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To Our
Recently Baptized
By Herbert W. Armstrong

Rejoice
In the Sabbath

What Are Your
Priorities?

You ready for
THE PASSOVER?

SEE PAGE 5

The Good News

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Contents:

Personal from Herbert W. Armstrong	1
What Are Your Priorities?	2
Passover — Your Annual Spiritual Checkup	5
Forsaken!	7
Stories from the New Testament	8
Through Much Tribulation	11
Parents — Show Your Teenagers You Care!	14
Close-Up	17
Good News on the Philippine Work	18
Make Your Marriage Last	20
Your Sabbath Murmuring Comes Before God!	23
Q & A	26

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COVER: The bread and the wine, the deeply meaningful symbols used at the Passover service. Are you spiritually ready to partake of these symbols this year? Read "Passover — Your Annual Spiritual Checkup," beginning on page 5. Photo by Roland Rees.

Letters

Emphasis on children

I am excited and thrilled that the Church is becoming aware of our children. My daughter had very dull and boring high school days, but she was extremely blessed in attending Ambassador College, Big Sandy [Tex.]. Now she has two sons who need instruction. So the stress being placed on the parents and the instruction being given to them in regard to the extra blessing their (our) children receive is wonderful! Your articles in the *GN* are so succinctly put and certainly greatly encouraging to all of us, grandmas and all.

Cynthia C. Cook
Corrigan, Tex.

Correction and encouragement

I'm writing just to remind you of what a wonderful magazine it is being published every month! I have enjoyed few things so much as reading *The Good News*.

It is one of the few things that I can relax and open my mind to read without being on guard against wrong thoughts entering in. I always come away happy and very inspired and exhilarated. I welcome its correction as well as its encouragement.

Amy Gould
Dayton, Ohio

Beyond our duty

I have just finished reading several articles in the October-November, 1980, *Good News*, which is one of the best. "Be a Profitable Servant" made me realize what going beyond our duty really is.

I was thinking: When the unconverted fly off and say things to hurt us, we can remember we have the Spirit of God to help us keep cool (which I don't do sometimes). But anyway, such reading helps me grow to do better. I am so thankful to know the truth that God has called me and is converting me as I yield to Him.

Mrs. Woodrow Oakes
Pikeville, Tenn.

Should be in every home

The message, "Guide Your Children Toward God's Family" (October-November, 1980), by Mr. Robert Fahey, should be in every home and then listened to. We would not have so many of our people going the wrong way. I am praying for parents to realize this before it is too late.

Mrs. Jewell Nathman
Orlando, Fla.

Herbert Armstrong

An Open Letter To Our Newly Begotten Brethren Recently Baptized

GREETINGS! newly baptized brethren in Christ Jesus:

This year again there is joy and rejoicing among the angels in heaven over your repentance and having been begotten to a lively hope as *children of God* through Jesus Christ our Lord!

And there is new joy in the hearts of ALL our true brethren and co-workers in Christ over your recent conversion from the desires and will of the flesh and the ways and customs of the world, to the government of God in your life now, that you may have reward in His Kingdom at the coming of Christ, in the world tomorrow!

You will meet trials

You have entered upon a new life — a life of great happiness and joy — a life to continue FOREVER — yet, in this present evil world it will not be an easy life.

As a matter of fact, you have left behind the "easy way" — the popular, broad road that leads to destruction. You have passed the crossroads and turned off onto the narrow, rutty, bumpy, rocky and HARD and DIFFICULT road that very few people in this world ever are willing to enter — but that leads to SUCCESS, to USEFULNESS, to HAPPINESS, JOY and ETERNAL LIFE.

It leads to rewards — not of idleness and ease, but to usefulness and service and accomplishment and suc-

cess — so great that I know your mind can't possibly grasp it, now, BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO PAY THE PRICE!

It won't come easy! All your temptations, trials, persecutions and hardships will come from *other people* — or from the devil — or from the consequences of sin, which means violations of God's laws and ways. You must remember you still have to live in a world organized and living in disregard of God's laws — a world governed by the sway of Satan, and according to the impulses of pride and vanity, the lusts of the flesh and the greed and tempers of human nature.

If you were still of this world, the world would love its own. But because you have renounced this world and its ways, and are no longer of it, the world will hate you, persecute you, turn against you, even as it hated and persecuted your Savior before you.

Why you must suffer

"My PEACE I give unto you . . . that my JOY might remain in you, and that your joy might be full," said Jesus (John 14:27, 15:11).

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have PEACE. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

You will meet many afflictions — trials, tests, troubles — even more than before. But, if you trust in Him, the Eternal will deliver you out of

them ALL (Ps. 34:19). ALL who will live godly in Jesus Christ shall suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12).

But WHY? Because God has called you to surrender your life to HIM — to GIVE your life into HIS HANDS — that He may transform you into a perfect, holy, righteous CHARACTER. God is CREATOR!

And now, with your consent, according to your own free will, you have placed yourself in His hands to CHANGE you — to CREATE out of you the supreme masterpiece of all His creation!

What is character?

And CHARACTER means SELF-DIRECTION, WITH GOD'S HELP, INTO GOD'S WAY OF LIFE. You'll find it is a new and different way of life from the way you have lived up to now. It means SELF-DENIAL! It means SELF-DISCIPLINE! It means resisting all that is evil or wrong in your nature. It means *breaking up wrong habits* — rooting them out of your life — and instilling into your life NEW habits — and making these newer right ways fixed HABIT.

This is not easy. It takes WILL-POWER. It requires DETERMINATION.

Besides all this, God will permit trials and tests to come upon you — severe problems. He will permit CIRCUMSTANCES to drive you to HIM for HELP — for deliverance! You may soon think no one in the world is

(Continued on page 28)

What Are Your PRIORITIES?

Your very salvation depends upon the priorities you set in your life as a Christian.

By Dibar Aparian

Do you know how to set priorities? When several things need to be done, are you able to decide which ones should come first in order of importance?

Suppose you're sitting peacefully in your living room watching the news on television. Suddenly you notice that the room is filling with smoke. Your house is on fire!

What do you do first? Do you get down on your knees and ask God for His help in stopping the fire? Do you call the fire department? Do you dash through the other rooms of your house to see if some other member of your family is caught in the fire? Do you run outside to get the hose and try to put the fire out?

All of those things may be necessary, but what do you do first? That is the big question!

Let's take another example. One evening, you are in the middle of housecleaning. Your rooms are in disorder and neither you nor the other members of your family look presentable. The phone rings. It is your employer. He tells you that he will be over in a few minutes because he has something important to tell you.

What is the first thing you should do? Do you hurriedly put the house in order? Do you change your clothes and put on something more appropriate for the occasion? Do you check the kitchen to see if there is something you can offer your boss when he arrives?

Once again, all these things may be necessary, but what must you do first? It's a question of setting right priorities.

Priorities play a major role in our lives. We all have good intentions, at least most of the time. But what really counts is executing an intention at the appropriate moment — doing the right thing at the right time. As Solomon wrote, there's a time for everything under heaven (Eccl. 3:1-8, Revised Standard Version throughout). Growth results from learning to put first things first.

Right and wrong priorities

Remember the story of Martha and Mary, the two sisters Christ visited? Both sisters liked and respected Christ very much; both of them did what they thought was most important when He came to see them.

"Now as they went on their way, he [Christ] entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving" (Luke 10:38-40).

There is nothing wrong with "much serving," is there? All of us are called to serve — Christ Himself was the greatest servant of all. However, in this instance, priorities were at stake.

"Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" Martha asked Christ. "Tell her then to help me."

Christ answered, "Martha, Mar-

tha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful [at this moment]. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her" (verses 40-42). Just then, the most important thing Mary and Martha could do was listen to Christ's teaching.

When Christ called His disciples, some of them hesitated. Others followed Him right away because they had their priorities straight. Simon Peter, for instance, "fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man'" (Luke 5:8).

Why did Peter say that? Because he and his fishermen friends had witnessed, a few moments before, an astonishing miracle Christ had performed (verses 4-7). Simon Peter and his companions had their priorities right. Upon hearing Christ tell them, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men," they left everything and followed him" (verses 10-11). No wonder James, John and Simon later became apostles!

However, not everyone reacted the way these three men did. Not everyone had the right sense of priorities. For instance, a man who had expressed a desire to follow Christ turned away from Him when he heard Him say, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9:58).

Another man turned Christ's offer down, arguing that he first had to bury his father (verse 59). Now what's wrong with that? Nothing! But Christ set the man's priorities

straight. He told him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God" (verse 60).

Yet another man, upon being called, told Christ, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home" (verse 61).

Again, there is nothing wrong with saying farewell to those dear to you. But much more was involved in this particular case. First, God didn't come first on this man's list of priorities. Second, you can almost detect a feeling of sorrow in his answer. He seemed to regret being called there and then and perhaps hoped his loved ones would convince him not to leave them for the sake of the Gospel! That's why Christ told him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (verse 62).

Priorities and your calling

Do you remember the circumstances of your calling? How did you first react? Did you perhaps want to bury someone or something before deciding to really follow Christ? Did you hesitate to turn away from the world, finding it hard to choose between those of your household and Christ? What was your attitude then — and what is it now?

Unfortunately, some in the Church are still burying their dead fathers! Some are still looking back, and trying to pursue their personal ambitions before deciding to follow Christ!

Time is running short. Rearrange your priorities before it's too late!

If you put first things first, God will always take care of your needs. This doesn't mean you should neglect your part and stop taking care of your household. It simply means that you are to put first things first — be filled with God and His Work. You must endeavor to please Him with your attitude and growth.

As Christ said, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things [all that you need] shall be yours as well" (Matt. 6:33). Do you believe this promise of God? If so, live by it!

Your baptism was symbolic of your decision to put God first in your life, no matter what the circumstances. Do you still feel the same

way today? You accepted the condition to love God more than anyone or anything else, "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37). This is the greatest commandment of all. Does it have first priority in your life? And after that, does the second great commandment — loving your neighbor as yourself — have all priority in your life (verses 38-39)?

As you can see, even love has priorities! First, you must love God, and then love your neighbor. This doesn't mean you should neglect loving your neighbor because you love God first. It's just a matter of priority. Actually, if you really love God — if you obey His commandments and do His will — you automatically love your neighbor, because you cannot love God without loving your neighbor (1 John 4:20). Remember not to neglect *anything* on your list of priorities.

God came first in Abraham's life.

If you had a child whom you loved with all your being — if he was your only child, and you had eagerly waited and prayed for years for him — would you be willing to give him up?

Abraham was put to such a test. Humanly speaking, it didn't make much sense. Why did God give Abraham such a seemingly cruel order, saying, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:2).

Abraham must have spent a sleepless night struggling with his thoughts, wondering why God demanded of him such a sacrifice. He loved God, for sure. But he also loved his son Isaac very much. He had to choose between his love toward God and his love toward his son. The choice was all the more difficult since he did not understand its purpose.

Nevertheless, whatever his thoughts and concern, he set his priorities right. He "rose early in the morning, saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac . . . and went to the place of which God had told him" (verse 3).

Would you have done this? Would you have obeyed God to the point of being willing to sacrifice your only son, whom you loved? Abraham passed the test.

How about you? Does God come first in your life, before anyone else, even members of your family? If you cannot put God first in your life today, how can you put Him first tomorrow, when things will get tougher?

David's priorities

Kings David and Saul had totally different attitudes. David's attitude made him a man after God's own heart, whereas Saul's caused him to be rejected. Have you ever considered that one of David's most important qualities, far outweighing his mistakes, was his sense of priorities?

Saul was jealous of David and had gathered 3,000 men out of all of Israel to seek David and kill him. Strangely enough, the circumstances changed, offering David a unique chance to capture and kill Saul when the latter was resting in a cave. What an exceptional opportunity! After all, the two men were at war with each other — Saul had proved himself to be merciless.

"And the men of David said to him, 'Here is the day of which the Lord said to you, "Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you"'" (1 Sam. 24:4).

It would have been only natural, humanly, for David to kill Saul and justify himself by saying that God had promised to make his enemies fall into his hands. But David didn't reason that way. He "arose and stealthily cut off the skirt of Saul's robe. And afterward David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt" (verses 4-5).

Why? Why should David's heart smite him? He didn't commit any crime! No, but on his list of priorities obedience to God came first. "He said to his men, 'The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, to put forth my hand against him, seeing he is the Lord's anointed'" (verse 6).

There you are! Even though Saul wanted to kill him, David refused to do any injury to the king. Respecting God's anointed came before fighting for his own life. David's tremendous attitude is an example to all of us today. Is there any wonder why he will be a king in the soon-coming Kingdom of God? As for Saul, he carnally

sought his own selfish interests, going after power and personal exaltation. That's why God rejected him.

