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*"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled."—Matthew 5:17-18*

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By Gary Petty

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## What Did Jesus Look Like?

By Gary Petty

*The title proclaims “The Real Face of Jesus” followed by “Advances in forensic science reveal the most famous face in history.” This article didn’t appear in a religious magazine, but was the lead story in Popular Mechanics challenging the popular view of Jesus.*



**T**HE ARTICLE, which appeared in the December 2002 issue of *Popular Mechanics*, begins, “From the time Christian children settle into Sunday school classrooms, an image of Jesus Christ is etched into their minds. In North America He is most often depicted as being taller than His disciples, lean, with flowing, light brown hair, fair skin with light-colored eyes. Familiar though this image may be, it is inherently flawed. A person with these features and physical bearing would have looked very different from everyone else in the region where Jesus lived and ministered.”

Can we really know what Jesus looked like? Classical European painters usually portray Him as tall and thin, with delicate, almost effeminate features. The Original African Heritage Edition of the King James Bible has a picture of Jesus looking like a man from central Africa.

The image of Jesus in *Popular Mechanics* was based on information gathered by experts in forensic anthropology. Author Mike Fillon writes, “Using methods similar to those police have developed to solve crimes, British scientists, assisted by Israeli archeologists, have re-created what they believe is the most accurate image of the most famous face in history.”

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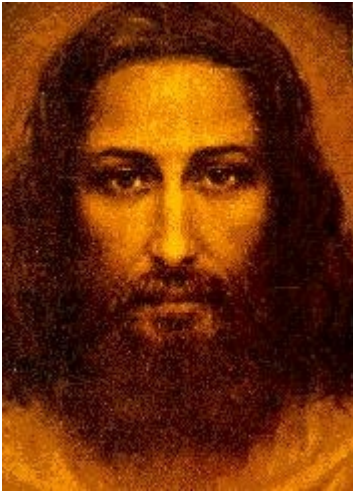
*“Just as it is a proclivity of people to create Jesus in their own image, they tend to interpret His teachings by the standards of their culture.”*

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The summary of these men of science surprised many religious people. They concluded, "From analysis of skeletal remains, archeologists had firmly established that the average build of a Semite male at the time of Jesus was 5 ft. 1 in., with an average weight of 110 pounds. Since Jesus worked outdoors as a carpenter until he was about 30 years old, it is reasonable to assume he was more muscular and physically fit than westernized portraits suggest."

The Gospel writers record an account when Jesus avoided violence by an angry mob simply by mingling with the crowd. Judas had to identify Him with a kiss of betrayal. Obviously, Jesus looked like any other Jew of His day.

### Jesus and long hair



The scientists quoted in *Popular Mechanics* assert that the prevalent view of Jesus with flowing locks is also an inaccurate portrayal. It's also hard to understand how the apostle Paul would write in 1 Corinthians 11:14 that it's a shame for a man to have long hair if his Savior wore His hair long. Where did the idea of Jesus with long hair originate?

For centuries many have believed that Jesus was under a Nazirite vow. According to Numbers 6:1-6 the person taking a Nazirite vow pledged to abstain from wine and grapes, to avoid touching a dead body, and to not cut his or her hair for the duration of the vow. The Gospels record occasions when Jesus drank wine, which means He would have broken His vow.

The misconception is rooted in scriptures where He is called Jesus of Nazareth or a Nazarene. Nazareth is a town in Galilee where Jesus spent time as a child. We find an account of Jesus' early life in recorded in Matthew 2:23, "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'" Jesus was a Nazarene, not a Nazirite. He was never under a vow to abstain from wine or to wear His hair long.

The scientists and archeologists who created the portrait of Jesus that appeared in *Popular Mechanics* may have been right in some details, but no one really knows the exact physical features of Jesus.

The apostle John was given a vision of what Jesus looks like today. In Revelation chapter 1 Jesus is said to have hair "white like wool," "eyes like a flame of fire," and to appear "like the sun shining in its strength" (verses 14 and 16).

### What did Jesus teach?

We find Jesus portrayed by Europeans as European, by Africans as African, by Hispanics as Hispanic and by Asians as Asian. Does it really matter how a person visualizes Jesus? Does how you perceive Jesus affect the way you interpret His gospel?

Just as it is a proclivity of people to create Jesus in their own image, they tend to interpret His teachings by the standards of their culture. Statements like "take up [your] cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24) had penetrating impact on an audience of first-century Jews who often saw

prisoners carrying crosses to their place of execution. Many of Jesus' teachings become profoundly clear when read in the context of Jewish culture of almost 2,000 years ago.

Some people say that Jesus came to erase the law of God. Did you know that Jesus said, "...till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 6:18)?

