

Virtual Christian Magazine

hope and encouragement for the real world

Volume 2 Number 9

November 2000



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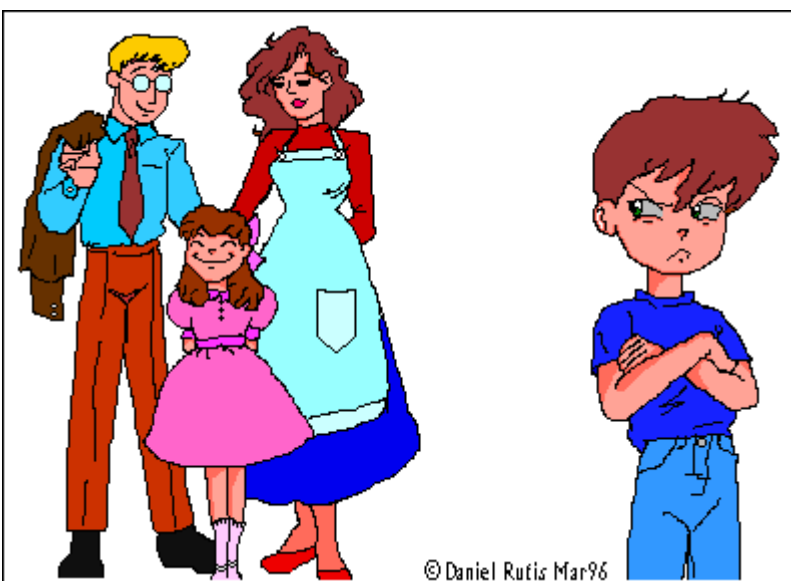
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We are pleased to announce the [November/December 2000, *Good News* magazine...](#)

AIDS: How a Killer Plague Can Be Stopped



The AIDS plague will soon become the most deadly killer epidemic of all time, taking more victims than the dreaded black death of the 1300s. The saddest fact, however, is that neither plague had to happen. The measures that would have prevented so much suffering and saved so many lives have been readily available for thousands of years--in the pages of the Bible.

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Virtual Christian MAGAZINE Editorial

You Can Make a Difference!

by Victor Kubik

Some shy away from doing anything about the sickening problems of our world because one can easily ask, "Where do I start? What can I do that will make any kind of difference?"

Others don't involve themselves in fixes for this present world. With the hope of Christ's return to straighten out the problems of society in the future world, we can easily hide our eyes from problems knowing that in God's timetable all is under control and that we really can't add much to the process. In our estimation, we are not responsible. And who knows? We may not be helping the most needy or qualified anyway.



*The Malakia Clinic and Birthing Center under construction. This facility being built with the support of hundreds of volunteers.
Photo taken October 12, 2000.*

Both of these attitudes yield inaction. We can easily become the Levite and the priest in the parable of the Good Samaritan in the 10th chapter of the book of Luke. They SAW and LOOKED, but went on their way (Luke 10:31-32). They figured that eventually someone would come along to do something about the assaulted and robbed man lying by the road.

Are we responsible to help with the needs of the needy?

Yes! We are MORE than responsible. Reading the 25th chapter of Matthew and starting with verse 31, the issue of Christians caring for the destitute appears to be a high priority item in God's check-off list for continuing an eternal relationship with us. To those who feed the hungry and clothe the poor, Christ gives this statement of reward: "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). The converse is stated in verse 41: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

The reason?

"For I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me" (Matthew 25:42-43, New King James Version). These are the Levite and the priest of Luke 10 who saw and looked, but did nothing.

Can you make a difference? The answer is YES! You can choose to grant life to a child or

you can allow poverty, lack of medicine, malnutrition and plagues to continue to kill people, mostly children.



The first of 15 concrete floors that are being poured in Guatemala. People should not have to live on dirt where disease spreads.

We have been helping with projects to help people in developing countries such as Malawi, Zambia, Guatemala, Ukraine and the Philippines, and these projects have yielded successful results. Have we solved those nations' problems with poverty? No, we have not. But we have made a difference in the lives of thousands of people and have saved many children from death by malnutrition. Sometimes all it takes to save a child is some medicine for diarrhea.

Right now we are building a clinic in Lilongwe, Malawi, that will make a difference for hundreds of people. The photo on the right shows the progress made with the help of many contributors. In this case, for \$20,000 we can build a clinic that would cost many times that amount in Western countries. We are sending a 20-ton container with food, medicine, hospital equipment and much more. Many of the costs are underwritten by cooperating agencies and the U.S. government.

In Guatemala we are helping impoverished people who are living on dirt floors by pouring concrete floors. In Zambia we are helping replenish cattle wiped out by disease three years ago. In Ukraine we have initiated micro-loan programs for people to borrow small amounts of money to buy items such as tools that will help them make a living. They repay the loan and then we can help someone else. Everyone wins.

We can make a difference in the lives of people and actively fulfill an important Christian obligation to help. We do not look away from the needy.