Obey God rather than men

The disciples of Christ, before receiving the Holy Spirit, did not have the necessary power and faith to fight the enemy. They forsook their Master and fled when the Roman soldiers arrested Him. The promise they had made to Christ, a few hours earlier, to never forsake Him was not engraved on their list of priorities.

But after their conversion, the disciples learned their priorities. Faithful to their mission, they preached the Gospel, despite threats and persecution.

On one occasion when they were brought before the council, the high priest condemned them, saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name." But they answered, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:27-29).

A question of priorities! The disciples' lives were at stake, but they were willing to follow Christ's instructions even if it meant death. They had learned that "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10:39).

On your own list of priorities, do God, His Church and His Gospel come before your own life? Or do you perhaps desperately cling to your own life for fear of losing it? Remember Christ's words! Unless you get your priorities straight, you may end up by losing your life.

Bible study and prayer

As a true Christian you should be aware that Bible study and prayer are two indispensable tools in your growth to become a Child of God. But how often do you use these tools? How much time do you spend with God and His Bible each day?

Some in the Church consider Bible study a hard chore. They don't seem to find time for it in their daily schedules. They don't realize that the more they study the Bible, the more they learn about the will of God and the way to please Him.

If you are truly Christian, the Bible must have priority over all of your other readings and studies. You are doing yourself a favor when you

study the Bible. Bible study is a privilege, not a chore or a task.

And how is your prayer life? Do you look forward to speaking to God every day? Do you actually enjoy praying? Or has prayer become for you just a routine, a duty that you have to perform? If your priorities are straight, prayer automatically comes first in your life. It becomes the happiest moment in your day, because it enables you to spend some time with the Supreme Creator of the whole universe, the almighty God who loves you and finds time to listen to you. Think of it! If He has time to listen to you, why wouldn't you find time to talk to Him?

It takes much effort to faithfully respect your priorities. It takes thinking and hard work. If the Church today is not quite ready for Christ's return, it is because, as a whole, we don't push hard enough and often lose our sense of priorities.

In a world that has cut itself off from God, Satan wants you to reverse your priorities or cast them aside altogether. Don't let that happen! Follow God. Obey Him, put Him first — and you will be much happier.

Tithing

Tithing is a law. It's a blessing. When you tithe, you don't do God a favor; you do yourself a favor.

How do you pay your tithes? What's your attitude? Do you pay the first tenth of your check, as soon as you receive it, or do you pay it only after you have paid your other bills? I remember Herbert W. Armstrong telling us during a ministerial conference that he always pays his tithe first, as soon as he receives his check. His other bills have to wait. The first check he writes is always to give God what is God's.

What a wonderful example for all of us to follow! Put God first in your life. Some of God's people have lost the blessings that result from paying tithes, because they bargain with God. They have lost their sense of priorities. They don't realize that tithing is a privilege and a blessing, not a burden.

Today, some people try to abide by the letter of the law and not the spirit. They try to bargain with God when paying their tithes. They will cut corners to see how much they can save,

or how little they can possibly give. With that attitude, tithing becomes a chore and not a blessing. God loves a cheerful giver and He is able to provide you with every blessing (1 Cor. 9:6-7). Are you a cheerful giver?

The purpose of your calling

Do you really know and understand the purpose of your calling? Did God call you specifically in order to save you at this time, or to enfold you with a certain task in this world? That's a question every Church member should ask himself — and understand the answer.

You were not called just to be saved, but to be part of a team to do a job. That's a priority — a priority for your being called! Your own salvation for the moment is not a priority; your fulfilling the task is. If you faithfully do your part and persevere until the end, you will be saved. However, if you neglect your share and turn away, God will raise someone else to do your part.

We in God's Church today are the firstfruits. In a sense, it's like having received a birthright from God. We are the first ones called before the big harvest, with a mission to prepare for that big harvest.

Unfortunately, some have sold — or are selling — their birthrights, just like Esau did. But once Esau lost it, he ended up despising it. In like manner, once you lose your sense of priorities, you lose your sense of values. Don't neglect your birthright. Don't disdain it. Set your priorities straight.

Perhaps one of the hardest priorities of all is to humble yourself, and count others better than yourself (Phil. 2:3).

Satan wants you to be puffed up. God wants you to be humble. Satan will do everything in his power to make you feel that you are better than others. But God wants you to count others better than yourself. That's the difference between God's teaching and the teaching of the world under Satan's influence.

As God's people, we need to learn our priorities. The Bible is our manual. The Teacher is God, through the writings of the prophets and the apostles. Whatever the circumstances, let's live to please God. That's our first and foremost priority! □

Passover - Your Annual Spiritual Checkup

As we approach the Passover, we need to examine ourselves to see whether we are worthy of God's promise of eternal life. Here's how.

By George Kackos

Life insurance is big business. Millions of people spend billions of dollars annually to be insured. But to qualify for many — even most — policies, a person must have a complete physical examination, and he must pass this examination before the insurance is issued. Though insurance companies have huge financial resources, they are not about to dole out enormous sums of money to people without specific conditions being met.

True Christians have a different type of "life insurance." Instead of paying off in money, it pays off with eternal life. Think of it: An absolute guarantee of eternal life is attached to the "life insurance" issued by God!

Man goes to great lengths to fulfill the requirements for physical life insurance, but the majority of people in this world feel they can cash in on God's life insurance without first meeting His requirements. But if you as a Christian fail to pass God's



requirements, the only guarantee you face is that of eternal death (Rom. 3:23, 6:23)!

Guaranteed protection

So how can we have God's offered protection against death?

First, God must call us. This world is cut off from God, and no one can gain access to Him unless God specially intervenes in the person's life (John 6:44). Then those few who are

called must believe what Jesus Christ says and believe His message about the Kingdom of God. The believer must then repent of his sins and be baptized (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38).

Repentance means examining ourselves by God's standards and seeing our sins, feeling deep remorse for having transgressed God's law and then determining to live by every word of God (Matt. 3:4). Repentance means turning from the way the rest of humanity lives and following the way God wants us to live. God actually grants us repentance (Rom. 2:4, II Tim. 2:25).

Jesus Christ becomes our standard (Gal. 2:20, I Pet. 2:21). We accept His perfect sacrifice for our sins and submit to having Him relieve

His perfect life in us now.

After baptism, we emerge from our watery graves with our sins forgiven. God's ministers lay their hands on us and God grants us His Holy Spirit (Acts 19:6). It is His Spirit in us that puts our "insurance plan" into effect (Eph. 1:13-14). We are now guaranteed eternal life. After we die we remain unconscious in the grave awaiting the resurrection, when we will be changed into spirit — into

literal, spirit-born Children in the Family of God (I Cor. 15:50-54).

Examination necessary

Does God's insurance plan automatically remain in effect? Can we turn back from God's way and still be saved? No!

Baptism and receiving God's Spirit are only the beginning of the process of conversion. Just after baptism we are not perfect. We have received only a small portion — "the earnest" — of the Spirit (II Cor. 1:22). We are not perfectly like Christ. We can still stumble and sin, invoking on ourselves the death penalty for transgressing God's law.

But we have begun a lifelong process of overcoming. We must continually repent of our sins ("die daily," as Paul put it — I Cor. 15:31) and ask God to forgive us. As we overcome our carnal natures more and more, God gives us more of His Spirit, which enables us to think and act more like God does.

We must finally grow "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). We are then ready to be born into the Family of God at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

But a person can fall to grow spiritually. He can become spiritually lax, and unable to pass a spiritual examination!

God wants to protect us from this happening. He wants us to be maturing spiritually, so we will be qualified to enter the Kingdom. To insure that we grow spiritually, God requires that we renew our baptismal covenants each year at the Passover. During the Passover season we must examine ourselves for sin and determine our level of spiritual maturity. We must rededicate ourselves to becoming like Christ.

We are told to glorify God in our bodies (I Cor. 6:20). Doing this necessitates that we examine the way we spiritually use parts of our bodies. The Bible talks in terms of how we use our eyes, ears, mouth, mind, heart, hands and feet. As the Passover draws near, let's be sure we are maintaining the life insurance God gives us through His Spirit by examining ourselves as to our spiritual application of these various organs. If we honestly do so, we may find hid-

den conditions that need to be eradicated for our spiritual survival.

Examine your . . .

• **Eyes.** Though no bigger than Ping-Pong balls, the eyes are more complicated than the most sophisticated television camera. It is estimated that 80 percent of all our knowledge is gained through our eyes.

But how do we use our eyes? For the glory of God? Are they means by which truth enters our minds? Most people are blinded by Satan and can't see the truth of God (II Cor. 4:4). Consequently, their eyes keep them in spiritual blindness by seeing only false knowledge. Our eyes must not be used this way.

Think for a moment of all the subversive things it is possible to cast our eyes upon. Is it any wonder God uses our eyes as spiritual thermometers? For instance, the eyes can be mechanisms by which lust is aroused (I John 2:16). Just consider the effects pornography or materialistic advertisements have on people. Do you allow your eyes to see violence and sex on television, or movies that depict people breaking God's laws in any number of ways? Do you look at physical things you would like to get and then begin to covet them?

David said, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes" (Ps. 101:3), but rather, "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord" (Ps. 25:15). Is this your attitude?

We must discipline ourselves to take our eyes off that which flarms us: "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire" (Matt. 18:9). Of course, this is a figure of speech and is not meant to be taken literally. It is a warning to encourage us to use our eyes properly. We must overcome looking to things that separate us from knowing and living the truth of God.

Consider the myriad of right uses for the eyes. Do we look upon others with compassion, like the Samaritan (Luke 10:33)? Do we look upon the Word of God in intense daily Bible study? Do we watch world events as they race toward the end of Satan's rule on earth (Luke 21:36)? Do we look to God for His mercy and coming Kingdom (Ps. 123:2)?

Which is entering our eyes — light or darkness?

• **Ears.** Our ears make a computer look like a crude concrete mixer. They are filled with enough electrical circuits to provide phone service to a good-size city. Through the ears we receive verbal communication.

Unfortunately, Satan is the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2), and he infiltrates our minds by influencing the words spoken to us by others. These wrong, illicit words are more lethal than a venomous snake. They are often designed to destroy someone's reputation or instill wrong knowledge.

For that reason, we must carefully evaluate everything we hear (Luke 8:18). Just because something is said doesn't mean it is true. Too often people with wrong motives alter the truth and cause irreparable damage (Prov. 26:24-25). Once we know a person is trying to lead us astray or destroy someone's reputation, we simply have to stop hearing him (Ps. 26:4, Prov. 19:27). Tell such people you'd prefer not to partake of such conversations.

Remember, though, that there are things we must hear to grow in the way of God (Prov. 22:17). We must open our ears to God's correction (Prov. 3:11-12). Remember to maintain humility when listening to others. They may not always be eloquent, but they need to be heard; too often a man's wisdom is not heard because he is poor (Eccl. 9:16).

Do you listen attentively to sermons? Do you apply them personally? Are you objective or too emotional? Give heed to the quality of the material you allow to pass through your ears.

• **Mouth.** Through our mouths we are nourished and can communicate with others, both important and enjoyable activities. But through Satan's influence, man puts his mouth to wrong use.

From a physical point of view, the diets of many people in the world's more affluent nations cause them to be overfed and undernourished. True, the Kingdom of God is far more than meat and drink (Rom. 14:17), but we still are required to care for the bodies God has given us (I Cor. 6:19-20). Beyond the re-

(Continued on page 29)

FORSAKEN!

Jesus Christ endured His awful death alone — completely cut off from God. Why? The answer should sober all of us.

By Philip Stevens

Thick, black clouds swept across the Jerusalem sky. The Jews, preparing themselves for the deeply emotional Passover service, grouped around in the gathering gloom and wondered where the light had gone. It was not even 3 o'clock in the afternoon! The high priest, in the midst of the confusion, was trying to organize the people assisting him with the last-minute arrangements needed for the annual ritual.

In the murky darkness, on a hill just outside the city, the ultimate High Priest was about to perform the most meaningful sacrifice of all. And for the first time in His life, Jesus experienced what it was like to be alone.

Only several hours before, as the mob came to arrest Him in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had told His disciples, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53).

Now, it seemed, Jesus was no longer able to count on that help. At the end of His human life, when the pain and anguish reached their peak, Jesus Christ could not rely on the strength that had seen Him through the trials of the previous 33½ years. Why, in His greatest hour of need, was He left alone?

Why cut off?

When Jesus cried out, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsak-

en me?" (Matt. 27:46), He was not merely mouthing empty, emotional words. He knew that, hanging there on a stake, He was now totally alone, totally cut off from His heavenly Father. That is the condition most of the world finds itself in today! And most of the world is totally unaware of it.

This condition is brought about by sin. Isaiah was inspired to make it plain: "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:2, New International Version).

When sin is present in our lives, we are cut off from contact with God. Sin and God are totally incompatible. The two just cannot exist together. Therefore, unless the penalty of our sin — death — is paid, we cannot ever regain the contact with God that is necessary for eternal life. And that, of course, is where Jesus Christ enters the picture.

