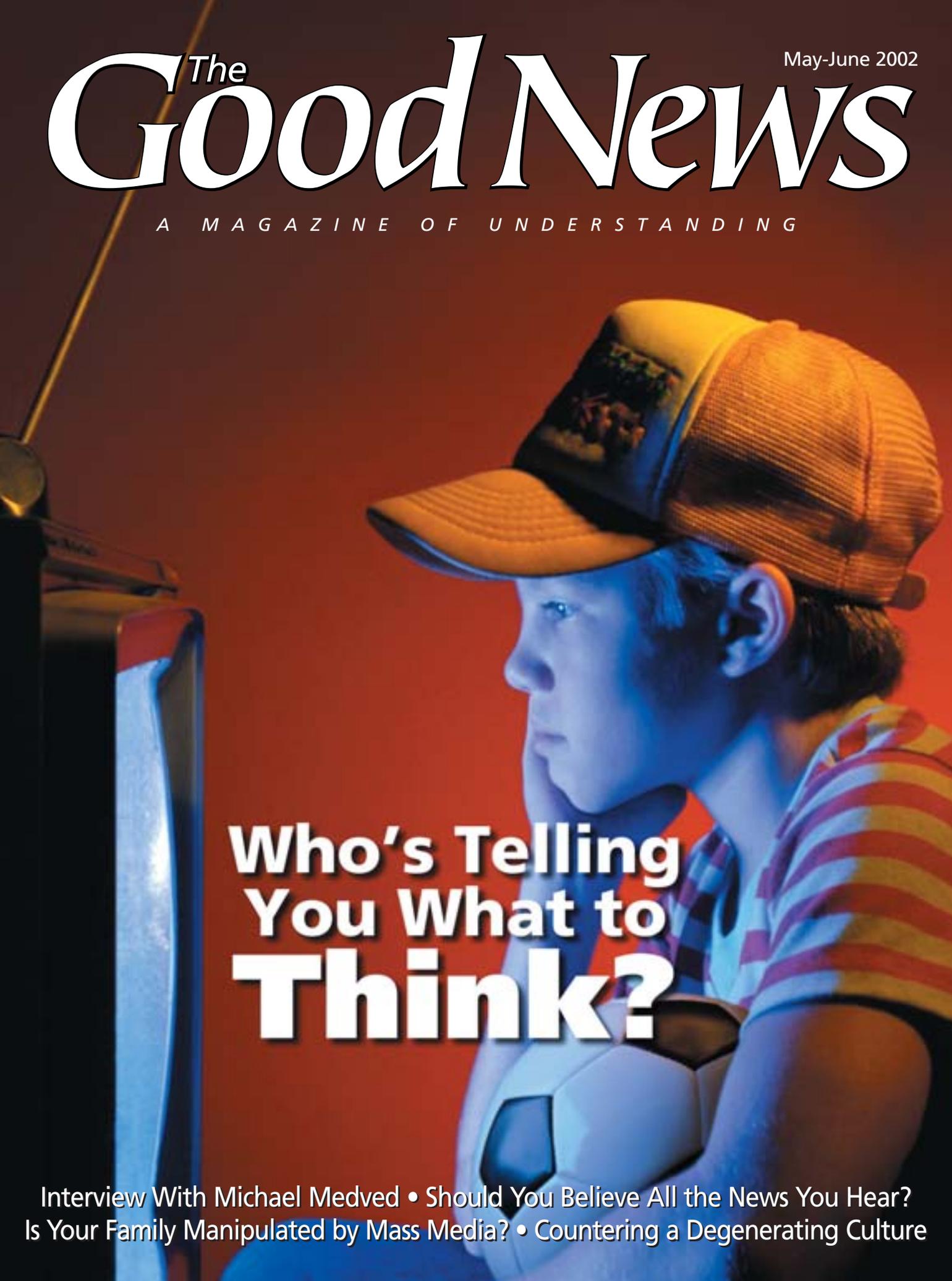


# *The* Good News

May-June 2002

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING



**Who's Telling  
You What to  
Think?**

Interview With Michael Medved • Should You Believe All the News You Hear?  
Is Your Family Manipulated by Mass Media? • Countering a Degenerating Culture

**B**efore the new television season started last fall, writers and producers pressured network censors to again lower standards as to what could be aired over American television. Said one newspaper account at the time: “[Network] executives say that writers are submitting scripts for shows that include every crude word imaginable . . . If the experience of the last year or two is any indication, there will be many heated discussions about them and, probably, some new leeways granted.” And indeed there were. The process that some have described as “defining deviancy down” continued.

A decade ago movie critic Michael Medved wrote *Hollywood vs. America: Popular Culture and the War on Traditional Values*, an exposé that details the undermining of Western society through amoral standards of behavior promoted by the movie, television and music industries. Although his book is 10 years old, the statistics and anecdotal evidence he cites are still shocking. The problem he cited then has grown worse, with the media’s standards at a far lower level than they were in 1992.

Mr. Medved’s table of contents reveals the poisoning of the soul of the Western world. He addresses the entertainment media’s frontal attack on religion and the family. He demonstrates the media’s glorification of ugliness through the urge to offend and their infatuation with foul language and violence as well as their addiction to bashing America and discrediting genuine heroes.

