

COMPASS CHECK

United Youth Magazine

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

***Learning to Love Myself
the Way God Does***

▮ Dream Big and
Serve God

▮ Escape the
Jealousy Trap

Five W's of Christmas

Bullying
We Can End It

Hello

This is our third issue of *Compass Check*, written with you, a teen in God's Church, in mind. We hope you enjoy each article and benefit from them all. There is a nice variety of articles this issue.

Please pray for Roy Holladay, who suffered a stroke in October. Mr. Holladay faithfully served for many years as a pastor and administrator at the home office (including as a past president for the United Church of God), and he is the "founder" of *Compass Check*—it was his idea to begin this magazine in early 2015. He is my friend, and I deeply miss his wise and friendly counsel.

Readers, let me hear from you! I want to know what topics and issues you want us to address. Contact me at compasscheck@ucg.org.

We thank Mitch Moss for his skilled work on the layout of *Compass Check* (notice the new masthead!). We also deeply appreciate our dedicated writing and editing staff for making this magazine possible. A lot of work goes into each issue.

Enjoy your winter, even the snow! Speaking of snow, we wish all of you going to Winter Camp in Wisconsin a very enjoyable week. I plan on being there myself so I'll see some of you there. After that, it won't be long until spring, then the summer camps in June and July. Hurray!

Happy reading and let us keep our spiritual compass pointed toward God and His plan for us and all of humanity. There is nothing more important in our lives. **CC**



Steve Nutzman
Managing editor
compasscheck@ucg.org

Compass Check Pointing Your Spiritual Compass to God

Five W's of Christmas

I don't know about you, but this time of year is very disappointing for me. I dread leaving the house, and I avoid listening to the radio and watching TV. I can't help but feel trampled by hundreds of reindeer as I overhear the mind-numbing songs of the season. We are going to be exposed, again, to the image of a plump man, dressed in red, who supposedly slides down chimneys to leave gifts under an evergreen.

Have you ever thought about where all of this silliness begin? And what measures can you take to ensure that you do not follow in similar practices?

What is the history behind Christmas?

The traditions associated with Jesus' birthday actually came from the ancient Persians. The Persian god of light, Mithra, was born out of a rock on Dec. 25. The Romans were not shy in worshipping strange gods and quickly jumped on board. Rome recognized this day as the "Day of the Invincible Sun." Christ and Mithra were both attributed to possessing traits of solar deities, and the 25th was soon taken over by Christians as Christ's birthday.

God does not take it lightly when we fail to recognize Him and His sovereignty. Paul wrote letters to the Colossians to warn against following false teachers, as they did not previously believe that Jesus was God. Paul warned, "Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ" (Colossians 2:8, New Living Translation).

Who is Santa?

Santa is characterized as the successor to Saint Nicholas. The origin of Santa is based on mythology, which changes from one country to the next. Within most mythologies, Saint Nicholas was given the title of patron saint of children after two specific acts of kindness. One tale involves him giving money to three young girls—saving them from a life of prostitution. The second was a story of him resurrecting three young boys shortly after an innkeeper took their lives.

After the Protestant Reformation, Saint Nicholas fell out of favor, and there was no one to

bring gifts to children—this job was left to "baby Jesus." Since his carrying capability was limited, he needed helpers to deliver the gifts. Within such fables developed the concept of Santa Claus as one of Christ's helpers. During Christ's ministry, He warned of wolves dressed in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15). Among non-Christmas-keepers, Santa is described as "the Great Imposter." In the light of God's Word, it's not hard to see that "the Great Imposter" is really working for "the Great Deceiver"—Satan the Devil.

Santa is considered to be a saint among children. In this fictional story, he ascends into heaven on his sled and is worshiped as Mithra (the god of light) above the stars of God. He resides in the farthest sides of the North Pole and is often pictured soaring above the clouds.

This has parallels to what Satan did as "the Great Deceiver." Notice that he actually did ascend into the heavens to the farthest side of the north: "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High'" (Isaiah 14:12-14).

Why shouldn't we celebrate Christ's birth?

There is no commandment in the Bible that tells us to celebrate the birth of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Although some will argue, God simply does not want us to honor Him this way. Note Deuteronomy 18:9-12. In verse 9 God instructs us not to follow in the way of the world around us: "When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations."

