

Virtual Christian Magazine

Hope And Encouragement For The Real World

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.”—Exodus 20:12
“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...”—Romans 8:16-17

Volume 9 Number 5

June 2007

“Fatherhood”

By Dan Strathern

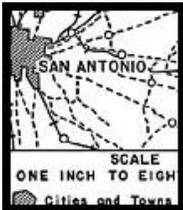
Page 3



Maintain Your True Course

By Arthur Morris

Page 4



Meditation on God’s Word helps us navigate through the obstacles of life to reach our destination—God’s Kingdom!

A Few Good Men in Some Honorable Roles

By Hector M. Earle

Page 7



Often people look at the outward appearance of a man to judge who he is. However, only God’s standards should be used to discover the real man within.

Go Ahead, Rock the Boat

By Lorelei Nettles

Page 11



We all know the old saying, "Don't rock the boat." But there are cases where this is neither helpful nor correct.

The Train Ride

By Colin Ogles

Page 14



We're all passengers on a metaphorical express train. Why are so few concerned about the destination?

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

By Robert Berendt

Page 17



As human beings, we need physical food to survive. But the most important "bread of life" comes to us from Jesus Christ through God's Word and Holy Spirit, which replenish us.

Letters to the Editor

Page 19

Virtual Christian Magazine Staff

Lorelei Nettles - Managing Editor
Jada Howell - Issue Editor
Mike Bennett - Editors
Gayle Hoefker - Editors
Jada Howell - Editors
Patrick Kansa - Editors

David Meidinger - Editors
Suzanne Morgan - Editors
Amy Stephens - Editors
Debbie Werner - Editors
Jack Elliott - Reviewers
Eric Evans - Reviewers

Don Henson - Reviewers
Don Hooser - Reviewers
Leroy Neff - Reviewers
Becky Bennett - Proofreader
Chris Rowland - Web Design

[Copyright 2007 United Church of God, an International Association](#)

“Fatherhood”

By Dan Strathern

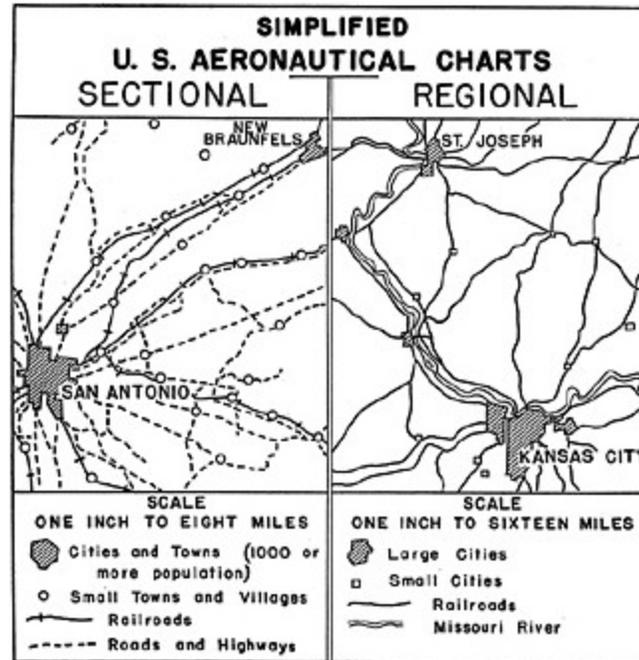


There is praise for the man who goes out into space
To challenge a frontier unknown;
There is praise for the man who sets out with a goal
To reach the North Pole on his own;
There is praise for the man who seeks riches and wealth
To the uttermost ends of the earth;
But, where is the praise for the family man
Who puts coals on his family's hearth?
A hero is someone who goes out into the fight
To perform the ultimate deed;
A hero is someone who answers the call
Whenever his country is in need;
A hero is the champion who comes galloping forth
Whenever the downtrodden plead;
But, the real hero's the one who keeps plodding along
Because he has children to feed.
The world always has time for the gallant, it seems
Whose thirst for adventure assuage;
They worship the star whose immaculate face
Appears daily on every front page;
They devour every word, every scrap of verbiage
From the present most popular sage;
But none ever considers the family man
Who works hard for his menial wage.
My father was never the shining white knight
Who responded to each such occasion;
Who was always out there in full battle gear
When an enemy threatened invasion;
But, the "home front" was where all his battles were fought
And, therein lay his patriotic persuasion;
He strove on till he died, teaching us to survive
To be part of the real strength and backbone of our nation.

Maintain Your True Course

By Arthur Morris

Meditation on God's Word helps us navigate through the obstacles of life to reach our destination—God's Kingdom!