Meanwhile, media-industry decision-makers take no responsibility for any of this. The princes of dark culture who decide what we will watch and hear maintain that scenes of violence and sex simply reflect the unpleasant realities around us.

If you are not yet hardened to the filth offered by the entertainment industry, you would be shocked to read some of the examples Mr. Medved uses to show the enormity of the problem. The vulgarities he excerpts from songs popular at the time are so lewd, so obscene, that we cannot print them. In his book he warns parents: “If you are unfamiliar with the messages in today’s music, prepare to be appalled” (p. 97).

His warning is even more appropriate today. Steve Allen, who died recently, wrote in *Vulgarians at the Gate: Trash TV and Raunch Radio*: “The most shockingly vulgar recordings reap multimillions in profit, and the same is true of sleazy radio, television, and films. There are indeed monsters in our midst, and they are us” (2001, p. 30).

Media marketers exploit our weaknesses, Mr. Allen wrote. “. . . The primary offenders, those who create the objectionable material in the first place, must stop blaming the audience, as if they themselves are somehow morally opposed to what they are forced to market” (pp. 31-32).

The Hollywood establishment chooses to ignore public attitudes that decry their raunch and filth. Though the movie and television industries don’t like to admit it, network-television-viewer numbers have dropped dramatically. Ironically, much of that drop can be attributed to viewers switching to cable and satellite TV, where, in addition to more wholesome fare, they can find shows where virtually anything goes.

The illustrations in Mr. Medved’s and Mr. Allen’s books graphically support the facts of Hollywood’s preoccupation with money over morals. Both are well worth reading. You need to educate yourself about the mental diet that movie, television and music producers feed you and your children.

We already reap the tragic consequences of the misguided media—which include millions of teen pregnancies, abortions and sexually transmitted diseases along with frightening epidemics of drug use, murder and other premature death. Eventually, if we do not turn from our destructive behavior, we will self-destruct.

—Jerold Aust

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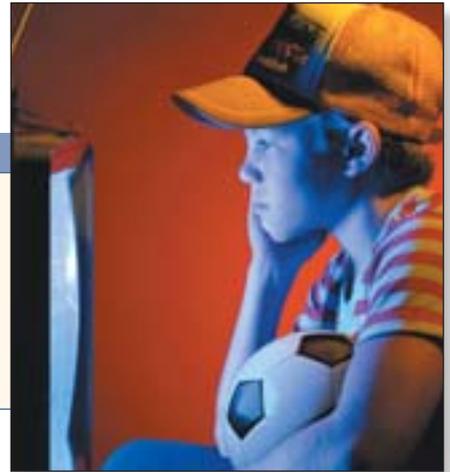
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# Who's Telling You What to Think?

*Some people accept the news they read in newspapers and watch on television as the gospel truth. Is such trust in our mass media justified? Do you really know who's telling you what to think—and why?*

by Jerold Aust

Today's mass media—radio, television, movies, audio and video recordings, books, magazines, newspapers, the Internet—shape our perception of reality. But how accurate is that perception? Is it true?

Consider for a moment what might happen if someone you knew who died in the 1950s or '60s, perhaps your mother or grandmother, suddenly came to life and sat down with you to watch some of today's evening television shows. What would she see? What would she think?

Imagine letting her take your favorite chair and handle the remote control. Since you probably receive TV programming from a cable or satellite company, listen to her shocked disbelief as she hears the profanity and crudity spew forth. Notice her face as she hears the actors and actresses blurt out vulgarities with an ease and indifference the likes of which she would have never heard only a few decades earlier.

You might well find yourself on the defensive, trying to explain why modern television programming so openly promotes casual sexual encounters, gratuitous violence and foul language. She might question why you would voluntarily allow such crudeness to enter the sanctity of your home. She might ask why you feel no sense of alarm at the filth and vulgarity you allow into your children's minds. She might urge you to "turn that trash off"—and she'd be right on the mark.

## Spiral to depravity

Steve Allen, the longtime actor, comedian and songwriter who died in 2000, wrote thoughtfully and perceptively about the depraved vortex of television programming in his book *Vulgarians at the Gate: Trash TV and Raunch Radio*.

"There has always been a market for vulgarity and licentiousness," he observed, "but at present it is undeniable that motion pictures, theater, television, radio, the recording industry, and, to a lesser degree, journalism are *enthusiastic participants in the general collapse of standards and behavior*."

"Some people may find it hard to believe that television was a morally admirable

medium as recently as the 1950s. With a few exceptions it was largely administered by gentlemen and ladies, and although it was, from the first, apparent that inferior cultural merchandise was likely to become quite popular, given the notorious imperfections of human nature itself, television programming in general at least consisted of fare that could be watched by the entire family . . .

It is clear that the medium has changed . . . Corporate America, granting exceptions, has not only largely given up its former admirable participation in the maintenance of society's general sanity *but has joined those who would undermine it . . .*" (2001, pp. 32-34, emphasis added).

For those who believe in character and high moral standards, some obvious questions come to mind: Where have we gone wrong? *Why* have we gone wrong? What, if anything, can be done about our self-initiated spiral into media-induced depravity?

What messages are those who spoon-feed us through the media presuming to tell us? *What do they want us to think?*

Today's mass media—radio, television, movies, audio and video recordings, books, magazines, newspapers, the Internet—shape our perception of reality. But how accurate is that perception? Is it true? Sometimes media moguls would like us to believe that our perception—a perception they carefully craft and provide—*is* reality.