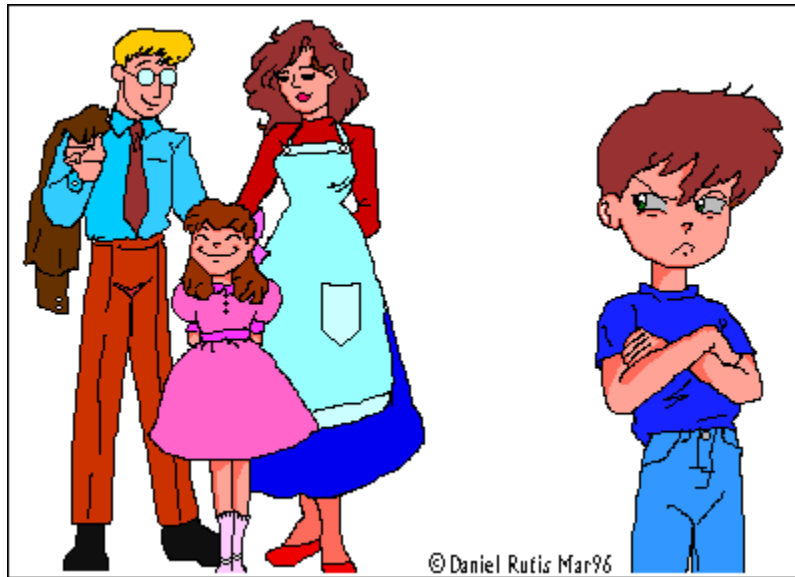
To find out more about these various programs that are making a dramatic difference in the lives of people, please take a look at our work at www.lifenets.org



Playing Favorites

We can joke about favorite children, but it is not a joke to those who are not favorites. Understand how every person is special with God.

By Joanne Rutis



Drawing by Becki Rutis - Digitized by Daniel Rutis

HAVE YOU HEARD the comic routine in which the young man complained to his brother, "Mom always liked you best!" It sounds funny when told by a comedian, but in too many homes it's a heart breaking reality.

Of course, showing partiality to a particular child is nothing new. For instance, Isaac liked Esau better while their mother favored the youngest twin, Jacob. The confusion, plotting and double dealings that resulted couldn't have helped the family peace of mind and tranquillity! It certainly didn't build trust among family members.

Why do parents show favoritism? Much of it has to do with expectations. We expect our children to behave in a certain fashion and when they don't we react, sometimes in a counterproductive fashion. As anyone who has more than one child knows, children are all unique in temperament, appearance and personalities. Yet there are certain family traits that carry over more in some children than others. It is only natural that we will be more tolerant toward those who reflect attributes that we are the most familiar and comfortable with.

Jacob liked his son Joseph best because he was the son of Rachel, the wife he loved. Perhaps he saw his wife mirrored in the young man's face. Perhaps the youngster's personality was similar to his mother's. Whatever the reason, Joseph was treated with favoritism and hard feelings resulted. In fact, his brothers hated Joseph so much that they sold him into slavery. Some even wanted to murder the lad.

All children, regardless of their temperament, need unconditional love. That doesn't mean that parents should ignore their negative traits. What it does mean is that children should be told by their parents that they love them for who they are. There is no standard they have to live up to before we extend our love. In our home two of our daughters like country and western music. My husband is a strict classical fan. Though he doesn't care for country and western, he doesn't criticize their taste in music. He accepts them for who they are and the distinct personalities and tastes that they have.

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Growing up, it seemed to me that my mother sometimes favored my youngest brother. It's only natural, perhaps, for parents to show their youngest more attention. But it can be hurtful to the child who doesn't understand. I still remember sitting in the back seat of the car and crying because my mother was pointing out the local sights to him while ignoring my presence. My mother never intentionally showed my brother more attention than me. But it was something she did. It's such an easy habit to fall into. Often we aren't even aware that we're doing it.

Have you ever said to one of your children, "Why can't you be more like your brother or sister?" I have. And later I regretted it. Each child is their own person. They shouldn't be standing in anyone else's shadow or trying to measure up to an image that doesn't fit their personality.

Just assuming that our children know we love them isn't always enough. How we think and how our children perceive we think might be something very different. We shouldn't be shy about offering praise when it is appropriate. Solomon tells us, "Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones" (Prov. 16: 24). When children hear us giving appropriate praise, they feel better about themselves and life in general. That doesn't mean that we flatter our children. It does mean that we take note of their efforts and support them with a few words of encouragement.

Anyone who deals with children often 'clicks' better with one child than another. That's natural. Different personalities blend or clash on occasion. The hurtful part comes when the adult in charge makes a child feel unloved or inferior. There is also the danger that they may be doing damage to the one that they are favoring by causing an unrealistic sense of superiority.

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"As he thinks in his heart so is he" can also apply to our children. If our children believe we perceive them to be bright, loving, intelligent young people and encourage them to develop their own talents and abilities, chances are that they will endeavor to live up to our expectations. If, on the other hand, we deal with them as if they were sloppy, disrespectful and stupid, chances are they will never reach for anything higher.

On a recent talk show one woman said something to the effect, "I have one bright, intelligent, respectful child, and then I have this one," motioning to the unhappy girl sitting next to her. She didn't know it, but both her daughters were living up to

her expectations.

Col. 3: 21 tells us, "Fathers (and mothers) provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" (KJV). This daughter was not only discouraged, she was angry. It showed in her young face. In her discouragement she had turned to overeating and her excess weight only made her mother more critical.

Parents aren't the only ones who are guilty of favoritism. Teachers, coaches, even ministers have been known to spend more time and attention on one child, or type of child, than another.

Being aware that there is a danger of partiality is the first step in correcting the problem.

God, who is no respecter of persons, loves all His children equally. As people who are trying to put on the mind of Christ, we too should look on each child as a unique creation. One child should never come before another, but each child should be dealt with in a fair and similar manner.

