel who remained in the area, apparently were very proud of this tower, for they built many more. There are 35 ruins of towers, called *ziggurats*, found in the region. They had seven levels with a pagan temple at the top, and they may have become a pattern for the first Egyptian pyramids.

*The New Bible Dictionary* explains: Babel, or the gate of God, called also Babylon. The name of one of the chief

cities founded by Nimrod in the land of Shinar (Sumer), ancient Babylonia. According to Babylonian tradition, the tower [i.e., the ancient ziggurat of Babylon] was founded by the god Marduk and destroyed by Sargon [king of Akkad or Agade] in 2350 B.C. ... A text of Sharkalisharri, king of Agade (c. 2250 B.C.) mentions the restoration of the temple-tower at Babylon, implying the existence of an earlier sacred city on the site... After Sharkalisharri, the earliest reference to the ziggurat at Babylon is to its restoration by Esarhaddon [king of Assyria] in 681-665 B.C. This was named in Sumerian 'Etemenanki'—'the Building of the Foundation-platform of Heaven and Earth.'

"It is very probable that such a sacred edifice followed an earlier plan. The tower was severely damaged in the war of 652-648 B.C. but restored again by Nebuchadnezzar II [king of Babylon] (605-562 B.C.)... The ziggurat at Babylon was demolished by Xerxes in 472 B.C., and though Alexander [the Great] cleared the rubble prior to its restoration, this was thwarted by his death. The bricks were subsequently removed by the local inhabitants, and today the site of Etemenanki is a pit as deep as the original construction was high (1982, pp. 110-111).

Some, however, contend that the original Tower of Babel was located 11 miles southwest in modern Birs Nimrud—anciently called *Borsippa*, meaning tongue-tower. Nebuchadnezzar also built a great ziggurat over an earlier structure here, stating: "This edifice, the house of the Seven Lights of the Earth, the most ancient monument of Borsippa, a former king built it (they reckon forty-two ages), but *he did not complete its head. Since a remote time people had abandoned it, without order expressing their words. Since that time the earthquake and the thunder had dispersed its sun-dried clay; the bricks of the casing had been split, and the earth of the interior had been scattered in heaps* (quoted in *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, "Tongues, Confusion of").

In any case, the biblical account of the Tower of Babel is not a myth. The building of such enormous mud-brick towers has solid historical backing. And clearly the tradition of the unfinished tower due to language confusion was known at the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

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**Mario Seiglie** is the father of four adult daughters and pastor of United Church of God congregations in Garden Grove, California, and Honolulu, Hawaii.

by Emily Quant

# Spanish Land More

I thought I knew exactly what I was doing, but my trip to Spain yielded some unexpected results.

**I**t was my junior year at Baylor University, and I thought I had my college career comfortably under control. I had completed most of my requirements with the exception of one Spanish class. Three years had elapsed since I had read, studied or spoken Spanish; and with this small fact I knew that I was going to struggle.

**It was tougher than I thought. After one week, I was hopelessly behind and dropped the class. Considering my alternatives, I had the brilliant idea that studying abroad in Madrid would be the perfect way to learn the language and fulfill my college requirement. Little did I know that I was about to learn more than just Spanish.**

With my suitcase in one hand and a metro map in the other, I began to roll my belongings through the streets of Madrid. After 12 hours of travel, having flown from Dallas, Texas, I was more than ready for a shower and settling into my new apartment.

As I walked up Calle Manuel and found the apartment that would be my new home, I was greeted by an older woman with dark eyes. Her name was Carmen, and being a native Spaniard she greeted me with a double kiss and rapidly asked questions in Spanish. At that moment I began to think back to my Spanish classes in high school, wishing I had paid more attention! Not knowing much English, she welcomed me in with hand gestures and pointed down a long hallway to where I would be staying for the semester.

This seemed less frightening when I saw that my three other roommates were American students who had the same stunned and overwhelmed look on their faces. We talked about our flights, our expectations and our initial impressions of Spain. We shared the reasons we decided to study abroad for a semester, and they were shocked to find that I was not majoring in the language. To be completely and humbly honest, I did not hold a candle to these girls who seemed to be comfortable holding a conversation in Spanish. My first challenge soon arrived.