Some of us may be familiar with the traditional nativity scene that incorrectly depicts Jesus Christ receiving gifts from the wise men at His birth. The



Randy Shoemaker and his wife Ingrid attend the Salt Lake City, Utah, congregation. He keeps busy with work, writing and service in his local congregation.
randallshoe@gmail.com



Dream Big and Serve God

Don't sell yourself short—live your dream

I've heard the story many times. Or at least variations of the story. The basic gist is that there is a man or woman who is exceptional at something—"He was professional at the piano; he could've played at Carnegie Hall," for example. "Then he was called into God's Church, and he didn't think he could pursue the piano anymore because a lot of concerts are on the Sabbath. So he gave it up and chose a profession he really wasn't passionate about, and did it only to make money to live."

I've been thinking about that story lately. It's such a tragic story to me, because as someone who's been raised in the Church and who sees amazing things being done all the time by amazing people, I can't help but wonder about my own dreams.

Am I going to have to choose between what's right and doing something incredible?

If I want to make a dent in the universe, is that even possible without compromising God's way?

I really hope so. But when negativity and doubts are easy to come by, what am I choosing to do day-by-day?

The thing that bothers me about the story is that the guy gave up before he even tried to make a go of his dream. He was exceptionally talented, headed on a track to become famous and successful but when He was called by God, instead of knocking on doors to see which ones might open, he assumed none of them would open anyway and walked away. He didn't work to try and make success on his own terms, he just assumed it wouldn't work out and gave up.

Jesus gave a metaphor to describe how He wants us to live our lives (Matthew 25:14-30). In the metaphor, a king gives money to his servants

to look after while he's away. The word used for the money is "talent," which was a unit of weight used for money at the time. The story explains that each servant was given a different amount of money based on his or her ability as a servant. While the king was away, the servants each use the money differently to make more money; that is, except one. One person, who was only given one talent, did nothing with the talent. "I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground," he said when his king had returned to settle accounts.

He was afraid! His fear was based on a misunderstanding of his king, and it paralyzed him into doing nothing.

The metaphor gives us all kinds of lessons about many different aspects of life, but the one I want to draw out is that we are each given skills (talents) by God, and He wants us to use them. The servants in the story were expected to take the money given them and put it to use—by trading, by investing, by putting it in a bank account to earn interest. Likewise, we are each given talents and skills, and God expects us to put them to good use—by developing them, by using them to serve others, by making a living with them.

If you have a dream, if you have a passion, if you have a talent, put in the hard work to pursue them! If your motivation is to succeed so that you can serve God and His people better, God can and will reward you by opening doors for you.

If you can use your talent to serve at Church in some way, great! Doing so can inspire and help God's people. If you make a successful living out of following your passion, good! Because then you can use the money you earn or the skill itself to help God's people. If your talent fulfills you creatively, good! Because that means you will be mentally and emotionally healthy and therefore better able to serve God and His people.

Every single path you can take will require you to make decisions—big or

small, right or wrong, left or right. How you decide shapes who you are and what kind of character you have. This is true no matter if you're working a job you hate or a job you love. Taking the path of least resis-

tance is a decision that shapes who you are, just like choosing to take a risk and pursue your dream does. Do you make decisions that lead you closer to fulfilling your dream or making an impact on the world with your talent?

God doesn't want us to choose the easy thing—He wants us to dream big, take a risk and use what He's given us to make a dent in the universe. After all, His calling is for each of us to make the biggest dent in the universe ever in His Kingdom.

There have been people who had a dream, pursued it with all they had, and had to give it up because there really was no way forward without sinning against God—those doors truly were all closed.

There have been people who had a dream and God gave them an even bigger, better dream, so they followed that instead. The thing is, they gave it a shot.

Just don't be like one of the people who pursued their dream and ended up compromising on God's way in exchange for success—those people will always earn the consequences of that sin. No one who chooses to obey God, instead of success earned by compromise, will ever regret it.

There are nearly limitless possibilities for how you can live your life. It is not an either-or choice between following God and doing something great. Don't sell yourself short. Use what God has given you to dream big and serve Him. **CC**



Mitchell Moss is the designer of Compass Check. He and his ultra-lovely wife Dana live in Nashville, Tennessee. He loves photography, design and #menswear. mitch_moss@ucg.org

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

(Learning to Love
Myself the Way
God Does)



H

ave you ever thought of yourself as ugly?

Or have you felt that no one loves you? Maybe that you're stupid or that you don't matter? I have, and not just once, but many times.

