

July-September 2004

vertical**thought**

a magazine of understanding for tomorrow's leaders

Christian Values Under Attack!

Will Yours Survive the College Challenge?

How Correct Is Political Correctness?

Sexual Myths, Sexual Reality

What Will the Kingdom of God Mean for You?

INSIDE**thought**



Like Hiking
With **GOD**



Money & Teens



Heading off to College

Congratulations to those of you who recently graduated from high school! Now many of you will continue your formal education at a college or university. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in the United States "immediate college enrollment rates of high school completers increased from 49 to 62 percent between 1972 and 2001" (<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2003/section3/indicator18.asp>).

Although slightly more girls (63.6 percent) than boys (59.7 percent) pursued a formal education immediately after high school, both sexes did so because they believed it was their best course of action (ibid.). After all, furthering one's knowledge through formal education is usually rewarded by higher pay in the job market.

The Bible endorses this pursuit of learning, saying, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7). In this passage, "wisdom" refers to being able to properly apply knowledge and understanding. This is where *Vertical Thought* comes in. The purpose of this magazine is to give you important information *and* the encouragement to apply it in a godly manner. These ingredients are critically important for everyone who wants to please God and be successful.

As for leaving home for college, many high school students also look forward to this as the time they will make the official break from their parents. They look forward to independence and making their own decisions. It's an exciting time of life as young people mature, prepare for careers and set out to live on their own.

Yet for all the good we can gain by leaving home for additional education, there are also risks and challenges.

For all the good we can gain by leaving home for additional education, there are also risks and challenges.

Our lead article, "Christian Values Under Attack!," addresses the spiritual challenges nearly all young people will encounter from prevailing philosophies found on most campuses. And for a firsthand report on what you will most likely be asked to conform to (in the way you

think, act and talk) from someone who recently completed her bachelor's degree, be sure to read, "How Correct Is Political Correctness?"

The temptation to experiment with sex before marriage will also challenge many people when they leave home. While the majority of students graduate from high school as virgins, many succumb to premarital sex afterwards. "Sexual Myths, Sexual Reality" discusses this important subject.

In addition to our focus on what to expect at college, this issue of *Vertical Thought* includes articles ranging from the significance of the coming Kingdom of God for young people to baptism, plus all of our regular features such as "In the News" and "Q&A." You'll find plenty of good reading.

As you read this issue, we hope you'll bear in mind the connection implied by the name of our publication, *Vertical Thought*. Think about what God wants you to do. Please Him and you'll receive a double reward. As 1 Timothy 4:8 promises: "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."

David Treybig
Managing editor



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When you arrive on campus, your perspective and way of thinking will undoubtedly be tested. Will you be able to cross the minefield of ideas with your Christianity intact? Why not start with a map letting you know what to expect?

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Even though most institutions of higher learning say that they want students to learn to think for themselves, some ideas are frowned upon. There is often great pressure to conform to politically correct points of view that dismiss a belief in absolute truth. Will you fall victim to the propaganda?

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We make plans for most everything, including where to go to school, what career to pursue and how to spend our money. But what about sex? To have a great sex life, you need to have a plan for this part of your life too.

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How does the Old Testament principle of “covenant loyalty” apply to Christians today? The love story of Ruth shows the way.

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In this magazine we often write about what the Bible calls the Kingdom of God—the government Jesus will establish at His return to earth. But what will the Kingdom of God do for you? Why should you look forward to it?

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Will Your Christian Values Survive the College Challenge?

The college years are often some of the greatest times of challenge for young people brought up in Christian homes. A college degree is essential for so many occupations. Yet four or more years of college or university often tear young Christians away from their foundation, at times destroying values and beliefs taught them by their parents and their churches.

Is it possible to survive college and hold on to Christian values? If so, what are the keys? And what are the big dangers in college life?

Challenge number one: anti-Christian philosophies

No matter where you go, you will probably have professors who don't share your beliefs, and who may even be openly hostile to them. Humanism and the various forms of Marxism or Communism are still popular philosophies in the world of postsecondary education. And even though these beliefs have less popularity outside of college, you will still need to be prepared to face them.

When I went to university in England, I suddenly found myself in a radical political environment. Those who didn't seek radical political change in some form or other were definitely in the minority. "Leftist" groups of many different stripes seemed to abound. The ideas of famous German philosopher Karl Marx were everywhere. Having never studied Marx before, I became fascinated, and then somewhat pulled in, before I finally (thankfully!) rejected those ideas.

Marx taught that history is driven by conflict between social classes, not by national, racial or religious conflict. The opening words of his *Communist Manifesto* read as follows: "The history of all . . . society is a history of class struggles." From this flows the idea that as lower classes rise up in rebellion against their oppressors, society moves forward toward an ultimate utopia free of class distinctions and injustice.

I came to see the falseness and futility of these ideas. It was the Holy Bible, the Word of God, that helped me to see it. The Bible makes plain that evil isn't determined by who has his hands on the means of production in society. People from lower classes can be just as evil, just as self-

Christian Values Under Attack!

Will you be leaving home for college this fall? If so, your Christianity is sure to be tested. Read this article for advice on how to remain strong.

by Ralph Levy

ish and just as prone to mistreat their neighbors as those from the privileged classes. And overturning it all, as Communists desire, might lead to only loss of freedom, bankrupt economies and, often, far worse abuses of power.

Another very common, but unchristian, philosophy encountered in college is humanism. Essentially, humanists believe "the solution is within us." They view human nature as inherently good and suggest that humankind's problems would be solved if only the good in us can be coaxed out. Most humanists deny any idea of the uniqueness of man or of life after death.

Again, humanism conflicts with what the Bible teaches us. The prophet Jeremiah made it very clear when he declared, "O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23) and "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Of course, God knows this and is willing to help us change, once we make the choice to live the way He commands. King David of Israel discovered this and wrote of the changed heart in Psalm 51. Praying to God, he said, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (verse 10).

The solutions taught on many college campuses are really misleading. Humanity can't

make it without God's help, no matter how reasonable the proposed solution may sound or how radical it may be!

Challenge number two: drugs and alcohol

A recent survey found that 49.7 percent of college students reported participating in "binge drinking" (defined as five or more drinks in one sitting) in the two weeks prior to completing the survey. The same survey showed that 64.5 percent had experienced a hangover from excessive drinking, 55.3 percent reported having been nauseated or vomiting, 40.5 percent had "done something I later regretted" and 12.3 percent reported they had been taken advantage of sexually while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Of all the students in the survey who had experienced unwanted sexual intercourse, 82.6 percent said they were under the influence of drugs or alcohol when this occurred, while 76 percent of those reporting unwanted sexual touching said they were under the influence at the time (2001 *Statistics on Alcohol and Other Drug Use on American Campuses*).

Abuse of alcohol and drugs is a big problem among college students. So what's a Christian to do? The Word of God makes it plain: "Hear, my son, and be wise . . . Do not mix with winebibbers [in other words, avoid the parties where people are getting drunk or taking drugs!] . . . for the drunkard . . . will come to poverty" (Proverbs 23:19-21).

And don't forget that you can always get up and leave. If the drugs begin to circulate or people are getting drunk, the Christian can always say, "Thank you for the invitation, but I have to leave now." You might be surprised to see others get up and leave with you!

Challenge number three: sexual immorality

Recent research shows fewer high school students are having sex now compared to 10 years ago and that the majority of high school graduates are virgins. But the picture changes drastically in college.

A report in the December 2001 issue of *Archives of Sexual Behavior* indicates that 71 percent of unmarried college students reported being sexually experienced. Breaking it down further, 64 percent reported one sexual partner in the 30 days prior to the survey, while 30 percent reported no sexual partners in that time. Presumably, the remaining 6 percent had been with two or more partners in the month prior to the survey.

College will present challenges to young Christians wanting to remain morally pure! Perhaps the greatest challenge to your character and determination will come in this area. How can you protect yourself?