As the Creator of all mankind, His life was worth more than the sum total of humanity. His death paid the penalty for every sin committed on this planet. But in paying this penalty, He had to take all these sins on His shoulders: "For he [God] hath made him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (11 Cor. 5:21).

And again: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

As the clouds overhead darkened and the pain in His body became almost unbearable, Jesus Christ knew He bore the sins of the world. And

He knew He was bearing them alone.

Earlier when He had been in mental agony, His Father had sent an angel to strengthen and encourage Him (Luke 22:43). Time after time in the humiliation of His scourging, Jesus had drawn on the strength of His Father. The burden of responsibility — knowing that to fail in His mission would mean the oblivion of mankind — weighed heavily on His mind, and He constantly renewed His resolve through prayer to God in heaven.

Now, in the hour of Christ's greatest need, there was nothing. Even if He were forced to abandon His own beloved Son, God the Father was not willing to compromise with sin.

That's the way it had always been: "I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them. . . . And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought" (Deut. 31:17-18). "At that time he [God] will hide his face from them because of the evil they have done" (Mic. 3:4, NIV).

God, therefore, was left with no alternative. If Jesus had become "sin" for us, then God had to forsake Him. He would have to face the final minutes alone.

Jesus, at last, could really comprehend what it meant to be cut off from God. He had come to this sick earth not just to give His life for all mankind, but also to experience human existence. By doing so, He would be able to intercede to the Father on our behalf with far more meaning and fervor.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in

(Continued on page 28)

STORIES FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

Chapter 3

Christ's Early Years

By Shirley King Johnson

Seized with "fear that a new rival might take his throne, King Herod anxiously awaited word from the foreign travelers. Days passed and there was no news. Eventually he learned that the dignitaries had given gifts to a baby King and had left Bethlehem without reporting back to him as he had asked.

Acting in ruthless rage, King Herod ordered all children in Bethlehem who were two years old or younger to be slain (Matt. 2:16).

Flight to Egypt

But an angel of God spoke to Joseph in a dream. "Jesus' life is in danger!" warned the angel. "Take Him to Egypt and stay there until I let you know it's safe to return" (verse 13).

Joseph awakened from the dream with his heart thudding in his chest. It was still night, but he knew every moment counted. He woke Mary and they hurriedly packed provisions on



their two donkeys, and before sunrise they were on their way out of Bethlehem.

The sojourn in Egypt must have seemed long to the little family. But at last the angel reappeared to Joseph with the news that the king who had wanted to kill Jesus was dead himself (verse 20).

As they began the trip home, Joseph and Mary looked forward to seeing the familiar Judean hills again.

But the angel of God returned to give Joseph further instructions in another dream, and Joseph headed the donkeys toward the region of Galilee. The little family returned home to Nazareth.

Growing up in Nazareth

Jesus spent His boyhood and adolescent years in the region of Galilee. Reared in a home where the atmosphere was one of love for God

Jesus' childhood home in Nazareth, Galilee.

The Nazareth home of Jesus.

and neighbor. He heard much about the books of the law during daily family activities, and the family attended the synagogue in Nazareth every Sabbath.

Jesus was tutored in languages as well as in all the Hebrew books of the Old Testament that were available. Aramaic was the language of the common people at that time.

From His first toddling steps, Jesus was subject to His parents. His mind was never hostile to them, and He was totally obedient to His heavenly Father's laws (Luke 2:52).

Joseph and Mary undoubtedly told Jesus that He was born by a divine miracle, that His Father was the great God of the universe and that an angel had appeared to them before He was born. Jesus heard the account of the shepherds who came to worship Him in the stable the night He was born, and He learned of the appearance of the foreign travelers who came from the East to worship Him while He was still in Bethlehem.

There were four brothers and at least two sisters born into the family after Jesus' birth (Mark 6:3). The half-brothers were named James, Joseph, Juda (Jude) and Simon (James and Jude became Christ's disciples after His death and resurrection).

As Jesus grew older, He began to help Joseph in his work as a carpenter and contractor. Passing years brought to Jesus a deepening awareness of His relationship to His heavenly Father. By the time He was 12 years old, He spent much time praying, meditating and studying the books of the law, the prophets, and writings at the synagogue. He understood little by little about the glory He had once shared with the eternal God of the universe (Luke 2:40, John 1:1-3).

About six months after His 12th birthday, Jesus went down to Jerusalem with His parents and other relatives for the Passover season (Luke 1:41).

Feeling very much at ease with the Temple scribes and priests, Jesus listened, asked questions and made comments of His own. Those who heard Him were astounded at His wisdom (Luke 4:7).

So absorbed was Jesus, and so interested in

discussing Old Testament scriptures, He remained in the Temple after His family departed for home. Joseph and Mary eventually turned back to Jerusalem to search the city for Him.

Joseph and Mary grew more anxious with each passing hour, and when they found Him in the Temple, Mary blurted out in exasperation: "Why have you been so thoughtless? We've been terribly worried!"

"I'm sorry, Mother," replied Jesus. "I thought you'd know that I was safe here in my Father's house."

Jesus went home with them and grew up as other normal boys of Nazareth, working and playing, and there was not a time that He was not perfectly obedient to His parents (Luke 2:52).

John the Baptist begins his ministry

Meanwhile, John the Baptist was reared in the Judean hills with his parents, Zacharias and Elizabeth. When he was 30 years old he began his ministry and went to preach in the Judean wilderness and in the Jordan valley (Matt. 3:1).

His message was not a popular one. Calling upon all persons to repent of their sins and be baptized, John warned the public that they would not enter the Kingdom of God automatically just because they were descendants of Abraham.

One day while hundreds of the common people came to John at the Jordan River to be baptized, Jesus arrived on the scene. He waited for John to finish baptizing those who requested it, and then as the group began to disperse, He spoke to His cousin.

"Hello, John. I've come to ask you to baptize me. Will you have time to do it this afternoon?"

John was aghast. "You are the Lamb of God! You don't need to be baptized! You have no sins of which to repent," he spluttered. "I can't baptize you. I'm not worthy to carry your shoes."

Jesus laid a hand on His cousin's arm. "Please do it for me. It's important."

John submitted to Jesus' wish. He led the

Satan . . . had come to tempt Christ to sin. If Christ were to commit just one sin, that alone would prevent Him from qualifying to take Satan's place as ruler of this earth.

way down the steep slope to the water's edge, and they removed their outer robes and laid them on the bank. John splashed into the cold water and Jesus followed. This area where he had been baptizing all day was at a bend in the river, which circled into a little cove of calm water.

When the water was at their waists, they stopped. Calling on the Eternal to witness the baptism, John plunged Jesus beneath the river's surface.

As Jesus came up out of the water, an unusual light began to shine upon Him. The light seemed to become dovelike in shape, and it beamed down directly upon Jesus' head. A voice spoke out of the sky, startling them both and saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (verses 16-17).

John and Jesus stood in the river without moving, scarcely breathing, waiting as the light gradually faded. Then they waded back to shore.

A titanic battle with Satan

Immediately after His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit of God to go into the wilderness area south of Judea (Matt. 4:1, Luke 4:1). In that rocky desert waste, there was no food or water; but that did not concern Him. He wanted to fast and pray and prepare Himself for His ministry.

For 40 days Jesus prayed and meditated as He fasted. The more weak He became physically, the greater was His strength spiritually.

As He arose early on the 40th day, a shadow fell across the ground. Satan himself stood before Him. He had come to tempt Christ to sin. If Christ were to commit just one sin, that alone would prevent Him from qualifying to take Satan's place as ruler of this earth.

Satan used three temptations that are common to all men. First he tried to get Jesus to

obey him by satisfying a physical desire for food. Jesus by this time was hungrier than any of us today have ever been. "If you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread," Satan suggested.

Jesus replied, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God'" (Matt. 4:4).

The devil then swept Him away to a high tower of the Temple in Jerusalem. "If you are the Son of God," Satan chided, "throw yourself over the edge of the tower. You'll not be hurt. The Scriptures say that God will give His angels charge over you, and they'll catch you as you fall."

Jesus drew back from the edge of the tower. "The Scriptures also say that we must not tempt the eternal God," He said. "It is not for man to try to force my Father or His angels to act in his behalf" (verse 7).

A moment later Jesus was standing with Satan on a high mountain from which they could see a long way in every direction.

"I'll make you ruler of all the kingdoms on earth," promised the enemy, "if you'll bow down before me." Given rulership over the earth when he was the archangel Lucifer, Satan knew that Jesus was here to displace him and become the future Ruler of the earth.

But Jesus kept His Father's great purpose and plan uppermost in mind. "Be off! It is also written, 'You shall worship the Eternal and serve only Him!'" (verse 10).

With a cry of rage at his defeat, Satan left Jesus alone.

Exhausted, Jesus slumped to the ground. Angels came to Him. Ministering to Him with food and water, they stayed until He regained His strength.

It had been a terrible battle, but Jesus qualified to rule this earth in the Kingdom of God. =

'Through Much Tribulation'

*Is it necessary to suffer to be a Christian?
Have you ever wondered about the reason for
your seemingly endless problems?*

By Leslie L. McCullough

"And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:21-22).

The apostles Paul and Barnabas taught that tribulation is necessary in the Christian life! It is a vital prerequisite to entering the Kingdom of God.

Why? Why, if God is part of your life — if God is directing your life — must you as a Christian suffer problems, trials or traumas?

You have probably puzzled, at one time or another, over how or even why you should "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (Jas. 1:2). How can you honestly approach personal difficulty as a joy? Why does God expect this of you?

The apostle Peter wrote, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Pet. 4:12).

Why? It seems only natural to wonder about the necessity of certain problems when they arise in your life. It's hard to have difficulties and not question the reason for them. Is mankind doomed to have prob-

lems without knowing why they happen?

Why trials?

Often Christians look upon problems in their lives as a sign of God's displeasure or correction. In some instances, this may well be the case. God does indeed correct and chasten His begotten sons (Heb. 12:6-8). But that isn't the only reason — or even the primary reason — for some trials in our lives.

At one point in his work, the apostle Paul was stoned by a group of people and dragged outside the city, assumed to be dead (Acts 14:19-22). Was Paul in a bad attitude? Did he need correction for some sin? Why did he have to have this trial?

Read through the early part of the chapter. Paul, by the power of God, had just performed a miraculous healing (verses 9-10). He was energetically preaching the Gospel and teaching the truth to the people; his teaching was accompanied by signs and wonders (verse 3).

God must have been pleased with what Paul was doing. There is no indication that Paul was in a bad attitude or had failed to repent of some sin. But being pelted by stones until he was unconscious was certainly a trial! Later, Paul even wrote the Corinthians that he would be better off if his physical life were over (II Cor. 5:8).

The real trial in this case was undoubtedly more for those members of the Church who had heard Paul's message and then seen him stoned

and left for dead. What must have gone through their minds when they saw this man, who had been performing miracles among them, apparently killed? They might have thought God had deserted them. They perhaps felt betrayed — at least bewildered. They probably wondered how such a thing could happen to a Christian.

But then imagine the inspiration the brethren must have felt when Paul got up and even went back into the city in spite of what had just happened! It was just after this incident that Paul exhorted the people to have faith and explained "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

Paul used the experience he had just gone through to encourage the people and also instruct them that there would be trials in the Christian life. In effect, he said we *must* have trials. But why is this true?

Our supreme example

At His final Passover on earth, Jesus Christ changed the symbols of the observance (I Cor. 11:23-25). In making these changes Christ said He had set the example for us, and that we should diligently follow His example. This is true in every facet of Christian life.

I Corinthians 15:3 says, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." Christ unselfishly gave His life so that mankind might have salvation. He was the perfect example, during His life, as a living sacrifice and, with His death, as a total sacrifice. He was tempted to sin and

yet always controlled His desires and actions in order to qualify as our Savior. It wasn't an easy task. Christ was a vibrant, powerful, healthy man. His emotions, uncontrolled, could have naturally led him to strike out in anger, to drink too much, to respond to human drives — to satisfy the pulls of the flesh. Christ felt those desires but never sinned.

His effort had to be a tremendous one. It hurt Christ physically when He was beaten and crucified. His perfectly healthy body had never been abused. He felt deeply, strongly, agonizingly the insults and punishment heaped upon Him. It hurt to have a crown of thorns jammed down on His head. He suffered greatly. The desire to retaliate must have stirred within Him, but He accepted the really unjustified actions in the spirit of the sacrificial Lamb He was, and willingly gave His life for us.

Christ, the perfect example, had to suffer in order to perfect His character and remain qualified to become the Savior of mankind. It hurt to resist the very real temptations that came upon Him. Hebrews 5:8-9 says: "Yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

If Christ needed to suffer to perfect His character, can His servants expect any less?