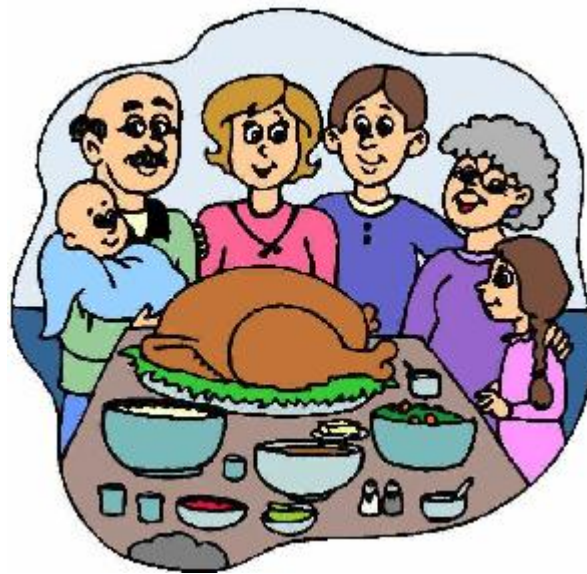
Then truly there will be greater peace in the home. The hearts of the parents will be turned toward their children and the hearts of the children toward their parents in true family unity.



Thanksgiving Day, Not “Be Thankful” Day

*Americans celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday every November.
Perhaps this is the appropriate season to wonder if there is
a difference between being thankful and giving thanks.*

By Don Hooser



THANK YOU. Those two words are among the most important and appreciated in any language. He who does a good deed is often satisfied to hear "thank you" as his only reward. It's too bad the phrase is so underused.

Some say gratitude is the mother of all virtues. That makes sense. Gratitude--a grateful attitude--inspires other good attitudes. It's hard to have a bad attitude when you are feeling grateful.

Ingratitude is probably the most prevalent sin. It is easier to feel pity than appreciation. It seems easier to criticize than compliment. Gripping, grumbling and being grouchy are just doing what comes naturally. They are part of our negative, self-centered nature.

Some people rarely say thank you. You wonder what holds them back. We should have developed the habit of expressing our gratitude by the time we were 3 years old.

Most people probably regard themselves as being properly thankful. If they really are full of thanks, that's wonderful. But thankfulness must be expressed to others to be worth much. Giving thanks is much better than just being thankful. Giving thanks is good for both

parties, the giver and the receiver.

Thankfulness tends to be passive. Thanksgiving is active. Thanks are something that need to be given away--making everyone richer. Note that the national holiday Americans celebrate is called Thanksgiving Day, not "Be Thankful" Day.

Many Thanksgiving Day celebrations undoubtedly involve precious little thankfulness, much less giving thanks. For many the holiday has become known as Turkey Day, characterized more by gluttony than gratitude. Meanwhile people in poor, undeveloped countries look on the United States as incredibly rich and self-indulgent instead of thankful for its abundance, comforts and conveniences.

Thankfulness oriented outward

When people regard themselves as thankful, it often is more accurate to say they are merely glad about something. People often fail to give credit where it is due, or they give too much credit to themselves. The word *thankful* implies that someone else deserves credit and a "thank you."

For example, anyone could say, "I'm thankful I have a good job" and simply mean he is glad to have that job. How much better it would be to think of the many people throughout his life who helped prepare him to be qualified for that job. Even better would be for him to thank as many of those people as possible.

Merely being glad or "thankful" can be self-centered. Saying "thank you" is other-centered. Expressing gratitude is oriented outwardly. We should make it a habit to thank people. When we do, we are sure to make people happier.

Are you thankful for your education? Thank your parents and a whole host of teachers. Are you thankful for your freedoms? We owe much to our forefathers and statesmen. Are you thankful for your health? You can thank your parents for good genes and a healthful diet. You can thank your parents and a farmer or rancher. Are you thankful you have regular trash pickup? Thank your garbage man.

Concerning thanksgiving, wouldn't it be nice if companies had a bigger need for thank-you departments than they have for complaint departments?

The Bible encourages giving thanks

When it comes to the need to be thankful, the Bible emphasizes action over passivity. In the New King James Version of the Bible, the word thankful appears only three times, and unthankful appears only twice. The number of times both words are used is surprisingly small.

However, thanksgiving occurs 31 times, and the phrases give thanks or give You [God] thanks occur 43 times. The words thank and God occur in the same verse 15 times; thanks and God are used together 23 times; thank or thanks and Lord appear together 43 times.

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The word praise implies a big thank-you given with an abundance of admiration and respect. The world would be a better place with more praise and less criticism. Children often require less punishment for misbehavior when there is plenty of praise for good behavior. If we praised our families and coworkers, our homes and workplaces would be far less tense and would experience more peace and productivity. We humans thrive and strive better under the warm sunshine of praise.

The Bible stresses that the greatest praise should go to God. Praise and God occur in the same verse 57 times, and praise and Lord occur together 97 times. Are you thankful for a beautiful day, a gorgeous rainbow, a spectacular sunset? Tell God about it! Thank the One who created it all!

We should be extremely grateful for all our benefits and blessings, and express it. Continually tell your family and friends how much you appreciate them. Say thank you to everyone who serves you in any way. Make it a habit to say thank you as often as you can find any reason to say it.

And on each Thanksgiving holiday, be sure to offer a heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving to the great Creator God who is primarily responsible for the United States of America being a great nation with amazing abundance.

Let's make every day a day of giving thanks--a thanksgiving day. I'm going to try harder, and I hope you'll join me. Come on. You can say it: Thank you.

Thanks for listening.



Extending Our Hand to the Grieving

*We will all come in contact with someone who has lost someone close to them.
What's the best thing to say and do?
Probably the same things you'd like to hear.*

By Joan Osborn



THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE can be devastating. As a friend we often need to help someone cope with such a loss. Often we are unsure of how to help our friends and family as they cope with their grief. Should we offer assistance or should we give them space, time, and privacy?