EVER SINCE I WAS A NAVIGATOR and an aircraft performance engineer in the Air Force and a few years later came into God's Church, I have been intrigued by the physical analogy of both those endeavors to the spiritual calling God has given to His people.

Each flight we flew was called a mission, and today we are constantly reminded of the mission of the Church. We even have a mission statement.

A navigator's job was to guide the aircraft to its destination in spite of all the obstacles along the way. And the aircraft performance engineer's job was to be sure all systems functioned in the most efficient way so we would have sufficient fuel and power to reach the destination.

In the Strategic Air Command, our mission was to be ever poised and ready to fight against an "evil empire" threatening to overtake the world. I'm certain these terms have a familiar ring to most anyone in God's Church today.

Stay on the true course

To illustrate this analogy, let's consider the work of the aircraft navigator. For a mission, he takes the map called an aeronautical chart and draws a line on it from the point of departure to the destination. This line is called the *true course*. It is the course he wants the aircraft to follow, but there are several obstacles he will invariably have to deal with to keep the aircraft on course.

All his calculations are based on true north, but his magnetic compass does not point to true north. Two factors throw it off as much as 8 degrees. One is called “variation,” which changes with the magnetic fields in each geographical location; the lines are plotted on the chart showing the degrees plus or minus that must be adjusted on the magnetic compass. The second thing is called “deviation,” which is the deflecting of the compass due to magnetic influences within the aircraft itself. These factors are known, and the navigator can compensate for them.

A navigator's job was to guide the aircraft to its destination in spite of all the obstacles along the way.

The unknown factor is the wind being encountered, which is seldom constant throughout the mission, and may vary up to 360 degrees along the course. So, the navigator has to take a fix every so many minutes to find his true position.

God's Word, our compass

The Bible is our magnetic compass, and the different translations each have their own variations and deviations that require correction. For example, the *Scofield Reference Bible* is a good study Bible, but Scofield believes in the “Rapture Theory,” which can be easily disproved. We need to take note of these types of variations, or they will throw us off course.

So, let's say you have prepared to embark on the spiritual flight to God's Kingdom. You have plotted your true course from wherever you are now to God's Kingdom. You have adjusted your magnetic compass so it points to true north. You have asked for the full power of the Holy Spirit received at baptism. You have lifted off and are on your way to God's Kingdom. Now, how can you be sure you stay on your true course, when the wind, or in our case, “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2), is doing all he can to blow you off course?



The way a true Christian stays on course is by often taking a “spiritual fix” to determine his position and then making any course corrections necessary to get back on true course. The navigator calls these *alter headings*. Regular study of the Bible and periodic meditation on God's precepts helps us determine our true position and enables us to stay on course to the Kingdom. We pause and look where we are spiritually versus where we should be, and then correct our course to head directly toward the Kingdom.

We have the knowledge, the tools and the power (the Holy Spirit) to make it to our destination, the Kingdom of God, but we don't know how much, or how subtly, we are being blown off course. Now is a good time to begin the habit of meditating often to stay on our course to the Kingdom. *Meditation* is first mentioned in Genesis where Isaac went out in the fields in the evening to meditate and at that time his lovely bride, Rebekah, arrived on the camel.

Meditate on God's Word

The authors of the Psalms speak often of meditation. Psalm 1:1-2 states, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night." (Notice throughout the Bible a Christian's life is referred to as a "walk" or a "journey" or a "motion" going to a destination led by God.)

The way a true Christian stays on course is by often taking a "spiritual fix" to determine his position and then... to get back on true course.

He meditates day and night, not just occasionally during the year, showing we should meditate often. The reward for staying on course is a prosperous and abundant life as described in verse 3, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper."

In Psalm 5:1, David's prayer for guidance begins: "Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation." In verse 8 he says: "Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; make Your way straight before my face."

In Psalm 19:12-13 David asks God: "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression."

The next verse of this beautiful psalm shows these thoughts originated in David's meditation and his desire to be on his true course. Psalm 19:14 says, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer."

In Psalm 63:5-8 David wrote: "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches...My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me." Notice, he follows Christ very closely through meditation.

Meditation on God's laws of love, with the needed course corrections, is the way to constantly stay on course to the Kingdom.

David stayed on course through meditation much of his life, but when he didn't make course corrections, the "prince of the power of the air" was able to blow him way off course, such as in the time he numbered Israel against God's command, or in the affair with Bathsheba. Had he meditated regularly through these times, he probably would not have made these mistakes and the prophet would not have had to come and correct his path.

Meditation on God's laws of love, with the needed course corrections, is the way to constantly stay on course to the Kingdom. Paul tells Timothy to do this in 1 Timothy 4:12. "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

In verses 15 and 16, he continues, "Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."