Others claim that all you have to do is accept Jesus as Savior to receive salvation. Jesus taught "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

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*"By creating Jesus  
in our own image,  
have we  
misinterpreted  
what He taught?"*

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By creating Jesus in our own image have we misinterpreted what He taught? Do you really know the truth of Jesus' message, or has it become a caricature like the pictures in our Bibles based more on the appearance of the people making the picture than on Jesus Himself? Maybe it's time to dust off the Gospels and discover the real Jesus. You may find that not only did Jesus look different than you have believed, but His gospel contains truths from God you've never heard.

*Good News Radio is heard on stations across the country. For an Internet listing of stations and times or to download radio programs go to [www.ucg.org/radio](http://www.ucg.org/radio). While online, you can also order the booklet offered on this program [The Gospel of the Kingdom](#).*

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## Why We Need a Weekly Rest Day

By John Ross Schroeder

*Why the seven-day week and the continual cycle of day and night? Is there a message for modern men and women in the way our planet was designed to operate?*



“**H**URRY SICKNESS” is the malaise of the modern world. We rush from one appointment to another, and from one task to the next.

Many of us in the West are perpetually in search of materialism and money as we charge up the ladder of success.

London *Times* writer Celia Brayfield commented that “thirty years of greed have given us luxuries undreamt of by previous generations and no free time to enjoy them.”

In her feature article she frequently mentioned “time poverty.” In her conclusion she warned readers that “if we don’t change our time poverty consciousness soon, we will reach a point where that change is no longer possible. We are already miserable, lonely, stressed and sick ...”

An overstatement? Probably yes, but some of the present symptoms are highly distressing indeed!

### No rest for this modern age

Many executives are routinely expected to put in at least 14 hours at the office or on the road. One man recently said that he was in the office by 6 a.m. and worked weekends, and he’s certainly not alone.

It seems that the pace of modern life is taking its toll. A recent study suggests that long hours at work are harming our mental health—psychologically and emotionally. Jonathan Scales, a research lecturer at the Health and Social

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*It seems that the  
pace of modern life  
is taking its toll.*

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Services Institute in Britain, observed “there is evidence that working long hours over a long period of time is raising stress levels and reducing emotional well being.”

Closely related to the perpetual hurry syndrome is increasing evidence of our monumental impatience. We do not easily come to terms with the discipline of deferred gratification. We want everything *now*.

We live in an age of almost perpetual impatience. One symptom is road rage. If irritated or delayed even for a few moments by another driver, some few totally lose their tempers and fly into a rage.



Some of these symptoms of modern life are increasingly reflected in the behavior of our children. According to Britain-based author and journalist Minette Martin, “Their infant minds ... have been so grossly over-stimulated by the easy fixes of television and computer games, and of low-grade, heavy-beat surround sound, that they are largely unable to concentrate for more than a few seconds” (*Daily Telegraph*).

We all need to sit down, breathe easily, relax and take time to think rationally and constructively.

Regrettably, in this past century we’ve even cut down on our sleep time. An article in *The Times* reported that we now average 90 minutes less sleep at night than people did a century ago. Also a recent survey found that we now average 7 hours and 12 minutes of sleep a night, down 25 minutes from only a decade ago. Many average much less than that.

### The 24-hour society

Clearly human beings were designed to rest at appropriate times. Yet increasingly we are moving into a 24-hour society. Some of us work, eat, drink, dance and shop around the clock. Like New York and other cities that never sleep, we are very reluctant to turn in and go to bed. The evidence is becoming clearer that our collective exhaustion threatens national health and well-being.

Many services and shops are open around the clock in major American cities. The Internet is available anytime. One person described this growing practice as “colonizing the night,” expanding our control over time to do things whenever it is convenient for us, regardless of what the clock tells us.

Societal habits have changed significantly over the last generation. It wasn’t that long ago that the typical husband came home after a hard day’s work and the whole family sat down to a meal and family conversation at 6 p.m. or thereabouts. Today both husband and wife are likely to arrive home—often at different times—to the start of a second shift of domestic chores and mutual responsibilities.

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*Clearly human beings were designed to rest at appropriate times. Yet increasingly we are moving into a 24-hour society.*

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For those who have some time for leisure pursuits, many TV stations and cable channels are on the air around the clock. Supposedly we can be entertained at any time of our choosing. But the

net result of the 24-hour society is that schedules start to blur in our minds and we begin to lose the significance of natural time patterns. Even our awareness of the seven-day week starts to wane.

Many today are in a state of perpetual confusion and weighed down with various problems and anxieties. What's the solution? Jesus Christ tells us that if we will adapt to His way of life, He will give us rest from our burdens (Matthew 11:28). On one occasion He encouraged His disciples to "come aside by yourselves ... and rest a while" (Mark 6:31).

Once in a while we all need to come to a complete halt—to totally stop what we are doing, take time to rest and reflect, and take stock of our lives.