## **Calamari for dinner**

Our first night, Carmen made us fried calamari (squid),

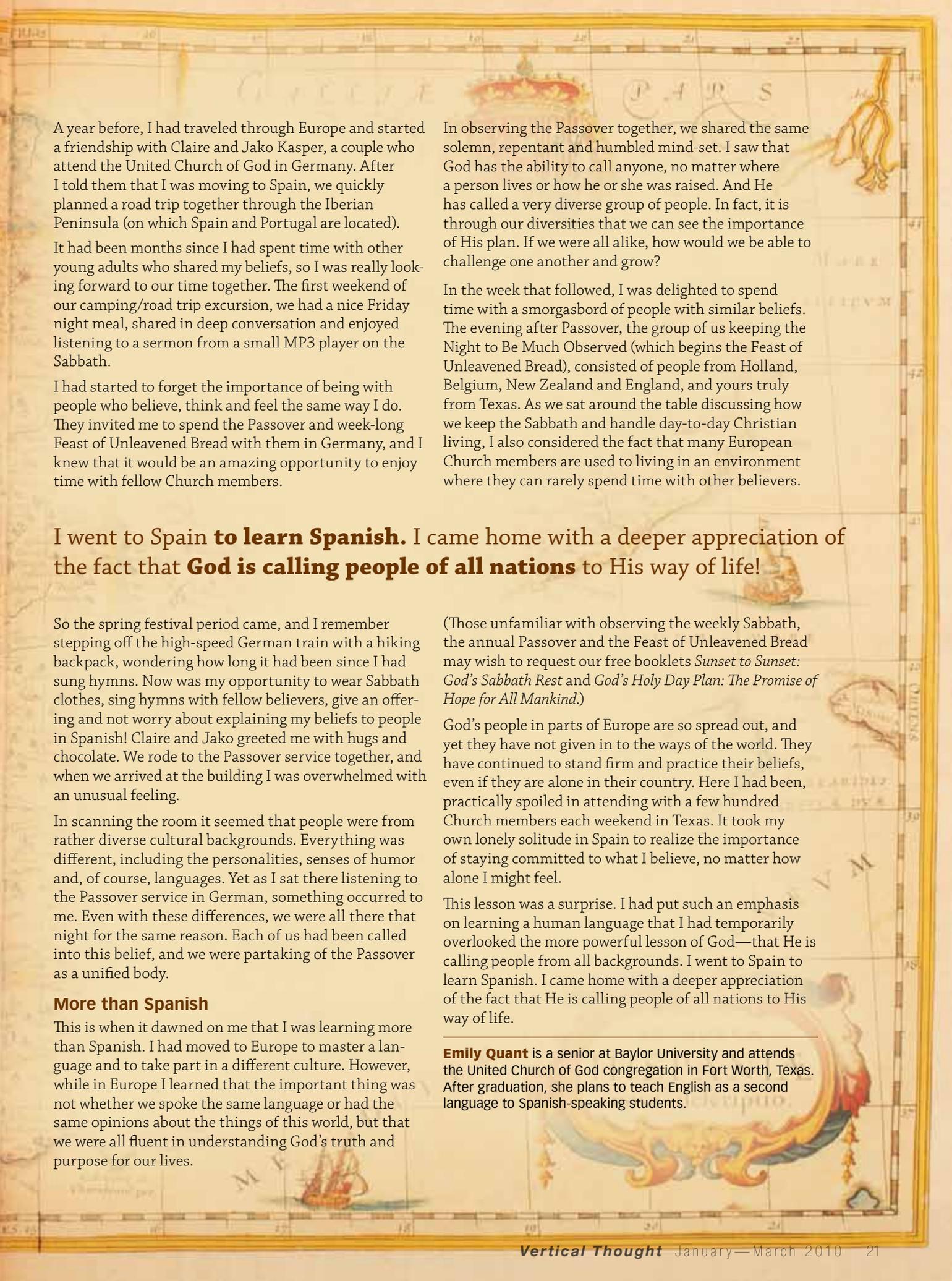
and in my fractured Spanish, I politely explained that I could not eat the meal she'd prepared. Then, with Spanish-English dictionary in hand, I made a list of the other meats that I couldn't eat. What a way to make a first impression—rejecting her first meal! I was sure Carmen must have thought I was rude, and she soon learned that I was different in more respects than just my diet.