First, choose your environment carefully. It may be wise to stay at home or with close relatives while in college. That way you can avoid the noise, drugs and excessive drinking you would have to face in many college dorms.

If you're going away from home, it's a good idea to find roommates with whom you share certain basic values. Look for people you'll get along with and who will commit to having no drugs, no illegal or excessive drinking and no boyfriend or girlfriend sleepovers. Sit down and discuss these things with potential roommates before committing to sharing a room with them.

If there's no choice but to live in a dorm, you might try to find one where other Christians are living. Fraternities and sororities are often the most free-living dorms, and should usually be avoided. But there are fraternities and sororities that are organized on a set of values, such as service to the community or basic Christian morality.

Anything you can do to be in the company of people who will help you maintain your Christian values is something to be pursued. The Bible tells us that "evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33), and, conversely, that "whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools suffers harm" (Proverbs 13:20, New Revised Standard Version). Like it or not, we're all heavily influenced by the company we keep.

A source of help: true Christian fellowship

One of the big keys to holding on to your Christian faith during the college years is the Church. Keep going to Church! In fact, during this time

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Sexual Se

Imagine that you and some of your friends have been invited to tour a nuclear power plant. Shortly after you gather outside the plant's entrance for your scheduled tour, an employee greets you and explains that even though the official guide isn't available, all of you are welcome to wander through the plant on your own. "Go ahead and push any buttons you wish," says the employee. "After all, experiential learning is fun and you'll be able to see firsthand what happens as a result."

Without any protective gear or instruction, you and your friends begin wandering around, pushing buttons and looking for fireworks. Whoa! Stop this nightmare! No one in his or her right mind would recommend this course of

action. It's a recipe for disaster!

Ironically, this is the approach many have taken to sexual education. Some mistakenly assume that young people should be free to experiment with their sexuality whenever and however they would like so they can develop their own ideas and perspective. Sadly, it's like the imaginary nuclear power plant tour. Start pushing buttons in a random fashion and it won't be long before you have a nuclear disaster. Start experimenting with sex in a random fashion without any instruction and you'll soon experience tragic consequences that could include emotional pain, unwanted pregnancy and even sterility or death from a sexually transmitted disease (STD).

As young people, how we respond to our developing sexuality

How Correct Is *Political Correctness*?

Since political correctness will be part of nearly every college class you take, what should you know about it now?

by Janel Johnson

Sometimes it seems like political correctness (PC) has been around forever. Some commentators peg the beginning of political correctness within the decade of the 1980s.

But the politically correct movement already had a foundation long before that in moral relativism and in situation ethics. Both of these philosophies are based on the idea that there is no such thing as "absolute truth." Those of us who know and accept the "absolute truth" of the Bible know that such thinking is flawed. We also discover that there is more to the business of PC than "correctness."

PC is so prevalent and powerful because it is based on our innate desire for love, peace and justice for the underdog. But without the true biblical principles to guide these desires, they can run amok.

What does it sound like?

PC nouns and adjectives include words such as "privileged," "entitled," "majority rule," "diversity" and "individual rights." While "tolerance" is a favorite buzzword of the politically correct, PC actually creates its own intolerance that often quickly shouts down alternative viewpoints.

You'll hear all about "imperialism" in history, "reason" in English, "exploitation" in economics, "evolution" as fact in biology and "connecting to the greater world" in sociology. And, if you listen very carefully, you'll hear that the words spoken are not really about equal opportunity for all.

How does it look and feel?

PC embraces minorities, but not because it respects everyone like God does or as the Constitution of the United States and its amendments advocate. According to author and radio host Laura Ingraham, political correctness uses polarization to reinforce division and ends up *creating* classes among our citizens (*Shut Up and Sing*, 2003, p. 62).

Your PC classroom will be one with an emphasis on personal right of choice—but, when you stand back and take an overview, this turns out to be a shortsighted approach that is rarely for the *collective good of all*. The barometer of the politically correct movement tends to be the gratification of one person or one particular group of people.

Your PC classroom will be one in which each student is encouraged to lobby for that right of choice but will rarely follow up on the personal responsibility needed in taking that action.

In the politically correct worldview, abortion is a reproductive right and homosexuality is an alternative lifestyle just as valid as any other. All religions, from animism to Wicca, are equal (except one that would claim to know absolute truth). You'll be made to feel ostracized and intimidated if you hold an alternative opinion.

Myths, Sexual Reality

by David Treybig

is one of the most important decisions we will make. Choices made at this time of life directly affect our future success, our health, our marital happiness and even our relationships with God. Sex is thus a critically important subject. And as we might expect, the Bible is filled with instruction regarding this aspect of life.

As the Creator of sexuality in human beings, God is the One who has all the answers. He knows how we were designed and how we can best experience happiness in all areas of life—including sex. Human beings, by themselves and apart from God, don't have all these facts.

God begins His instructions about sex in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, and continues adding information all the way



Everyone knows that God created us as sexual beings. We also know that young people face tremendous pressures regarding sex. But who explains how and when a young person can best awaken his or her sexuality?

What difference does it make to you?

While being politically correct will put you in a generally comfortable place with your professors and peers, it will slowly take you away from biblical values.

Our freedoms grant us the ability and the opportunity to contribute to a healthy, functional society through personal choice, personal responsibility and personal accountability. This is obviously a better choice.

How can you be prepared to deal with it?

As your college schedule gets more demanding, be sure to set aside time to continue learning about God's gifts. These precious gifts include having a sound mind, peace, gentleness, kindness, self-control, joy, goodness, love, faithfulness and personal responsibility.

Never close your mind's door to discernment. Be aware of current events. Pick up a couple of books for summer reading that deal with the PC topic (such as *Bias* by Bernard Goldberg or *Shut Up and Sing* by Laura Ingraham). Talk with your friends and encourage one another to stand up for the integrity of a giving way of life.

As you enter and progress through your higher education, remember the sounds, sights and feelings of the politically correct movement. Be prepared and ready to understand the difference between the counterfeit and truth.

Janel Johnson lives in Lexington, Ohio, with her husband Doug. After raising three children, she returned to college to complete her undergraduate work, receiving a bachelor's degree in English from Ohio State University in 2002.

It is a beautiful act of love for two people to grow up as virgins and then on their wedding night present their bodies to each other saying, "I loved you so much, I saved myself for you and you alone." This is true love!

through the concluding book of Revelation. Good and bad decisions in this area are recorded in many of the other books, too.

So what are some of the important truths regarding sexuality? What information do young people need to know so they can avoid disasters and experience the happiness God intends for us to enjoy?

Respect your sexuality

One of the biggest problems in our modern, secular society is disrespect for sex. When God made Adam and Eve male and female, He said this was "very good" (Genesis 1:27, 31, emphasis added throughout). Sexuality in human beings was not designed to just be okay; it was designed to be extremely good! And it is great and wonderful when we use this special gift of God in the way He intended.

God's beautiful picture of sexuality is for us to refrain from having sex until we are married and then to only enjoy sex with the person to whom we are married (1 Corinthians 6:18; Exodus 20:14). Sex was designed by God to be a special pleasure bond to be shared between a husband and wife. By following



Men and Women's Vulnerabilities

When it comes to temptations to have sex, men and women, in general, face different challenges.

Speaking for men, Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker write: "We have a visual ignition switch when it comes to viewing the female anatomy" (*Every Man's Battle*, p. 57). The godly answer for men is to control what they view. Recognizing this male trait, Jesus taught that "whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). To guard against this vulnerability, Job said, "I made a solemn pact with myself never to undress a girl with my eyes" (Job 31:1, *The Message*). Godly men need to avoid pornography and looking at women with sexual desire.