But it's important for us to differentiate between viewpoints that arise from standards that are healthy for us and based on a moral foundation and those that are rooted in *amoral* thinking. As the Bible cautions us in Proverbs 4:23: "Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts" (Today's English Version).

## News slanted to tell you what to think

*The New York Times*, with the largest weekly circulation in the country, is the most influential newspaper in the United States if

not the world. But more than just a newspaper it is also a news *organization*. It owns more than 20 regional newspapers and even network-television affiliate stations across the country. Each issue of the *International Herald Tribune* (the international newspaper published primarily for American travelers and expatriates) is published in conjunction with *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, including a selection of articles and editorials from both of those papers.

*The Times'* reach, however, is far more vast and influential than even these facts would indicate. The New York Times

**“In effect, you are being exposed to a *gospel* that is rooted in a kind of *secular theology* that purports to convey *infallible social, moral, and political truth*.”**

*social, moral, and political truth*—a truth that the paper fervently promotes with all the zeal of the fieriest proselytizer” (2000, pp. 11-12, emphasis added).

### Journalism to reshape

Mr. Proctor shows how the *Times* carefully communicates, as its slogan puts it, “all the news that’s fit to print.” What *Times* editors *feel* is right for Americans will wind up as stories on the front page. Yet they are careful not to be too overt in their secular religious fervor. For example, they might place a story on the front page and then support it in the op-ed (opinion-

written several revealing books on the uncritical acceptance of evolution in modern society, replacing creationism and belief in the Bible (among them *Reason in the Balance: The Case Against Naturalism in Science, Law and Education*, 1998, and *The Wedge of Truth*, 2000). As Dr. Johnson puts it, naturalism is a philosophy that substitutes *unintelligent nature* for an intelligent God.

His analysis of naturalism is straightforward: “This philosophy assumes that in the beginning were the fundamental particles that compose matter, energy and the impersonal laws of physics. To put it negatively, there was no personal God who



Syndicate and its news service, which distribute the paper’s opinion pieces and news articles, reaches more than 2,000 other media clients in 50 countries on five continents. No matter where you are in the world, glance through your local or regional newspaper and odds are you’ll find articles, editorials and opinions generated by the staff of *The New York Times*.

That wouldn’t be a problem if the *Times*—and other newspapers and news organizations, for that matter—did their job of simply reporting the news. The danger is when they *selectively* report the news or slant it to promote their social agenda (see “Why This Death Didn’t Count,” page 6).

Journalist William Proctor wrote an illuminating book titled *The Gospel According to The New York Times*. Mr. Proctor examines the profound effects the paper has on America and the world, playing a major role in shaping our thinking and values.

*The New York Times*, he writes, is a well-designed belief system that touches every aspect of your life. “In effect, you are being exposed to a *gospel*, but one that is a far cry from the traditional good news of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Rather, this gospel is rooted in a kind of *secular theology* that purports to convey *infallible*

editorial) pages. This practice can repeat itself on alternate days.

There is also the problem of skewing stories to fit the editors’ personal beliefs and agendas. Mr. Proctor continues: “It’s reasonable to assume that a decidedly slanted or partisan report about a new pill that induces abortions, coupled with pro-abortion editorials and op-ed columns, represents a journalistic package designed to nudge the reader into changing social policy positions and personal beliefs” (p. 36).

Citing examples, his book documents many of the ways journalists slant their reporting to subtly change the way readers think. To be fair, the *Times* is not the only media outlet that tries to reshape our values and morals. Still, its influence reaches farther than most (see “The Media’s Alternative Gospel,” page 7).

Mr. Proctor quotes the Old Testament prophet Isaiah to indict modern media distortions: “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil” (Isaiah 5:20).

### Naturalism usurps morality

What is the basis for so much of the media’s upside-down thinking? A pseudoscience known as naturalism forms part of it.

Phillip Johnson, author and law professor at the University of California, Berkeley, has

created the cosmos and governs it as an act of free will. If God exists at all, he acts only through inviolable laws of nature and adds nothing to them.

“This philosophy controls academic work not only in science but in all fields, including law, literature and psychology. It is promulgated throughout *the educational system and the mainstream media*, and government backs it” (*The Wedge of Truth*, pp. 13-14, emphasis added).

The media live by this no-God doctrine—if not deliberately, certainly by effect. This is one reason that science reporting in the mass media is overwhelmingly proevolution in its fundamental premises.

What happens when a society progressively abandons its belief in God? Can it self-destruct? The words of Abraham Lincoln in 1837, before his becoming American president, warn of the danger we have brought on ourselves: “If destruction be our lot, *we must ourselves be its author and finisher*. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide” (emphasis added).

Although astonishingly farsighted, even the reputable Abraham Lincoln likely could not have foreseen the enormous stakes behind the self-absorption, hedonism and self-destruction that are outgrowths of

naturalism and the modern media.

### Behind the scenes

Who—or what—is ultimately behind these circumstances and trends in our mass media? Who is trying to tell you—and your family—what to think?

The Bible reveals the reality of an enormously powerful presence hard at work behind the scenes trying to influence every man, woman and child on earth to a different way of thinking—a way of thinking built on a foundation of lies.