Faith proven by trial

Each of us must experience certain trials to demonstrate our faith in God. Carefully read and think about I Peter 1:6-7. Take it a little at a time and realize how these scriptures may apply to you and some of those uncomfortable experiences you have wished you didn't have to go through:

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

Stop there. Notice that the problems that confront you are "for a season." Generally, they won't last over an extended period of time. But notice the next words, "if need be." In other words, at times it is necessary to experience "manifold" (many or various) temptations, trials or problems. Our faith needs to be tried

in order to be strengthened. Just as with Jesus, the end result of our faith in God is salvation. Trials strengthen faith, which produces salvation.

Moses explained the reason for Israel's trials to the people by saying: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments; or no" (Deut. 8:2).

The 40-year trial of ancient Israel was caused by their refusal to go in and possess the land God had given them. The men who were sent to scout the land came back with fright-

The apostles Paul and Barnabas taught that tribulation is necessary in the Christian life! It is a vital prerequisite to entering the Kingdom of God. . . . Why, if God is part of your life . . . must you as a Christian suffer problems, trials or traumas?

ening reports of the size of the inhabitants and the dangers of the land. The Israelites, out of fear, refused to trust God to provide for them. Therefore God forced them to spend the next 40 years wandering in a wilderness that offered no obvious way to support life.

Notice verses 3 and 4. The Israelites were allowed to go hungry for a short time, after which God fed them in a manner they could not have anticipated. Their clothing didn't wear out. Their feet didn't swell in spite of all the hard walking in the heat of the desert. God proved to Israel that He not only could but would provide the nation's every need even when it seemed impossible.

Fortunately, we today aren't

always required to suffer the trials ourselves. It is possible to learn from the experiences of others, so that we don't have to learn lessons the hard way. I Corinthians 10:6-11 explains how these things happened to Israel as examples for us, so we wouldn't make the same mistakes.

Many trials are very difficult. I Peter 4:12 speaks of the "fiery trial" that can come upon us. Fire is respected by everyone and feared by many. A fiery trial is not easy for a Christian to endure, and may well be one where he has difficulty relying upon God for the solution. It is easy to think that no good can result from a particularly difficult circumstance.

Perhaps that was Abraham's initial thought when he was told by God to sacrifice his only son, Isaac (Gen. 22:2). Then Abraham realized God had promised the son, given the son to him and promised descendants through the son. It was indeed a fiery trial for Abraham, and yet one that he passed with flying colors. He knew with complete confidence — faith — that God would provide the answer. He proved his faith in God by his actions. And Christ said that Abraham has, through his faith in God, attained salvation, even though he hasn't yet received it (Matt. 8:11).

The virtue of patience

Another important aspect of a trial is that it develops patience, an admirable virtue but one that is difficult to express. We want action now. As a result, we often attempt to sidestep the problem, to receive the immediate relief we desire. But sidestepping the problem deprives us of one of the great benefits produced by the trial.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience [some translations reader this word *character*]; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:3-5).

Patiently continuing through a trial, with faith in God, produces god-like character. Godlike character is the one thing God doesn't create. An individual must come to understand the difference between right (obedience to God) and wrong (disobe-

dience to God), and then choose right regardless of the circumstance, to develop true godly character. Then the person may be required to wait patiently for God to do His part.

All trials are not necessarily times of personal hardship or pain. There are the intangible trials, which at times seem even more difficult for us to master. These trials deal with our attitudes. Learning to control our minds and thoughts is one of our most difficult battles. Our attitudes are deep down inside our hearts and minds.

Peter addressed the problem directly: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward" (1 Pet. 2:18). Here the word *froward* means "unreasonable."

Christians are to willingly and energetically serve their bosses. They are to follow their superiors' instructions, as long as they don't involve disobedience to God, even though the instructions may seem unreasonable. A Christian should work just as hard for a penny-pinching, inconsiderate tightwad who will never give him time off as he would for a gentle, considerate, generous boss who tries to understand his needs.

Our natural reaction is to rebel,

talk back or slow our production. It is hard to see why we should make extra effort when the boss is unkind or inconsiderate of his employees. But we are still required to practice our Christianity. The boss may never know our attitudes. But God knows what is in our hearts.

Takes effort to submit

It is hard to maintain right attitudes when we feel we have been wronged, or when the one to whom we are responsible is acting contrary to our wishes or well-being.

But remember this: The Church — all of us as a unit — is to become the Bride of Jesus Christ. All of us, whether male or female, will become part of the Wife of Christ. Therefore the instruction in Ephesians 5:22-24 applies directly to each of us: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. . . . Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."

We often feel that to be subject or to submit requires nothing more than a docile, passive lack of action. Rarely do we look upon submission as an active, energetic way to serve God. It is difficult to submit. It requires con-

scious thought and effort to submit to God. We must conquer our thoughts and deliberately control our actions. We have to think about how we can make our part in the family, on the job, or in the Church more supportive of God's way. On occasion we may have to force ourselves to pray or study in order to submit to God's way. At other times we may have to refuse to think wrong thoughts or force ourselves to think good ones. We may have to apply our minds to see how we can make the instruction we have been given work.

Anyone can sit passively and do nothing. It requires effort to willingly, honestly submit to a higher authority in our lives.

Jesus Christ was the supreme example. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:21-23).

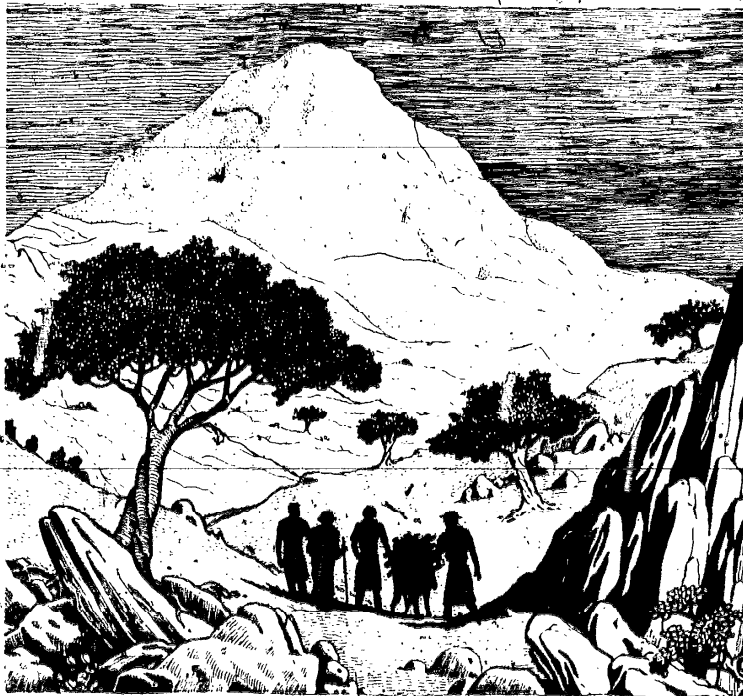
When Christ was being unjustly accused, beaten and then crucified, our supreme example didn't answer back, threaten or take things into His own hands. He mentioned that He could call for 12 legions of angels to help Him, but He didn't. He didn't tell His tormentors that He would get even when He returned to the earth as its Ruler. He left it all in God's hands. How hard it is to follow His example and submit ourselves to the will of God! Yet trials come to help us better live our lives in faith to our Creator.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him" (Jas. 1:12).

How can you be happy when circumstances around you tell you to be sad? Why should you "count it all joy" when you are tried?

Because the trial of your faith can produce the joyful fruit of salvation — you can become a very Son of God. □

What must Abraham have thought when God commanded him to sacrifice Isaac, his only son? It was indeed a fiery trial! But Abraham proved his faith in God by his actions.



Parents - Show Your Teenagers You Care!



*Are you presenting God's way of
life to your teenagers in a positive light?*

By Richard Rice

It is Monday morning at the local high school in a midwestern U.S. town. As Susie, 15, walks to her locker, she is surrounded by several jubilant friends. They are all excited about the weekend just past.

"Oh, Susie, you should have been at the football game Friday night!" they exclaim. "We won! And the party afterwards was a real blast. Some really neat guys were there from out of town!"

Dejected, Susie trudges to her first period class. "Why is my life so dull?" she ponders. "Why can't I have an exciting life like my friends? I don't want to break God's Sabbath or go out with guys in the world, but Mom and Dad don't seem to understand that I need recreation and excitement.

"Since we came into the Church, our lives have become so dry and boring. We seldom do anything as a family, and Mom and Dad don't want to bother taking me and my brothers to Church socials."

Could your teenager take the place

of "Susie" in this scene? The above experience is not uncommon in God's Church.

Double responsibility

Though many parents don't realize it, their teenagers are harboring deep resentments because they are deprived of recreational opportunities and regular social experiences. These teens are developing negative attitudes toward God's Church, not through any fault of their own, but because Mother and Dad have neglected their responsibilities.

Mark well this fact: Whether or not our teenagers stay in the Church and remain true to God's way depends largely on how well we present God's truth to them and relate its benefits to their lives.

The world seems to offer such tantalizing fun and glitter, and our children are naturally drawn to its perverted influence. Therefore, we have a double responsibility to not only point out to them the evil of Satan's society, but also to provide the kind of wholesome activities that properly represent the *better* way of God.

Every father knows that it is his duty to supply the basic necessities of

life for his children — food, clothing and shelter. Likewise, every mother knows that she's responsible for providing nutritious meals, clean clothes and a neat, attractive home.

But, how many parents realize that in addition to providing these basic needs, they are equally accountable to God for their children's social life? God's way of life is happy, exciting, abundant!

But too many parents seem to have overlooked their duty to present this aspect of God's way to their children. Thus, their kids may have become self-conscious social misfits, lacking poise and confidence and devoid of a proper, healthy respect for God and the Church.

Paul wrote, "Fathers, stop exasperating your children, so as to keep them from losing heart" (Col 3:21, Williams).

Paul also states in 1 Timothy 5:8, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." While this verse basically means caring for the physical needs of a family, in principle it also means providing for their social, cultural and spiritual development.



God wants our teenagers to grow up to be intelligent, well-adjusted, happy men and women. Therefore he levies on us as parents the sacred trust of providing a rich and fulfilling life for them, so they become responsible individuals and an attractive light to the world.

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

Never too late

Some kids were already teenagers when their parents were called into God's Church, and because of this the parents reason that there is little they can do to win the children over to God's way. Others who have been in the Church for years may not realize they are about to lose their teenagers to the world because the kids have been robbed of fun and excitement.

It's time to awaken to the seriousness of your responsibilities and realize it is never too late to change! Teenagers have natural, healthy social drives that cry out for fulfillment. Therefore, working with your teenagers should not be looked upon as a burden or an impossible task, but as a wonderful new challenge and opportunity. Granted, changing old patterns and approaches may require

much sacrifice, time and prayer, but the end result will be abundantly worth it!

Start by building a new relationship with your teenagers. Sit down with them and have a heart-to-heart talk. You might begin by reading and discussing this article with them, and telling them you are making a new commitment as parents. Taking the initiative may seem awkward and embarrassing at first. But it's necessary — it's your duty as a parent. And it will break the ice that has perhaps been there for years.

Draw your kids out and get them to talk about their feelings. Don't criticize or react negatively when they are honestly expressing their views. You want to know how they really feel about their family life, and they must be able to tell you without fear of rejection or recrimination. You want to get their total input as to how the situation in your home can be improved.

Ask for suggestions on what activities they'd like to participate in. Encourage open give-and-take communication while stressing God's wonderful way and the necessity to obey our Creator.

Plan activities

In these family discussions — of which there should be many — you

and your children should plan small group activities with other teenagers in the Church. Include both boys and girls, so that they have the opportunity to interact with the opposite sex in a proper, wholesome environment.

Remember, we're not necessarily advocating single dating. Nor do we encourage building cliques. It is important, therefore, for your children to be exposed to a variety of friends. The purpose for these activities is to broaden their horizons and build their social skills.

There are several ideas you might work into your schedule as time, money and opportunity permit. These are activities you personally can plan, so as not to depend solely on the Church to fulfill your teenagers' social needs.

• *Saturday night parties.* Saturday night is an ideal time to plan get-togethers. Transportation problems and the soaring costs of gasoline can be minimized. Those who live in distant areas could plan to stay over from the Sabbath. Some types of activities you might consider are: card games, board games (Monopoly, Careers, Risk), sing-alongs, Bunco, Spoons, Charades or limited dancing.

Serve simple refreshments such as punch, popcorn and cookies. Perhaps the guests could chip in to help cut

costs. It is necessary to maintain proper supervision, but don't let your presence dominate the atmosphere. If the kids invite you to take part in the action, by all means do so in fun and



courtesy. But allow the kids to be themselves.

Occasionally, invite an out-of-town family with children the same ages as your kids' to spend the night. You could have a potluck dinner or some other special event on that evening.