Writing to women, Shannon Ethridge explains: "While a man's battle begins with what he takes in through his eyes, a woman's begins with her heart and her thoughts. A man must guard his eyes to maintain sexual integrity, but because God made women to be emotionally and mentally stimulated, we must closely guard our hearts and minds as well as our bodies if we want to experience God's plan for sexual and emotional fulfillment" (*Every Woman's Battle*, p. 13). Continuing, Ethridge says that these differences explain "why it's said that men *give love to get sex* and women *give sex to get love*." Proverbs 4:23, New International Version, says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the well-spring of life." Godly women must refrain from giving away their hearts until it is appropriate for them to do so in marriage.



God's instruction, this act would help husbands and wives grow closer together in an intimate bond, allowing them to have the greatest sex possible and helping them avoid potential dissolution of their marriages in divorce.

It is a beautiful act of love for two people to grow up as virgins (not having engaged in any kind of sexual gratification) and then on their wedding night present their bodies to each other saying, "I loved you so much, I saved myself for you and you alone." This is true love! This is the most beautiful love story of all! And it is the kind of start that can help a couple live happily ever after in a joyous marriage instead of ending in a heartbreaking divorce as so many do today.

But how often do modern songs and movies tell us this story of sexuality? Not often, if at all. Instead, sex today is cheapened and degraded into a casual act for people to experience prior to marriage and even during marriage with whomever they wish. It's commonly assumed that to fully enjoy life, people should have sex with anyone they happen to like at the moment.

The modern "love story" of unrestrained sexual activity has two people on their wedding night saying, "I have loved so many different people before I met you that I think we can have sex without any problem at all. Tonight isn't really that special. And did I remember to tell you? I have a few STDs I'll be sharing with you. They are painful and impossible to cure. They'll be with us for life. But Baby, I really love you. At least right now I think I do and I'm willing to stay with you until someone better comes along."

Which love story would you rather experience? You aren't helpless. You do get to choose. The modern approach of so many is disrespectful of others, disrespectful of self, disrespectful of sex and disrespectful of God. With all this disrespect surrounding sex, it's no surprise that people are getting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), unplanned pregnancies and marriages that soon dissolve in failure.

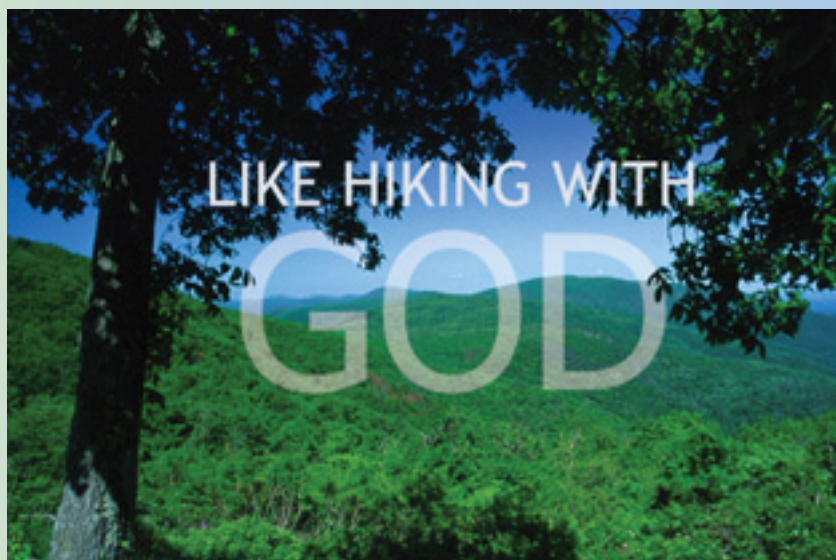
The approach of so many is disrespectful of others, disrespectful of self, disrespectful of sex and disrespectful of God. With all this disrespect surrounding sex, it's no surprise that people get sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancies and marriages that soon dissolve in failure.

Sexual myths

Given all the confusion that exists today regarding sex, it is important for us to understand some of the most common but mistaken ideas regarding sex. Here are a few of today's myths:

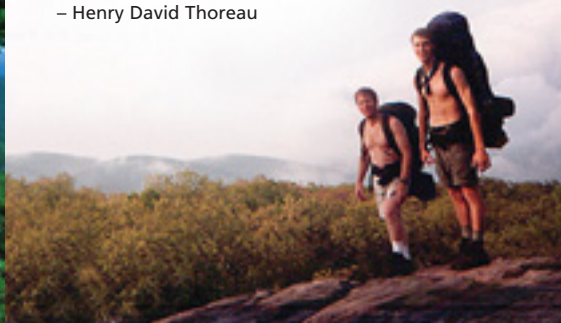
- "People can't help falling in love." We may be attracted to someone at first sight but true biblical love is something that grows. It isn't selfish and is based on respect and admiration for another person's character and godly attributes (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).
- "People have to engage in sex." No one yet ever died from not having sex. Awakening sexual activity at the right time

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If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.

– Henry David Thoreau



by Joy Porter

A while ago I was pleased to receive a phone call from an old friend living near Atlanta, Georgia. His warm greeting was familiar and immediately brought back memories of our friendship that had spanned the most influential

five years of my life. As we discussed the most recent events in our lives, I thought about the kind of person my friend was. And maybe it was then that I decided to write this article. I want to share his story with you. For David

David has always been talking about one thing: his dream of backpacking the Appalachian Trail. A positive, energetic, apparently born outdoorsman, David loves all things pertaining to the natural world.

Kennebeck is more than just a great friend to me, he is an amazing example of the dedication and bravery it takes to bring one's dreams to life.

For as long as I can remember,

To prove his love, he co-taught the "outdoors living" class at Camp Woodmen in Alabama for two consecutive years. Campers probably didn't realize the amount of experience and knowledge David had to share! His dedication to his dream has given him more experience in truly living outdoors than most of us will encounter in our lifetimes.

In seventh grade, David decided that he wanted to backpack the Appalachian Trail. The Appalachian Trail, more commonly abbreviated the AT, is a continuous marked footpath that leads from Springer



Mountain in Georgia to Katahdin in Maine. The total distance of the trail is around 2,160 miles. Hikers may choose to “through-hike” the trail, completing the entire route without returning to their homes for any lengthy period of time. Another option is to hike a part or parts of the trail according to the needs and time limits of the hiker. In either case, the trail is a unique experience.

While backpacking, hikers sleep in shelters, three-sided structures with a nearby privy and water source, or they may choose to sleep in the open air or tents. They carry everything they need to survive in their large backpacks, often weighing around 50 pounds. They do have the opportunity to stop in towns near the trail to purchase food, take a shower or even enjoy the luxury of a real bed in a hotel room. Since the trail was first hiked in 1936, 6,605 people have hiked the entire route. In seventh grade, David decided that he wanted to be one of them.

Of course he had a few obstacles to overcome. First of all, he had to grow up. No one’s mother in her right mind would allow a 13-year-old boy to hike to Maine. No, he had to wait until he graduated from high school, a full five years. But the wait, as waits tend to do, turned out for the best. During this period, David focused on preparing for his trip. He trained physically, went on numerous shorter backpacking trips and saved lots and lots of money. The average through-hiker will invest \$3,000 to \$5,000 in their experience, with \$1,000 of that purely for equipment. Undaunted by these figures, David continued to plan and prepare for the day his dream would become reality.

Finally that day came. On Feb. 10, 2002, 18-year-old David

began his hike from the trail’s starting point in Georgia. His goal was to experience truly living outdoors, whether that meant finishing the trail in a through-hike or completing it over his lifetime. His father, Lon Kennebeck, would accompany him for the first few days, and after he passed through the pet-free zone of the Smoky Mountains, his dog, Cherri, would join him.



David kept a daily journal of his travels, which he mailed to his father during his trip. These journal entries are posted online at www.Trailjournals.com/yellowjacket. He hiked an average of 16 miles a day, excluding the much-appreciated Sabbath day. His pack weighed in at 53 pounds. The nights

and early mornings were often bitterly cold. And he was, for the most part, completely alone.