Bright and Morning Star

Navigators often determine their true position by celestial navigation because the stars are fixed in their position in the sky. They take a reading on two or three stars using a sextant, and where the resulting lines cross on the chart is their true position.

In determining our true spiritual position, we need to take a reading on only one star, the Bright and Morning Star. In Revelation 22:16 we read, "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

This Star is forever fixed in the universe. We need to continually ask ourselves, "How does my life compare to this Star? Am I on track or do I need to make a course correction, an alter heading?" Regular study of God's Word and frequent meditation helps us to stay on a true course to God's Kingdom.

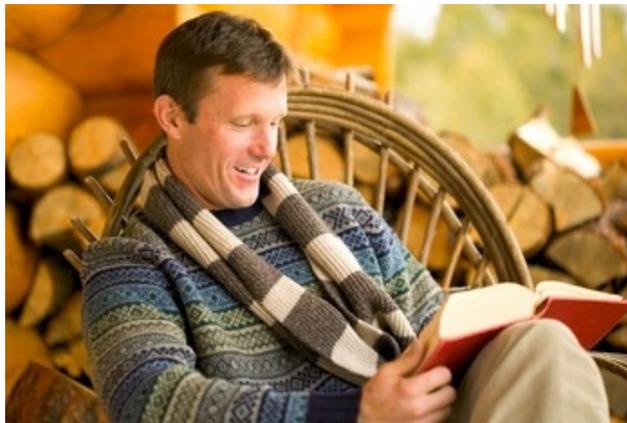
Recommended reading

To find out more about heading in the right direction to God's Kingdom, please request our free booklet [The Road to Eternal Life](#).

A Few Good Men in Some Honorable Roles

By Hector M. Earle

Often people look at the outward appearance of a man to judge who he is. However, only God's standards should be used to discover the real man within.



IF YOU WERE TO CONDUCT A POLL on what the role of a man is in today's world, you would probably get as many different answers as there were people questioned, dependent on their attitude, age and values.

Traditionally, a man's primary role was viewed as the main breadwinner and disciplinarian, the silent macho type who prided himself on his physical strength and fortitude. The roles and expectations of a man have changed somewhat in today's fast-paced society. It appears the main

focus now is working to gather as many material possessions as possible, while at the same time trying to keep out of debt. Many modern men are pressured to keep up with the ever-increasing demands to buy the latest gadgets in order to keep up with our modern culture's emphasis on materialistic gain.

Gone are the days when a man brought home the bacon and the woman stayed home to look after all the domestic chores. Today it seems both the man and woman have to work full-time just to make ends meet. Aside from helping out with domestic chores, most men are encouraged to be more open, and, in many cases, to play dual roles both on the domestic front and in the workplace. Today it seems a man is valued on his intellectual ability to say what is politically correct, not what is right. On the social scene there is a feminizing of the male image and confusion over gender roles.

Finally, there is Hollywood's version of a man. We observe this view in the movies and sitcoms starring men who are womanizers, loud, opinionated and emotionally charged. In other cases, Hollywood's version of a man is portrayed as timid and weak.

What should a man expect of himself?

What should matter most to a man is whether or not he lives up to the expectation of his Creator as outlined in God's Word.

The value of a man in Scripture is not portrayed in material possessions, wealth or physical appearance. God's Word speaks first and foremost about the importance of a man's character and integrity. For God is not so much interested in a man's intellectual ability, his education or his training as He is looking at the deep desires of a man's heart.

Where does character come from?

One definition of character is shown in the Sermon on the Mount as the consistency to stick to the nuggets of truth and set priorities straight. Integrity is the quality of being complete and unimpaired. It comes from being completely obedient to the Ten Commandments and having a steady diet of God's Word (1 John 2:5; 1 Peter 2:2). It is relying on the strength of God's Holy Spirit to help us make the right choices in living out our Christian faith and in doing what is right, no matter what is or isn't politically correct. Together, character and integrity flourish when a man trusts and depends on the strength of God (Proverbs 3:5-6).



Character also comes from emulating the great men and women of the Bible who displayed the type of integrity and character traits all of us should develop in our lives. We can follow the example of men like Noah, who was a beacon of light in a dark generation. He stood out as a righteous man, willing to obey God when everyone else sinned. Abraham, too, was a great man of faith and a godly man in his generation.

Who can forget Joseph, who showed compassion, forgiveness and love for his brothers instead of revenge after they sold him into slavery. He also fled sexual temptation because of his reverence for God. Moses chose to obey the Lord rather than live a life focused on passing pleasures. Three

young Hebrew men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, stood up for their beliefs under the most severe persecution and threats. Daniel, as a young man in exile, would not compromise his standards, nor hide his faith.