Uncertain about what will be best for the grieving person, we sometimes choose to avoid those who have just suffered a loss. Though this choice may be the easiest, it is not the best. Those who are grieving need the support of their friends and family--they need our helping hand.

God offers us comfort in His scriptures for our benefit during the difficult time of bereavement. Even with the assurance of God's presence and His comfort, there will still be a time of suffering, for grief is a natural process. This process can take quite awhile before it actually subsides. We need to be sure to remember our grieving friends and relatives far beyond the few days and weeks after the funeral.

Grief can take on a number of steps. The last of those steps is closure. For some this closure

may be years in coming, for some it may never come. Perhaps this is why James tells us that part of "true and undefiled religion is to visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction" (James 1:27). Even those who seem to be handling their loss well are still under stress and need consideration. This is especially true after the initial shock of death begins to wear off.

Four months after my father's death, my mother mentioned that she often found herself wandering aimlessly around the house trying to focus. She had spent 61 years of her life using her energies for her husband and family. Now her husband was gone and her children were grown and gone from her household. My mother needed to be gently reminded that what she was going through was natural. She needed the reassurance that her children understood what she was going through and cared about her deeply.


As Christians there are a few things we can keep in mind when considering those who are grieving:

1. Remember that James' admonition about helping the widows and fatherless in their affliction shouldn't be limited to physical help. Anniversaries of the death, wedding anniversaries, birthdays, family reunions, and holy day seasons will be especially hard times for the bereaved. These are times of togetherness for most families. Now part of their family is missing. Some people want to be alone at these times; others need contact to help them through this rough period. It never hurts to ask what you can do to help.
2. Remember that everyone handles grief differently. Mrs. Jones may appear to be adjusting well after the death of her husband, showing no outward signs of sorrow. On the other hand, Mr. Smith's sorrow may be evident by the tears he sheds. Dealing with grief is a very personal matter. Even if Mrs. Jones seems to be doing well, inside she may be feeling very sad and lonely. People do not always wear their emotions on the outside. Mr. Smith may actually be coping more effectively with his grief because he is venting more of his emotions, or because he is physically manifesting his grief. It is important to remember the old parable about reserving judgement of a man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins. Mrs. Jones and Mr. Smith deserve the same love and respect, along with the understanding that their methods of coping with loss may not be the same.
3. Remember that all loss is devastating. The loss of a spouse in a long-term marriage is of course horrendous, but the loss of a parent can be equally devastating. This is true regardless of the age of the child involved. Certainly a young child or a teenager will not have the benefit of a father or mother's guidance and loving presence. On the other hand, an older child is losing someone they have known for much longer. There will be a great void in their lives as well. As Christians we should be sensitive to everyone's feelings no matter what their age or relationship is with the deceased loved one.
4. Remember to offer reassurance when it is needed. Many widows and widowers, especially the elderly, feel they have no purpose after the death of a mate. Show them that they are important to you as a



parent, a friend, a brother, or a sister in Christ. Help them to see that you appreciate, value, and love them, and that they are needed in your life.

A colleague of mine recently lost her mother after a long illness. Her father had been the primary caretaker for several years. She invited her dad to her home for a while. Soon her father was busy reorganizing and cleaning her garage. He threw out a few things she probably would have kept, but she realized the greater good of her dad having a reason to get up each morning. He felt needed and purposeful and she received a benefit as well.



AFTER DEATH?

do we even have to die? Can we know if there is life beyond the grave? Where can we go for meaning and believable answers? To find out, just [click here](#) to get your free copy of ***What Happens After Death?***

5. Remember that grief does not follow a specific time frame. Some people may be healing very well after a year. Some may never heal entirely. Continuing concern for those who have suffered loss is somewhat like follow up visits by the doctor. It is good to keep checking in on the patient to see what their needs might be.

Continuing to send notes and cards can be very encouraging. Something as simple as "Hi, I'm thinking about you!" can easily brighten a gloomy day. The act of sending notes and cards is becoming a lost art in our technological age of phone, fax, and e-mail, but it is a gesture that shows you took a little extra time to do something personal for them.

So when is the grieving process over? For some, who have suffered the devastating loss of a spouse, child, or parent, it may never be over in any formal sense. This lack of closure may be especially true in the elderly, who have spent most of their lives with their mates. Grief may be the reason why many older widows and widowers often follow their spouses closely in death.

The person we have lost will always be a part of us. If you have never suffered the loss of someone close to you it may be hard to empathize fully with someone who has; yet, as Christians we have a responsibility to show each other loving concern under all circumstances. Remember James' words about the fatherless and the widows and be an example by extending your helping hand.



What Disability Can't Do to You

For some, disability means an end to a real life. But, for others it's a challenge to adapt and do things they never thought they could do.

By Cecil Maranville



A LITTLE GIRL walks through the shopping mall, tightly gripping her mother's hand as they pass by a man in a wheelchair. With disarming innocence, the child loudly asks, "Mommy, why is that man in a funny chair?"

The child isn't rude; she is simply frank and open. She has noticed that this person is different from the average person and is honestly curious. Mom, however, is horrified by her child's openness. Embarrassed, she whispers, "Shhh!" and quickly leads her daughter away. The disabled person was "different" - a fact which was both curious and awkward.

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If you are the one with the disability, you cannot simply walk away

from the awkward challenges this situation presents. "Why is that man in a funny chair?" can now be asked about me, for I have often needed a wheelchair for long periods of time. I have also become familiar with the mental lows which often accompany disability. There has been an overwhelming sense of a loss of control over my life. All standards by which I once measured success -- my career, the freedom to pursue any hobby, the ability to play sports, participating in rough 'n tumble activities with my children -- collapsed along with my health.