You’ve got to give him credit for even wanting to attempt this feat. But he had his reasons. Just as Thoreau went to the woods to “live deliberately” and to “suck all the marrow out of life,” David explains his motivations as such: “I guess what it all comes down to is this is what I love. Backpacking gets down to the core of life, no distractions, just you and the raw wilderness, maybe some new hiking friends and God.”

It may be that deep inside we all crave that kind of simplicity. This excerpt from David’s journal further explains his reasons for hiking:

“... I got this wonderful feeling today; I get it every once in a while. Just being in the woods, not thinking about anything in particular, and then, BAM! This amazing sense of joy hits me. The same feeling you

get at the Feast sometimes or when I get to see great friends again . . . I think that’s why I love hiking so much. When I get that feeling, it’s like I’m hiking with God. I feel so close to Him. It doesn’t even have to be during a beautiful part of the trail. So thanks to God for hiking through those fields today.”

While feeling closer to God was a source of encouragement to David, he was plagued with persistent illness almost from the onset of his trip. Consistent rains did not permit his things to dry, and he began to have knee problems. On April 2, 2002, after 53 days and 667.4 miles of hiking, David decided to end his trip—for the time being.

In his final journal entry, he expresses mixed emotions but sums up his trip with this statement: “I feel like I’ve accomplished what I’ve come out here to do, so I’m not disappointed.” A bold statement, but if you think about it, it is a perfect expression of what life is about. In a sense we are all trying out



dreams to see how they’ll work and to learn what we can from them.

David is one of the rare, brave people who dare to try out one of those big dreams, the kind we have in childhood but, sadly, typically put aside. He gained an invaluable experience, something to “tell his grandchildren.” He also became closer to God and, most of all, through the lessons he learned on the trail and prior to it, he added to that most precious facet of human existence: his character. And for that he deserves respect. I know he will always have mine.

Why Should I?

by Jennifer Jantzen

It seems to be a habit today to respond to situations with the attitude of "because I want to." With hours of people-watching under my proverbial belt, I have heard this excuse from 21-year-olds: "I will drink because I can." From 18-year-olds: "I will smoke because I can." From 16-year-olds: "I will drive wherever I want because I can."

What has helped me the most is having [a strong] network of friends in the Church . . . Summer camps provided plenty of opportunity to build that network.

And so it goes all the way down the age scale to some whiny 2-year-olds saying, "Because I want to."

But how do socially conscious people like us combat this ever-present selfish idea of "I'm going to do whatever I want and you can't do a thing about it"? Most importantly, how do we respond to this environment in a manner pleasing to God?

I am currently a student attending the University of Colorado at Boulder. With more than two years of college knowledge inside my head, I have seen and heard some things that make me sadly shake my head. For example, I was downright shocked by the number of people who treat the weekend, Friday night to Sunday night, as a 48-hour party.

In the words of my father, "I have never appreciated the Sabbath as much as I did in college." Let me tell you right here that even though you might dismiss this as some blatant propaganda on my part, when this some-day rings true for each of you, I offer my "I told you so."

I personally found the Sabbath tedious to keep while younger, mainly because my friends would go out and I couldn't. And our

church area had a serious lack of teens with whom to celebrate God's day. But once I got to college that all changed. Between the workload, the extra responsibility and the new social situations, I found myself torn 1,400 different directions. And the mere thought of an entire day of not working, not doing homework and the chance to build up my sleep bank is enough for rejoicing.

Another issue is taking off school for the Holy Days.

In my youth, I grew excited at the thought of being able to get out of school for a week for the Feast of Tabernacles and individual Holy Days when I could relax, go to services and fellowship. But now in college, even missing one class means at least a week of makeup work. It has required a different way of thinking.

Could this act of thinking outside ourselves be part of God's great plan? To get us mere human beings to stop thinking of our own little avenues of life and to think of the greater structure of God's laws? After all, these laws are in place for our own good.

But how does one deal with the temptation to "go along with the crowd"? How do you tell your wonderful, fun-loving friends that you can't see the movie on Friday night, or that you won't be able to attend that Star Trek party on Saturday? What has helped me the most is having an equally strong network of friends in the Church. While the weekly Sabbath services yielded no gain on that front, the summer camps provided plenty of opportunity to build that network.

I went to the United Church of God's Teton Challenger Camp for



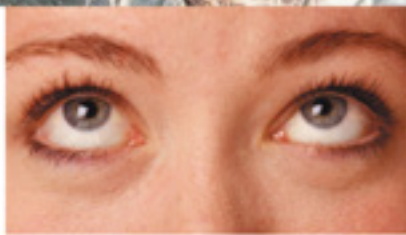
three years in a row and met people who have now become my best friends. And I can honestly tell you that without these friends of similar faith, I would have had a much harder time making the decisions that I know are right in God's eyes.

So at this point in my ramblings, I wish to direct your attention back to the results of people-watching and ask the following questions: Why should I follow God's laws? Why should I go against the herd? Why should I stand up for what I believe in a world where I am questioned?

One simple answer: Because God's ways bring blessings and ultimate reward, and that is better than any Friday night movie, better than any 48-hour party and definitely better than what this world has to offer. Long after the furor of trends and fads dies down, would you rather be known as the one who says, "I did that just because I could," or as the one who says, "I *didn't* do that just because I could"?



Money & Teen



Here's some advice for making money and putting it to work so

by Douglas Ruml

Saving

Saving—that's something we often hear about. We know that it's the right thing to do, but it's sometimes so hard not to spend the money that we have right now!

One of the fruits of God's Spirit is "self-control" (Galatians 5:23). Self-control is something we all can learn, and it's important in the world of our finances. It helps not only in putting money aside in savings (having the self-control

Anything that we spend money on can seem great at first, but we need to think about how we will feel about our purchase in the future.

not to spend it!) but also in keeping it invested. For example, when the stock market goes down, many people panic and sell when values are low, thus losing money. Patience and self-control in finance can prevent us from making mistakes like this.

When we have money, do we get the itch to spend it right away—to rush out and instantly gratify our desires by getting something that we have had our eyes on? Being able to say "no" or "not now, but later" can help make us feel great about our choices.

We need to think about other things we will be able to do with

the money in the future. One trick someone once told me was to think about all those rusty old cars. They were all shiny and new once, but now they are used up. Anything that we spend money on can seem great at first, but we need to think about how we will feel about our purchase in the future.

We can also think about what other things we may need and want in the future. My five-year-old daughter would spend all of her money on more Barbie dolls (she already has more than she knows what to do with!) or on candy (like I sadly did), but

I know that she will want to have the money to spend on other things when she is older.

Look for someone you can use as a role model and try to pattern your financial life on what he or she did or is doing. This is a way of keeping yourself focused and on track to being financially successful. Look at what savers are able to accomplish.

There is the true story of Walt Disney's housekeeper. Every year during the holidays Mr. Disney gave her one share of Disney company stock. She didn't make much, but she decided to save her stocks rather than just cashing them in for money. When she

retired, she had over a million dollars worth of Disney stock!

Having said the above, it is also okay at times to spend money now. If all our money is going toward big, future things, we can feel like we're punishing ourselves now! But you can always save something, and in the future you will be glad you did.

Jobs

A job is a good way for young people to earn money and learn what it's really like in the working world. You can also start building good work habits. But don't wade in over your head and get distracted from school by trying to earn money.

I had a friend from Detroit, Michigan, who was one of the only people from his high school to go on to college right after high school. Others got jobs in car factories and got sidetracked from continuing their education. Not that it's wrong to work instead of continuing school, but later in life many of these people realized that they should have continued their education when they had the chance.

Look into things that you will enjoy doing for their own sake when looking for jobs (Ecclesiastes 2:24). When I was a teen I enjoyed being outdoors and spent a few summers offering to care for neighbors' yards while they were away. I made some



you'll be able to meet your long-term goals.

money doing what I enjoyed.

Allowances

Allowances usually come in return for doing chores—mine

Have you heard of the tremendous power of compound interest? There is a mathematical truth that the longer you save money, the faster it grows.

included emptying the trash and cleaning up after the dog. It was messy, but I learned to work to earn money.