One could go on to mention others who showed great character and integrity such as the psalmist David's devotion to God in difficult circumstances; the young Stephen's relentless faithfulness to Christ, even to death; and, of course, who can forget the apostle Paul's hard work and boldness for the Christian faith under the most severe hardships?

What are some good character traits?

The Bible is full of examples of the character traits of a good man. One only has to read the book of Proverbs to see how godly wisdom and knowledge can shape our character and instill the kind of integrity God is looking for in a man. But perhaps the best place to look is 1 Timothy 3, which specifically outlines desirable characteristics of a man and his place in the Body of Christ. Let's look briefly at these qualities stated for Church leaders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and apply them in a *broader sense* to all men.

A man is to be blameless. This does not mean a man cannot sin, for we have all sinned and come short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). What it does signify is that a man must have a pattern of life in tune with biblical standards of behavior and conduct.

He is to be a husband of one wife. There is no ambiguity here. A married man must honor his marriage vows and be faithful to his wife at all times. This includes not dabbling into any type of sexual immorality or pornography. His life is to be truly and wholly devoted to his wife, and he is not to lust after other women (Matthew 5:27-28).

God's Word speaks first and foremost about the importance of a man's character and integrity.

A man of character must be temperate. The word means "showing moderation and self-restraint." A man who is temperate in his Christian walk does not lose his spiritual orientation, nor does he give into destructive extremes, but, rather, lives a balanced and steadfast life.

He is instructed to be sober-minded. This refers to the quality of being sensible and sharp in one's thinking and actions, thereby exercising responsibility in making sound judgments and decisions.

He must be of good behavior and hospitable. A man should be trustworthy, respectable and honorable in all his actions, both in his public and private life, so his true character matches his reputation. The term *hospitable* refers to a man's inclination to show kindness and empathy to friends and strangers alike and a willingness to help those in need. In today's desensitized world, we all need this trait.

A man should have the ability to teach. To tactfully teach others about the Christian faith without showing arrogance and bigotry is truly a Christlike character trait. A man should not only have the discreet ability to teach others, but also be teachable himself if he is to grow and mature in Christ.

He is not to be a slave to alcohol or display violent behavior. A godly man is not the kind of individual who is controlled by alcohol. He does not abuse his own body, which is the temple of

God's Spirit. We are also instructed to be no longer drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit instead (Ephesians 5:18). Strife, violence and temper tantrums do not please God. This includes violence not only in actions, but also in our thoughts and intents. In fact, Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

He is described as gentle and not quarrelsome. A good man is to be gracious, kind and considerate, while showing the kind of etiquette that displays the utmost consideration for all human beings. One of the seven sins God hates is someone who is always stirring up trouble (Proverbs 6:16-19). We are warned about the folly of a quick temper causing a lot of quarreling and divisions (Proverbs 29:22). Therefore, a man should not be the type of individual who is always looking for an argument or stirring up trouble.

He should not be greedy for money nor covetous. To acquire wealth and material possessions is not wrong. Some of the most godly men of the Bible were wealthy, like Abraham and Job. However, it should not be an obsessive priority overpowering us and destroying our relationship with God. Both Jesus and Paul warned against a preoccupation with money (Matthew 6:19-21; 1 Timothy 6:10). Also, Proverbs 22:1 advises us if we have a choice between a good reputation and great wealth, choose a good reputation.

A father should be the type of person who rules his own household well and has his children under submission. Many children are missing a father figure in the home today, and society is suffering for it. A man has the responsibility to make sure the relationship with his wife and children is good. He is to love his wife as much as he loves himself and to rear his children up in godly values.



A man of the house should be the one who is there for his children and who helps them in time of need. He should be a person his children can confide in. He is to respect and honor his wife and take on the responsibility of a good leader and manager of his home life. The words *under submission* do not mean a father is to use his leadership to force his children into obedience. Rather, he is to develop the kind of relationship with his children that builds love, trust and respect so the children want to learn proper behavior and etiquette. Proverbs 20:7 states children are fortunate if they have a father who is honest and does what is right.

Finally, *he should have a good testimony among those outside of the Church.* A man must have a good reputation in the community and display the kind of behavior seen as a good role model to young and old alike. His conduct should exemplify the very character of Christ Himself in showing a strong witness to others.

Our greatest role model

How did Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior and the author and finisher of our faith, show strength of character and integrity? Simply put, Jesus lived His faith in complete devotion to the will of His Father in serving mankind.