### Precious time to think

The late author Norman Cousins observed, "We in America have everything we need except the most important thing of all, time to think and the habit of thought" (*Human Options*, 1981, p. 28).

"Our own age is not likely to be distinguished for the large numbers of people who insisted on finding time to think," he wrote. "Plainly this is not the age of meditative man. It is a sprinting, squinting, shoving age" (p. 69).

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*Like God, in whose image we were made, we can bring order out of chaos through the process of developing proper thinking habits.*

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There are so many movers and shakers in our society, there is little room left for thinkers. Yet the capacity for disciplined, sequential thought is one of the greatest gifts our Creator has given mankind. We have the God-given ability to exercise our moral imaginations. Like God, in whose image we were made, we can bring order out of chaos through the process of developing proper thinking habits.

Clearly we do live in a chaotic, confused age. To cope successfully, we need valuable time for sustained thought—periods in which we really have time to think things over and prioritize our commitments. Also we need time to truly appreciate the wonders of the creation. Solomon said that God made everything beautiful in its time (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

The Bible does tell us that we are to be "redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16). How are we to accomplish this task? A key lies in a God-given pattern that has been with us since creation.

### The seven-day week

It's interesting to note that God's Word is full of patterns of seven. Check any sizable Bible concordance and you will see. In fact, the biblical record tells us God fashioned the present world in six days and chose to rest on the seventh—thus setting apart the Sabbath day for all of mankind to follow His example.

Each 24-hour period was divided into night and day for special purposes. Generally speaking, the nighttime is for rest and sleep.



But we also need rest from our general labors. So the Creator commands us to rest every seventh day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). This 24-hour period of time is holy to God, and He tells us to cease from carrying on with our normal working lives and devote this time to rest and reflection on His ways. It is also a time for assembling with others for collective worship (Leviticus 23:1-3; Hebrews 10:24-25).

Spiritual fellowship with others of like mind is one of the most beneficial tonics to the human psyche. We all need it! Of course, this can only succeed in and through our fellowship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3).



Successful relationships all require time—quality time with God in prayer and Bible study; quality time with our husbands and wives; quality time with family, friends and fellow churchgoers. Of course not all quality time is spent at weekly church services, but it's a good and important beginning.

A weekly day of rest enables us to use the other six days much more profitably. It also gives us sufficient time to meditate and think about those things that can bring special meaning and divine purpose to our busy lives. It

provides time and space for families and couples to draw closer together. It provides precious time to read and study the Bible, the book that tells us how to live in a way that is infinitely rewarding, purposeful and fulfilling.

The Sabbath is an integral part of the Ten Commandments. It is no less important a commandment than those six specifically designed to govern our relationships with other human beings. It is one of the vital first four that help us to please our Creator and worship Him in a proper and respectful manner.

Isn't it about time you looked into the Bible's solution for all the stress and anxiety permeating your life?

### **The Sabbath Day in Summary**

Jesus Christ kept the seventh day and worshipped God on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). Indeed Christ Himself is the "Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28)—directly linking our Savior with this period of holy time.

The book of Acts records that the New Testament Church, including the apostle Paul, continued to keep the Sabbath (Acts 13:14-44; 17:1-3; 18:4). The Sabbath is a special 24-hour period designed to deepen and broaden our devotion to God—enabling us to learn more of the real purpose of human life.

On the Sabbath day, when men and women turn from their own thoughts, they have

things that please God (Isaiah 58:13-14). We are freed from the bondage of this world's ways that are contrary to God's, just as the ancient Israelites were emancipated from their slavery in Egypt nearly 3,500 years ago.

Moreover, obedience to the commandment in Exodus to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" causes human beings to hallow the seventh day by resting and worshipping God.

Further, Exodus 31:13-17 points out that the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people, constituting a perpetual covenant. This day is to be kept holy as a reminder that He sets His people apart as His children.

The seventh-day Sabbath looks back to creation and reminds men and women of their Creator. It also looks forward to the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God, when all the world will finally experience that true promised rest (see Hebrews 4:4-10).

### Recommended reading

Knowing the vital importance of the weekly Sabbath, the publishers of *Virtual Christian Magazine* have produced a free booklet on the subject. [\*Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest\*](#) shows from the Bible which day is the real Christian Sabbath. This booklet also discusses how to observe this weekly holy day in a balanced and practical manner. This free booklet will open up fresh vistas of knowledge that can bring peace and order to your personal life. Request your free copy or read it online today!

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## The Perfect Prayer

By Hector M. Earle

*Most of us have read or heard "The Lord's Prayer" recited, but have we ever tried to understand the great meaning contained within it?*



**O**UR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come...

During my childhood I remember many times repeating this prayer before going to bed at night. I would rush through the words, my tired mind never stopping to pause and reflect on what this wonderful prayer really meant. As I grew older, the prayer became forever etched in my memory. Even today one can hear the prayer ritualized in many religious institutions. However, rote memorization of certain scriptures can cause us to read right over them or to instantly recall them without reflecting upon their awesome meaning. The Lord's Prayer is no exception. But if one were to analyze the beautiful phrases as outlined by our Savior, the rich meaning of its content says so much.