Later I was able to pay for most of my college tuition working at a number of jobs. Some were not very classy or exciting (I was a janitor twice), but I had time to think and I was able to finish school without any debt.

I spent most of my allowance on candy. My parents would often give me my allowance in older coins. Now I wish I had instead collected them because they would be valuable today; especially as collectors are now willing to pay *Antiques Roadshow* prices for some of those dimes and quarters that I wasted on rotting my teeth!

Investments

Jesus talked about earning interest in His parables. For instance, in Matthew 25:27, He mentions that the servants left behind to manage the master's money should have invested it. Have you heard of the

tremendous power of compound interest? There is a mathematical truth that the longer you save money, the faster it grows. This is because in time more and more interest is earned on previously earned interest, not just the small amount that you may have initially put in.

I know a young person who was able to put away a few hundred dollars into a mutual fund. In less than 10 years, that amount had grown 10 times (1,000 percent)! He will be able to use it to help with a down payment on a house.

You can start with as little as \$250 to invest in good mutual funds, stocks, bonds or other financial instruments. Quicken's Web site has a list of these "low-cost, low-minimum" funds at: www.quicken.com/investments/mutualfunds/finder.

Or you can even buy single shares (or more!) of companies through discount brokers (you might want to check out Wrigley—they also give you a box of chewing gum every year!) or direct from the companies by mail (these include companies like Daimler-Chrysler, Disney, ExxonMobil, Ford, Hershey, IBM, McDonald's, Nokia, Sony and Wal-Mart).

Parents can put money aside for teens in special accounts (called

UTMA or UGMA) in which the interest earned is either tax-free or only taxed at a very low rate. You can talk to your relatives about this, because the money will become yours when you turn 18 or 21 and can come in very handy for college or such things.

However you get money—from an allowance, gift or a job—the exciting thing is using it wisely through savings, investment or education to achieve your long-range goals. You will feel good about your choices and you will be learning lessons that will last a lifetime.

For more information on this subject, request the free booklet *Managing Your Finances*. You can read it or request it online at www.ucg.org/booklets.

About the Author

Douglas Ruml is originally from Canada and grew up in Southern California. After college he was a broker in New York and New Jersey, then the pastor of three congregations in and around Washington, D.C. He is now the marketing director for a software company. His wife is French and he has two children and one Shetland sheepdog.

What are YOU Waiting For?

We don't all have the same experiences leading to baptism, but the Bible identifies some necessary steps in the process of conversion.

By Gary Antion

The religious zealot Saul of Tarsus was on his way to Damascus to apprehend and imprison members of a new sect, the followers of Jesus Christ. Suddenly he saw a bright light and fell to the ground. He heard the words, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting'" (Acts 9:4-5)

Saul then asked what the Lord wanted him to do. He was instructed to go to Damascus and he would be told what to do. Saul arose and realized he could not

As we read and meditate on these sections of inspired Scripture, God may lead us to see how we are, in contrast to how He desires us to be.

see. He had to be led the remainder of the way. He was found by one of God's servants, Ananias, who by the power of God restored Saul's sight and baptized him.

This dramatic incident brought about the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who became the apostle Paul. Must you have this same type of experience before you can be baptized? How old must one be? What are the important concepts to understand prior to baptism?

To be baptized, people young and old must repent of their sins (turn from breaking God's law and commit to obeying Him) and believe (have faith in) Jesus Christ and His gospel. That's it. There is no requirement that one must have a miraculous experience with God such as Saul had. You don't have to wait until you hear the

voice of God and are blinded as Saul was.

Regarding one's age, in our day it's common in many Christian organizations for babies to be baptized. Yet, in simple terms, baptism requires repentance (Acts 2:38), faith (Mark 16:15-16) and commitment (Luke 14:26-33). Because babies can't even conceive of these things, infant baptism doesn't fulfill the biblical requirements.

In my experience of counseling hundreds of young people at the university level for many years, I have seen that age 16 is about the youngest one can be to truly understand and fulfill God's expectations of baptism. I should also explain that 16 is a very young age, and not many at that age were ready to be baptized. Even so I admired their sincerity in seeking baptism.

The importance of baptism

Baptism is a very important step. It is one we must take to be forgiven of our sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:18), and it is how we establish a Father-son or Father-daughter relationship with God. It is a prerequisite to receiving the Holy Spirit, which makes us a part of Christ's spiritual Body, the Church (Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

The act of baptism and the subsequent receiving of the Holy Spirit identify us as Christians (Romans 8:9). Baptism is also a crucial step toward receiving eternal life. (For more information, read our free booklets *The Road to Eternal Life* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*, which can

be found at www.ucg.org/booklets.)

What should you do?

Baptism is a very personal step. No one should take it unless he or she has thoroughly studied the topic and is personally convicted of the need to fulfill this command from God.

Counseling is available from dedicated ministers to help a person understand what God is looking for in the process. Of course, just because a person initiates counseling for baptism, it does not mean that he or she must follow through and be baptized—unless he or she is truly convicted and ready.

Seeking counsel from a minister of Jesus Christ will also help you understand what God expects of you when you commit your life to Him and walk in His grace toward eternal life in the glorious Kingdom of God (Luke 14:26-33; Matthew 6:33; 2 Corinthians 5:7; 2 Timothy 4:8). Be sure to take advantage of this help.

Search the Scriptures

The desire to be baptized usually begins when a person realizes that he or she has sinned and lived contrary to what Jesus Christ and God the Father have revealed as the right way of life. I was struck again while watching the movie *The Passion of the Christ* by the realization that my sins necessitated the suffering and death of Jesus Christ.

We need to believe that God's Word, the Bible, is true and that it is our guidebook for life (Matthew 4:4; 2 Timothy 3:15-16). The reading and studying of His Word will bring us to an understanding of God's will for us. We will come to an understanding

of how He wants us to live.

The realization that we have essentially killed Jesus Christ through our disobedience and contrary attitudes will be enhanced through comparing our past and present actions with the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). Additional study may be done into the fruits of the flesh and Spirit (Galatians 5:17-23), the beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) and the direction that our thoughts should take (Philippians 4:8).

As we read and meditate on these sections of inspired Scripture, God can lead us to see how we are in contrast to how He desires us to be (Romans 2:4). We may then truly repent of our sins—the ways we do things contrary to Him (Romans 8:7; Proverbs 14:12).

Faith is essential

Belief in Jesus Christ and His gospel is another essential requirement for baptism. Jesus said in Mark 1:15: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." There is no other name by which we must be saved than that of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:10-12; 8:12). It is essential that we believe and know that God exists—and that we believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior, High Priest and coming King (Acts 8:37).

Finally, we need to accept the grace that God offers. Grace provides forgiveness and the strength to walk worthy of His calling (Ephesians 2:8-10; Colossians 1:10).

So what are you waiting for? "Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6). Don't wait for something to strike you down to consider baptism. If you are interested, take up the challenge to "seek the LORD while He may be found." May God guide you to know when you need to be baptized and then grant you the courage and commitment to follow through.

Gary Antion is an instructor at Ambassador Bible Center in Milford, Ohio.



Compiled by
Andrea Pacelli

**Friendship is the highest degree
of perfection in society.**

–Michel de Montaigne

**You cannot build a reputation
on what you're going to do.**

–Henry Ford

**What is easily had is lightly treasured
and therefore easily lost.**

–Maurice Switzer

**A man must not swerve from his path
because of the barking of dogs.**

–H.M. Stanley

**We are rich only through what we
give; and poor only through what
we refuse and keep.**

–Anne-Sophie Swetchine

**The measure of a man's humanity
is the extent and intensity of his
love for mankind.**

–Ashley Montagu

**You may not be able to help the whole
world, but you can make a difference
in your own community.**

–Elizabeth P. Carter

Have You Thought of

A Word to the Wise ...