Every Friday night Carmen noticed how I never went out partying with my other roommates. She also inquired about the “movies” I watched on Saturdays. They were not the typical forms of entertainment the other students watched!

I explained that my church had sermons online that I could watch or listen to regardless of my location or country. Spain, a country rich in religious history and predominately Catholic, did not have many who shared in my beliefs. It was difficult to keep the Sabbath alone, and I knew that this feeling of loneliness would grow with time. I had never considered how much my church was actually a family. Being away from my family brought on a feeling of homesickness.

## **Road trip!**

It was finally time for spring break, and although many of my school friends had planned trips outside Spain, I wanted to stay and fully experience the culture. For centuries, this area has been famous for richly unique qualities of food, dancing and landscape.



A year before, I had traveled through Europe and started a friendship with Claire and Jako Kasper, a couple who attend the United Church of God in Germany. After I told them that I was moving to Spain, we quickly planned a road trip together through the Iberian Peninsula (on which Spain and Portugal are located).

It had been months since I had spent time with other young adults who shared my beliefs, so I was really looking forward to our time together. The first weekend of our camping/road trip excursion, we had a nice Friday night meal, shared in deep conversation and enjoyed listening to a sermon from a small MP3 player on the Sabbath.

I had started to forget the importance of being with people who believe, think and feel the same way I do. They invited me to spend the Passover and week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread with them in Germany, and I knew that it would be an amazing opportunity to enjoy time with fellow Church members.

**I went to Spain to learn Spanish. I came home with a deeper appreciation of the fact that God is calling people of all nations to His way of life!**

So the spring festival period came, and I remember stepping off the high-speed German train with a hiking backpack, wondering how long it had been since I had sung hymns. Now was my opportunity to wear Sabbath clothes, sing hymns with fellow believers, give an offering and not worry about explaining my beliefs to people in Spanish! Claire and Jako greeted me with hugs and chocolate. We rode to the Passover service together, and when we arrived at the building I was overwhelmed with an unusual feeling.

In scanning the room it seemed that people were from rather diverse cultural backgrounds. Everything was different, including the personalities, senses of humor and, of course, languages. Yet as I sat there listening to the Passover service in German, something occurred to me. Even with these differences, we were all there that night for the same reason. Each of us had been called into this belief, and we were partaking of the Passover as a unified body.

### More than Spanish

This is when it dawned on me that I was learning more than Spanish. I had moved to Europe to master a language and to take part in a different culture. However, while in Europe I learned that the important thing was not whether we spoke the same language or had the same opinions about the things of this world, but that we were all fluent in understanding God's truth and purpose for our lives.

In observing the Passover together, we shared the same solemn, repentant and humbled mind-set. I saw that God has the ability to call anyone, no matter where a person lives or how he or she was raised. And He has called a very diverse group of people. In fact, it is through our diversities that we can see the importance of His plan. If we were all alike, how would we be able to challenge one another and grow?

In the week that followed, I was delighted to spend time with a smorgasbord of people with similar beliefs. The evening after Passover, the group of us keeping the Night to Be Much Observed (which begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread), consisted of people from Holland, Belgium, New Zealand and England, and yours truly from Texas. As we sat around the table discussing how we keep the Sabbath and handle day-to-day Christian living, I also considered the fact that many European Church members are used to living in an environment where they can rarely spend time with other believers.

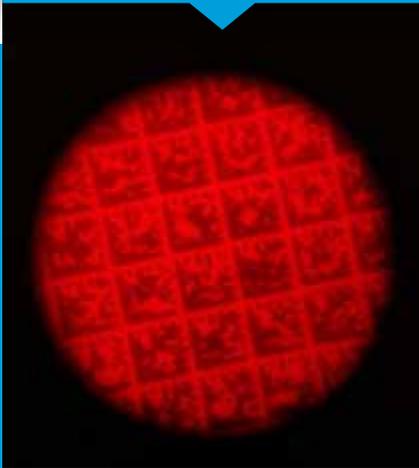
(Those unfamiliar with observing the weekly Sabbath, the annual Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread may wish to request our free booklets *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest* and *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.)