Though I don't know exactly when or how this all began, I can remember being picked on in elementary school for being the shortest kid in the class. I can recall the absolute embarrassment I felt when I auditioned for cheerleading in middle school and knocked my large, round glasses right off my face in front of everyone. My high school years brought their own unique

opportunities for self-loathing, everywhere from being ignored by boys to failing a test I had studied hard for. These experiences, along with countless others, could have and should have been taken in with a better attitude. Sometimes things happen that are beyond our control, and that's okay. Instead, they became tools for my

bully to use against me; he told me these things were evidence that I was unpopular, dumb, and worthless.

I am not my bully

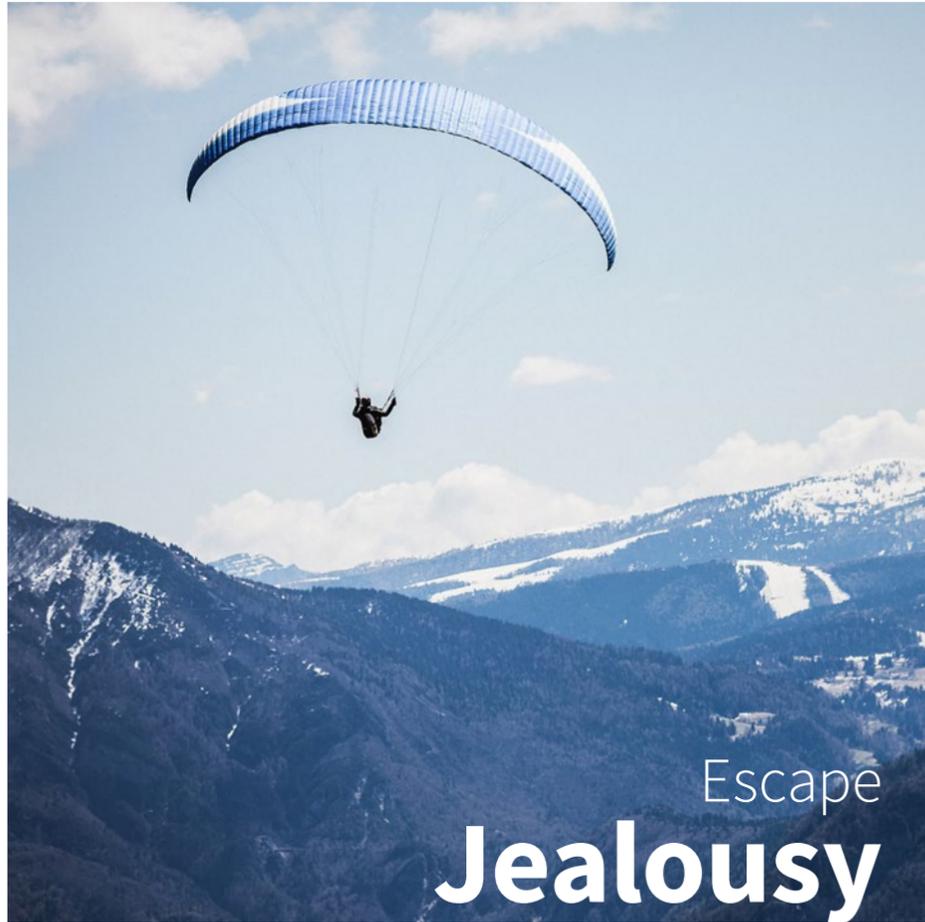
I have come to know that my struggle is not just against those words but also against the voice behind them: a sinister bully who, bent on wrecking my confidence, fills me with self-hatred to an almost frightening level.

Until very recently, I believed that the voice telling me all of these bad things about myself was *me*. Believing that I was my own worst enemy was a very difficult thing to swallow—I would feel bad because I believed I was stupid, ugly, weak, and then to know that *I* was the one saying it made me feel ten times worse. I could never say those mean things to one of my



Brittany McGarity is a 20-something from Nashville, Tennessee, where she enjoys listening to podcasts in the morning, drinking coffee with cream, and wondering what cats think about. mcgarity.brittany@gmail.com

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Escape Jealousy



the Trap

“Who does she think she is?” I thought angrily. I was looking through a friend’s endless smiling photos with *my crush* on Facebook. I went to another friend’s page, where I saw that he was currently enjoying a wonderful and exotic trip out of the country. “Lucky him!” I fumed. “What did he do to deserve that?”