**Our Father...** We are told to address the God whom Jesus called Father as "our Father." After all, He is the Father of all creation with mankind the crown of His handiwork. As Scripture says, we are His children, created in His very image with the vast potential of becoming like Christ, His Son. He has begotten us by His very Spirit through Christ with the promise of someday seeing Him in all His glory and splendor when our mortal bodies will be changed and fashioned as His glorious body. Like a loving Father, He has provided for us every good and perfect gift from above, including the gift of eternal life. When we go to Him in prayer, we should picture Him as the perfect Father, the absolute ideal ... a kind, generous, loving, forgiving Father who has the awesome power and ability to meet our every need.



**Which art in heaven...** The very mention of the word “heaven” conjures up images of order, splendor and beauty. Heaven is the headquarters of God’s very throne where our heavenly Father controls the entire universe. Christ resides there at God’s right hand waiting for our prayers and interceding to His Father on our behalf. Our Creator controls and sustains all His creation from His throne. When we pray, we should picture, as near as we can, the glorious splendor of God’s throne, and how He has provided easy access to it through Jesus Christ to meet our every need.

**Hallowed be thy name...** To hallow means “to show awe, respect and reverence.” The eternal God, the Maker and Ruler of the entire universe, the One Supreme Being, the Great “I AM” ... these names of God cannot totally convey His divine attributes of love, mercy, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, power and divine character. When Jesus said we should pray, “Hallowed be thy name,” He intended we know the great and holy name of our Heavenly Father who is our protector, provider, life-giver and Savior. Therefore, His name demands great respect and is not to be used lightly.

**Thy kingdom come...** Jesus spoke repeatedly of His coming Kingdom and told us in the Sermon on the Mount to seek His Kingdom first and foremost in our lives. When we pray, “Thy kingdom come,” we once again express our faith in God—our trust in His great promise that He will return again to earth someday in power and glory to bring everlasting peace to this sin-sick world. This desire for the Kingdom should always be the focus of our attention, giving us great hope that no matter what the conditions are like on this old earth, someday all things will be made new and all the sin and sorrow we see today will be a thing of the past.

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*“Familiarity with certain scriptures can cause us to read right over them or to instantly recall them without reflecting upon their awesome meaning.”*

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**Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...** The will of God is that not one single human being past, present or future should perish but that all come to the knowledge of the truth and receive the gift of eternal life through the precious shed blood of His Son. He desires all mankind to repent and live a full, abundant life according to His commandments. This is His will for all mankind on earth as it is in heaven. In heaven, we see order instead of chaos, beauty instead of ugliness, a perfect system rather than confusion, and the very epitome of all that could be possibly desired in the most perfect state. God wants earth to be that someday. Soon, this utopia will be fully realized as the knowledge of God will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

**Give us this day our daily bread...** Jesus knew how much we are dependent upon God, not only for our physical needs, but, more importantly, our daily spiritual needs. He told Satan in Matthew 4:4, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from out of the mouth of God.” Our spiritual life needs daily fulfilling if we are to grow and mature as Christians. Asking God, our great Provider, to “give us ...” is a recognition that He supplies both our physical and spiritual needs every day.

**And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...** One of God’s greatest qualities is mercy. He knows how prone we are to sin and wrong desires. He requires us to repent and pray for forgiveness. God wants us to come to Him in a continual attitude of contrition for our human shortcomings and be always cognizant of our sins. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). However, just as importantly, we need to forgive others who sin against us. “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you” (Matthew 6:14). This is very

straightforward: *We are forgiven on the condition we harbor no grudges or hatred against our fellow human beings.* A good portion of the rest of the Sermon on the Mount provides examples of forgiving our fellow man and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

**And lead us not into temptation...** We are faced with three major sources of temptation: Satan, society and our human nature. But God promises to help us overcome temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). When we are tempted to sin against God and our fellow man, Christ understands for He was tempted in all areas as we are. *He experienced the temptation to do wrong, yet He never yielded once to sin.* Therefore, in Christ we have a High Priest who is the Great Intercessor and who is always there to help us. The old saying, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” certainly holds true when overcoming temptation. Prevention is the key.

**But deliver us from evil...** Our prayer always should include asking our eternal God to guard us and deliver us from worries, fears and sins which so easily entangle us. Jesus knew how vulnerable we all are to the downward pulls of Satan and how important it is to ask God for daily deliverance from Satan’s evil persuasions. The psalmist David assured us God can deliver us from all sins, doubts, worries and fears when he wrote, “I sought the LORD and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” (Psalm 34:4).