What about you? How do you feel about yourself now that you have a disability? Are you worth less to yourself? To those around you? Do you struggle with feelings of inadequacy?

I was left, in my pain and fatigue, with a profound feeling of worthlessness and hopelessness. Does that sound familiar?

You know his name, but do you know his story?

The following letter was written by a woman to a friend about a mutual acquaintance on November 14, 1921:

"I am staying up here with a dear friend. It's a lovely region, but tragedy rather overshadows this once so happy and prosperous family, for their only son was struck down in August with a terribly serious case of infantile paralysis [polio]. He is only 39 -- both too old and too young for such a germ to disable him. He's had a brilliant career. Now he is a cripple -- will he ever be anything else? His mother is wonderfully courageous and plucky, but it's a bitter blow."

"He's had a brilliant career. Now he is a cripple -- will he ever be anything else?" Therein lies an assumption we need to shake out of the folds of our minds.

"Cripple" is an unpleasant-sounding word. It comes from an Old English word meaning to creep or to go low to the ground. It is used in the above letter to convey a sense of pity for "the poor man."

(You may wonder why I do not use the term "handicapped." Most organizations which work with people with disabilities, as well as government agencies, are shunning its use due to its origin. The word comes from an Old English game, literally called "hand-in-cap". Players each contributed to a common fund which an umpire held in a cap. The umpire decided who was in need and gave the cap's contents to him. Hence the term "handicap" carries a connotation of condescension with it.)

Did you ever analyze what it is that makes a person "whole"? Is it 20/20 vision in both eyes? Is it full use of both arms, hands, all ten fingers and both thumbs? Is it the ability to be ambulatory, that is, to walk around? Is it the ability to run? Is it "perfect" [whatever "perfect" is] hearing? Is it being pain-free and constantly energetic? Is it never aging?

It is oh, so easy to assume that a "whole" or "normal" person is one who possesses the average physical abilities of the general population. The negative continuation of that assumption is that a person with a disability -- who clearly has less than average physical abilities -- is somehow less of a person.



Here is a surprise which challenges that assumption! The prosperous and successful family in the 1921 letter was the James Roosevelt family. The son who was crippled at age 39, of whom it was assumed he could never be anything but "a cripple", was Franklin Delano Roosevelt! His career was far from being over. With his previous success in serving as an Under Secretary of the Navy he went on to become the longest serving President of the United States, leading it through one of the most challenging times in human existence.

Who today thinks of President Roosevelt as a "cripple" whose worth ended at age 39? Yet, it is true that throughout campaigning for and serving as President, Franklin Roosevelt could never walk more than a step or two without leaning on someone, usually his son James. Even at that, Roosevelt could never walk without an uncomfortable, cumbersome brace. Most of his time was spent in a wheelchair.

Millions of people with chronic pain have benefited from Roosevelt's great accomplishments in a field far removed from political service. He developed and pioneered many fundamental techniques of hydrotherapy, enabling the exercise of painful limbs in warm water.

The source of the letter and other information included in this article is a Roosevelt biography, *FDR's Splendid Deception* by Hugh Gregory Gallagher, "the moving story of Roosevelt's massive disability -- and the intense efforts to conceal it from the public." You might find it inspiring reading.

Gallagher adds this shockingly blunt historical sketch of societal and cultural attitudes towards people with disabilities:

"Throughout history -- with specific, glorious exceptions -- the crippled [disabled] have been cursed, tormented, abandoned, imprisoned, and killed. The Spartans hurled their disabled citizens off a cliff to their death. Martin Luther believed deformed children were fathered by the devil and killing them was no sin. The Jews banished their cripples, forcing them to beg along the roadside. American Indians took their deformed newborn and buried them alive. In the eighteenth century, the handicapped were confined to asylums -- to be cared for, perhaps, but also to remove their deformed appearance, offensive to sensitive persons, from the streets."

Why does disability strike?

There is an almost irresistible human urge to ask and answer the question, "Why?" when we see a person with a disability.

No less a distinguished group than Jesus' early appointees to the ministry demonstrated this fact. The scriptures record their open question to the Teacher when they happened upon a man who had been blind since birth. "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he

was born blind?" [Gospel of John, chapter 9, verse 2]

To answer this question, they made an assumption, "This man is blind because someone did something evil. The blindness is the resultant curse." Assuming that to be true, they skipped right to, "Who was the offender?" It is an astounding commentary on human nature when we stop to realize that these men were willing to believe the blind man may have caused his own disability.

Following such reasoning, the people believed the man was born blind because he had "sinned" in the womb, as ridiculous as that sounds! Are there still absurd assumptions made about why people have disabilities? Is there a chance that you, or others have assumed that your disability is a result of someone, somewhere having done some evil deed? Don't we all ask the question "Why"? And don't we all make assumptions about the answer?

It is hard to lie awake, awash with pain, and not ask "Why me?"

We must change our thinking

We need to examine our assumptions and be willing to change them! It is a myth that somebody has to have done something evil to bring on either his own or his loved one's disability! It is a myth that a vindictive God is dealing out disabilities as curses.

Why is someone, why is anyone, disabled? Why am I disabled? I could spend a lot of time puzzling out the possibilities -- and I have! But I found this to be a useless pursuit.

Have you ended up feeling angry because you have a disability? If so, perhaps you have been frustrated in your own pursuit of the "Why me?" question. Universally, disability seems unfair.

Let's turn the question around. Why not?

There are approximately 49 million United States citizens who have disabilities. That means that between one and two in every ten citizens has a disability!