The apostle Paul calls this unseen force “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Other verses refer to him as “the dragon, that serpent of old, . . . the Devil and Satan” (Revelation 20:2).

The apostle John tells us how successful

Satan the devil has been in his manipulative, deceptive work. He writes that “*the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one*” and that this evil being “*deceives the whole world*” (1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9, emphasis added throughout).

Of course, Satan doesn’t present his ways as they really are—harmful and destructive. (This is spelled out in greater detail in our free booklets *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* and *Is There Really a Devil?*) Instead, the devil “*transforms himself into an angel [messenger] of light*” (2 Corinthians 11:14).

In other words, Satan *presents* his ways as enlightened and wise when in truth they are *the opposite*. He cleverly appeals to our human nature, which is hostile to God (Romans 8:7) and, for the most part,

concerned only with itself (Galatians 5:19).

In reality, Satan wants to permanently shipwreck the future God has planned for you. This is a fact. When you come to know the big picture of the spiritual forces at work on earth, such knowledge will sober you. Mankind stands in Satan’s way. By virtue of the fact that we are alive, we threaten his position and power.

Satan was once an “anointed cherub,” a kind of superangel serving at the very throne of God (Ezekiel 28:14). But he rebelled, and God cast him down to earth. When the devil realized he could not overthrow God and take over the universe, he became “Apollyon,” meaning “the destroyer” (Revelation 9:11)—the enemy of God and all God’s creation, especially humanity (1 Peter 5:8).

Since God will not allow Satan to destroy mankind directly (compare Job 1-2), Satan has concocted devious ways to influence us to *destroy ourselves*. He inspires men to lead nations into war, hoping to kill off thousands and millions. Short of war, but even more devastating, he has deceived humanity into substituting the false god of science as mankind’s savior.

False religions, naturalism, the theory of evolution and related belief systems have kept humanity in darkness for centuries. Satan reasons that, if he can’t kill mankind off wholesale, then he will work at keeping mankind deceived. Paul tells us the devil has successfully “blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel” (2 Corinthians 4:4, New International Version).

These are the big stakes in the battle our arch-adversary is desperate to win. He is determined to keep human beings confused, filled with harmful and distorted biases and separated from God, cut off from right knowledge.

Paul elsewhere calls Satan “the ruler of the *power of the air*, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient” (Ephesians 2:2, New Revised Standard Version). Writing many centuries before the advent of television and radio, Paul showed that the devil transmits what we might call a spiritual broadcast of moods and attitudes to which human minds are tuned.

Of course, as the god of this age, influencing human minds everywhere, he is also the ruler and manipulator at work behind the scenes in the world’s electronic broadcasts and other media sources, using them to promote choices and behavior that are directly contrary to our Creator’s

## Why This Death *Didn’t Count*

Most Americans, and many in other countries, have heard of Matthew Shepard, the 21-year-old Wyoming college student who in October 1998 was robbed, beaten and left to die on a fence in an alleged antihomosexual “hate crime.” Details of his death and the trials of his murderers were recounted endlessly in newspapers and television news programs. He became a cause célèbre for hate-crime legislation and the subject of several books and at least two made-for-TV movies.

Few, however, have ever heard of Jesse Dirkhising. That’s not surprising, since the Arkansas seventh-grader’s tragic death less than a year later, in September 1999, and the circumstances surrounding it were not considered newsworthy by those who shape the news we hear.

The difference, as some media watchers have pointed out, is that the two men who tied up and blindfolded 13-year-old Jesse Dirkhising, gagged him with his own underwear and repeatedly sodomized him before he suffocated were homosexuals. When Mr. Shepard was murdered, a great outcry arose for more hate-crime legislation. When Jesse Dirkhising was murdered, not only was there no outcry for hate-crime legislation, there were extremely few news sources that even carried the story.

A writer for *The New Republic*, himself a homosexual, reported on the media double standard in the April 2, 2001, edition. “. . . You’ve probably never heard of this case,” he wrote. “*The New York Times* has yet to run a single story about it. *The Washington Post* has run only a tiny Associated Press report—and an ombudsman’s explanation of why no further coverage is merited . . .

“In the month after Shepard’s murder, [the media reported] 3,007 stories about his death. In the month after Dirkhising’s murder, [the media reported] 46 stories about his. In all of last year, only one article about Dirkhising appeared in a major mainstream newspaper, *The Boston Globe*. *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* ignored the incident completely. In the same period, *The New York Times* published 45 stories about Shepard and *The Washington Post* published 28. This discrepancy isn’t just real. It’s staggering. . .

“So why the obsession with Shepard and the indifference with regard to Dirkhising? The answer is politics. The Shepard case was hyped for political reasons: to build support for inclusion of homosexuals in a federal hate-crimes law. The Dirkhising case was ignored for political reasons: squeamishness about reporting a story that could feed anti-gay prejudice, and the lack of any pending interest-group legislation to hang a story on.

“The same politics lies behind the media’s tendency to extensively cover white ‘hate crimes’ against blacks while ignoring black ‘non-hate crimes’ against whites. What we are seeing, I fear, is a logical consequence of the culture that hate-crimes rhetoric promotes. Some deaths—if they affect a politically protected class—are worth more than others. Other deaths, those that do not fit a politically correct profile, are left to oblivion. The leading gay rights organization, the Human Rights Campaign—which has raised oodles of cash exploiting the horror of Shepard’s murder—has said nothing whatsoever about the Dirkhising case.”