**For thine is the kingdom...** This is truly an awesome statement assuring us God Almighty is in absolute control over all things and forever rules over His creation. When the storms of life seem overwhelming and the news is all bad, is it not a great relief to know our eternal God is in control of all things and His Kingdom is an everlasting one? Believing God is in complete charge of the affairs of mankind instills in us faith and confidence that God is perfectly able to do what He promised. We can have the hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began (Titus 1:2).

**And the power...** Our great God is so powerful it boggles the human mind. The prophet Isaiah stated the creative powers of the Eternal brought not only everything in the entire universe into existence, but He can account for every single one of the billions of stars in the billions of galaxies in the cosmos and knows each by name (Isaiah 40:26). Also, in the first chapter of Genesis we see the mighty power of God as He brought everything (the flora and fauna) into existence by the word of His mouth. “He has made the earth by His power” (Jeremiah 10:12). To know that the hand of the Almighty sustains it all is even more awesome. I wonder, have we really set our minds to contemplate the power of the great “I AM” who is everywhere on the earth, in the solar system, in our galaxy and our universe—and marvel, in ever increasing “shock and awe,” at the mighty hand of our divine Creator who made it all? Yet, as powerful as He is, He is concerned for every one of our needs, great or small (Philippians 4:19).

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*“When we pray, we should picture, as near as we can, the glorious splendor of God’s throne, and how He has provided easy access to it through Jesus Christ to meet our every need.”*

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**And the glory, for ever...** God’s glory is as splendid as His power. John’s description of God in Revelation chapter 4 is a breathtaking spectacle that is simply too magnificent, too bright, too beautiful and overwhelming to imagine. Also, we see Christ, the very express image of His Father pictured glorified and shining as the sun in full strength (Revelation 1:16). Yet the time is coming when God promises, “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Finally, when the dead in Christ are resurrected from their graves, we who are alive and remain when Christ returns shall inherit God’s glory forever (1 Corinthians 15:53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

**Amen...** The word *amen* means “so be it,” “it is completed,” “it is accomplished,” “God has heard it and it will be done.” It should mean that we are saying in faith to our everlasting, Almighty God, “Father, I know you have heard my prayers and you are a rewarder of those who diligently seek You.” When we say “amen,” we are in essence saying we have surrendered our prayers to God and leave the rest to Him.

The next time we consider the Lord’s Prayer, may we resist the temptation to use it in monotonous repetition, but rather use it for an outline for meaningful prayer to connect with our Creator. *Amen.*

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## Against All Odds

By Janet Treadway

*What’s holding you back from achieving your dreams? What overwhelming obstacles do you face? These stories of drive and perseverance can inspire us to go on in spite of the odds.*



**R**UDY WAS 23 AND HAD A DREAM—a dream that his family members tried to squash over and over again. “You’re not smart enough.” “You just have mediocre athletic skills.” His family feared he would fail and get hurt. The only person who encouraged him to reach for his dreams was his best friend. When his best friend was killed in an industrial accident, it was then that Rudy Ruettiger went out to make his dream come true, even against all odds.



Rudy’s dream was to play on the legendary Notre Dame University football team. After three rejections, and then final acceptance, this young man of 5 foot 6, 165 pounds and fierce determination was able to realize his dream. Because of his determination, endurance and perseverance, Rudy won the respect of his fellow teammates, coaches and the student body.

Because of his size, he was still not allowed to play (even though he became a part of the team) until the last game of his senior year. In that game his teammates began to chant “Rudy, Rudy, Rudy!” Then the people in the stadium also followed suit. With 27 seconds remaining in the game, Rudy was allowed to play his one and only time. Rudy made a major play—he sacked the

quarterback! Rudy was the only player since 1975 who was carried off the field on the shoulders of his fellow players.

### Joni's story

On a hot July afternoon, a young 17-year-old girl dove into a shallow lake, changing her life forever. Joni Eareckson Tada snapped her neck, and was left as a quadriplegic. Through determination not to give up, she learned how to paint with a brush between her teeth.



Today she is an internationally known artist, author, speaker and radio host. She founded "Joni and Friends" to offer hope to hurting people by sharing her own experiences. Above all, she is an enthusiastic and highly effective advocate for those with physical disabilities.

### A problem of gigantic proportions

David was a young lad who was considered the least of his brothers. When Samuel asked David's father to present to him his sons, they overlooked David. When Samuel realized that none of these young men had been chosen by God to be king, he asked if there were another son. David—the youngest, the overlooked son—was anointed king of ancient Israel!



David was not sinless, but he was a man of great passions and was driven by

great goals. While still a young man, David, when it seemed all odds were against to him, took a stand against the giant Goliath. When everyone else was afraid, David bravely took up his sling and stone and killed the giant. If David had retreated, had listened to his brothers and others around him telling him that it was impossible to go out and kill a giant with a sling, the course of history could have been changed.