After you've approved a given activity, let the kids do most of the planning and preparation. With most teenagers, anticipation is just as meaningful as the activity itself. But be available to lend your support.

• **Sports and games.** This category could involve limitless possibilities: volleyball, softball, croquet, basketball, badminton, soccer, dodge ball. You and your teenagers can no doubt think of many more. If you don't have space in your yard or immediate neighborhood for these games, check out a nearby park or school.

Again, the emphasis should be on group involvement to give your sons and daughters an opportunity for social mixing. Your direct participation in this type of outing may be especially helpful in bridging the gap between parents and youngsters.

• **Church activities.** Let your children get involved in church socials, dinners and outings. And get more involved yourself!

Throughout the year the Church will have several Youth Opportunities United (YOU) functions. See that your children attend if at all possible. Share transportation with other

families. Volunteer to chaperone occasionally, if needed. Let your kids know that you really care and are concerned about their happiness and welfare.

• **Miscellaneous activities.** Because of factors of distance, time and expense, some activities can and should only be held occasionally. But these outings should be included somewhere in your calendar of events: beach parties, hiking trips, overnight camping trips, all-day picnics, trips to the zoo or an amusement park.

Occasionally take in a special movie, play, concert, ice show,

How many parents realize that in addition to providing . . . basic needs, they are equally accountable to God for their children's social life? God's way of life is happy, exciting, abundant!

But too many parents seem to have overlooked their duty to present this aspect of God's way to their children.

museum or art gallery or go sight-seeing or skating.

Some of the above suggestions may seem complicated or financially out of reach, but with careful planning and forethought workable solutions can be found.

If all parents in the Church cooperate and share responsibilities, no one family will need to suffer.

Suppose Susie had 10 to 12 of her friends in the Church over for a Saturday night party. If the parents of each of these friends in turn invited Susie for an activity, no hardship would be imposed on anyone too frequently.

To finance some of the more expensive outings, several children could launch a fund-raising activity.

In all fairness, the teenagers should be made aware of the needs of the entire family and not make unreasonable or selfish demands.

Have regular talks

It's imperative that you have frequent talks with your teens in these crucial, formative years. It is vital to keep the lines of communication open to build a close family relationship. Your love for your children should be so strong and so obvious that they will want to come to you with all their personal problems and will not feel compelled to seek only the counsel of their peers.

Be kind, patient and empathetic when they approach you with their hang-ups, fears and frustrations. Be a good listener — don't rush in with advice until you've heard the whole story.

Treat them with respect, and as individuals. Consider their feelings. Be generous with praise in those areas where they are making progress.

Reinforce their good behavior by pointing out their strengths and successes. Gently correct their weaknesses.

For example, if a son or daughter is expressing a bad attitude in a sports activity or pouting about losing a game, bring this out during one of your talk sessions.

Continually encourage them to venture out socially in order to grow in confidence, culture and self-esteem. Teenagers need exposure and experience to round out their lives.

The more opportunities your kids have to interrelate with other teens in proper activities, the more well adjusted they will be as youngsters. And as adults, they will know how to conduct themselves with maturity and responsibility in most situations.

God has given a serious charge to us as dutiful, loving parents. We need to teach God's truth to our young people in the most appealing way possible.

Whether or not our teenagers survive the pressures of this world and respond to God's eventual call, depends on how effectively we fulfill our responsibility to them now.

Let's prove to our teenagers that we really care! □

Close-Up

Personality profiles of members and co-workers of God's Church around the world.

Roger Bryant's voice has been compared to that of Luciano Pavarotti and the late Jussi Björling. He has sung with premiere soprano Beverly Sills and under such conductors as Kurt Adler, Robert Shaw and Louis Lane.

Mr. Bryant is also a member of the Worldwide Church of God and, together with his wife Lyla Jane and their 6-month-old daughter Lauren, lives in Austin, Tex.

Many Church members heard Mr. Bryant during the 1980 Feast of Tabernacles when he sang in the Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena, and also in the Tucson Music Hall, where he was accompanied by the Arizona Opera Orchestra.

Mr. Bryant, only 31, has gained much recognition in the music field. In 1975, he was the second-place winner in the San Francisco Opera Auditions, and also a finalist in the Lyric Opera of Chicago Auditions. His debut was with the Spring Opera of San Francisco in March, 1976, as a soloist in Bach's "St. Matthew's Passion." His appearances with the San Antonio Symphony Opera included the role of "Flavio" in Bellini's "Norma" with Beverly Sills in the title role.

From childhood, Mr. Bryant has had an interest in music. Both his parents are musical. He sang in church choirs and high school choruses before going to Texas Christian University, where he received a bachelor of arts in voice performance and a master of arts in music education. Although he was



Photo by Hal Finch

encouraged to pursue a full-time musical career, he never had a strong desire for just performing. He was more interested in both singing and teaching.

In 1975, Mr. Bryant came in contact with the Worldwide Church of God. He sent for literature and after three to four months of study began to attend Church services. He was baptized in June, 1976. Realizing he could not pursue a full-time singing career and still observe God's Sabbath, he chose the latter, and today both sings and teaches as assistant professor of voice at the University of Texas in Austin.

As he was growing up, Mr. Bryant's parents always stressed the element of service to others, and he spent several years searching out the

niche where he could best serve his fellowman.

"My teaching career is an opportunity to set an example of the give way of life," he says. He also tries to show his students that creativity comes from God, and how it ties in with the spirit in man.

A highlight of his musical career was two years ago during the Feast of Tabernacles in Savannah, Ga., when he conducted the Festival choir. He felt the choir's performance of the "Hallelujah Chorus" on the Last Great Day was a peak — an inspired moment.

However, music is not the only thing in Mr. Bryant's life. "My family is very important," he says. He enjoys playing with his daughter, getting together with other people, reading and sports,

especially golf. Last summer, he played for the Austin church's softball team.

One observation Mr. Bryant has made in his profession is that music has taken on an almost religious significance. Teachers often seem to think that art can take the place of religion and be almost a religious experience for some people.

"Music is not a messiah," says Mr. Bryant, and he tries to counter this attitude in his teaching and example by showing that music can be used as an expression of our relationship to God.

"I'm a down-to-earth person who doesn't take music so seriously that I can't enjoy it, to express joy, happiness and thanksgiving. My students enjoy that approach." — *By John Curry* □

Good News on the Philippine Work

A Thriving Work

A vigorous Work of sowing the seed of God's Word — and reaping a good harvest — is taking place in the Philippines, a republic of about 48 million people speaking more than 80 different native dialects.

Through a guiding Hand in history, this archipelago, of more than 7,000 islands in the western Pacific passed into American hands in 1897. The legacy Americans gave to the Filipino people is largely responsible for the thriving Work in this nation now.

Before the Americans became involved, the Spanish dominated the country for some 330 years. No widespread public education had been provided, and literacy among the natives was thus low. Had this condition continued, perhaps God's Work would not have enjoyed the same growth.

Among the first things the Americans did here was to introduce the public school system, using English as a medium of instruction. Because of this, the Philippines today has one of the world's largest English-literate populations (about 20 million).

Thus it was that in the 1940s some copies of *The Plain Truth* started to find their way to the Philippines from the United States, and eventually some readers proved to be fertile soil for the seed of God's Word.

By 1962 an office of God's Work was set up in Manila, the nation's capital. Advertisements in the then leading national magazine, *Philippine Free Press* (now defunct), swelled *The Plain Truth* mailing list in a matter of months. Many people were being brought to repentance, and today there are more



Thousands heard Mr. Armstrong expound the human potential in Manila in 1974. This campaign, plus follow-up lectures by then regional director Colin Adair, produced growth in the Philippine Work. (All photos, Good News)

than 2,150 baptized members of the Worldwide Church of God in the Philippines. That is the fifth largest concentration of God's people in the world.

The Plain Truth goes to about 50,000 readers today. But that doesn't tell the whole story. Over the years tens of thousands of Filipinos have been on the magazine's mailing list at one time or another. A conservative estimate of the number of people reached by the magazine here over the

years would be about four million.

Besides the widespread acquaintance with written English, other factors helped make God's Work a success here.

The Philippines has a constitution that was almost wholly derived from the American model. Freedom of religion and speech have made it possible for God's truth to flourish.

The special relations the Philippines maintains with the United States also make it

easy and convenient for God's Work here to transact business with the offices in Pasadena and other offices of God's Work worldwide.

An important factor in the success of God's Work here is the Filipino people's friendliness and openness to foreign influences. The Filipinos especially admire Western standards and trends. So it is not surprising that the Filipinos would turn out in great numbers to welcome God's "foreign" ways and truth.

Regional Office and Church

An all-Filipino staff assists regional director Guy Ames in the Work in the Philippines. The group includes eight office personnel and 12 full-time church pastors.

The Philippine Work's headquarters are housed in a suite of offices being purchased by the Work in Makati, Manila's main business center. The office area includes a mail processing section, literature storage space and a function room for ministerial conferences. Spokesman Club, Women's Club and YOU activities.

During 1980 God's Work here enjoyed a healthy overall growth. Some 95,757 pieces of mail were received, an increase of 17 percent over the previous year.

Income was 30 percent more than during the same period in 1979.

Meanwhile, on the media front, advertising began receiving new emphasis during the latter part of 1980, and the results have been encouraging. An ad for the booklet *Does God Exist?* ran in *Panorama Magazine* of the *Sunday Bulletin* in August and broke all

previous records for advertising in the history of God's Work here. Responses at last count totaled 4,366.

Until April, 1980, *The Plain Truth* was printed locally for Philippine subscribers on newsprint, using local funds.

Thanks to a generous subsidy from the Canadian Office, the magazine is now being printed in the United States on better quality, glossy paper and is directly shipped to the Philippines.

With this help from the Canadian and American areas,

the Philippine office will be able to strengthen its ministerial and church development.

A total of 99 people were added to the Church in the Philippines in 1980.

And to ensure that God's flocks were taken care of, God raised up more elders to pastor them. At the Feast of Tabernacles nine new elders were ordained and two more were raised in rank. The manpower development program begun

in 1977 was bearing fruit.

At the end of 1980, there were 21 churches, with 12 full-time ministers and local church elders. Attendance is around 1,900.

Because of the country's geography and inadequate transportation, there is a need to establish more church congregations and employ more full-time ministers. Great emphasis is therefore placed on leadership in the churches here.

Philippine Director

Guy Ames began listening to *The World Tomorrow* broadcast as a teenager in the early 1950s.

He came to Pasadena from his home in northern Califor-

sia, Malaysia, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore.

For the past five years Mr. Ames has been an assistant pastor in Pasadena.

Mr. Ames and his wife, the former Helen Beecher, have two children: 14-year-old Karolyn and 11-year-old Gilroy.

Mr. Ames returned to the Philippines in January to become regional director when Colin Adair, who had served in that capacity for 10 years, was transferred to the Vancouver, B.C., area.



Pasadena Auditorium AM pastor Larry Salyer presents a token of appreciation to Mr. and Mrs. Guy Ames before their departure to assume management of the Work's Philippine Office.

nia and enrolled in Ambassador College in 1959. Mr. Ames was sent to the Philippines after 3½ years of college to manage the fledgling office in Manila.

In January, 1965, Mr. Ames was ordained a local elder and returned to Pasadena to complete college. He graduated in 1966 and served for two years in the Mailing Department.

In 1968, Mr. Ames moved back to the Philippines to help carry the increasing work load. From 1970 to 1973 he served in the Work in Australia.

In December, 1973, Mr. Ames moved to Singapore to establish an office. While living in Singapore from 1973 to 1975, he traveled extensively in Southeast Asia, baptizing members in Burma, Indone-



Mr. Armstrong received honorary doctorates from both Angeles University and the University of Iloilo. He is shown above with President Angeles of Angeles University.

Reaching the Public

In 1974 Herbert W. Armstrong held a public campaign in Manila, Philippines. Having first visited the nation in 1970 and met with government leaders, the way was cleared for him to reach the citizens with the good news of the Kingdom of God. At the

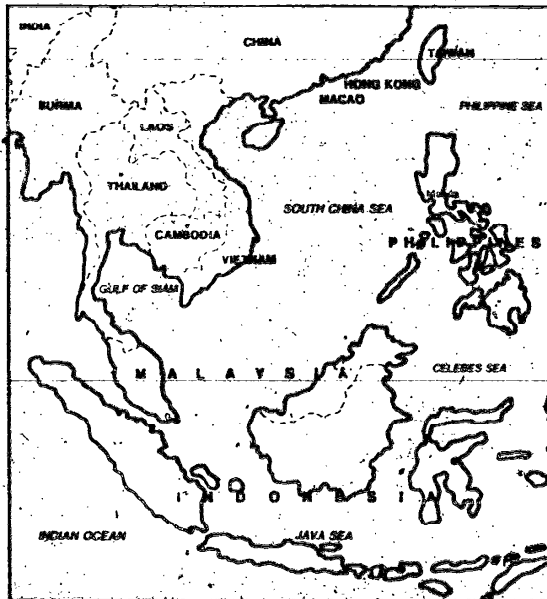
Araneta Coliseum, several thousand people heard Mr. Armstrong expound the human potential of man, over a three-night period.