God is not expecting a man to start out as a perfect, sinless individual... This is why He sent His Son to forgive our sins if we repent and believe in Him. This included love and compassion for everyone (Mark 1:40-42), speaking the truth about sin and hypocrisy (Matthew 23), taking time to pray (Matthew 14:23; Mark 14:32-42; John 17), refusing to yield to temptation and drawing strength from Scripture (Matthew 4), hating sin but showing love and mercy to the sinner (John 8:1-11), following through on His commitments (John 12:23-33), serving others (Matthew 20:28; John 13:1-17), setting His priorities straight (Matthew 5 through 7) and having a forgiving spirit (Luke 23:34). He truly was and is man's greatest role model.

Let our light shine

In summary, God is not expecting a man to start out as a perfect, sinless individual, for He knows to err is human nature. This is why He sent His Son to forgive our sins if we repent and believe in Him (John 3:16). However, God does expect every man to be a beacon of light in a world of darkness and to be the best role model he can be. He should strive to allow God's Holy Spirit to mold and shape his character in working out our Creator's great purpose in our physical lives. Then, He will give us eternal life and rulership with Him in His great Kingdom to come.

To be led by God in seeking the very purpose of why we were born and to allow Him to shape our character like His Son is indeed an honorable role for all men.

Request the free booklet [What Is Your Destiny?](#) to find out what God has planned for your future.

Go Ahead, Rock the Boat

By Lorelei Nettles

We all know the old saying, "Don't rock the boat." But there are cases where this is neither helpful nor correct.



HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN A CONVERSATION with someone when he or she suddenly started to confide in you? Perhaps the person tells you about a conflict with another person or maybe several people. Or maybe the person who offended him or her wasn't even aware anything had happened, but the person speaking with you is quite upset. Usually, the person

being spoken of negatively is a person you both know, and the conversation quickly descends into accusations and gossip. This unfortunately occurs all too often between friends and coworkers.

We have all done this or been the victim of it. We may want to believe we are never involved in such negative talk, but if we really think about it, we have been.



We may have a friend who one day comes to us with a story of how he or she was somehow hurt by someone else's words or deeds, and in our response we may even add our own personal story of what the same person has done to us in the past. Maybe we just say nothing and nod in agreement. Or maybe we become defensive for the other person, disagreeing and saying it couldn't be so, while making excuses for the offender.

Some of us may just take all the complaints and accusations in and then, as we mull things over, we begin to create our own negative opinions about the person or the group in question—thoughts that may not have been there at all had our friend not brought them up in the first place.

But what if we have done the right thing and suggested the person with the complaint try to rectify the situation? Too often the response is that he or she doesn't want to cause any problems between him or herself and the other person. He or she doesn't want to be the one to "rock the boat."

Go before God

This type of situation happens every day in the workplace, in families and often in the Church, where we most worry about offending someone. At church, we especially want to avoid rocking the boat, but does this really keep the situation stable? Is it always what is best for all involved?

No, it is *not* in most cases the best thing to do. While it is often good to let something go, when you feel the need to run to someone to complain or criticize another, have you really let it go, or are you hanging on to your hurt and looking for an ally? If you cannot give up your anger and your hurt, then you have not let things go, and you are not solving the problem. In fact, you are allowing the problem to overtake you, creating a whole new problem, by creating bitterness within yourself and perhaps others.

If you cannot give up your anger and your hurt, then you have not let things go.

In Matthew 5:23-24 it says we should be reconciled to our brother before we come before God with our offerings. This shows how important it is to God that we be connected to those we are to love, *our brothers and sisters in Christ*.

Psalm 50:20 warns about speaking against a brother. In Zechariah 7:10, we are told to "let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart" (King James Version). God does not want any hostility among His people. He wants us to work out our differences together, not drag in the whole congregation with gossip and innuendo.

Reconciliation process

Matthew 18:15 tells us to go to our brother and tell him his fault privately. Then, verse 16 says, if that does not work, we should bring a couple of witnesses to hear out the thing. This doesn't mean talking behind the person's back, but bringing them to listen and witness what the dispute is about, hearing both sides of it.

If you still cannot mend the breach, then you should take it to the church, to the ministry with your witnesses, if need be. It seems to me, though, if it goes this far, there must truly be a problem in the Christian attitude of either you or the other person or both. No Christian should take on such a hostile heart that he or she is unwilling to forgive or to be forgiven. It may be difficult, but it can be done. There may be some tears, some angry words or even some conflict at first, but in most cases that will pass and things can be worked out.

So you see, *God set up a process*. If we go to others outside of the situation to complain, have we not already passed judgment on the other person? We must first go to the person or persons causing the offense and try to work it out. If we go to others first, we risk offending not only the person we are speaking *of*, but the person we are speaking *to* as well. Maybe you have been in the situation where you have heard someone speak poorly about others and then later wondered what he or she might be saying about you behind your back.