### "What was I thinking?"

Recently I had the opportunity to do something that I thought could never be possible for me. I was asked by the students of the Ambassador Bible Center here in Cincinnati to speak at their graduation banquet!

*Ask God to travel that difficult road with you and help you reach your dreams. God can be your helper.*

When I was younger, I was so shy that I would not speak to anyone. When I did, I would usually end up stuttering, which would mortify me and I would retreat even more. But I did not want to give in to this. Or to give up! I wanted to grow and be all that God wanted me to be. My minister advised me to go around, stick out my hand and say hello. It was very hard at first, but became easier with time. Even now, there are times I get nervous and the words just don't come out right.

So when I was asked to speak, I said yes, then started wondering, “What was I thinking?” But like Rudy, Joni and King David, I did not want to give in to my fear. I prayed about the speech a lot! I practiced a lot and I asked others to pray for me about it.

When I got up to speak in front of a whole group of people, to my surprise I did not stutter and was not nervous. I had accomplished something in my life that I thought I could never do. God had indeed answered my prayer and was there with me through that speech. That speech demonstrated to me how far you can come with the help of God and others if you don’t give up!

### What’s holding you back?

What is your dream? What is it that holds you back from being all that you can be? Is it a handicap, your size, your speech, your education? Is it criticism from others telling you that you cannot do this or your own self-image saying you cannot accomplish your dreams? Here are some points that I believe will help you to rise against all odds.

**1. Seek God first.** Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Put God first in your life! Ask Him to give you wisdom, courage, strength and a pure heart.

James 1:5 tells us, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” Hebrews 13:6 emphasizes the help and strength God provides: “So we may boldly say: “The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?””

The movie *Rudy* showed Rudy praying often, asking for God’s help.

God wants us to have good things in this life. In Ephesians 3:20 Paul describes God’s power to help us: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.” Ask God to travel that difficult road with you and help you reach your dreams. God can be your helper.

**2. Prepare.** You have to prepare for your dream. You have to be willing to work hard. You have to struggle. You prepare through education. You have to have goals. Rudy had to acquire sound study habits through hard work. He even had to get a tutor. He had to bring up his grades so he could be accepted to Notre Dame.

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*We all need mentors to help us along the way. We need people to give us advice, to encourage us.*

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Knowledge comes from preparation. Reinforce your dreams every day with positive information from tapes, books and mentors. Each day you will get closer to your dream through preparation.

**3. Ask God to send people into your life who will encourage you and help you along the way.** In the movie about his life, Rudy had people who urged him on. Before he was accepted at Notre Dame, he was accepted to a college across the street. During that time he worked for a groundskeeper at Notre Dame. The groundskeeper encouraged Rudy often to not give up his dream.



Rudy is now a much-sought-after speech motivator. If he had given in to people around him and not searched for his dream, his life would have been so different. He would not have realized his dream.

We all need people—mentors—to help us along the way. We need people to give us advice, to encourage us. I, too, had people to help me, like the minister who encouraged me out of my shyness. We cannot travel the road to our dreams by ourselves; we need help along the way.

**4. Focus on your dream and never quit!** Consider Hebrews 12:12-13: “So take a new grip with your tired hands and stand firm on your shaky legs. Mark out a straight path for your feet. Then those who follow you, though they are weak and lame, will not stumble and fall but will become strong” (New Living Translation).

Joni did not give up when she wanted to. She had friends to encourage her to use what she had to give to others—her heart. Today she inspires many by her example and drive to not quit! Joni went way beyond what most people thought she was capable of doing and far beyond what she thought she could accomplish.

One of my favorite poems that I have often gone back to is “Don’t Quit!”

### Don’t Quit!

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,  
When the road you’re trudging seems all uphill,  
When the funds are low, and the debts are high,  
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,  
When care is pressing you down a bit—  
Rest if you must, but don’t you quit.

Life is queer with its twists and turns,  
As every one of us sometimes learns,  
And many a failure turns about  
When he might have won had he stuck it out.  
Don’t give up though the pace seems slow—  
You may succeed with another blow.

Often the goal is nearer than  
It seems to a faint and faltering man;  
Often the struggler has given up  
When he might have captured the victor’s cup;  
And he learned too late when the night slipped down  
How close he was to the golden crown.

Success is failure turned inside out—  
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,  
And you never can tell how close you are,  
It may be near when it seems afar;  
So stick to the fight when you are hardest hit—  
It’s when things seem worst that you mustn’t quit!  
—(Author unknown)

Rudy almost quit. After all those years of struggles, right before his last game he almost quit. All Rudy wanted was to run out with his teammates through the tunnel so all his family could see that he had achieved his dream! He was there at Notre Dame with the football team! But when the list was posted for the last game with the names of the players to be in uniform, Rudy was not on it. Rudy felt betrayed and was about to quit.