Examples like this—and many more that can be found through searches of alternative media sources on the Internet—demonstrate that most major media outlets often aren’t reporting the full spectrum of the news, but only *the news they want you to hear*.

## The Media's *Alternative Gospel*

The major media news organizations and outlets, says journalist William Proctor, have their own lists of rights and wrongs that they support or condemn through their editorials and reporting. Most follow the lead of the media heavyweight *The New York Times*, which, he says, has its own list of "sins" that the paper regularly criticizes and attacks. Detailed in his 2000 book *The Gospel According to The New York Times*, these include, but are not limited to:

- Religious certainty—especially that rooted in Christianity.
- Political conservatism in any form.
- Capital punishment for any reason.
- Placing any restrictions on freedom of the press, speech or expression.

- Limiting abortion rights.

Conversely, the newspaper's "gospel" is essentially the opposite of these—that is, it continually pushes the viewpoint that:

- There are no absolutes, particularly when it comes to religious beliefs. We must be tolerant of all other beliefs and behavior (except those based on biblical standards or conservative beliefs).
- Liberalism is enlightened; conservatism and conservatives

are selfish, bigoted and uncaring.

- Society as a whole is at fault for criminal behavior; therefore the death penalty is inherently unjust.
- Freedom of the press, expression and speech is virtually absolute and trumps virtually all other rights and restrictions.
- Sexual freedom, including freedom from unwanted consequences such as pregnancy, is an absolute right for everyone.

Let's you think Mr. Proctor's assertions are overstated, carefully examine the news coverage, editorial positions and even the political cartoons in your local newspaper. Odds are you'll find them advocating, subtly or not so subtly, the same editorial and social positions.

You'll see reporting that favors positions such as homosexual rights, diminution of parental discipline and authority, lack of personal responsibility and greater government growth and social spending—all designed to shift your thinking from the standards found in the Bible and toward the alternative gospel such sources want you to believe.

Collectively, today's mass media have become one of the most committed instruments of antibiblical bias that can be found in our world. Their influence in that direction is enormous.

instructions. But we are not helpless before the devil. With God's help, we can resist these negative spiritual forces (James 4:7).

### Right media, right advertising

Because God created us, He knows what makes us tick, how we best learn and what is mentally healthful for us. The world's media outlets aren't inherently good or evil; they are simply means of communicating information. However, the way they are used, and the *content* they carry, can be helpful and positive, neutral or enormously destructive.

Paul said we should be aware of conditions around us (1 Thessalonians 5:1-8). However, before you accept an important headline or story as gospel truth, question it and reserve judgment—and maybe even take time to research it if it pertains to an issue that is important to you. Compare it with other sources and perspectives on the same subject.

With some digging you may find other media sources, such as better-researched newspaper and magazine articles, that can supply you with a more-accurate perspective on the story. Some Internet sources, such as NewsMax or the Media Research Center, often cover stories ignored by most media outlets and present alternative perspectives on many major stories and situations.

Major TV networks such as ABC, NBC, CBS and CNN, and major newspapers such as *The New York Times*, do present many stories that are unbiased. But, when it comes to stories that bear on moral values and ideology—and these are the most important stories—the major networks often present them with a liberal or ungodly spin that

does not well serve their audiences. Fox News is currently the only conservative-leaning major television news network.

Of course, your best source for the unbiased truth as it relates to the world we live in is your Bible. It is the source that shapes the perspective of *The Good News*. This magazine's subtitle, *A Magazine of Understanding*, is there for good reason. Our primary purpose is to help you see major trends and events through the perspective of the Bible, helping you see them as God views them. It is our goal to make it the most biblically relevant and revealing publication on earth. But we encourage you to check the Bible references—to make sure we accurately present what God has to say.

Who is telling you what to think? It should be God's Word, not shortsighted and misguided human beings motivated by their social or moneymaking agendas. God alone possesses the wisdom we need to give us a clear perspective of what's going on around us in these dangerous times. Jesus, in praying to our heavenly Father, said, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). He also says to us, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32).

More and more, modern media direct us away from the truth of God and toward Satan's widespread deceptions. What can you do? You can turn to God in prayer and ask Him to open your eyes to His truth, to set you free from the subtle darkness that envelops "this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4). God promises to answer those who sincerely set their hearts to find Him (Jeremiah 29:12-13).

You then need to allow God to instruct you—first through your own study of His

Word, the Holy Bible. The publishers of *The Good News* offer biblically based media sources—such as this magazine, our *Bible Study Course* and booklets on many topics—to help you see and understand things from God's perspective. If you have a computer, we also urge you to become a regular follower of our Bible Reading Program on the Internet so you can learn even more by digging directly into God's Word.

With our individual cooperation, God can teach us what to think and do and how to avoid seduction by the dangerous messages of the modern mainstream media.