While it is human nature to share our bad experiences with others, if we become the ones who always seem to be doing it, we will be the ones not trusted by others. The strong bonds needed for friendship and brotherly love will never be built between us. At that point, we become the offender and the one in need of forgiveness.

While it is human nature to share our bad experiences with others, if we become the ones who always seem to be doing it, we will be the ones not trusted by others.

In Matthew 18:20 we are told, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." How can two believers come together to work out their problems and not be able to do so? If we come together in the name of God, with prayer and the right attitude, God will be there with us. How then can we fail? When we do these things, we can walk away with an even stronger relationship than before.

Don't let bitterness build within you, and do not let it spill out onto others. Sometimes, you just have to face your offender and deal with a problem head on. Sometimes you just have to rock the boat. Remember what it says in Ephesians 4:1-2, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

For more interesting articles sure to inspire you, please ask to receive a free subscription to [The Good News magazine](#).

The Train Ride

By Colin Ogles

We're all passengers on a metaphorical express train. Why are so few concerned about the destination?



THERE ARE MANY AMAZING TRAINS in the world today, from the high-speed TGV trains of France to the bullet trains of Japan. And a magnetic levitation train designed and built in Germany is now in use in China. Most people have never had the opportunity to ride on any of these fast, modern trains, but I want to tell you about a train ride that is familiar to us all.

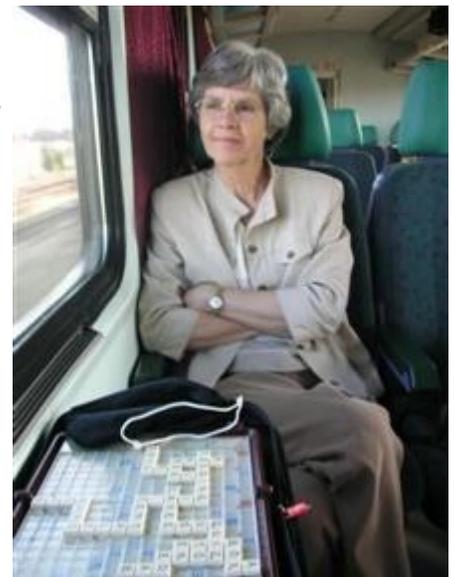
This train is also very modern. It has many carriages, from first-class luxury to the very basic third class. In between these extremes is the economy class many of us travel by.

The tracks the train runs on are wide and long. The journey for most of the passengers is a long one. Many hazards are to be found along the way before this train reaches the end of the journey. Dark tunnels, rivers, gorges, bridges and viaducts must be traversed. It passes through every town, city and country in the world.

This train is fitted with every conceivable invention of man. There is an emergency cord bringing the train to a halt in time of danger, but it only works if all the passengers will agree to pull it at the same time. Entertainment and news are available to the passengers.

The train has an observation carriage for passengers to view their progress. Those in the luxury carriages are much too busy to bother with observing where they are. Entertainment and making money are, to them, more important.

However, a few of those from the economy and third class do make the effort to observe their progress. Quickly fading into the distance they can see where they've come from. And they can also see where they are now. But the observation carriage is located at the rear of the train, so they are unable to see where they are going.



Unease about the driver and destination

The driver is a handsome fellow who inspires confidence in all but a few of the passengers. He is in charge of the train, and he knows it. As the journey progresses, a few of the passengers begin to have some uneasiness about the destination, because it is not noted on their tickets. Discussions and arguments begin to affect some of the passengers.

The conductors are unable to explain to the concerned passengers the exact nature of the destination. So they convey to the driver the uneasiness a few of the passengers feel. The driver laughs at this and eases open the throttle a little more, and the train continues to increase speed. He isn't going to slow down or stop for this minority. Besides, the majority is happy with his stewardship of the train.



However, a few passengers listening to the news hear reports a bridge has been washed out up ahead. But, the driver tells them not to worry. He says he will stop the train if this is so. Therefore, most of the passengers continue to be happy with his control and ignore the warning. And, the train continues to gather speed.

A few passengers are not at all happy with this situation and, being unable to stop the train without majority help, jump off. They survive the ordeal a little battered and bruised but feel great relief. In the meantime the driver increases the speed. He isn't going to allow any more to get off. Still, a few more want to get off, but they keep delaying. They are afraid to jump because of the difficulties they may have to face, even though they know of the catastrophe lying ahead.

Eventually, it happens. The driver sees the washed-out bridge, and he laughs and increases the speed even more! Needless to say, those who remain on the train all perish, except the driver.

“Stop the world, I want to get off!”

Well, I suppose you have worked out by now this train represents the society we live in today. In every age society has thought of itself as being modern. And in every age there have been people who felt uneasy about their society. The apostle Peter describes Lot's uneasiness this way: “For that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds” (2 Peter 2:8).