There are approximately 49 million United States citizens who have disabilities. That means that between one and two in every ten citizens has a disability! Disability is found at all social and economic positions, as well as at any age level. Until you joined our ranks, you may not have been aware of the statistics, but we all see people with disabilities in the general public every day.

Think about what the statistics are telling us: in this present world, it is normal to have people with disabilities.

Think that through further. With so many millions in that category, is it sensible to say, "People with disabilities are abnormal"? The sheer numbers declare them to be common. It is, therefore, often fruitless to give any consideration to why any one person may have a disability.

It may well be impossible to say for certain. The fact of the matter is, you will find disabilities of various kinds among all peoples. That's always been true!

We must shake ourselves free from superstitions of the past, which are still with us in some ways, and come to acknowledge and accept the facts. Paraphrasing another statement of Jesus, "People with disabilities you will always have with you!"

You and I just happen to be amongst their number.

Some think a disability is an advantage

President Franklin Roosevelt had an adviser named Harry Hopkins. During his years of service to the President, Hopkins was dying of cancer. Peter Drucker, in his book *The Effective Executive*, uses him as an example of the extraordinary effectiveness so often attained by people who are ill or who have a disability:

"A dying, indeed almost a dead man for whom every step was a torment, he could only work a few hours every other day or so. This forced him to cut out everything but truly vital matters. He did not lose effectiveness thereby; on the contrary, he became, as [Sir Winston] Churchill called him once, 'Lord Heart of the Matter' [for his ability to incisively get to the important part of any issue before the world's nations during World War II] and accomplished more than anyone else in wartime Washington."

Look at Stephen Hawking. Does he have a disability? Rarely will you see a body more tormented, more limited, to the observer. But who would say that this brilliant physicist, scientist and author is limited?

What "enables" a person? It isn't his sight, hearing or his limbs. It is his mind! Because of that fact, some actually find that a disability can be a boon in disguise. Physical limitations can free the mind of a person who has a disability from matters with which "average" people need to busy themselves.

When I say "the mind" I'm including spirit along with intellect. This spiritual feature separates humans from animals; animals cannot create, reason, invent, or achieve anywhere close to human ability.

Journalist Terry Anderson endured a terrible ordeal as a hostage of terrorists. Read what he said of the value of his experience as a captive:

"We come closest to God at our lowest moments. It's easier to hear God when you're stripped of pride and arrogance when you have nothing to rely on except God. It's pretty painful to get to that point, but when you do, God's there."

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He was not physically disabled in the traditional sense. Yet, his captors prevented him from free movement; he had a narrow choice of allowed activities. So, in a real sense, his captivity was much like a disability. But his richly revealing conclusion tells us that his mind was not limited, even though his freedom of movement was! To the contrary, he found his mind or spirit, was actually made keener because of his physical limitations.

Obviously, having a disability is not what made Roosevelt, Hopkins, Hawking or Anderson accomplish what they did. That's not the point. The point is: everyone who has a disability can accomplish as much as anyone else -- and just maybe more than he otherwise would -- and, if he allows that physical disability to motivate instead of discourage him.

Is every person with a disability automatically made stronger in mind as a result of his physical limitations? No! It depends on the individual, and what he decides to do with his life. The encouragement and understanding of those around him, including family, friends and co-workers, helps so very much.

What do you expect of yourself?

Is it easy for you to see yourself, restrained by the invisible prison of pain, as normal?

A quadriplegic friend of mine in his forties confided in me (years before I was disabled), "People think I am not normal when they see my crippled form. But underneath this exterior, I have all the drives, interests and needs of any man." Now I understand him completely.

People with normal drives, interests and needs contribute to their families and communities.

We need to admit to ourselves that our contribution will not be in the typical way neighbors might exchange help: "I'll cut your lawn this month while you're on vacation; in return, you can cut mine next month." Often the reality is that we pass along the help we receive to people other than the ones who help us. For example, someone has been cutting my lawn, and I can't "return the favor." Instead, I am using my ability to write this article to help you. I am in essence passing along my neighbor's help to another neighbor.

It hasn't been easy for me to come to this realization, for I am the kind of man who is too embarrassed to depend on the help of others for things I used to be able to do without difficulty. (It hasn't even been easy for me to ask my children to help me carry a cup or open a door!) But a community is made up of many individuals, each making his unique contribution.

If we stop contributing to our families and communities because we now have some level of disability, it is because we choose to stop, not because having a disability made us stop!

If we stop contributing to our families and communities because we now have some level of disability, it is because we choose to stop, not because having a disability made us stop! Our contribution will likely be different in some ways than before a disability challenged us. Not less; just different.

Don't allow pride, the temptation to give up, or feelings of bitterness over your situation block the opportunities you have. You've got to find where you can contribute.

I am not trying to make disability sound so attractive that people will be lining up (or falling down -- pardon the humor) to join our ranks! However, since disability is a part of life, I am trying to help us live with it. Too often a person with a disability uses it as an excuse, rather than a prompt.

We who have disabilities may frankly find it easier to surrender to the negative pulls of human nature -- to complain, be depressed, cranky, impatient, selfish or unreasonable. But we are not excused from the healthy exercise of self-control! That exercise in itself makes a valuable contribution to any home or community!

It can be uncomfortable to have others tending to physical duties and needs which we would much prefer to do ourselves. Sometimes our dignity and sense of privacy suffer. To use the biblical ritual of "foot washing" as an analogy, there is a time to be served. If you recall the story, Jesus performed a job usually done by a common household servant by washing the feet of Peter. That brought a vehement protest from Peter. Jesus pointedly explained that there is a time to sit still and let others serve you! That requires a measure of humility.