I went from page to page, getting more and more annoyed. All these people’s lives seemed 10 times better than mine, and they didn’t even “deserve” it! I thought, “Does God love them more than He loves me?” Thankfully, my angry thoughts came to a halt and I began to calm down. I knew that notion was a lie, and I knew where lies like that come from. I glanced at the clock and gasped. Had I really just spent three hours on Facebook? It happened again—I was ensnared in the jealousy trap!

What happened to me? Why did I allow myself to get sucked in *again*? Perhaps like me you have felt

jealousy at some point in your life, and it can be a difficult feeling to overcome! But fear not—there is hope! Using the following simple process, you too can escape the jealousy trap.

The first step is to define jealousy

Jealousy, according to Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, is an unhappy or angry feeling of wanting to have what someone else has. Have you ever been jealous of something you didn’t want for yourself? You may not want your sibling’s bad cold, but you definitely wish you could get out of doing chores like him or her. As Christians, we know that jealousy comes from our adversary, Satan, and our own human



Sydney Bradley lives in Grand Blanc, Michigan, where she attends the Flint, Michigan, congregation with her parents and three younger sisters. She enjoys writing, listening to music, and being with her family.

nature. Jealousy is a tool Satan uses to distract us from building a healthy relationship with God: “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice” (James 3:16, English Standard Version).

The second step is to find your triggers

What triggers you into a fit of jealous fury? Is it being around peers who have more musical talent than you? How about being around those who appear to be more spiritual or righteous than you are? Maybe it is simply being around happy people in general. Whatever it is, find your trigger, and guard your heart with a vengeance during those times. Additionally you may even have to avoid some situations altogether. For example, if you find yourself feeling jealous of anyone more muscular than you after watching five hours straight of *The Biggest Loser*, or find yourself becoming jealous of couples after watching *Say Yes to the Dress* reruns, then you may want to cut those shows out of your life. One of my triggers is Facebook, so I try to only log in only when I have a purpose, because I realize that logging in at my leisure can



Does Sociality Barbie’s life make you jealous?

be hurtful to me. “A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot” (Proverbs 14:30, English Standard Version).

The third step is to gather your “escape tools!”

The three favorite escape tools that I use are prayer, meditation and faith. When I walk into a room of bubbly singles, I say a quick *prayer* to God, and every time I do this, I end up having a great, jealousy-free time. Prayer is a way to realize your weaknesses and ask for God’s help and involvement in your situation. Next, when you *meditate* on God’s way of life as found in the Bible, you are given a peace of mind from God that calms you down. The final escape tool I use is *faith*. Faith includes trusting that you are loved and cherished by God and that He can completely transform the desire of your heart from one of jealousy to one of love. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Romans 15:13, ESV).

Though the “green-eyed monster” of jealousy may seem impossible to beat yourself, it will be a successful battle with God. **CC**

BULLYING

we CAN END *it*

by Janet Treadway

While walking down a hall one day in seventh grade, I was suddenly shoved over to the other side of the hallway. I looked over to see what happened. A huge girl was walking away laughing hysterically. I walked to class, shaken. This was the beginning of what I called being picked on. What we call it today is being bullied.

I was very small-framed and very shy at the time. I don't remember having any friends at school because I changed schools so much. This shoving incident was the first of several episodes with this girl—whose name I didn't even know. One evening when I was getting ready to get on the bus, she was there. She grabbed my head in her huge hands and proceeded to bang my head up against the bus. Thankfully I was not hurt.

Then one day, she shoved me again in the hallway, but this time I'd had it. I raised my schoolbooks high in the air, preparing to let her have it, when a teacher intervened. Students had circled us hoping to see a fight. We both were sent to the principal's office, where I found out her name was Janice. The bullying stopped after this, and she never bothered me again. I don't know what happened to her after that.

I don't know why Janice felt that it was fun or funny to pick on a kid who was much smaller than her. I just knew it was frightening, and I felt the need to always look over my shoulder. I also went through other situations in elementary school where I was called names.

I forgot about being bullied until bullying started making the headlines in the news a lot more often.

According to statistics from *Family First Aid*, about 30 percent of teenagers in the U.S. have been involved in bullying, either as a bully or as a victim of bullying. Data suggests that younger teens are particularly at risk. Physical bullying is more

CYBER BULLYING *are you a victim?*

today, through cell phones and the Internet, a new form of bullying has emerged—it's called "cyberbullying." According to cyberbullying statistics, in 2014 over half (52 percent) of young people who reported being cyberbullied reported being bullied at least once, and 25 percent of that 52 percent reported that they had been bullied two times or more (NoBullying, "Cyber Bullying Statistics 2014," Sept. 10, 2015, www.nobullying.com/cyber-bullying-statistics-2014). How is this done?