As you consider whether to accept the newspapers' or television news programs' gospel truth, or whether to view the violence and vulgarity on television and movie screens, or hear the seductive, suggestive lyrics of many songs, be sure to ask yourself who is telling you what to think—and whether you should listen. **GN**

### Recommended Reading

The Bible reveals much about an unseen power that works behind the scenes, shaping our world to its will and agenda. Are you being taken in? Be sure to request your free copy of *Is There Really a Devil?* Discover the real source behind so many of the world's problems. Learn about the being who is determined to bend your thinking to his own. Also be sure to request *The Ten Commandments*, an eye-opening look at the standards of thinking and living our Creator expects of us.



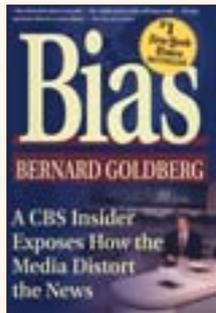
Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download them from our Web site at [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org).

# Should You Believe All the News You Hear?

Many people's outlook on current events, culture, society and the world is shaped by the news they read and hear. But how truthful is most reporting? Can you—and should you—believe everything you hear?

by Jerold Aust and Scott Ashley

The credo of professional journalists is to report facts and events objectively. Yet several recent books document journalists slanting their reporting to favor their biases and further their prejudices, especially left-leaning agendas.



Longtime CBS News reporter Bernard Goldberg realized how deep media bias can run as he reviewed a February 1996 story presented by fellow CBS reporter Eric Engberg. In his best-selling book *Bias*, Mr. Goldberg expressed his shock at the way Mr. Engberg's report poked fun at presidential candidate and *Forbes*-magazine publisher Steve Forbes' proposal for a flat tax rate.

"Steve Forbes pitches his flat-tax scheme as an economic elixir good for everything that ails us," Mr. Engberg began. He then proceeded to interview three supposed tax experts, all of whom opposed Mr. Forbes' proposal to overhaul the massive U.S. tax code. He then referred to the flat-tax idea as "wacky" and a "giant, untested idea" that should be "test[ed] out someplace—like Albania" (2002, pp. 16-18).

As Mr. Goldberg points out, Mr. Engberg could easily have found respected economists who supported Mr. Forbes' flat tax—especially since two Nobel-prize-winning economists and various conservative university economics professors were on record as supporting the idea.

Mr. Goldberg concludes: "From top to bottom the Engberg piece was breathtaking in its lack of fairness. So how could CBS put it on the air? Well, news fans, here's one of those dirty little secrets journalists are never supposed to reveal to the regular folks out there in the audience: a reporter can find an expert to say anything the reporter wants—*anything!* Just keep calling until one of the experts says what you need him to say and tell him you'll be right down with

your camera crew to interview him.

"If you find an expert who says, 'You know, I think that flat tax just might work and here's why . . .' you thank him, hang up, and find another expert. It's how journalists sneak their own personal views into stories in the guise of objective news reporting. Because the reporter can always say, 'Hey, I didn't say the flat tax stinks—the guy from that Washington think tank did!'" (ibid., p. 20).

Mr. Goldberg also notes that too many reporters, editors and columnists live in their own insular world, isolated from other views and sources of information. He cites the example of *New Yorker* film critic Pauline Kael, who expressed astonishment when Richard Nixon beat liberal candidate George McGovern in the 1972 U.S. presidential election. "How can that be?" she exclaimed. "Nobody I know voted for Nixon." Yet Mr. Nixon had carried 49 of the 50 states in a landslide election victory.

## Slanted news reporting

William McGowan, former reporter for *Newsweek* and the BBC and a regular contributor to *The Wall Street Journal*, explains in his recent book *Coloring the News* that the news media's crusade for a favorite liberal cause—diversity—has corrupted American journalism by promoting homosexual rights, feminism, affirmative action, race and immigration over objective debate and honesty.



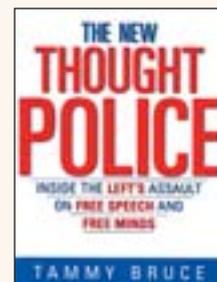
He recounts that in December 1992 he attended the Diversity Summit Meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors and the Newspaper Association of America. From that point forward, he notes, media coverage underwent a major and lasting change.

"The cause of diversity had become a crusade across the length and breadth of the American media, and would be a defining

and dominating force in journalism in the decade to come. Almost every day after that 1992 meeting, one could hear echoes from it in newspaper stories and nightly network broadcasts. Diversity was the new religion, and anybody who wanted to be anybody in the news industry had to rally behind it" (2001, pp. 9-10).

## From media darling to pariah

Another revealing book documenting the bias of many in the media was written by Tammy Bruce, longtime advocate of liberal causes. Ms. Bruce, a Los Angeles political figure and talk-show host, was head of the Los Angeles chapter and a national board



member of the National Organization for Women (NOW) as well as an avowed lesbian and abortion-rights activist. However, after defending conservative author and talk-show host Dr.

Laura Schlessinger and charging NOW with hypocrisy, she found herself a pariah among reporters who had formerly sought her out for interviews.

Based on such experiences, she wrote *The New Thought Police: Inside the Left's Assault on Free Speech and Free Minds*. In it she explains that "what began so many years ago as a noble cause—ending the scourge of bigotry—has devolved into something far different. It's not bigots that the new Thought Police are after. It's people . . . who dare to speak their mind and contradict the 'progressive' point of view . . .

"There is enormous irony in the fact that it is those on the Left—the supposed protectors of all things culturally important—who are imposing severe sanctions on anyone who espouses an idea or expresses an opinion that might be deemed 'offensive' to some favored group" (2001, p. 4).