How much faith is enough?

by Barry Kenavan

Jesus Christ said the mustard seed "is the least of all the seeds" (Matthew 13:32). But He compared our faith to this tiny seed in Matthew 17:20, saying, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."

A seed needs to be planted and watered so that it grows to its fullest potential and produces fruit. Do we need to do the same thing with faith? Or should we be content with what we already have?

Let's take the quiz below to see what the Bible says about faith.

- | YES | NO | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the Bible describe faith and tell us what it is? Hebrews 11:1; Romans 8:24-25. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are degrees of faith mentioned in the Bible? (Continue the quiz to see if you are correct.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is it possible to have no faith? Mark 4:40; Luke 18:8. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Were the disciples corrected for having little faith? Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 14:31. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Did some people show great faith? Luke 7:9; Matthew 15:28. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Can faith be described as weak? Romans 14:1. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Can a little faith help us accomplish anything? Matthew 17:20; Luke 17:6. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there room for my faith to grow and increase? Luke 17:5; 2 Corinthians 10:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:3. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is it possible to lose or shipwreck my faith? 1 Timothy 1:19. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Can we have faith without actions or deeds? 1 Thessalonians 1:3; James 2:14-20. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Can we please God without having faith in Him? Hebrews 11:6. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Should faith be based on what we see? John 20:24-29; 2 Corinthians 5:7. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does faith help us understand that God created this world? Hebrews 11:3; Psalm 33:6-9. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is faith all I need, with no requirement to act on it? James 2:21-26. |

Sexual Myths

Continued from page 8

(after marriage) is important (Song of Solomon 3:5).

- “If you’ve already had sex, your life is ruined.” God always offers us the opportunity to repent (admit we sinned and live properly). The advice we are given under these circumstances is the same Jesus gave the woman caught in the act of adultery: “Go and sin no more” (John 8:11).
- “Everybody is doing it.” According to songs and movies one would think this is true. But it isn’t. More young people graduate from high school today not having had sex than those who have. And the number of those abstaining is increasing.

A plan for sexual happiness

As individuals, we choose whether we will live sexually pure lives or whether we will ignore the instructions that lead to happiness and satisfaction. Making a commitment to parents, friends and God to be sexually pure in word, thought and deed is an important first step in living a full, complete, sexually happy life.

We can determine that we will not use filthy language of any kind—including the type that degrades sex. We can also determine that we will not watch movies with inappropriate sexual content or listen to songs with sexually explicit lyrics. We can determine that we won’t bow to peer pressure to go along with those who disrespect sex. We can determine that we are willing to be mocked for our beliefs and that we won’t succumb. We can choose to associate primarily with friends who share our convictions. And we can make it our daily practice to pray to God for strength to honor Him in the way we live our lives.

God intends for dating and marriage to be high-class, honorable experiences (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7). Treat sex as God’s honorable gift to be awakened only in marriage, and you can reap the sweet reward of a happy, godly life. No explosions. No diseases. No heartache. Just a great love story that can last your whole life.

David Treybig is the managing editor for *Vertical Thought* and pastors United Church of God congregations in St. Petersburg and Tampa, Florida.



Q&A

Q. I’m 17 and I want to have a relationship with a girl who is also my age. I really like her and I know she likes me too. My problem is that she feels we ought to make love to solidify our relationship. Should I give in? She says that if we don’t, we can’t know if we are sexually compatible and she will have to leave me. I love her and I don’t want to lose her.

A. In our society, very poor examples are often set regarding relationships between men and women. Many in our society view premarital sex as “normal.” Accepting this erroneous idea, many unmarried couples engage in intimate activity that should be reserved for marriage.

Of course, this is contrary to God’s teaching. In 1 Corinthians 6:18 it says: “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.”

“Sexual immorality” includes any sex act that occurs outside the bounds of marriage between a husband and wife. Obviously, this would include fornication, which is sex prior to marriage. Clearly, the Scriptures show us that intercourse is only to take place within marriage.

In any event, the reasoning of your friend concerning sexual compatibility is unsound. That popular concept is often put forward as a justification for premarital sex. Study after study has shown that having sexual relations with someone before marriage actually *increases* the odds for divorce later on. Your happiness in marriage will be based on mutual respect and love, not on how well you make love.

We suggest you explain to her that you are not in agreement with her reasoning and that you would like to save yourself for marriage. We know this may sound risky, but it is far more risky to your health and your future happiness to give in to her suggestion.

We also suggest reading the following articles before speaking with your friend. It will help you understand how you should view the subject and will help you in explaining it to her.

The first article, titled “A Touchy Subject: Hand-holding, Hugging, Kissing and More,” appeared in the January-March 2004 issue of *Vertical Thought* (www.verticalthought.org/winter2004/touchysubject.htm).

A second article, “Sex, Dating and You,” appeared in the October-December 2001 edition of *Youth United* (www.youthmagazine.org/you/article.asp?volume=2&issue=4&article=sexanddating).

If you have a question, e-mail us at info@verticalthought.org

The *Hesed* Factor

How does the Old Testament principle of *hesed*—“covenant loyalty”—apply to Christians today? The love story of Ruth shows the way.

by Nathan Albright

One of the most popular books of the Bible is the book of Ruth. In this short and enchanting story, we learn how a young Moabite widow became the ancestor of David and later of Jesus Christ through marriage to the wealthy and generous Boaz. Beyond the surface of the story, though, there is a consistent theme of covenant loyalty.

The Hebrew word *hesed* has been translated into a variety of terms in English. These include favor, grace and loving-kindness. According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, “The entire history of [God's] covenantal relationship with

decided to return to Israel after the death of her two sons in the land of Moab. Ruth, her widowed daughter-in-law, planned to go with her, even though Naomi warned her that there could be no expectation of marriage and children, but rather the bleak prospect of poverty. Still Ruth refused to leave Naomi.

Uttering one of the most moving pleas of *hesed* in the entire Bible, Ruth said, “Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.

when Boaz was generous to Ruth both publicly (Ruth 2:8-9) and privately (verses 14-16). Ruth had been working hard all through the morning, and Boaz granted her the right to glean with his women and eat and drink with his workers. Hearing about her loving service to Naomi, Boaz (who was a close relative of Elimelech, Naomi's deceased husband) decided to take care of Ruth and Naomi.

Boaz secretly ordered his men to intentionally leave some barley on the ground so that Ruth might glean more. This was going above and beyond the duty of a relative and suggests that Boaz was greatly favoring Ruth.

The fourth example of *hesed* took place when Naomi gave Ruth advice on how to propose marriage to Boaz (Ruth 3:1-4). As a widow without children, Ruth had the right, according to Israelite law, to propose marriage to the nearest relative of her husband to raise up an heir to preserve the family line. Ruth may have been unaware of the custom, and Boaz may have been too shy to propose marriage to Ruth himself. Naomi looked out for both of them in this instance.

Ruth then repaid the favors given to her by Boaz by proposing marriage to him (Ruth 3:9-13). Not only did she propose marriage to an older man who had shown great favor to her, but she did so in a way that did not attract attention to herself or him.

Since she made the request while no one else was around (without compromising her own good reputation for morality), she did not put pressure on him to accept in order to avoid public ridicule. Boaz recognized the great favor and promised to act on it quickly, after giving Ruth more barley as a sign of his sincerity (Ruth 3:15).

Boaz immediately went before the elders of the town and found the one relative closer to Mahlon (Ruth's deceased husband) than himself. Presenting his case

If we are acting in love toward others, we seek their best interests and not merely our own. Ruth shows that even when it appears as if we have nothing going for us, our own loving service may be repaid to us in ways that we cannot predict.

Israel can be summarized in terms of *hesed*.” In other words, “covenant loyalty.” Covenant loyalty, while it may seem an odd expression, refers to action done out of a loving heart. If we are acting in love toward others, we seek their best interests and not merely our own. Ruth shows that even when it appears as if we have nothing going for us, our own loving service may be repaid to us in ways that we cannot predict.