Follow-up lectures were held by regional director Colin Adair, and some growth was experienced in the Church.

Mr. Armstrong returned to the Philippines in 1975 for a number of visits involving government leaders, and was able to speak to the Manila congregation once again.

Mr. Adair started holding public lectures in the country's main cities in 1975. On numerous occasions these meetings were carried live by area radio stations. From 100 to 500 people attended each lecture, and follow-up Bible seminars were conducted with encouraging results.

These lectures have continued to the present, although now they are geared more to the readers of *The Plain Truth* than to the general public. Local pastors follow the lectures with forums of their own, and a number of new people have started attending church as a result. □



Make Your Marriage Last

Here's how to make your marriage solid and truly fulfilling.

By Roderick C. Meredith

"But she won't even listen to reason," the shaken husband lamented. "My wife says it's all my fault and now she's considering leaving me. I know I have been domineering in the past, but now we can't even seem to talk about it. She's down on me, down on the Church, down on everything."

'An extreme case?'

Not really. A great number of marriages, even in God's Church, are threatened by this kind of emotional impasse. Marital partners have come to the place where they can no longer reason with each other. People are so absorbed with their own private hurts that they can't see the big picture and get their minds, their emotions and their marriages back on the track toward the Kingdom of God.

Why?

Why marriage problems?

The real answer — and this is not just a cop-out — is that this is NOT God's world. It is Satan's world (II Cor. 4:4), and since marriage is the basis of a truly decent society, the great deceiver wants to *destroy* sound, happy marriages — just as he did before the Flood and before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Both these eras were types of our own end-time society now!

As Satan broadcasts attitudes of resentment, rebellion and self-will (Eph. 2:2), he certainly must zero in



Photo by Roland Rees

on upsetting marriage partners wherever possible — especially on the people destined to replace him and his demons in ruling over this world. All too often, most of us are not alert to Satan's part in causing our wrong attitudes toward God, toward the Church and toward our own spouses. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness [the Greek word means "wicked spirits"] in high places" (Eph. 6:12).

We must constantly put on the

"whole armour" of God, not just part of it. A day without prayer and Bible study, not meditating regularly on the big goals in this life and beyond, too many months without a prayer-filled period of fasting before God and WHAM! Satan overpowers us with negative attitudes, cynicism, selfishness and bitterness.

Satan is pervertedly brilliant. If he perceives that your marriage is, or can be made to be, your Achilles' heel — your weakest point — he will strike directly at that target. You must realize this and be prepared. You must be willing to fight for your marriage as you would fight for your very life, for indeed, your life now and your eternal life and reward in God's Family depend on the success of your marriage, now.

Yes, your marriage is just that important.

God's will regarding marriage

The book of Malachi, written long after Israel's first captivity, is directed to modern Israel today. Of all people, we in God's Church need to heed this inspired instruction!

Asked why God wasn't hearing prayers, Malachi answered: "Because the Lord was witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Has not the one God made

and sustained for us the spirit of life? And what does he desire? **GODLY OFFSPRING.** So take heed to yourselves, and *let none be faithless to the wife of his youth.* For I **HATE DIVORCE,** says the Lord the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless" (Mal. 2:14-16, Revised Standard Version).

The point here is that God hates divorce! He instituted marriage as a profound *covenant* relationship, picturing the eternal relationship between Christ and the Church.

Anyone who tampers with that relationship — be he judge, priest, psychologist, counselor or one of the marriage partners themselves — is tampering with something sacred to God. And He hates divorce. He warns us clearly of His great purpose in instituting marriage — so that in this stable, loving atmosphere, "Godly offspring" would be produced, potential sons of the great Creator.

Yet, when we get our feelings hurt, it seems that this awesome understanding simply flips out of our minds. But we in the Church of God should know better. We, of all people, cannot plead ignorance.

Restudy Matthew 19:3-9. Jesus here answered the Pharisees' question about putting away one's wife for "every cause" by referring back to "the beginning" — to God's purpose in establishing marriage. Did God originally intend that there be divorces?

After reminding them that it is *God* who created us male and female, Jesus said: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (verses 5-6). Our Creator intended that man and wife "cleave" together, that they henceforth be regarded as one flesh. Man was not to "put asunder" this union, ordained by God from creation.

Divorce never intended

That was God's plan. Anything else was only something God *permitted* the weak, carnal nation of Israel

to do, but not something He ever really intended.

Jesus, when asked why Moses "commanded" ancient Israelites to give their wives divorces under certain circumstances, replied, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so" (verse 8).

So "in the beginning" God *never* intended that there be divorce!

It was only as a concession to unconverted Israel that God allowed divorce in certain cases. And, as we in God's Church well know, Christ greatly limited even these allowances. Under the New Testament, converted men and women have access to the Holy Spirit, the power to overcome the human selfishness and rebellion that ruptures marriages in the first place.

God's will, therefore, for the truly converted person, is that there be **NO DIVORCE!**

Once a Church of God couple have accepted each other's past mistakes and have lived together for a few months or years, even the threat of a divorce is an admission that 1) one or both of them have never been converted, or 2) that one or both of them are no longer filled with and led by God's Holy Spirit and, unless real repentance occurs, are on their way out of God's Church!

What to do?

Truly converted people should fear and reverence the God who made us male and female and who gives us life and breath. And we should fear to even allow our minds to entertain the threat of divorce if things don't go smoothly in our marriages.

That is the starting point. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 1:7). Many of God's true people are far too concerned with self-satisfaction and "looking out for No. 1" to patiently, humbly serve their God-given mates even under adverse circumstances. They are too selfish to put up with each other's faults and pray their hearts out that God will intervene and strengthen and save their marriages.

Once we reorient our thinking on the rock-solid basis that marriage must last for life, we should go all out to build on the following keys and

practice the real meaning of marriage.

A character-building institution

In our "instant gratification" society, even many Church members fail to understand that marriage should be a *character-building institution.* The strength of a nation's marriages is representative of the strength of the whole society — of its stability, its values, its respect for laws and traditions, the hope of its posterity.

Godly marriages affect the attitudes, safety and security (physical, mental and emotional) of the children and grandchildren involved, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, cousins, friends and associates. All these people are impacted by the example set by *you and your mate!*

Through Malachi, God showed that "Godly offspring" are a major purpose of marriage. In an atmosphere of love and stability, giving and sharing, humbling the self and worshiping the Creator, Godly offspring are sure to be produced. But from an atmosphere of selfishness, cynicism, rebellion and division can come no such result.

So it behooves us to make our homes reflect the Christianity we profess — citadels of peace and kindness, where each partner in the home serves the other, is patient and forgiving if the other slips up, and where everyone is intent on doing God's will rather than demanding his own "rights."

Marriage and the home are perfect vehicles through which to fully express Jesus' wonderful teaching that "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

Each partner must genuinely give of himself. He must openly, enthusiastically, lovingly *share* his plans, hopes and dreams with his mate. He must strive to be more sensitive of the unspoken needs and aspirations of his partner.

A loving husband must mentally and emotionally "get inside" his wife's head. He must listen to her stated and implied goals and hopes and show her that he genuinely wants the best for her. He may not always be able to bring all her dreams to pass, but the fact that he *cares* will go a long way toward making her happy.

A loving wife should listen perceptively to her husband and sense his moods and unspoken needs. She should try to encourage him, enter his life and show him that she sincerely wants all his proper hopes and dreams to come true.

She must show that she's truly lovingly with him in heart and spirit. No man could ask for more.

A picture of Christ and the Church

In Ephesians 5:21-33 the spiritual reality marriage pictures is put in sharp focus. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (verses 21-24).

Both man and wife are to recognize that their union literally pictures Christ and the Church. So in their marriage, they are to learn and act out the total submission of the Church to Christ, and the total love and concern of Christ for the Church.

Marriage is not a 50-50 proposition! Each partner must be 100 percent determined to do his or her God-ordained share. And 100 percent determined to be totally faithful in his or her marriage.

If we will not even exercise the character to remain faithful in our marriage union during this short physical life, what assurance does God have that we will submit to Him and remain faithful to Him throughout all eternity?

Think about it.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (verse 25). This sacrificial love of Christ is to be emulated by the Christian husband, who will give "till it hurts" in constant appreciation of his wife's role as a dedicated help and companion. A man must consistently think of his wife as part of himself, equal with him, and so "love his wife even as himself" (verse 33).

Paul concludes, "And the wife see that she reverence her husband"

(verse 33). In the love of Christ, you are to love your wife as you love yourself. "Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (verse 21). "Submit yourselves one to another, as the Lord has commanded, as the God-ordained head of the church, His body, which is saved by His word, that He might purify it by the word of water with the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:26-27).

All Christians must willingly "submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (verse 21). "Submit yourselves one to another, as the Lord has commanded, as the God-ordained head of the church, His body, which is saved by His word, that He might purify it by the word of water with the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:26-27).

The challenge of marriage is learning to serve even when you're tired. It's learning to forgive even when you normally wouldn't. It's learning daily patience, kindness and deep empathy. These marriage experiences prepare you to be in God's Kingdom...

mately responsible for his family before God, a wise husband will listen to his wife and take her advice on countless occasions. He will be patient even if she does not perfectly obey and follow his leadership in every situation. He will quickly recall that he does not always quickly and perfectly submit to the leadership of Jesus Christ. We are all made of dust. We are all weak. We all need patience, understanding, mercy and encouragement to do better.

Love — genuine, patient, outflowing concern — is the answer. This will strengthen the marriage covenant, which pictures the lasting faithfulness of Christ and the true Church and so must not be broken.

You CAN do it!

Those truly converted must never permit themselves to go down the dark corridor of carnal human rea-

son. "Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (verse 21). "Submit yourselves one to another, as the Lord has commanded, as the God-ordained head of the church, His body, which is saved by His word, that He might purify it by the word of water with the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:26-27).

Therefore, if we fear God and understand that we must save our marriages, we'll go to Him with fervent prayer and even fasting. We'll go to God's ministers for help, counsel and correction. We'll work, we'll overcome, we'll fight to save what we know is precious to God!

We'll humble ourselves, submit ourselves to our mates, talk it over, pray it out and, with God's promised help, save our marriages. Jesus promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). The true Christian believes that promise and will go to Him constantly and boldly for the help to do what He has commanded us to do.

Of course, if your mate rebels against the truth, becomes hostile and leaves God's Church, you are no longer bound. But even here, you have a responsibility to love, help and encourage him or her as long as there is hope! For, in certain circumstances, one mate could virtually drive the other out of God's Church by his or her own mule-headedness.

Learn to serve

A real Christian must be more than willing to go all out in an effort to turn even a seemingly hopeless marriage around. As the old saying goes, "It takes two to tangle." You'd better be willing to admit your mis-

(Continued on page 27)

Your Sabbath Murmurings Come Before God!

*Do you sometimes let down in keeping God's Sabbath holy?
Ancient Israel's mistakes in Sabbath keeping — and the results
— are recorded as a warning to all Christians.*

By Selmer L. Hegvold

Visualize yourself reliving ancient Israel's experiences, and as you do, think about what your actions and reactions probably would be.

Imagine what it must have been like to be a slave in Egypt. To have Moses, on behalf of Almighty God, demand your freedom. To witness the miracles God performed to secure your release. To walk through an uncomfortable desert toward an unfamiliar destination.

And imagine what it must have been like, after living in a pagan society all your life, to have God's law revealed to you — to have been offered the chance to live a way of life whose rewards were abundant physical blessings and happiness.

Perhaps Israel's experiences — particularly with the Sabbath — have not registered in the way God intended when He inspired them to be written and preserved for you. Only the bare outline of these experiences is preserved, but these facts are most interesting. Israel's experiences with the Sabbath should say something to those of us who claim to be Christians today. Sometimes we fall down in complying with God's directions and, like Israel, grumble and complain. And, even if we don't real-

ize it, our murmurings are directed at God!

Sabbath forgotten

The Israelites' life in slavery was a rigidly restricted existence. During their wretched sojourn in Egypt, they lost significant knowledge of the God of their fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They even lost much of the knowledge of how to keep the Sabbath and, of course, its meaning.

One of God's objects with His rescued people was to restore the knowledge of the way to His great blessings. God works through human instruments, and that was the first important lesson He revealed to Israel. He set before them Moses and Aaron. Through startling miracles, God built for his two servants prestige and awe in the eyes of the people.

Experiencing with the Egyptians, the first three of the plagues God caused, Israel became more and more willing to listen to God's directives through Moses. They observed their first Passover and survived the sweep of the death angel through the land. They left the land of bondage with great joy and a "high hand" the night after the Passover (Ex. 14:8).