God's people in parts of Europe are so spread out, and yet they have not given in to the ways of the world. They have continued to stand firm and practice their beliefs, even if they are alone in their country. Here I had been, practically spoiled in attending with a few hundred Church members each weekend in Texas. It took my own lonely solitude in Spain to realize the importance of staying committed to what I believe, no matter how alone I might feel.

This lesson was a surprise. I had put such an emphasis on learning a human language that I had temporarily overlooked the more powerful lesson of God—that He is calling people from all backgrounds. I went to Spain to learn Spanish. I came home with a deeper appreciation of the fact that He is calling people of all nations to His way of life.

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**Emily Quant** is a senior at Baylor University and attends the United Church of God congregation in Fort Worth, Texas. After graduation, she plans to teach English as a second language to Spanish-speaking students.



## Bye-Bye, Bar Codes?

Researchers at MIT have developed a new type of information tag called a Bokode. The tag is 3 millimeters in diameter and can encode information about a product or a venue that can be read by a standard mobile phone camera. The Bokode is a tiny light-emitting diode with a mask and a lens. A camera can read information directly from the front of the tag or from the side.

The creators of the Bokode envision many uses, one of which is interaction with Google Streetview. Information gathered about locations via photos taken by Google vehicles would then be accessible on Google Maps (Jonathan Fildes, "Barcode Replacement Shown Off," *News.BBC.co.uk*, July 27, 2009).

## Glow-in-the-Dark People

Recent research in Japan has determined that human beings emit very small levels of visible light. Scientists used extremely sensitive cameras to record the light emissions from male volunteers. "Body glow" was determined to rise and fall through the course of the day. It was lowest at 10 a.m. and highest at 4 p.m. (Charles Choi, "Strange! Humans

Glow in Visible Light," *LiveScience.com*, July 22, 2009).

According to the tests, faces glowed most of all. We have come to know a great deal about biology, but surprising news like this demonstrates that we still have a lot more to learn about the intricacies of God's creative handiwork!

# 12,000,000,000<sup>+</sup>

(12 billion plus)

**Number of devices Intel Corp. estimates will be capable of connecting to TV and video content by 2015.**

—"Future Is TV-Shaped, Says Intel," *News.BBC.co.uk*, Sept. 25, 2009

## Row, Row, Row Your Boat ...

Do you know what the first American collegiate sport was? Thinking football? Nope, it was rowing.

The number of people in America today that regularly compete in racing shells (long narrow boats with oars) down rivers and across lakes is 85,000, which is up from 32,000 in 1986. Another 65,000 people row just for fun. Regattas (rowing matches) can draw large crowds. Over 300,000 attend the annual two-day event in Boston, Massachusetts.

Most rowers hit the water by 5:30 in the morning and train several hours a day. They typically don't peak in their abilities until their late 20s. However, lack of coverage by sports television stations has kept the sport from growing in the multibillion-dollar sports



industry. Some suspect that rowing is considered too sedate, but community rowing associations hope to keep the sport on the map (Skip Rozin, "Forever Rowing Upstream," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 18, 2009).

## TV Everywhere!

If you were ever overwhelmed by the vast array of TV sets available in appliance stores, things are about to get even more complicated! Executives at Intel predict that TV-capable devices will multiply in number and variety of sizes, so that everyone on the planet will be able to have one or more screens around him or her.

With the increase of television and video viewing done on the Internet, companies are developing TV-like devices that interact with the Internet. However, concerned that consumers don't want to be snowed with televisions as complicated as computers, they are seeking simplicity in design. Adding to the challenge, three-dimensional television is not far off. Samsung and Mitsubishi have already launched 3D TV products, and Sony and Panasonic will follow up next year (Maggie Shiels, "Future Is TV-shaped, Says Intel," *News.BBC.co.uk*, Sept. 25, 2009).