There are at least seven ways that covenant loyalty is shown in the four chapters of the book of Ruth. As we go through these examples, imagine what it would be like to be Ruth, Naomi or Boaz. By realizing the great love and work of God in the lives of these righteous individuals, we may see the ways in which God can bring us great glory, even through suffering and misfortune.

Seven examples

The first example of *hesed* occurs in Ruth 1:16-17. Naomi, an Israelite widow,

Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me.” With that the two widows went back to Bethlehem.

After Naomi and Ruth reached Bethlehem, Ruth sought to help Naomi (who was probably too old to work at this time) by seeking her permission to glean for the two of them as the poor and strangers were allowed to do (Leviticus 23:22).

Gleaning was not easy work. It meant long hours stooping to pick up small clumps of barley or wheat that had been left behind after the reapers finished harvesting a field. As a young woman, Ruth would have been subject to the unwanted attention of the young men of Bethlehem. As a Moabite woman in a town of Judah, Ruth could expect distrust and scorn. Knowing all of this, Ruth still desired to help her mother-in-law, and Naomi granted her permission.

The third example of *hesed* occurred

skillfully, Boaz wove together the right to redeem the family inheritance of Elimelech (found in Leviticus 25:23-28) with the obligation of marrying Ruth (found in Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

The relative was interested in having Elimelech's land, but not in marrying Ruth. Since Boaz was willing to raise up an heir to Mahlon with Ruth, he gained the right to redeem the land. Boaz then married Ruth, and their marriage was blessed by the townspeople. This story, told in Ruth 4:1-6 and verses 10-12, is the sixth example of *hesed*.

The final example of *hesed* was the favor shown by God to Ruth, Boaz and Naomi. Boaz obtained a wife, Ruth gave birth to Obed, and Naomi served as the nurse. Referring to the child, the people of Bethlehem told Naomi, "And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of

your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him" (Ruth 4:15).

The book of Ruth closes with a genealogy from Perez to David. Obed was the grandfather of King David, the great shepherd king of Israel. Even more importantly, both Ruth and Boaz were ancestors of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and Ruth is one of only three women named in the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1.

Application today

How can we show such kindness—such covenant loyalty—in our own lives? First we must find out what sort of needs there are among our friends and family, our congregation or our neighbors. Perhaps there is someone who needs some time and attention, a willing ear to listen

to stories or problems. Perhaps someone needs a friend to comfort him or her through a difficult time.

Even if we do not have money to give, perhaps we can give our time and service to help those around us. Maybe we have the expertise to help someone solve a problem he or she is facing. Without expecting or demanding anything in return, we can help those around us.

In turn, God may end up repaying us in ways we cannot foresee. Though Ruth, Naomi and Boaz could not see the end result of their acts of *hesed* to each other, they acted out of love anyway. So should we.

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Q&A

Q. I am curious about the people who are given a second chance during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth. Will life be the same as today? Will human life spans be the same? Will children be born? Will humans interact with spirit beings on a regular basis? Will people alive during this time know about the thousand-year time period? Will people remember their past?

A. This thousand-year reign of Christ, also called the Millennium, offers people who have not known Christ or His true expectations an opportunity to respond to Him. It is important to note that this is not a second chance. It will be the first and only chance for these people. The Bible teaches that everyone will have an opportunity to come to God (2 Peter 3:9).

For those called today, the firstfruits, the opportunity (judgment) is now (1 Peter 4:17). Others will have this opportunity during the Millennium.

As for those who are alive at the start of the Millennium, these people are ones who will have lived through the cataclysmic events of the return of Jesus Christ—called the “day of the Lord” in the Bible. Their physical lives will continue as the Kingdom of God is established here on earth (Revelation 5:10).

As to what the life span of human beings during the Millennium will be, the Bible doesn't explicitly say. It probably will be at least as long as people live today, and perhaps longer (see Zechariah 8:4). People will have children (verse 5). One important change in human life during this time, however, will be the interaction of the spirit world with human beings.

During the Millennium, Satan will be bound (Revelation 20:1-2) and the firstfruits, God's people who will have been changed into spirit at Christ's return (1 Corinthians 15:52), will be actively teaching people God's ways.

Commenting on this time, Isaiah 30:20-21 says: “And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.”

Satan's constant influence to cause people to sin, which is part of this present evil world, will be replaced by spirit beings who will help guide people into godly paths.

Because of this positive teaching and guidance by spirit beings and the fact that God's law will be going out to all the earth from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3), it seems that people living in the Millennium will know about this period of time and that this is their opportunity to respond to God.

If you have a question, e-mail us at info@verticalthought.org



What Will the Kingdom

In this magazine we often write about what the Bible refers to as the Kingdom of God—the government Jesus will establish after He returns to earth. But what will the Kingdom of God do for you? Why should you look forward to that period of time? You need to know the answer!

by Tom Clark

Many of you are very aware of some of the challenges and fears of life—crime, poverty, disease and war. The world today also has to live with the threat of terrorism—knowing that a terrorist can strike anywhere, any time, bringing devastation and death.

You struggle against the pressures of sex, drugs and alcohol. You may wonder whether you will be able to afford to go to college or what career path to choose and if you will be able to find work after you are done with your education. You may also question whether you will ever marry and have an opportunity for a happy family and a good life.

biological and nuclear weaponry will be destroyed and any usable parts will be reused to make useful instruments for the betterment of humanity rather than destruction. Everyone will be taught by Jesus Christ how to live in true peace and harmony with each other (Isaiah 2:1-4)!

Can you imagine how much different life will be then? Can you imagine how different your life will be after Jesus Christ returns? Let's consider just a few real-life issues.

Peace and safety

The city of Jerusalem is anything but a safe place today. There is not another piece of ground on earth that has inspired as much fighting and killing as this city. And a good case can be made that there is not a more dangerous place nor a more difficult place to bring peace to than Jerusalem.

There won't be any drug dealers, crack houses, pimps or streetwalkers. Small children will be able to run around the neighborhood without fear of anyone or anything.

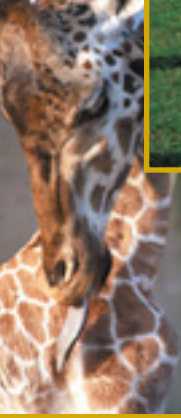
So it is significant when we read what God tells us this dangerous city will one day be like: "This is what the LORD says: 'I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain.' This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with cane in hand because of his age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there'" (Zechariah 8:3-5, New International Version).

God is describing a place that is safe for the elderly to walk about in perfect peace! Small children will be able to run around the neighborhood without fear of anyone

Street gangs and crime are issues you may have to wrestle with. And some grow up knowing that rape, mugging, verbal and physical abuse, kidnapping and even murder lurk nearby. There has to be a better way to live!

The Bible reveals that Jesus Christ is returning to earth, and it could be soon! When He returns He will bring an end to the world order as we know it and will open the door to an entirely new world! Terrorism, ethnic cleansing, religious and ethnic hatred and bigotry will all cease to exist!

War will be a thing of the past. Conventional, chemical,





of God Mean for You?

or anything. There won't be spray-painted graffiti on the walls or gang members driving by looking for trouble. There won't be any drug dealers, crack houses, pimps or streetwalkers. No drunken drivers behind the wheel of a car and no one hiding in shadows to mug an unsuspecting pedestrian.

What does it say about families when the elderly and small children are both out together without fear? It means families will still be together, not split up by divorce or moving off in every direction chasing a job. Families will be filled with love and support. No longer

The very nature of wild animals will be changed by God to reflect the wonderful world of peace and beauty that He will establish.

will childhood and old age be times of fear. These times will be filled with love and a proper sense of respect!

The nature of animals

Even the nature of animals will be changed. Animals that are natural enemies today, like wolves and sheep, will live together at peace. The lion, today's fierce king of beasts, will be changed so that it eats grass and hay rather than raw meat. A tiny child, innocent and unafraid, will be able to play peacefully without worry about snakes, scorpions or any other creature that today might harm or even kill him or her. It is all recorded in advance in Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 11:6-8)!