Once free of Egypt, Israel was introduced to the discipline of God's way. He had effectively destroyed their fear of the Egyptian gods, the pantheon that held sway over their lives and customs!

After God miraculously brought Israel through the Red Sea, He introduced to them the purpose of His Sabbath. Having observed no similar period of time — having worked seven days a week for their Egyptian taskmasters — the people were lacking full understanding of why God had hallowed this one day of every seven.

The children of Israel were like little, untutored children. No one but God could have chosen such remarkable means to instill reverence in their minds for His holy Sabbath! Had you been an Israelite in the wilderness stretching before Mt. Sinai, you, too, would have been impressed. Do you, having the Spirit of God, respect it thus today? Notice how and what God taught the people about His Sabbath.

Food from heaven

Providing daily food for the millions camped in the wilderness posed no problem to the great God. He could have provided sustenance for them in any number of ways. He chose to do so with quails in the evening and manna in the morning. Quails flying into the campgrounds must have been a curious sight. But quails of themselves were not unusual. They were natural creatures.

Manna was an entirely different phenomenon. It never had existed before. In fact, so strange was it to



The man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath paid with his life for not respecting God's holy time!

the puzzled people that they asked one another. "What is it?" *Manna* (meaning, "What is it?") derived its name from this question. Thereafter it was called *manna from heaven*. Israel lived on this and quail for the remaining years of their sojourn, while isolated from all worldly influence.

Exodus 16 shows the impact of the lesson of the manna. None should miss it — it is a lesson for us today. We should be thankful we can learn from Israel's experience, and not have to live through it personally.

God wanted to impress Israel with a daily miracle! They were helpless of themselves to provide a living from the barren wasteland around them. They needed to learn that God demanded absolute obedience. Freedom from Egypt? Yes! But now, implicit obedience to God was the alternative. The Israelites were to become willing slaves of God in order to know real freedom.

God chose to begin that lesson with His divine bread from heaven. The lesson proved painfully embarrassing to many.

Implicit obedience demanded

"Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they

will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." (Ex. 16:4-5)

A specific measure of the precious food was to be gathered each morning. Nothing more, and nothing less.

"Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less" (verses 16-17).

Those with larger families gathered more. The elderly or the very young children gathered less.

Another miracle was performed! "And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack, they gathered every man according to his eating" (verse 18). An omer per person. It must have astounded the people when, after they had deposited their food for the day in their tents, they found the exact measurement of manna God had commanded sitting before them. Now read on.

"And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning" (verses 19-20). God must have shaken His head in exasperation. He determined to correct the recalcitrant Israelites in a stern but comical manner. After this lesson, few would err a second time.

"But some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank, and Moses was wroth with them." When morning broke over the desert plain, perhaps Moses' wrath turned quickly to mirth as he observed the frantic activity in scattered tents, among the vast host encamped about him. The uproar no doubt affected even the innocent neighbors.

When the rebels first arose from their beds to prepare their morning repasts, nothing appeared any different. The shock came quickly, however. Bedlam must have broken out in tent after tent! Screams rent the still morning air. "Worms! Worms!

Filthy worms are crawling everywhere in our tent!" Bedding and clothing began flying out into the open air as whole families, their noses stopped tightly against the awful stench, struggled to freshen their garments and belongings in the outside air.

God had warned, and the Israelites had not heeded. Now the result was plain for all to see. The wayward among them had been singled out and corrected. It was a secret that could not be kept. The stench probably swept over the dwellings of all the people encamped.

Certainly thereafter, when the chastened people went out, each morning to gather the manna, they eyed the sweet wafers with a new, healthy respect. And each person collected exactly the amount authorized by God, through His servant Moses.

Sixth day singled out

Five days of the week of instruction had passed. At sunset came the beginning of the sixth day of the week. A new principle — one that many today seem to have missed — was about to be explained to Israel. When properly applied, this principle sets the stage for a relaxed Sabbath.

In the morning of the sixth day the people busied themselves gathering manna for their families. Each person this time collected his allotment of two omers of manna.

"And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man; and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord; bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning" (verses 22-23).

This instruction created no problem for most of God's host. But to some it proved too much for their weak faith in God. When the sun rose on the seventh day of the week, the skeptics were found to have moved out under the stars the previous evening. They slept outdoors with all their belongings stacked beside them. They were determined not to be caught indoors again with worms and

rank manna! What a chagrined group they must have been when they found their neighbors untroubled by the previous problems.

Some of the hard-to-convince and stiff-necked among the 12 tribes went out to gather on the seventh day, refusing to understand: "And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day" (verses 27-30).

The sixth day is special. It was set apart by God as the time to prepare all the fine things we should enjoy on the Sabbath without the labor normally entailed during the other days. How many use it for that purpose? How many still profane the Sabbath by regarding it as no different than the previous six days? The lesson is

clear in these verses, if we will see and consider.

The day before the Sabbath, whether it be the weekly Sabbath or one of the annual Sabbaths, was the day of preparation for that Sabbath. "Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate" (Matt. 27:62). The apostle John also refers to the "preparation day" (John 19:42).

In order to make the weekly Sabbath a day of rest, relaxation and enjoyment above all other days, God provided for a day of preparation, that no laborious work need be done on His Holy Day.

The Sabbath established

Numbers 15:22-31 illustrates how seriously God regarded His instructions about the Sabbath: "But the soul that doeth aught presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment,

that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him" (verses 30-31).

Do we take the Sabbath lightly? Let's pray we don't, or that if we have so done, we repent quickly and begin to obey wholeheartedly.

One man tested God on His Sabbath commandment and paid with his life under the terms of the Old Covenant. God had earlier been willing to mercifully correct in noninjurious ways. God was compelled, however, to use the death penalty to deal with this challenge!

"And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. . . . And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses" (verses 32-36).

A chill must have settled over the camp as the people who had witnessed the execution went back to their tents. The event had a strong impact, and the people now understood the importance God attached to His Sabbath day!

There is an amusing but true expression, "We are too soon old, and too late smart." We need to review the lessons of ancient Israel's experiences and avoid their mistakes.

Can you see yourself erring as some of them did? Don't be too sure you wouldn't. You, too, have human nature, and not enough of God's nature. You should be able now to view the Sabbath in a new, more appreciative way. The Sabbath is a blessing, not a burden. Anticipate each Sabbath day with excitement and gratitude.

Examine the way you approach, observe and keep each Sabbath, and regard the Sabbath for what it truly is — a great gift to man from the great, giving God. Then rejoice in God's holy Sabbath day! □

The Sabbath is a joy, a blessing, a marvelous gift from the Creator God. Truly rejoice in it.



Photo By Jerry Gentry



Just what is leaven? Which foods are to be avoided during the Days of Unleavened Bread?

God uses leaven to typify sin (1 Cor. 5:1-8). Sin puffs up just as physical leaven puffs up (verse 2). Unleavened bread is a type of an unleavened life.

To understand exactly what is included in the leaven we are to avoid during the Days of Unleavened Bread, let's first notice some of the Hebrew words translated "leaven" in the Old Testament. *Mechemetz* refers to leavening agents — substances used to puff up or produce fermentation, causing dough to rise. Yeast, bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) and baking powder are such substances.

Another Hebrew word rendered "leaven" is *seh-ohd*. This literally means "sourdough," a naturally fermenting yeasty batter that was the most common leaven of the Israelites, and which is still often used to cause baked goods to rise and become light in texture.

These leavening agents cause foods to become *chametz*. This Hebrew word is translated "that which is leavened" in Exodus 12:19. It is also translated "leavened bread" in a number of places. It refers to all foods that leaven has caused to rise, including bread, cake, some crackers, certain cookies, some prepared cereals and pies. A few candies and other foods also make use of leavening agents. If you are in doubt about any product, check the list of ingredients on the wrapper.

Instead of eating leavened bread, we have the positive command to eat unleavened bread (Ex. 13:6). We may also eat unleavened pies and cereals together with all the meats, drinks, fruits and vegetables we normally consume.

Most stores carry a variety of

unleavened breads. Always check the ingredients on the label to be sure. Or, you may enjoy making your own.

Some have asked about using egg whites in baking. Egg whites should not be used as a substitute for leaven, in a deliberate attempt to circumvent the spirit of the law. On the other hand, beaten egg whites used in meringue on pies and other desserts do not constitute a leavening agent. They have not been used to puff up any product baked of flour or meal.

Others have noticed the term "yeast extracts" on the labels of certain foods and have wondered if they should be avoided. These are derivatives of yeast that cannot be used as leavening agents. It would therefore be permissible to use a product containing yeast extracts provided, of course, that it does not contain any actual leavening agent. Some people also buy brewer's yeast from health food stores. This form of yeast is totally dead and should not therefore be considered as leaven. It should also be mentioned that cream of tartar, by itself, is not a leavening agent either.

Occasionally a question comes up about beer or other fermented drinks. There is nothing in the entirety of Scripture to indicate any restriction on the kind of beverages we consume during the Days of Unleavened Bread — no mention of these being the "Days of Unleavened Beverages." The fact is that in all cases where the Days of Unleavened Bread are mentioned, the reference is always to the example set by the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt without any leaven in their dough (see Exodus 12:39). There is no reference to the invisible yeast or result of it in either beer, wine or other beverages.

Naturally fermented wine was customarily consumed by the Israelites at God's festivals. If God had intended a ban on fermented beverages during the Days of Unleavened Bread, it would undoubtedly have been mentioned. In fact, such mention would have been necessary. Yet the command adds no more than is found in Exodus 13:6-7: "Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened

bread... and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters."

If you are unsure about any particular food and unable to find the answer, you should refrain from eating it, "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23).

If partway through the Feast you find some leavened product that somehow escaped your scrutiny, put it off your property immediately. This is a type of those hidden sins that we don't always discover upon conversion. We must keep on putting out sin (leaven) until the process is complete, as is signified by the very fact that there are seven — the complete number — Days of Unleavened Bread.

God intended the Days of Unleavened Bread to be a type to remind us that we are to be unleavening our lives spiritually by putting out the spiritual leaven of sin — not for seven days only, but throughout our entire lives! "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:8).

Matthew 26:17 calls the Passover a day of unleavened bread. Please explain.

Leavened bread may be eaten on the Passover day. But because unleavened bread was used in the actual Passover meal, the day of the Passover came to be considered "the day of unleavened bread" (Luke 22:7). The day of the Passover is a time when all leavened bread is to be put out of the home in preparation for the seven Days of Unleavened Bread (the Feast of Unleavened Bread) that immediately follow (Ex. 12:18-19).

The noted Jewish historian Josephus, who lived in the same century as Christ, tells us that the Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted for seven days — from the 15th day to the 21st day of the first month. The Passover preceded the Feast, being on the 14th day. However, the entire eight-day Spring Festival was commonly called "The Feast of Unleavened Bread" — that is, from the 14th to the 21st. (See *Antiquities of*

the Jews, Book II, chapter XV, Book III, chapter X.)

Is there biblical proof that the word *even* in Exodus 12:18 refers to the end of the 14th day of the month and not to its beginning? I thought each day begins at "even" as God counts time.

The Hebrew word translated "even" in Exodus 12:18 means "dusk, evening, eventide." The evening mentioned here could just as well refer to the end of the 14th as well as its beginning. We must look at the context to see the intended meaning of this verse.

Exodus 12:15, 19 and 13:6 all show there are only seven Days of Unleavened Bread. Scripture shows that the seven Days of Unleavened Bread do not begin on the 14th but rather on the 15th of the first month. Leviticus 23:5-6 clearly states: "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread." Beginning with the 15th for seven days, ending with the 21st day, no leaven was to be eaten (Ex. 12:19-20).

Another proof the Days of Unleavened Bread did not begin with the Passover is given in Numbers 28:16-18: "And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the Lord. And in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten. In the first day shall be an holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work therein."

The Passover was not a holy convocation in which no servile work could be done. Instead of God's people coming together, the Passover was observed separately by families in private homes at night (Ex. 12:21-22). And instead of resting from servile work during the remaining daylight portion of the 14th, the Israelites busily spent the time getting ready to leave Egypt the following night (verses 33-39).

It was the night following the 14th that Israel left Egypt: "And they departed from Rameses in the

first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians," (Num. 33:3).

Here, then, is the sequence of events: At the beginning of the 14th "in the evening," or as the Hebrew could be rendered, "between the two evenings" (Ex. 12:6), just at the time the 13th of the month was ending and the 14th was beginning, the Israelites killed and roasted the Passover lamb, and ate it with unleavened bread. They remained in their homes until the morning, which was still the 14th, when they went out and made ready to leave Egypt the next night, the beginning of the 15th.

The 15th, then, is the first day of the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, when only unleavened bread was to be eaten. Unleavened bread was eaten at the Passover meal (Ex. 12:8), but the entire day was not made a feast day and there is no command that leaven could not be eaten following the Passover night. The seven Days of Unleavened Bread end with a Holy Day on the seventh of these days (Lev. 23:4-8).