## Eating as a Family Proves Beneficial

A Columbia University survey reveals that teenagers who regularly eat dinner with their families have a lower likelihood of developing substance abuse problems. They also tend to get better grades in school. That seems like a pretty easy way to improve performance in class!

Sadly, only half of American teenagers regularly have family dinnertime, which means a lot of young people are missing out on the benefits. Talking over the day's events is key teaching time for parents. A Harvard University study finds that family dinners help children develop their language skills too ("Family Dinner Linked to Better Grades for Teens," ABCnews.go.com, Sept. 13, 2005).



## Bracelets Send Wrong Signals

A middle school in Colorado has asked parents to not allow their students to wear a certain type of "jelly" bracelet. School administrators learned that certain colors may indicate varying degrees of sexual activity either experienced by or willing to be engaged in by students. However, many female students maintain that the bracelets are merely a fashion statement and have no such connotations (Dan Frosch, "Schools Ban Bracelet Used in Sex Game," *The New York Times*, Sept. 12, 2009).



Regardless of students' intent, we should keep in mind the biblical principles of maintaining a good reputation and staying above reproach. We should avoid any semblance of condoning or participating in evil, even if that means abstaining from a certain type of apparel.

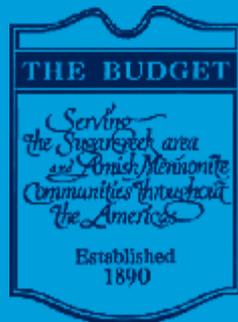
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[VerticalThought.org](http://VerticalThought.org)



## Newspaper Thrives in Amish Community



*The Budget* of Sugarcreek, Ohio, is a newspaper covering Amish community news around the United States. In a world economy where newspapers are closing up shop because of high prices and Internet competition, *The Budget* has the opposite problem. Its Amish readers are resisting plans by the publisher to establish an online version of the national paper. These readers and contributors, who by reason of their religious beliefs shun certain technologies, including computers, are not anxious for their contributions to the paper to be available to everyone on the Internet (Meghan Barr, "Amish News Slow, Steady," Associated Press in *The Washington Times*, Aug. 21, 2009).

**"Teens having family dinners five or more times a week were 42 percent less likely to drink alcohol, 59 percent less likely to smoke cigarettes and 66 percent less likely to try marijuana"** ("Family Dinner Linked to Better Grades for Teens," ABCnews.go.com, Sept. 13, 2005).

## Ancient Wall Unearthed in Jerusalem

Part of a massive 3,700-year-old defensive wall has been uncovered in Jerusalem on the slopes of the Kidron Valley below the City of David. Experts believe it is part of a passage that led to a spring protected by fortifications. The spring, the Gihon, is still in use today.

Excavation director Ronny Reich speculates that there may be further architectural ruins behind the wall. It is believed that ancient Canaanites built the enormous boulder wall, but excavators are at a loss to know how they completed the project and created such straight-sided fortifications (Kevin Flower, "Massive' Ancient Wall Uncovered in Jerusalem," CNN.com, Sept. 7, 2009).

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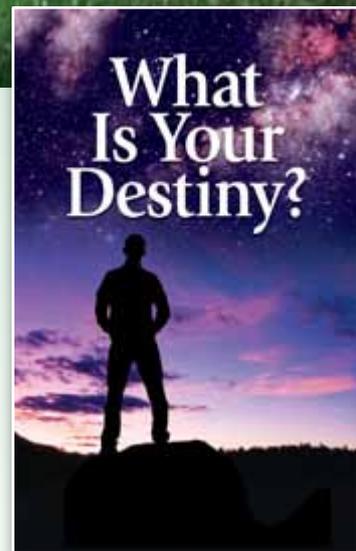


Imagine wielding a **sword**  
and defeating the powers  
of **darkest evil ...**

Imagine strapping on the  
**helmet** and **shield** of a  
gladiator and stepping into the arena ...

Imagine **matching wits** with  
archenemies in order to  
defend a **mighty Kingdom ...**

Imagine ...  
***your destiny!***



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