Do you feel uneasy about where humanity is going? Have you heard the expression, “Stop the world, I want to get off?” Do you want to get off? Do you have the courage to get off? Because it does take courage, and there will be some difficulties.

Jesus tells us that if we are prepared to join Him, He will give us rest from the ever-increasing burdens this society ensnares us with. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Have you heard the expression, “Stop the world, I want to get off”? Do you want to get off? Do you have the courage to get off?

But, why is it only a few passengers on the train jump to safety? Jesus tells us why. “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way [society makes it difficult] which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

How true it is that only a few are prepared to make the effort to find God’s true way of life. It’s no wonder then Jesus tells us His Church is small. “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

Those in the luxury carriages are too busy to bother about where they are going. Life is good, and they have all they need—or so they think! They find no need to get off the train.

A few passengers are not at all happy with this situation and, being unable to stop the train without majority help, jump off.

Jesus Christ, in the parable of the sower, warns us all our calling can be ignored if we are not careful. “Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” (Mark 4:18-19).

The driver of the train is none other than the being who deceived Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It easy for him to deceive us as Paul explains: “For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14).

And being an angel, it is not possible for him to die. The revelation given to the apostle John by Jesus Christ has this to say about Satan. “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:8-9). Yes, it’s true. Like most of the people on the train were deceived, so this world is today. But, you don’t need to be.

If you would like to stop the world and get off, please download or request a free copy of the booklet [The Road to Eternal Life](#). Its scriptural message can provide the emergency cord that will work for you.

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

By Robert Berendt

As human beings, we need physical food to survive. But the most important “bread of life” comes to us from Jesus Christ through God’s Word and Holy Spirit, which replenish us.



WHEN I WAS A BOY IN SCHOOL, each day began with our reciting the Lord’s Prayer (that was a long time ago). It would be quite a few years later when I would understand this prayer is really an outline of prayer to be used as a guide. I learned prayers are not to be repetitive and, thus, when I really began to pray in earnest, I would write the Lord’s Prayer down and talk with God about each phrase or part of this prayer (Matthew 6:7-13).

It struck me some time ago, the words “*Give us this day our daily bread*” were the only words referring to our physical needs in this prayer outline. All the rest of the prayer is in praise of God or to request spiritual gifts so we may better please and serve Him. Why do we ask for our physical needs in a prayer that is nonphysical in all other aspects?

Bread of life

One of my great joys in life is found at the pivotal point a profound truth strikes home. If I am among people at such a moment, I will restrain my excitement, but more than once something has struck me while driving alone and then I have to let loose with a whoop and a holler!

The profound spiritual truth of the Lord's Prayer was such a moment. I finally realized Jesus Christ is the "bread of life" and the daily bread we need even more than physical food (John 6:51)! We are to live each day with Christ dwelling in us (John 17:23). This was the source of Paul's strength as he wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:16 and Philippians 4:13.



It was a joy to realize the deeper meaning of the phrase "Give us this day." Of course, Jesus Christ *did* ask a blessing as He was breaking bread for a meal (Luke 9:16). It is correct to ask for our daily provisions and to ask God to bless them. My joy came in recognizing the deeper importance of Jesus Christ being the daily bread we truly need.

At that point the Lord's Prayer became cohesive and complete in my understanding. It is indeed a spiritual prayer raising us out of the dimension of physical life and into a thought pattern above and beyond the struggles of this present world. It elevates our thinking into the purpose and plan of God to establish His Kingdom and dwell with mankind for eternity. For more information on that plan, please request our booklet titled [The Gospel of the Kingdom](#).

In Luke 4:3-4, we can read about the confrontation Jesus had with Satan. Satan told Jesus to change the stone into bread, but Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." He was referring, of course, to needing spiritual sustenance more than physical bread. God's truth, God's Word, is spiritual (John 6:63). It provides the "food" we need to be spiritually sound.

One of my greatest joys in life is found at the pivotal point a profound truth strikes home.

Jesus taught many things using the example of bread and, typically, His focus was on the spiritual need rather than on the physical one. It amazes me today how long it took me to realize this. In Luke 12:23, Jesus once again used the example of eating to show the *primary need we have is spiritual*. He said, "Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing."

Some would make the mistake of discounting food altogether. That is the far side of the ditch; we are physical, and God knows we need physical sustenance. It is in the comparison of the eternal with the temporary that we must realize how much more important the presence of Jesus Christ is in our lives than even our physical food. God expects us to work hard to procure our daily food—there are lessons in that. He expects us to work much harder to procure our spiritual food, and we need to see the value in that. *A half-hearted attempt will fail.*

Where do we seek our daily bread?