Now, if we sit still and allow others to do everything for us while we do nothing, that is an unhealthy dose of vanity! (And maybe a touch of self-pity?)



How often as a minister have I gone to see people who were suffering through terrible physical ordeals, with the purpose of encouraging them, only to come away from the meeting greatly encouraged myself! I was uplifted by their inner strength. It showed in their cheerfulness, their positive outlook, and their ability to think of the needs of others during their time of great personal need. Truly, they were contributing richly to the community. Do you see yourself as that kind of person?

Isn't everyone limited?

Aren't all people limited? Can we fly? Can we walk through walls? Can we survive without food, water or shelter? Can we live forever? Can we prevent heartache and trouble from striking our loved ones? Everyone is limited. It's just that not everyone realizes it!

We tend to see ourselves in comparison to others, as well as in comparison to the way we used to be. If we use that standard alone to judge our self-worth, we will be deeply discouraged. "I am less than other people -- less of a person than I used to be." It is a short step from that to "I am good for nothing, anymore".

Have our modern cultures left behind those superstitious attitudes about people with disabilities? Even though they aren't thrown from cliffs or hidden from public view, people with disabilities are not yet fully integrated into society. Maybe we still labor under a false assumption or two. What you and I do will have something to do with shaping current thinking.

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Here is the conclusion of the matter: the strength of the spirit must be our focus, not the strength of the body.

What are you worth, now that you have a disability? Frankly, your net worth has not changed at all. You are normal. Will you become an even stronger member of your family and community? That depends upon you!



Virtual Christian MAGAZINE *Letters to the Editor*

I would [like to write a letter](#) to the Editor

Is Anybody Out There?

Dear Mr. Bennett:

I wish to tell you about a few things that crossed my mind as I was reading your article, [Is Anybody Out There?](#) that appeared as an Editorial in *Virtual Christian Magazine*.

My father was physicist and had atheist views. As I followed in my father's foot steps, I too, was quite an atheist in my young life and all through school.

Some years after leaving school I volunteered to help a student with his chemistry lessons. Being rusty with chemistry I bought, in 1955, a copy of Chemistry Made Simple by Fred C. Hess, Ed.D for ONE DOLLAR (Italics and capitalizing mine). When I got to page 26 there was , "Table VIII , Distribution of Electrons." On this page with that Table VIII, this atheists found God for the sum of ONE DOLLAR!

I knew for every electron in an atom there is a proton . There is always the same amount (or more) of neutrons. . In looking over the "electron" totals I noticed with the addition of only one electron, the element changed to something else! (You have to know a bit about atomic structure to know that one proton and neutrons were also added.) The key to note here is that the electron build-up of only ONE ELECTRON, shows there is a mysterious power hidden here someplace because it is such a completely mathematical sequenced build up that is beyond all doubt and come sense to think this could, by random choice orchestrate itself in this perfect sequential pattern. This shows thought, planning and precise design. Absolutely no doubt about it.

My father taught me about Charles Darwin. Mother taught me the Bible. Mother, knowing I would follow in my father's foot steps, drummed Job 37:14 into my head and it remains in my mind like it is cast in stone..

I still have the book. It is old; the pages have turned yellow; some of the pages are brittle and break easily. But I have it as my special book in my private library. A few weeks ago I see the book is still in issue with a fancy Paperback cover. It's the same book only on bright white paper and the cost is now \$12. I bought it for old times sake. Table VIII is still the same only it is on page 18.

People, not familiar with science look at me sort of funny when I tell I didn't find God by going to church or reading the Bible. I found God in a dollar paperback

chemistry book.

God does work in mysterious ways!

- Russel Odell

Benefited by VCM

Thank you for the work you put into this magazine. I am frequently on the computer and on the Internet. It is great to so readily have access to such support and encouragement.

- framed1986@hotmail.com

My husband and I are members in Las Vegas. We are new to the "net" and just received the July 2000 *United News* today. I had been searching the "net" for the *Virtual Christian Magazine* and there it was on the back page! So just wanted to let you know we have been looking over all the issues and are quite impressed!! Excellent!! Especially the topic on "Rekindle the Flames of Fellowship". Keep up the good work and God bless you all.

In Christian Love,

- Karen and Jack

I wanted to let you know that the *Virtual Christian Magazine* site comforted me. It made me relieve that no matter what God will be with me.

Thank You.

- Mindy O'Neal

This is a great magazine! Keep up the good work!!

- Daniel Macaraeg

Great job on VCM! I look forward to reading each issue. I print off all the articles for reading at my convenience. I know it benefits many people.

- Joyce liams

I Just wanted to let you know that I came across your website by accident. My 3 children, ages 5 and under, were having a not so great morning. After hearing you talk so joyfully about the privilege of being home with your girls I called my 3 girls to

me and asked them to forgive me for speaking so harshly to them this morning. I told them how happy I am that I get to be with them everyday and then we prayed to all have happy hearts and happy faces for the rest of the day. Thank you-you are exactly what I need to hear this morning!

- Teresa

The Gift of Sex

I just wanted to write you and tell how much your website about saving your virginity means to me. See, I am a Christian and I believe in holding off for sex till marriage but many of my peers totally disagree. This is real hard on me but to know that other people actually care is very encouraging.

Also I am in a speech class and we were given an assignment to give a persuasive speech about anything we wanted and I chose pre marital sex and its consequences. My teacher told us to find out some facts on the net or in books and that is how I found your website. I just wanted to tell you thank you so much and your website really helped me!

Thanks!