A literal Kingdom

Jesus Christ is going to return to the earth in power and majesty. He will establish His Kingdom to rule over all the nations of men. Here is how the Bible says this will occur: "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'" (Revelation 11:15).

All these wonderful changes will occur because Jesus Christ will return and take over as King of the earth! (Revelation 19:16). Yet the change in human nature will not be instantaneous. A world full of people will need to be taught how to live in peace. Jesus will use those who have shown they will always be faithful to Him to teach

others how to live without drugs, without abuse of any kind, without hatred and without fear. Everyone will need to be shown how to love as family and friends, and how to obey the God who loves them.

You can be one of the teachers who will affect so many lives and do so much good. If you will learn to obey and faithfully follow God today, He can use you in His



Kingdom to help bring real world peace!

What the Kingdom will do for young people

What will the Kingdom of God do for you? What do all young people have to look forward to after the return of Jesus Christ? Everything—including a brilliant future filled with peace and safety, families filled with love, children, parents and grandparents all working together and showing respect for each other. Again, the nature of animals will even be changed so they no longer pose any threat to human beings or each other—a perfect balance of nature!

And best of all, you can have a part in making it happen! If you are faithful to God and His laws today, He can use you to show others there really is a better way to live. Could anything be more exciting and worthwhile?

All this and much more is what the Bible means when it speaks of the Kingdom of God. It is a better world and a better life for you and everyone around you. We have God's promise that it is coming—and a promise from God is a promise we can count on!

Tom Clark is a husband, father and pastor of United Church of God congregations in Salina and Wichita, Kansas.

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IN THE NEWS

Compiled by James Capo

Court to Decide on “Under God”

It sounds impossible. How can pledging allegiance to your country be considered unconstitutional? Yet that's the contention of a California atheist, who objected to his nine-year-old daughter's daily pledge of allegiance in school to “the United States of America . . . one nation, *under God* . . .” He sued her school, saying the reference to God violated the principle of separation of church and state supposedly derived from the First Amendment to the Constitution. He won.

The California court's decision was appealed and now the case is before the U.S. Supreme Court. An Associated Press poll (March 24, 2004) found that almost 9 in 10 people said the reference to God belongs in the pledge, but now it is up to the Supreme Court to determine if the phrase “under God” stays or goes.

History and prophecy show that God has blessed the United States, a fact that has been recognized and publicly acknowledged by the people and leaders of the country since its founding. George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln and many others called on all Americans to acknowledge their dependence on Him. What does it say about America now, if the country's highest court makes it illegal to do that in the country's pledge?

(For more information about God's involvement in the United States' past and future, read our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. You can download it or order it on the Web at www.ucg.org/booklets.)



Kids Need Dads!

“Children growing up without fathers are five times more likely to be in poverty, are two to three times more likely to suffer from emotional and behavior problems and to drop out of school. They are more likely to commit crime, engage in early promiscuous behavior and commit suicide,” according to Dr. Wade Horn, assistant secretary for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Livenews.com adds: “[We] need to increase the number of children who are growing up in healthy, married households. They do far better on every measure of child welfare when compared to children growing up in unmarried households” (April 1, 2004).

What can those without fathers do? The best thing is to develop a close relationship with God. He promises in 2 Corinthians 6:18, “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.”

The Bible as Hate Literature?

The Canadian Senate passed a bill on April 28 that officially includes “sexual orientation” among those groups that are protected from “hate crimes.” So what's the problem? The bill does not clearly define hate or sexual orientation and a statement to protect religious views was not included in the bill.

Lorna Dueck, a Christian broadcaster, wrote in the Canadian newspaper *Globe and Mail*: “[This bill] says that moral views, motivated by religious text, can be equated with hatred. Thus, if church teaching refers to homosexuality as . . . sin, it could be charged as being hate propaganda.”

The Bible as hate literature? It could be seen that way in Canada. God condemned ancient Israel for calling “evil good, and good evil” (Isaiah 5:20). Sadly, many today are making the same mistake.

Do Condoms Make Sex Safe?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is considering requiring warning labels on condom packages, noting that they do not protect users from all sexually transmitted diseases, an FDA official said March 10.

Studies show that condoms do not prevent human papillomavirus (HPV), the most common viral STD today, which affects more than one third of all sexually active unmarried people and for which there is no cure. HPV can cause genital warts and cervical cancer. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than two million American women are infected with HPV each year, and 10,000 are diagnosed annually with cervical cancer.

Abstinence until marriage—following God's timeless law of saving sex for marriage and staying faithful within marriage—is the only certain way to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

Students Take a Stand

Eight students from a Christian high school in Rapid City, South Dakota, withdrew from a performance of the All-State Chorus and Orchestra, saying the words in a piece commissioned for the chorus clashed with their Christian beliefs.

Titled "These Things Shall Be," the piece, adapted from a poem by 19th-century poet John Addington Symonds, promotes the belief that humanity will perfect itself and usher in a utopia on earth and that "all the heavens [will] praise the earth."

In contrast, the Bible teaches that it is Jesus Christ, not humanity, who will usher in a peaceful, millennial time on earth, and that before then humanity will have succeeded only in bringing civilization to the edge of extinction. Request our free booklet, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, to learn more about the utopia that *does* lie ahead for mankind.

Another reason given by the students for withdrawing from the performance was that they did not want to appear to endorse the social viewpoints of the poet, who was a pioneering advocate of "gay liberation" (source: *The Rapid City Journal*, Nov. 8, 2003).

Move in, Move out

What happens to couples who "move in" together without getting married? Researchers at the University of Wisconsin have found that these relationships are less stable than marriages, and that instability is increasing.

Within 18 months, most couples either wed or break up. Today, more than half of all first marriages involve living together first, but these couples are at higher risk for divorce—up to 48 percent higher than those who didn't live together first. Only one tenth of cohabiting couples last five years or more, whether they marry or not (sources: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; University of Maryland in College Park).

Values Under Attack

Continued from page 5

when your faith is being assaulted, you really need *more* time with like-minded Christians than you did before. Spiritual camaraderie and adding to your Christian knowledge offer tremendous encouragement.

Hold on to your source of strength during your college years. Take the time for prayer, for study of the Scriptures and for *true Christian fellowship* to help you through. Build the bonds in Christ, and survive the college years—with your Christian faith not just intact, but strengthened!

Dr. Ralph Levy, a native of England, is an instructor at Ambassador Bible Center in Milford, Ohio.

Sun Safety

Making memories and friends during summer camp can last a lifetime, but so can the harmful effects of the sun. The damage that leads to adult skin cancers can start in childhood. According to the American Academy of Dermatology: "A number of studies have confirmed that repeated sunburns substantially increase the risk for melanoma. This is especially true for childhood sunburns because there is more time and opportunity for subsequent sun damage to lead to melanoma" (www.aad.org/SkinCancerNews/SafeSunTips/).

Here's how you can protect yourself from the sun and have a safe, fun-filled summer.

1. Limit outdoor activities between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
2. Wear protective clothing, including hats that cover your ears and neck.
3. Apply sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 15 liberally, uniformly and frequently.
4. Reapply sunscreen every two hours.
5. Stay in the shade whenever possible.
6. Avoid reflective surfaces, which can reflect up to 85 percent of the sun's damaging rays.
7. Avoid tanning beds.



Sunscreen should be used every day you are spending 20 minutes or more in the sun. Apply sunscreen to dry skin 15 to 30 minutes before going outdoors. Sunscreen should be water-resistant and generally has a shelf life of three years. Check the expiration date. For more information,



check the American Academy of Dermatology Web site (www.aad.org/SkinCancerNews/SafeSunTips/).

Cassandra Howard, MS, ACSM, JP Morgan Chase Fitness Director.

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