Thus, the Passover is not the first of the seven Days of Unleavened Bread. These days begin with the 15th and end with the 21st day of the month.

I noticed that Abib is the name of the first month of God's calendar (Ex. 13:4) and that Zif and Bul are the second and eighth months (1 Kings 6:1, 38). Could you give me the names of the other months?

The names you mentioned are Hebrew in origin. Babylonian names were given to the months when Judah was taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. These names are still in use today, beginning with the first month: Nisan (Abib), Iyar (Zif), Siyan, Tammuz, Ab, Ellul, Tishri, Heshvan (Bul), Kislev, Tebeth, Shebat, Adar. There is nothing wrong with these names since they are also used in the Bible (Neh. 2:1, Esther 3:7). The calendar itself was not changed after the captivity, only the names. □

Your Marriage

(Continued from page 22)

takes and concentrate on discussing *them* with your spouse if you want to defuse a volatile situation.

Sometimes it's hard to be humble. But God says, "Only by *pride* cometh contention" (Prov. 13:10). So learn to swallow your pride and say those two all-important words to your life partner: "I'm sorry." Then open up the lines of communication and demonstrate that you are genuinely, deeply sorry for your mistakes in the marriage. You've got to talk to each other. You must *communicate!* Concentrate on *your mistakes* rather than accusing or pointing the finger at your mate. Then pray fervently that God will soften your spouse's heart and restore the affection and love that was once there.

With God's help, set an example of sharing, giving, loving — and repent of your selfishness and your past mistakes. Let's admit that we *all* make mistakes. It's almost never "all" the other person's fault! Before any marriage crisis becomes too serious, call on God's ministers for hearty counsel. Pour out your heart to them. Tell them what the problem *really* is, not just your side of the story. Then diligently follow their advice and keep coming back for follow-up counsel until your marriage problem is solved.

The challenge of marriage is learning to serve even when you're tired. It's learning to forgive even when you normally wouldn't. It's learning daily patience, kindness and deep empathy for another human being. These marriage experiences prepare you to be in God's Kingdom, God's Family, probably better than any other normal set of experiences could. It is not good that man should be alone.

Marriage is a fearsome responsibility!

We must build and save our marriages, for we are in the Church of God, and we have available to us spiritual resources that this world knows nothing about.

So let us glorify God in our marriages, and *make no more excuses*. Let us *obey* the command of our God, who is building in us character to last for all eternity! □

PERSONAL

(Continued from page 1)

troubled like you are. You will begin to wonder why you have greater trouble to face than anyone else on earth — not realizing that all other real Christians are going through the same tests! Perhaps closest relatives will turn against you, probably because of the Word of God — the TRUTH you have embraced and started to live.

But, if you learn the lesson of FAITH — and if you have PATIENCE — you may KNOW that you will be delivered out of every trouble that comes up. God has PROMISED to deliver you from every trial — if you obey and trust Him. You see, you are now His very own child — actually begotten of Him just as much as you were begotten of your human father!

God gave you the precious gift of His Holy Spirit — placed His Spirit within you to renew your mind, give you a sounder, more understanding mind, fill you with His love, faith, patience, power, goodness — His own character. In short, you became an actual begotten SON — of daughter — of GOD. Not merely a creature or being He created — but His very own child, actually begotten of Him by His seed, so to speak — His SPIRIT, entering within you. He is now *your FATHER!* Not figuratively, but actually — REALLY!

Now you can go to Him just as any child can go to his father, for counsel and advice, for wisdom, for direction, for HELP in any time of need. Would a good human father deny his own child any good thing the child might really need? Neither will your heavenly Father deny you anything that is really for your good. If a human father heard the screams of his child, ran and found his child imprisoned in a burning building, would he break inside and rescue his child from danger? Your heavenly Father has given you His written PROMISE to deliver you from every danger, trouble or trial — if you call on Him, obey Him and RELY on Him!

Since you are now a real begotten child of God — now one of the FAMILY of God, which is His true Church — you are one of His heirs. Angels are not sons, but servants. And a ser-

vant is not an heir like a son. You are now a coheir with Christ, to inherit with Him, ALL THINGS — eternal life, this earth as an everlasting possession, eternal happiness and joy!

Think of what that means!

But we are now only heirs — only begotten sons. And just as it was necessary for us to grow physically from the time we were begotten in our mothers' wombs until we developed ready to be born, finally separated from the dependence on the mother for nourishment and sustenance, and coming into individual and separate existence, so the begotten spiritual infant must grow and develop spiritually, being fed the spiritual food, the Word of God, by the mother of us all, the true Church, until, at the coming of Christ, we shall be CHANGED, finally BORN of God, to have eternal life inherent in ourselves, and to be actual INHERITORS and POSSESSORS of the wonderful Kingdom of God!

In order to GROW in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord (II Pet. 3:18) — in order to develop spiritually and overcome, and have perfected in you the CHARACTER of God ready to be fully BORN of God — you must do two things daily without fail!

You must not only read, but eagerly, earnestly STUDY the Word of God to learn how to live — you must live according to God's teachings in His Bible — you must make it your guide for everything you do. In this way, God talks to you!

But you must also talk to Him! You must go to a private place, alone with God, and have long talks with Him — yes, EVERY DAY! Unburden your heart to Him. Take all your problems, your interests, your plans, your troubles to Him. Talk over everything with Him, continually. Then, even when going about your work — when walking down the street — when driving your car, or wherever you are or whatever you do, talk with God as you work, or as you drive or walk along. Go to a private place, and kneel in prayer (on both knees) as often as you can, and at least once every day. But talk with God often in between. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING!

Keep close to Him. You can't afford to be without the SECURITY of His constant guidance and protection. □

FORSAKEN!

(Continued from page 7)

"all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). And so it was, on that fateful spring day, Jesus Christ knew what it was like to be completely alone in the world.

As He hung there in torment, the words penned by King David became vivid in His mind. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent" (Ps. 22:1-2). Read all of Psalm 22 and try to put yourself in Christ's position. Try to imagine being cut off from the strength and encouragement we in God's Church can have from the Eternal.

God doesn't compromise

This episode at the very end of Jesus' earthly life contains several important lessons we need to consider carefully.

It should reinforce in our minds that sin — any transgression of God's spiritual law — will result in an estrangement from our heavenly Father. The fact that even Jesus Christ Himself had to experience that separation shows without a shadow of a doubt that God will not compromise with sin. And every time we sin we become responsible for the brutal torture and suffering Christ had to endure. This knowledge should move us to live the most perfect lives we can.

This episode should also increase our faith. God says He does not compromise with sin, and we can believe what God has written in His Word. Not only should that encourage us, it should also make us aware that God means business when He emphasizes the punishment intended for those who willingly persist in wrongdoing.

Christ died for our sins. His suffering, especially His mental agony when He knew He was totally alone in the ordeal, should make us consider what will happen to us if we refuse to repent of transgressing God's law. There can be no reasoning around the situation. God did not compromise with His Son, nor will He when it comes to the rest of humanity. □

Passover

(Continued from page 6)

responsibility to observe proper dietary habits is the onus to use the tongue correctly. The tongue is one of the most difficult parts of the body to keep under control (Jas. 3:5-8). Many of the proverbs admonish us to guard our uses of the tongue, especially in the area of gossip (Prov. 17:9). Are we guilty of passing on rumors? What about backbiting, making promises that aren't kept, lying, speaking evil of dignities (Ps. 15:1-4, Prov. 6:16-19, I Pet. 2:2-11)? Even too much talking can get us into trouble (Prov. 10:19; Matt. 12:36-37).

With the help of God's Spirit, we must learn to utilize our tongues as instruments to inform, encourage and in some cases correct others. There is a right time and a right way to speak (Eccl. 3:7). "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11).

• **Mind.** The mind is the body's most wondrous and powerful mechanism. It is the source of thought, and thought is what determines our actions. Both thought and action must be molded to the will of God. This is not easy, since the natural mind, influenced by Satan, is filled with enmity against God and opposes His law (Rom. 8:7).

Yet the carnal mind can be brought under control if we only exercise the Spirit of God with which we are begotten at baptism (Gal. 5:16). We can have the very mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5). We need to apply God's laws in our lives. It need not seem so impossible to overcome our carnal natures if we regularly pray, fast, meditate and study God's Word. Without exercising God's Spirit, we weaken and become unable to properly discipline ourselves.

During the Passover season we must examine ourselves to see how abundantly we bear the fruits of the Spirit, as opposed to the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-23). All our thoughts need to be brought into the captivity of Christ (II Cor. 10:4-5).

• **Heart.** The heart is the body's strongest muscle. Without its activity, life would cease. What does the heart represent in the Bible? It is the

source of our attitudes. The carnal heart produces evil thoughts, covetousness, pride, foolishness and deceit (Mark 7:21-23). Hence it is necessary to undergo a change of heart (Jer. 4:4); this is accomplished through repentance and baptism.

But our hearts can develop problems after baptism. We can become spiritual heart-attack victims by allowing wrong attitudes to develop under Satan's pull. We must be sure we love God with our entire heart (Mark 12:30). Do we put Him first in our lives? Are we sensitive and responsive to His will? Do we look on our trials positively (Rom. 8:28)?

Let's check our attitudes toward others. Do we fervently love brethren, neighbors and friends out of a pure heart (I Pet. 1:22), or do we only make a show of concern out of a desire for vain glory?

How well do we forgive others? This is an excellent test of our attitudes. God's forgiveness of us is dependent on our forgiveness of others (Matt. 6:14-15). Our hearts should be tender, expressing forgiveness and not grudges (Eph. 4:32).

• **Hands.** The hands are designed to carry out the work of the body by holding, moving and utilizing objects. Man's ability to write, build, plant, eat and play would be greatly curtailed without his hands.

No wonder God uses the hand as a symbol of work. "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich" (Prov. 10:4). This verse shows the need to work hard! Man was made to work six days (Ex. 20:9). Too many are failing to be successful by their sheer laziness.

Paul even had to admonish Christians to overcome their unwillingness to work (II Thess. 3:10-12). We can break the Eighth Commandment by not returning a fair day's work for a day's pay, and as profitable servants we should return *more* than that. We must examine our work habits to see if they are pleasing to God. We should put all our effort into whatever we are doing (Eccl. 9:10).

We should also share our productivity and assist others when we are able to (Prov. 3:27). Obviously there is a limit to what any one person can give, but giving is the ultimate goal of the Christian life and should be our

first consideration in every circumstance (Matt. 25:31-46).

• **Feet.** Our feet carry us more than 65,000 miles in an average lifetime. Biblically, our feet are the principles by which we live and goals we want to achieve. David said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). God's laws should guide everything we do. Think about where you are headed in life and don't wander aimlessly.

Examine the goals you have right now — will they lead you to the Kingdom of God? Matthew 6:33 tells us our No. 1 priority: "Seek ye first, the kingdom of God." Establish spiritual goals in areas such as personal growth, service to the Church and others and family togetherness.

For help in developing godly character you need to renew the Holy Spirit God has given you "day by day" (II Cor. 4:16). Make this a major goal! You cannot overlook goal setting and please God.

Pass your checkup?

As you can see, we have many things to examine as we near the Passover. The spiritual examination we must pass to qualify for God's "life insurance" is often very painful as we battle Satan, his world and our carnal natures. The going gets tough. But remember that "in your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood" (Heb. 12:4, New International Version). That is a powerful statement to ponder. We have a High Priest who *did* shed His blood — to overcome the penalty of sin for all mankind!

Taking the symbols of Christ's shed blood and broken body is an awesome event. Beware that you don't approach the Feast in an unworthy manner (I Cor. 11:23-29). Be honest with yourself. See your faults. Determine to overcome them.

God the Father has chosen you for His service, so put forth the effort to renew the covenant designed to grant you eternal life. Detect the spots and wrinkles in your character; then use the power of God's Spirit to remove them and grow toward perfection (Matt. 5:48). By working toward this goal we will be preparing for another goal — being born into the Kingdom of God as God's very Children! □

A Special Gift for You!



God, the great Giver of all good things, specially created and delivered to mankind an important gift showing His generosity and concern for us. It is His holy Sabbath day. "The sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27).

The Sabbath was made to provide man with a special time to rest from

his normal, mundane pursuits. The Sabbath offers man an opportunity to concentrate on the purpose of his existence and pictures, to those who understand, the bright future awaiting humanity. And this day is the sign that *sets apart* those God is working with now.

Our free booklet, *Which day is the Christian Sabbath?*, explains what the Sabbath is, why God gave it to mankind and why we must hallow the

exact time God originally sanctified. If you haven't reviewed this booklet in a while, why not do so? And if you have never read it before, why not send for a copy today?

Which day is the
**CHRISTIAN
SABBATH?**

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