Embarrassing or damaging photographs taken without the knowledge or consent of the subject have been reported by 11 percent of adolescents and teens.

Online threats—33 percent reported that their bullies issued threats.

Hate and put-down comments—a tenth of all middle school and high school students have been on the receiving end of "hate terms" hurled against them.

Just like being bullied at school, cyberbullying often produces the same results. Victims of cyberbullying are more likely to suffer

common among boys, and teenage girls often favor verbal and emotional bullying. Studies show that people who are abused by their peers are at risk for mental health problems such as low self-esteem, stress, depression, or anxiety. They may also think about suicide more often.

There are four types of bullying:

1. Physical, which was the one that I suffered in junior high.
2. Verbal, which I suffered in elementary school by being called names.
3. Emotional, when you are made to feel alone (for example, if no one will sit with you at lunch or others isolate you by excluding you).

4. Cyber bullying, which the newest one often heard about in the news.

If you are being bullied, get help! I don't recommend fighting back to stop it like I did. However, because I did take action, it was publicly made known and the principal intervened and put a stop to it.

If you are being bullied, here are some ways to get help:

1. Report the bullying to a trusted adult.

If you don't report threats and assaults, a bully will often become more and more aggressive. In many cases adults can find ways to help with the problem without letting the bully

from low self-esteem. Self-esteem is defined as *your* overall opinion of yourself — how you "feel" about your own abilities and limitations. When you have healthy self-esteem, you feel good about yourself and see yourself as deserving the respect of others. When you have *low self-esteem*, you put little value on most if not all of your opinions and ideas. In some cases those with low self-esteem may even consider suicide due to continuous bullying. So what can you do if you are being victimized? Here are some tips:

Don't respond back—this only keeps it going. Responding only fuels the abuser to do more.

Don't retaliate—getting back at the bully turns you into one and reinforces the bully's behavior. Help avoid a whole cycle of aggression.

Save cyberbullying messages as proof that the cyberbullying is occurring. This is especially important if the incidents are eventually reported

to the police, to parents, school officials or to the bully's cellular provider.

Talk to a trusted adult—you deserve backup. It's always good to involve a parent, but if you can't, a school counselor usually knows how to help.

Don't take part in the bullying of another person—put yourself in their shoes and ask how you would feel if it were happening to you.

Don't believe the bully—don't let bullies destroy your self-esteem. Bullies are cowards! So don't allow them to get you down by believing what they're saying about you!

You can find more tips at www.safeteens.com/tips-to-stop-cyberbullying. There are many other resources online that can give you help and more direction.

One of the most important aspects in overcoming bullying is being confident in who you are and how God values you!

know it was you who reported them.

2. Don't blame yourself and take it personally; it's not your fault that someone is being the bully and bullying you.

They are the one with the issue. Always remember that your identity should come from God, not from other people.

3. Walk away from the bully.

Bullies love to control. By your walking away and ignoring them, they lose control of you.

4. Never be alone; make sure you are with someone or a group of people.

The most important thing you can do is to ask God for help. God is there for you! He cares what is happening to you. God is not just your parents' God, but He is also your God. Peter said, "Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

If you are bullying someone else, stop! You can

actually push them over the edge and cause them to end their lives. Treat others the way you want to be treated. "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

The bottom line is be kind to one another, because life is tough and we all need to be encouraged, not put down! Place your identity not in what others think of you, but what God thinks of you. If we all practice these things, bullying will never come from us nor affect us. And do not be ashamed to get help if you are being bullied. It could save your life! You do not have to go this alone. **CC**



Janet Treadway and her husband Charles have four children and six grandchildren. She works at the UCG home office and attends the Cincinnati East congregation.

janet_treadway@ucg.org

20 great conversation starters

Do you clam up on the first day of school? Are you tongue tied when you try to talk to the widow at church? Are you terrified of applying for a job because you hate talking to adults? Try these tips on how to start a conversation and be comfortable doing it.

¡Hola! ¿Como estas? (“Hello! How are you?”) That was the sum total of my Spanish vocabulary when I went to Guatemala my first time. That didn’t make for a very long or a very interesting conversation. I tried to learn some new words, and I tried them out the next day at church.