What are the steps needed so that a person can have this wonderful daily bread? This was the question asked by people when the disciples first preached. Acts 2:37-38 records the event. When the people asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" the answer given was, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." We offer a free booklet that will guide you through the scriptures about the event and explain more in depth about baptism. You simply need to request the booklet [What Is Your Destiny?](#)

There is a process God has set in motion for those whom He calls. Repentance indicates an understanding of sin and how offensive it is to our Lord and Creator. Repentance is a cry for help as humans realize how incapable they are to cancel sin by themselves. God then begins the process of leading that person to His Church, where His specially ordained and appointed ministers will give counsel, immerse the person in water and, as he or she arises, lay hands on him or her, asking for God to include the person's name in the Book of Life. The minister will also ask that the person be given God's Holy Spirit and from that moment, the baptized person will be given God's Spirit. God the Father and Jesus Christ will dwell within.

My joy came in recognizing the deeper importance of Jesus Christ being the daily bread we truly need.

The need for daily bread shows God's Spirit runs through us like a river (John 7:38). This supply of God's Spirit needs to be renewed and refreshed every day. Thus, our daily prayer shows this request for a spiritual gift from God. Thankfulness for physical bread as well as the spiritual bread from Jesus goes hand in hand in our daily lives, but the most important bread is Jesus Christ. May our merciful and loving God grant each of us every day "our daily bread."

Now with that greater meaning, the phrase "Give us..." fits more securely within the rest of the model prayer. Each Passover season, converted people take of the bread that symbolizes the broken body of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 11:24). A *daily* reminder of the precious sacrifice that frees us from sin and heals the breach between us and God is given in the prayer Jesus Christ spoke so long ago. Let us always stir up the gift God has given us—the gift of life—the bread of life—His Son.

Letters to the Editor

["I Was a Stranger..."](#)



Thank you. An excellent article and such a good reminder. Thank you.

— Lois Baughman

[Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones](#)



I am writing in response to the article "[Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones](#)" by Jean Jantzen. It touched my heart because I have been dealing with the issue for the past few weeks. Gossiping does nothing but create a distance between you and the person you speak about. But is it gossip when you share bad experiences in which your heart was broken by someone? Is telling close friends about the way in which a partner, boss, land lady or acquaintance treats you badly gossip? I thought it was therapeutic to speak about surviving a bad relationship or boss.

Thanks

— D

Thank you for writing. We have all struggled with the questions you ask. That's why we all need to regularly ask God to guide and guard our tongues—to give us the love and wisdom to know what to say and what not to say, as well as when, where, how, etc.

I just re-read the article you speak of and it is very good. But it is a short article and this is a big subject. The Bible has much to say about the destructiveness of gossip, but the Bible also makes it clear that when you care about people, you are eager to hear and share news. And you spoke about confidentially speaking to a counselor or friend about past experiences in order to better understand those experiences and know how to cope with them and, in some cases, to heal from the old hurts. Like you indicated, counseling with someone in an attempt to gain understanding, wisdom, therapy and healing is often needed.

Here are some important considerations:

- 1. What is your honest motive? Are you speaking with a heart of love and mercy or a heart of hate and spite? Is it to get help for yourself or someone else, or merely to make yourself feel better because you are getting a kind of revenge by talking about the person behind his back? Do you want to hurt or to heal? Are you wanting to build bridges or build walls?*
- 2. Don't assume you know someone else's thoughts. Don't impute motives.*
- 3. Can the person you are talking with be trusted to keep the discussion confidential?*
- 4. Even if you think the person you're speaking to can be trusted, be constructive and very careful with your words. Realize that it is possible that your words could get back to the person you are talking about.*
- 5. If the person you are talking to and the person you are talking about have a personal relationship, will you help or hurt that relationship? See Proverbs 16:28 and 17:9 about the problem of breaking up friendships.*

Here are some more scriptures about gossip, tale-bearing and slander: Leviticus 19:16; Psalm 41:6-9; 50:20; 101:5; Proverbs 10:18; 11:13; 20:19; Ezekiel 22:9; Romans 1:29-30; 1 Corinthians 4:13; 6:10; 2 Corinthians 12:20; 1 Peter 2:1; 2 Peter 2:10.

And there are many, many scriptures about using your tongue in loving, constructive, beneficial ways. Correction given wisely and lovingly is a kind of tough love (Proverbs 3:12; 27:5-6, 9, 17). Whenever there is a problem between you and another person, the first course of action (after prayer)—when it is practical to do so is to go confront the person directly and see if you can iron it out (Matthew 18:5-17).

We hope this is helpful. Let us know if we can be of further help. May God guide and bless you.

Some feedback messages are edited for space and/or clarity