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*When everyone else was afraid, David bravely took up his sling and stone and killed the giant.*

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While Rudy was staring out into an empty field, his mentor, his friend, his encourager, the groundskeeper, reminded him, "You can't quit!" If Rudy had quit, he would not have had those seconds of fame. He would have lost his dream. But he stayed with it, and not only did his family see him play his one and only play on the field, but they saw the admiration that Rudy received from all his teammates.

Sometimes our lives can seem like they are against all odds. And we just give up right before victory!

Rudy, Joni and King David were all young people who battled against great odds. All the odds seemed against them, but they persevered on, they sought God, they received help and encouragement from others and they did not quit. You, too, can go against whatever is holding you back and reach your dreams. Ask God for help, ask others for help, prepare for your dream and don't quit! You can beat the odds! And when you beat the odds, you can be an inspiration to others to do the same.

You may be interested in reading a couple of brochures related to this subject. When trials and suffering occur in your life or the lives of those you love, it's natural to wonder, [Why Does God Allow Suffering?](#) Click here to read or request our brochure by that name. You will also want to read the biblical principles that can help you make life work. Click here to read or request our brochure, [Making Life Work](#). Both are free of charge, in the public interest.

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## 10 Million AIDS Orphans: A Disaster for Africa

By Mario Seiglie

*AIDS has taken a horrible toll in Africa, and the plague is far from over. What will stop the horror?*



**M**ORE THAN 10 MILLION ORPHANS. It took a while for the headline in *Newsweek* magazine to sink in. “A full-blown crisis is upon us, and it’s worse than expected,” reported *Newsweek*. “By the end of this year an astonishing 10.4 million African children under 15 will have lost their mothers or both parents to AIDS—90 percent of the global total of AIDS orphans” (Jan. 17, 2000, p. 12).

The situation has become progressively worse since then. UNAIDS, an umbrella group for United Nations agencies, estimates that by 2010 there will be approximately 20 million children in sub-Saharan Africa who have lost at least one parent to HIV/AIDS. These children will grow up with virtually no social structure, guaranteeing a future wave of lawlessness and chaos in already devastated countries. In some countries fully half of teenagers and young adults are infected and will die of the disease.

In any other part of the world the news would be scandalous, but in Africa, a continent largely disconnected from the rest of the planet, AIDS is still mostly a silent epidemic. The cover of the Sept. 9 issue of *World* said, simply and starkly, “AIDS: Africa Is Dying Slowly.”

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*“In any other part of the world the news would be scandalous, but in Africa AIDS is still mostly a silent epidemic.”*

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At least it has been finally recognized for what it is—a worldwide plague. The facts are slowly sinking in about how terrible and widespread this plague has become. It has already killed close to half a million Americans, almost 10 times the number who died in the Vietnam War. No nation is immune. China and India, where the epidemic is just beginning, together already have more than 6 million cases.

The number of people who have AIDS worldwide is around 42 million. More than 29 million are infected in Africa alone (compared with 900,000 in the United States). Almost 3 million of them are children under 15.

How many have died from AIDS? A million? Five million? Ten million? No, it is far worse. UNAIDS estimates the figure at more than 20 million.

In 2002, 3.1 million died of the virus, which is more than the population of Jamaica. Perhaps because 2.4 million of those died in Africa, the wails of grief are seldom heard beyond the villages of the dead. Yet they are all people made in God's image, but whose dreams and aspirations have been shattered in slow, lingering deaths.

The figures have grown to such astronomical proportions that they are finally causing worldwide alarm. "The spread of this disease," said former U.S. ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrooke, "could not be contained in Africa, and the destruction of Africa from AIDS will not be limited to the continent. If we don't work with the Africans themselves to address these problems ... we will have to deal with them later when they will get more dangerous and more expensive."

### Factors that cause AIDS to spread

Why has the AIDS virus been particularly virulent in Africa? In Africa this fatal disease is primarily a heterosexual problem. Much of the spread is due to social structures and instability. Many migrant men leave their rural homes and spend months working in mines, on construction projects or at jobs in the cities. While away from home, many visit prostitutes, of which up to 90 percent in some areas carry the AIDS virus. After becoming infected, the men carry the virus back to their wives and others in their home villages.

Civil unrest and war have also played a part. Widespread numbers of rapes committed in some of Africa's 14 ongoing military conflicts have also spread the disease. Even UN and regional peacekeeping troops have contributed to the problem, fathering illegitimate children and contracting the infection, which they carry to their own homelands and homes.

Cultural factors play a role. In some areas the superstition has spread that the best way for an HIV-infected man to be cured is to have sexual relations with a virgin.

### Politically correct reporting ignores causes

The caution with which some of the Western news media deal with the AIDS epidemic is mostly because of the political issues involved. Prostitution, promiscuity and homosexuality are all major causes for the spread of AIDS but are considered "politically incorrect" subjects by many journalists. In a world where sexual morals are being increasingly relaxed, it is difficult for the news media to deal with the main culprit of the AIDS outbreak—the breaking of the seventh of the Ten Commandments: "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14).