¿Cuantos asnos tienes? That was barely out of my mouth before my friend, who was standing beside me, was laughing and trying to control herself. I gave her a quizzical look, and she said, “You just asked that lady how many donkeys she has, not ‘How old are you?’”

I just about died right there! One wrong letter in the word I chose gave an entirely different meaning. I could have clammed up right then and not said another word for the rest of the Feast, claiming that I didn’t speak Spanish, but it would have been a long and lonely Feast.

Do you feel lonely in a conversation? Do social occasions last an eternity because you don’t know what to say? Do you feel like you don’t have a voice box when you meet someone new? What are you supposed to say after you say “Hello!”?

Trying to have a conversation with someone that you have just met is hard. If you are the new kid in school, it’s challenging to make new friends. What do you say to the older folks in your church congregation? When asked by a future employer, “Tell me about yourself,” are you tongue tied? These can all be trying situations where you might wish to just disappear, but you can’t.

One main point to remember is that you don’t need to do all the talking. If you ask the other person questions, then you don’t need to be talking.

Some of these questions or topics can be used across categories. If you have a few questions or topics in mind when you are going to meet new people, you can ask those questions and learn about them. Once you begin to learn about them, you can ask follow-up questions to learn more. This will keep the conversation flowing.

What happens if they don’t answer your question, or they only give one word answers? That makes it a little more challenging. It’s usually best to show interest in the other person, but sometimes you will have to be prepared to talk about yourself. What do you talk about?

Be prepared ahead of time by having an answer to each of the previous questions. You might say something that is a common interest of the other person, which might start them talking. You could tell them about what you did last week or what you hope to do in the near future. Tell them about your hobby or the team that you are on. Maybe you read a great book lately; tell them about it.

If you are genuinely interested in learning from others, you will forget about being embarrassed and nervous. Just like you don’t know about them, they don’t know about you. They may be just as nervous and uncomfortable as you are.



Gayle Hoefker is often meeting new people in her role as a pastor’s wife in North and South Carolina and in Colombia, South America.
glhoefker@gmail.com

What do you say to someone your own age?

1. What are your hobbies?
2. Tell me about your family.
3. What type of music, art, sports, food or car do you like?
4. What are you doing this summer? Which camp are you going to attend?
5. Where are you going for the Feast?
6. Tell me about your pet.

What do you say to an older person at church?

1. Tell me what school was like when you were a kid.
2. Tell me about your first job.
3. Tell me about your family.
4. Tell me about where you used to live.
5. How did you meet your spouse?
6. What did you do on a date when you were a teen?
7. How did you come into the Church?
8. Which is your favorite Feast site and why?

What do you say to an adult, a teacher or an employer?

1. Tell me what you do for work.
2. How can I improve my grades?
3. How can I be a better employee?
4. What do you like to read or watch on TV?
5. What do you do in your free time?
6. What should I study to do your job?

If I had prepared ahead of time when I went to Guatemala, I would have had several questions to ask the new people that I met. I should have practiced saying the questions to make sure I could say all the words correctly. If I had, I would not have been embarrassed by saying the wrong word. Fortunately, my new friend was very kind

and forgiving. Most people will understand. If you do make a blunder like I did, don’t be embarrassed and refuse to talk; turn it around into a good story like I did. Then you will have something to talk about and maybe something to laugh about at the same time. **CC**

Willing to Serve? There Is a Place for You!

Do you feel you don't belong in your local congregation because there are no service opportunities? If so, here are some tips on how to get involved.

Read this encouragement that was given to Timothy by the apostle Paul 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.”

Being a teen does not mean you cannot serve! In some congregations much of the organizational work is done by people who are older. But in many of these areas of service teens can most definitely help. But exactly which duties?

Church services

When you think of how you may serve in local congregations, involvement in the Sabbath services is often the first thing that comes to mind. Some congregations have youth days, where teens or young adults lead songs, give the opening and closing prayers and perhaps the sermonette message. For young men, these occasions can be very useful to serve the congregation.

As for music, you may be able to serve in the choir, accompany hymns or perform special music if you have the ability and the interest. There may also be opportunities for you to serve in Sabbath school. In these areas young adults can help teach lessons and provide positive examples for younger people to follow.

Other duties

There are many duties that are not as visible and that are often neglected. These may include running the sound system (if one is technically qualified for the position), ushering, greeting, setup and take-down, helping with potlucks and other activities, information table or bulletin board, announcement bulletin, running the congregational website or helping with youngsters.