- name withheld

Author Lynn Paulson writes VCM:

This is to make you aware of a newly published book that addresses the issue of premarital sex. Below is some information on it. This may be of interest to your organization. It is available through 1stBooks as either an Acrobat document or a printed/bound copy. It's URL is <http://www.1stbooks.com>.

All Things in Their Season: A Revealing Look at Premarital Sex, for Teenagers and Their Parents by Lynn H. Poulson M Ed.

About The Book:

In an era of wide open attitudes about sexuality and at a time when teenagers are flooded with conflicting messages about their own sexuality, this book provides a clear picture of the risks that young people take when engaging in premarital sex. Contrary to the messages of the media and from peers, sex is not a free exercise in choice whose only concerns are pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Hidden costs await the young person who acts on hormonal desires while lacking the information to evaluate the risks of such a choice. Even adults and parents are often minimally informed as to the emotional and physical risks of sexual behaviors.

This book is meant to be a clear and concise statement of the dangers surrounding premarital sex and of the benefits of abstaining until marriage. It clearly illustrates that morality is not old fashioned or irrelevant in a modern world. It also shows why morality is not simply a creation of religion but rather a necessary underpinning of a healthy and successful society.

Every young person and parent who reads this book will be provided with a broad and valuable foundation of knowledge that is often ignored in the headlong rush to accept and promote sexuality for young people.

About the Author:

Lynn H. Poulson is a professor of Home and Family Studies at Snow College where he has been teaching since 1975. He is the author of *Uncommon Common Sense: A Guide For Engaged and Married Couples*. He holds a M.Ed. Degree in Educational Psychology from Brigham Young University with advanced work in marriage and family, a B.A. From Utah State University in History, Psychology, and Spanish, and an A.A. in History from Snow College.

He is a member of the National Council on Family Relations and the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. At Snow College, he has served as Head of the Department of Home and Family Studies, Chairman of the Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and on numerous committees. He has served as advisor to the Snow College chapters of two national fraternities: Sigma Gamma Chi and Alpha Phi Omega, as well as advising the Home and Family Studies Club at Snow. He has worked for over 20 years with victims of sexual assault in personal counseling and with a support group for sexual assault victims.

An active participant in church and civic affairs, he has served on the Sanpete County chapter of the American Cancer Society, assistant chairman of the Ephraim Scandinavian Festival and as a member and President of the Ephraim City Library Board as well as holding many church positions during his life time.

He and his wife Julie, and their family reside in Ephraim, Utah.

Posting the [Ten Commandments](#) Is Not Enough!

We often do not think about the results of all people (or at least the majority) following and truly living in the ten commandments. Excellent and thought provoking message.

The [Politics of Education](#) -- "It's Not the Money, Stupid!"

Dear Mr. Maranville,

As a grandfather and business owner, I observe the loss of true education in our country. I applaud your information and the courage to present it. As President Lincoln said we can see what our country will be like in the next generation by seeing what is happening to the youth in our school systems. That is really a scary thought!

Thanks for your editorial.

- Tom Peine

I work as a Public Guardian for the Elderly in middle Tennessee. I am currently recruiting volunteers to visit our clients in the nursing homes, and I ran across your article *Are You Missing Something* on the Internet. I am currently in the process of developing pamphlets to place throughout our county and would like to know if I can use the information from the article.

Thank you for your attention. If you have any questions please email me, and I will respond as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

- Pauline Moore
- South Central Tennessee Public Guardian

Of course!

- ed

Virtuous Lady of Acts

I have been wondering what changes I need to make in my life. My husband and I took care of four different people, over a period of five years, until they each passed away. They were a friend, a son and my husband's parents. We then needed a break! My husband now loves to play the piano at various churches having been a music teacher for 31 years. For the past year I worked as a census enumerator and loved my job too. I met so many interesting people and heard so many life stories. There are many, many lonely people in this country just barely existing mentally, emotionally and physically. Being a government employee I could not mention spiritual topics or become involved in any way. Now that the census is over, I still need to work. At 65, jobs are limited. However I keep thinking of those people I met and wonder about the ones I didn't meet. I am at a crossroads as to what I should be doing.

I am very good at listening and hearing people out. They need to be heard without being rushed or cutoff. I've even started looking for what is said about women in the Bible. Because of my own health limitations, I need a job with some flexibility. In the meantime your description of Dorcas makes me realize that I can come back from my "break" and do what I can for those I see in need around me. Thank you for your inspiration.

- Catherine

Home Schooling

You have helped me more than you know. My 13 year old daughter is having trouble in school with bullies and how they are treating her. The principal will not do anything, so I have decided to home school for the safety of my children. I will follow your advise and I hope I can count on you if I ever need help. Thank you again.

- Susan

I caught your article on home schooling. Thought you might like to check out www.crosswalk.com and go to the home school link. Their resource page is quite extensive. I home school my 14 year old daughter, and have for 3 years. We are going all the way through high school, beginning this year.

Happy Home Schooling!

- C. Myers
- Indiana

For Those Who Will Honor Me I Will Honor

I just wanted to say that the article *For Those Who Will Honor Me I Will Honor* was very inspirational for me. I am at a time in my life where everything seems to be a dead end. I know that God has something wonderful for me planned, but sometimes it's easy to lose sight and concentrate on only the negative things. I'd like to say thank you to the person who wrote this.

- Laurie Kemper

Meditation

Much good is written but not lived. The purpose of meditation is to bring us into a right relationship with our Father in heaven, even as Jesus himself meditated in the garden. Though thoughts race across our minds, images and sensations distract us from awareness of His presence, His will for our lives is sure. God is with us!

Thanks for your site.