It's revealing to note that, as one insightful *Newsweek* reader later commented about the special edition dedicated to AIDS mentioned earlier: "In 14 pages of text, the words 'casual sex' or 'promiscuity' were not mentioned once, even though this is the direct or indirect cause of 98 percent of all new infections in Africa. Nor was the fact that HIV is a sexually transmitted infection alluded to."

To be sure, many in Africa are innocent victims. Tainted blood used in transfusions is one cause. Lack of sterilization in hospitals and clinics contributes to its spread. Mates unknowingly contract AIDS from a spouse. Then there are the children who inherit it from birth from infected mothers.

### A warning from God

God has repeatedly warned mankind in the past that He will not tolerate rampant sexual immorality forever. We read that He turned “the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them *an example* to those who afterward would live ungodly ...” (2 Peter 2:6, emphasis added throughout).

God’s intervention in world affairs is linked in Daniel 8 to growing degeneracy and an increase in ungodly lifestyles, of which the AIDS plague is both a symptom and a part. It is prophesied: “And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise ... against the Prince of princes [at Christ’s second coming]; but he shall be broken without human means” (verses 23-25).

Like the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, it seems sin has to rise to a certain level in our time before God decides to initiate the prophesied intervention of His Kingdom.

### Search for a cure

There are no known cures for AIDS. Expensive and powerful drugs can hold it somewhat in check—albeit with unpleasant side effects—but not eliminate it. Enormous efforts and resources have been directed at finding a cure, and some scientists believe they are on the right track to a lasting solution. This would be good news, for no one wants AIDS to continue, and there are too many innocent victims.

Fear of contracting the virus has slowed the rampant immorality in some countries. One wonders if a cure for AIDS would free people from their fears and actually lead to increased promiscuity. Other sexually transmissible diseases continue to multiply in spite of their devastating consequences.

### Long-term solution to AIDS

The long-term solution to the AIDS problem includes more than eliminating the virus. People must choose to *stop the sexual misconduct* that spreads this killer disease.

There is good news for the future in the fight against AIDS. God promises that people will choose this solution under His government, which Christ will establish at His return to earth.

Jesus prophesied the dire world conditions before His return: “And because *lawlessness* will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:12-13). He also foretold that “pestilences [disease epidemics] ... in various places” would be another sign before His coming (verse 7).

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*“It seems sin has to rise to a certain level before God decides to initiate the prophesied intervention of His Kingdom.”*

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Today, as in the past, children suffer for the sins of their parents. Lamentations 5:1-7 recounts that many centuries ago some were orphaned because of their fathers' sins. The misery brought by sin can spread its suffering and heartache over several generations (Exodus 34:7).

But Christ has promised He will return to save this sin-stricken world from itself. He will usher in a kingdom in which diseases such as AIDS will no longer exist because the world's inhabitants will choose a better way of life. We read about this in Isaiah 11:9: "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." With true knowledge, people will not choose damaging, self-destructive lifestyles.

### **A change of heart**

For that to occur, though, man's heart must be changed. God's laws must be written in a person's heart. God has prophesied this will occur: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Hebrews 8:10; compare Jeremiah 31:33).

Imagine a world in which marriage is respected to the point that no one looks for another sexual partner, where youths are not promiscuous and commit to wait until marriage to have sexual relations. AIDS and other venereal diseases will then be a distant memory.

God, who describes Himself as "a father of the fatherless" (Psalm 68:5), says that eventually He will wipe away the tears of those who respond to Him (Revelation 7:17; 21:4). These are some of God's promises, which He will bring about when Christ establishes His blessed Kingdom.

### **Recommended reading**

Some people think the Ten Commandments are only a series of restrictive *don'ts* designed to keep us from having any fun or that they're hopelessly obsolete in our modern world. But what does God say? Be sure to request your free copy of [The Ten Commandments](#) to discover the encouraging, exciting truth about the 10 eternal principles.

If you'd like to learn more about how the world will be transformed by obedience to God's laws, also request [The Gospel of the Kingdom](#).

Both booklets are free of charge and you can request them from our Web site at [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org).

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## **Letters to the Editor**

### **"Star Trek, God's Plan and You!"**

My 16-year-old son thought highly of your *Star Trek* article. I appreciate any way to connect with him. Thanks for the opportunity!

— Mrs. Miller

## **A place to find encouragement**



I have just found your site and I love it. Praise the Lord that there is a place I can go as a Christian and read wonderful stories and find encouragement in my daily walk with the Lord our God.

Thank you and your staff for such a wonderful thing you are doing for the kingdom of God.

God bless you always!

Some feedback messages are edited for space and/or clarity