Even if you do not have much knowledge in an area experienced people will be glad to show you how to do something. I know this from experience, since as a teenager I served on the setup crew in my local congregation as well as an occasional usher. When I went to college, I helped out with the security for the church

hall when it was necessary.

Of course, there are additional opportunities to serve at the Feast of Tabernacles. Young people can also serve on the staffs of preteen or teen camps. Teens and young adults can also serve the Church by participating in the United Youth Corps or by attending Ambassador Bible College. All of these opportunities allow teenagers to hone their attitudes and skills for service.

Setting an example

In the local congregation we should be good examples for others to follow. Whether we like it or not, adults (our parents, their friends or leaders in the congregation), other teens, and children frequently watch what we are doing and how we are conducting ourselves. Your service can be a valuable demonstration of our faith and knowledge and our desire for godly character and a good reputation (James 2:18).

We can also be positive examples to others outside of the Church. We do not have to wear our faith on a shirt or a bracelet, but rather we demonstrate it quietly through our good conduct. If we are acting in a right way, people will see some of our religious beliefs without our having to tell them, and often peer pressure will be reduced. Of course we will have to be true to our beliefs—a decision each individual will have to make for himself or herself. Whether in the Church, at work or school, our practice can be a positive example to others, for our actions speak louder than our words.

As a teen do not be afraid to ask others how you may serve! Also ask your friends in other areas how they serve in their congregations. They may have new ideas or advice to share that can be helpful. As long as you're willing, there will always be ways for you to serve. **CC**



Nathan Albright is a 2004 ABC graduate who attends the Portland, Oregon, congregation. He keeps busy with work, writing and service in his local congregation. nathanbalbright@yahoo.com

Fearfully Made

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friends or loved ones! So how was it that I was capable of putting myself down so harshly?

Because *it wasn't entirely me.*

God tells us in 1 Peter 5:8 that Satan “prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” We also know that he is “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2) and therefore able to reach us in an unseen way, projecting negative thoughts and emotions in order to push us further away from God.

I have a part in these negative thoughts, but if I stop enabling them, Satan has less of an opportunity to project them to me.

These tests of confidence are a battle. But fortunately for me, I am not alone: I have an amazing God on my side! He gives me plenty of encouragement, strength and confidence when I don't have any on my own. And through His words of truth and love I can learn to see myself the way He sees me: as a person He created to have an eternal relationship with Him; as beloved by Him. After all, Jesus tells me to love others as I love myself (Mark 12:31). Loving myself with God's perfect love is important so I can love and serve others in a balanced way.

The first step to overcoming low self-confidence is to realize that sometimes my thoughts are simply untrue. God can help me know what is true and what is false when I seek and pray for His discernment. When I am able to see that the lies are coming from a clearly separate enemy rather than my own self, I can begin to really fight against it with God's help.

Satan's lies vs. God's truth

For instance, the Bible describes Satan's character in John 8:44: “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's

desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” Thus, my enemy is a liar, but God is full of truth. I need God's words for comfort because He knows my true self!

When I'm struggling with negative thoughts about myself, I ask the question: What is the truth? Use the Scriptures and God's wisdom to uncover the lies and refute them.

Here are some of the lies I find being hurled at me on a daily basis and the truth that God gives instead.

Lie: “You are weak, both physically and mentally. You're not strong enough for people to respect you.”

Truth: God tells me: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Lie: “You are not pretty enough to be liked. You are undeserving of love.”

Truth: “[God] formed my inward parts; [He] covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise [Him], for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are [His] works, and that my soul knows very well” (Psalm 139:13-14).

Lie: “The decisions you make now will determine your future happiness, and you've already messed up. You should be ashamed that you are so directionless.”

Truth: “Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and

all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:32-34).

Satan wants me to believe what he says about me so that I won't believe God's truth when I hear it. But with practice, daily prayer and study, I can see that God tells me what is true. He is my strength. He formed me to be his beautiful daughter before I was even born. He gives me a path to walk that leads to safety and happiness. I can delight in his words knowing that He meant them for me!

Self-compassion, not pride

I am not seeking to become proud or boastful. “Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor” (Proverbs 18:12, New International Version). God certainly doesn't want me to love myself *over* Him, but hating myself can also be wrong. He created me in His own image (Genesis 1:27), so by the act of hating myself, I am hating God's creation. Yes, I should hate sin and repent when I do sin, but God is merciful and forgives me and wants me to move on. I can practice humility by relying on God for everything, while at the same time knowing that I am a wonderful creation called to be in His family.