The result is that "the effects of this new intolerance are felt in the media and in the arts, on college campuses, even in offices

and factories. The message is clear: Don't speak up. Or else—you'll be fired [or] sued . . . Labels such as 'racist,' 'sexist,' and 'homophobe' are routinely used to demonize anyone who utters a word that doesn't support the Left's agenda. Television producers allow their scripts to be edited by groups that purport to represent aggrieved minorities. On college campuses, student newspapers that don't toe the party line are collected and destroyed, and speakers with un-PC views are shouted down" (ibid., pp. 2-3).

Not surprisingly, all three books have been generally ignored in the mainstream media, even though *Bias* has become a best-seller in the United States.

### Bias affects reporting

How do such media biases affect everyday reporting? One notable example involved coverage of the campaigns leading up to a recent national election. The major liberal candidate was consistently portrayed by the mainstream media as a deep thinker and intellectual heavyweight. The leading conservative candidate, on the other hand, was typically portrayed as something of an amiable dunce, a man generally incapable of speaking clearly and presenting ideas coherently.

Seldom compared by the media were details of the academic backgrounds of the two candidates. Both had graduated from Ivy League schools, one from Harvard, the other from Yale. However, from there the "smart" one went to Vanderbilt Divinity School, where, according to a biography and column in *The Boston Globe*, "he received F's in five of the eight classes he took over the course of three semesters" before dropping out. He then enrolled for a brief stint at Vanderbilt Law School before again dropping out and entering a lifetime of politics.



ive showing since assuming office and the most-sustained high approval ratings of any person occupying that office in history, reporters and columnists still occasionally snipe at President George W. Bush for his supposed lack of intelligence.

### Mass-media alienation

Most media firms are, in fact, businesses that promote strong liberal biases. Such leanings reflect a warped worldview and lead them to assume their views are normal while the perspectives of those who disagree with them are abnormal. Significantly, several media corporations have been fast losing audiences, some say because of their profound bias.

Many Americans appear to be increasingly aware of the distorted diet the majority of media outlets feeds them in the name of news reporting. Columnist Jack Kelly's perception of modern mainstream media is telling:

"For people who are convinced we're awfully smart, we journalists can be pretty stupid. We've been driving away customers. In 1980, 75 percent of Americans routinely watched evening newscasts on ABC, NBC, or CBS. Last year only 43 percent did. In 1980, 67 percent of adults customarily read a daily newspaper. In 1999, only 57 percent did.

The other candidate, depicted as an intellectual featherweight, went on to earn an M.B.A. from Harvard, no insignificant accomplishment. He flew fighter jets in the National Guard. In spite of an impres-

sive showing since assuming office and the most-sustained high approval ratings of any person occupying that office in history, reporters and columnists still occasionally snipe at President George W. Bush for his supposed lack of intelligence.

"Television news has lost 43 percent of its audience, newspapers 15 percent of ours. In other businesses, such losses would trigger massive changes. Heads would roll. If word spread McDonald's was using rat feces as filler in hamburgers, McDonald's market share would drop. Viewers and readers are deserting us in droves because they think our product is shallow and biased" ("Media Is Its Own Worst Enemy," *Jewish World Review*, Jan. 28, 2002).

But not all journalists remain loyal to liberal biases. Bernard Goldberg, cited above, is perhaps the most popular television journalist who has stood against media bias. Radio-talk-show hosts with countering views, such as Rush Limbaugh, have become nationally popular by riding a wave of dissent against the mainstream media's liberal biases, as have conservative-leaning commentators such as the Fox network's Bill O'Reilly. Fox has been built on mainstream media's abandonment of any vestige of unbiased objectivity. Fox's motto itself is revealing: "We report; you decide."

Today a sentiment grows that the very media outlets that rose to greatness during World War II through most of the last half of the 20th century have begun to engineer their own demise by failing to fulfill their promise of objectivity in reporting.

There also exists a growing belief that the owners of the vast majority of network-news outlets are more interested in promoting entertainment personalities and products, along with issues and views popular in related fields, than in promoting and providing unbiased reporting. As a result, Western society often is informed only of news and issues that harmonize with the opinions of those who control the media. This approach leaves in its wake a distorted view of reality as its most disturbing consequence. **GN**

## A Telling Profile of Media Professionals

The entertainment establishment—writers, producers and stars of the movies, TV programs and music we consume—are overwhelmingly liberal in their political outlook. Not so widely known is that voting patterns of American newspaper reporters and editors show a similar overwhelming lean to the left. Consider these findings:

- In the 1992 election, 89 percent of journalists who make up the Washington, D.C., press corps and report on national political news voted for the liberal candidate, Democrat Bill Clinton. Only 7 percent voted for the conservative candidate, Republican George H.W. Bush.
- Of these journalists, 61 percent saw themselves as "liberal" or "liberal to moderate," while only 9 percent regarded themselves as "conservative" or "moderate to conservative."
- A poll of 167 newspaper editors found that, in the 1992 and 1996 elections, 58 and 57 percent, respectively, voted for Democratic candidate Bill Clinton (compared to 43 and 49 percent of all other voters).
- A 1996 survey of more than 1,000 reporters at 61 newspapers

found that, of those with more than 50,000 circulation (primarily large-city papers), 65 percent of the staff members were liberal or leaned to the left.