With self-hate on one end and pride and ego on the other end of this spectrum, where can I rest? A good target is self-compassion.

Compassion is synonymous with concern, care, warmth, tenderness, kindness and love. God defines the true meaning of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-6: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is

Fearfully Made

not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.” Am I treating myself this loving way, or am I believing those words from my bully that makes me act unkindly toward myself?

When I practice self-compassion, I turn that Godly love toward myself. I see my sins and repent and I see the mistakes of others and forgive them. I respect others, love them, recognize what makes me different from those around me, and I accept those differences fully rather than become embarrassed by them.

Learning to have compassion and love towards myself has not been easy. Some days are easier than others. But placing my confidence and strength in God and His love has made me properly armed to withstand the attacks.

Things have overall become better. My mental and emotional outlook has improved. I’m confident that others who follow these principles to apply the word of truth and practice self-compassion will receive the spiritual and emotional support they need. **CC**



Christmas

continued from page 3

truth is the wise men did not arrive until some time after Christ’s birth, since Joseph’s family was residing in a house (Matthew 2:11: “And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented to him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh.”).

The history of this scene began with the Romans holding a festival from Dec. 17-23 known as Saturnalia, where they decorated their houses in greenery and lights while they gave gifts to the children and the poor. This was combined with the worship of Mithra and later moved to Dec. 25. Since the date of Jesus’ birth was unknown, early Christians decided to counter these pagan festivals with celebrations of His birth. The origin is based around the worship of the sun rather than the worship of Jesus Christ.

When was Jesus born?

The story of Christmas is depicted as being observed in the middle of winter. Many Christians dream of having a white Christmas and hearing sleigh bells in the snow, as they welcome the Winter Solstice, also known as Yuletide, which symbolizes the turning of the sun. This day is the longest night of the year as the earth makes its revolution around the sun. It’s no surprise that during the longest night of the year, one of the biggest perversions in Christianity comes to light. “For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (John 3:20).

The truth of Jesus’ birth couldn’t be further from this deceit. The Bible offers limited clues, but God is not the author of confusion. If He wanted us to know the date, He would have made it clear. The best reference

we have is that the shepherds were watching over their flocks (Luke 2:8). This clearly indicates a warmer time of year. Shepherds would not be in the fields in the middle of winter. If we study Luke 1 along with some history of the time, we will see that the most likely time for His birth would have been in the fall of the year.

Where is God in Christmas?

As I ask questions, a lot of my friends say that they know Christmas is a dishonest fabrication, but they keep it so that they can enjoy the good spirits that the holidays bring and join in love with their families. But God is not honored by lies. Notice John 4:23-24: “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

When Jesus was a young child, gifts were given to Him to glorify God and were symbolic of His future role as a sacrifice for all mankind (Matthew 2:11). Satan perverted this event with his selfishness and inspired mankind to demand gifts from each other instead of recognizing the importance of Christ’s sacrifice in our lives.

The importance of His sacrifice cannot be overlooked. “For Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him, He will appear a second time, without sin, for salvation” (Hebrews 9:28).

These 5 “W”s of Christmas should inspire us to carefully evaluate what we do at this time of year.

(Additional reading material: www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/booklets/holidays-or-holy-days-does-it-matter-which-days-we-observe and www.ucg.org/the-good-news/the-top-10-reasons-why-i-dont-celebrate-christmas.) **CC**

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COMPASS CHECK

Compass Check is a biblically based magazine for young people of the United Church of God, an International Association (UCGIA) aged 12-19. Our name, *Compass Check*, describes youth pointing their spiritual compass toward God.

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Layout and design: Mitchell Moss

Writing staff: Members of UCGIA

United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027,

U.S.A. Phone: (513) 576-9796. Fax: (513) 576-9795. Website: <http://members.ucg.org/content/compass-check-magazine>. E-mail: compasscheck@ucg.org.

The goal of *Compass Check* is to inspire Church youth, ages 12-19, to respond to the gospel message.

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If you would like to submit an article to the “Reader By-Line” section, e-mail your document, preferably in Microsoft Word, to compasscheck@ucg.org. We can’t promise to print your article, but we would be happy to consider it. Please include your name, age, town and where you attend church. Contributors to this section must be ages 12-19, and articles should be fewer than 500 words.

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