- A 2001 poll of more than 300 media professionals found that those who identified themselves as liberal outnumbered conservatives four to one.
- A 1980 study of 240 New York and Washington journalists found that 86 percent never or seldom attended religious services, and half had no religious affiliation at all.
- Some 90 percent of these journalists were pro-abortion.
- About 75 percent did not regard homosexuality as wrong, and 54 percent did not regard adultery as wrong. Only 15 percent of these journalists "strongly agreed" that adultery, abortion and homosexual practices were immoral.

(Sources: William Proctor, *The Gospel According to The New York Times*, 2000, pp. 44-46; Media Research Center.)

# Michael Medved on Media and *the Family*

by Jerold Aust

**The Good News:** One of the things that I noticed in your best-selling 1992 book *Hollywood vs. America* was your analysis of the way movie producers are out of touch with the American public's wants and needs as they relate to movies as entertainment.

Since the writing of that book was based on the prevailing data and statistics of the late '80s and '90s, would you bring us up to date as to Hollywood's ignorance—or willing ignorance—of what the public wants in its movies and television viewing?

**Michael Medved:** One of the things that has happened since the book came out, and the book played a role in achieving, was the deflation and destruction of the idea that the R rating [restricted: children under 17 not admitted without a parent] was some kind of advantage in marketing a movie. In 1992 there was a great emphasis by studios in releasing as many R-rated titles as they possibly could. Largely that was a response to the kind of movies that directors and producers wanted to make, but it was also based on the idiotic idea that more people embraced R ratings more regularly and more readily than they embraced other more family-friendly ratings. In the book I spent a good deal of time and effort debunking that idea.

There has been a series of studies confirming that research, showing that the R rating is in fact a commercial *disadvantage*. The result of all of these studies has been a deemphasis on that rating and a higher percentage of PG and PG-13 films. In fact, it has become common, and it never was before, that filmmakers—as part of their contract—have to promise that they will avoid an R rating.

So that's the good news, that there's a spreading recognition that people do not really crave harsh language and graphic sexuality and violence. One of the big surprise hits of the summer of 2001 was a G-rated film. In fact, one of the most successful G-rated live-action films ever was *The Princess Diaries*, which is really a charming film. It's by the maker of *Pretty Woman* and *Runaway Bride*, Garry Marshall.

In fact, we've seen a whole tendency of some very well-known directors to release G and PG material, directors who were noted for other material. For instance, David Lynch did quite a lovely film called *The Straight Story* that was rated G—that's the same David Lynch, the maker of *Blue Velvet*, rated R. We also had David Mamet, a playwright and filmmaker known for harsh language, release an outstanding G-rated film—really one of the best films of recent years—called *The Winslow Boy*.

**GN:** So they *can* do it?

**MM:** They can do it, and again that's

**GN:** You wrote in your book *Hollywood vs. America* that, back in 1992, movie producers were attacking religion, assaulting the family and glorifying ugliness. In your opinion, has this condition gotten worse or better today?

**MM:** It's hard to say overall. America is a very complex country, and the movie industry is a very complex business. There are aspects of the entertainment industry that are worse than ever. Consider the music business. American popular music has never been so ugly, so profane, so degrading, so lacking in any restraints at all, so ready to promote larceny and rape. American popular music and the music-video industry are in terrible shape. By the same token, television is more sexual than ever before—more intense and edgy sexual references, lots of nuances of some gay sexuality. But at the same time the violence has been dramatically toned down.

**GN:** Let's turn to the amount and level

**“American popular music has never been so ugly, so profane, so degrading, so lacking in any restraints at all, so ready to promote larceny and rape . . . Television is more sexual than ever before . . .”**

worked out fairly well. The downside of all of this, and there *is* a downside of course, is that to some extent the ratings have slipped. In other words, some movies that will slip in with a PG-13 rating now would definitely have been R-rated 10 years ago. The film that most disturbed me with a PG-13 was a film called *Crazy Beautiful*, which included very graphic sex and alcohol abuse by a 17-year-old, and it never, never should have been rated a PG-13.

of violence and sex in movies and compare what you found in 1992 with what we have on television and in the movies today. How can someone rate the level of violence and sex in movies, by what method?

**MM:** There are people who actually rate this, quantifiably. What they do is have graduate students watch prime-time TV for a week. So I don't think there is any question about this. If you look at any of the top-rated television shows, there are no



**Michael Medved** is a best-selling author and film critic whose syndicated radio talk show is heard in more than 140 U.S. cities. It focuses for three hours every weekday on what he calls "the energizing intersection of politics and pop culture."

A graduate of Yale University, he attended Yale Law School before his interest in film led him to write several books of movie critiques. These in turn led him

to jobs as CNN's first on-air movie critic and a 12-year stint as cohost of the PBS show *Sneak Previews*.

Mr. Medved is a member of the board of contributors of *USA Today* and the author of eight nonfiction books, including the best-seller *Hollywood vs. America*. He lives in the Seattle area with his wife, clinical psychologist and author Dr. Diane Medved, and their three children.

top-rated violent shows right now. They just don't exist. But there are a lot of top-rated *sleazy* shows. One of the most violent shows on TV is also one of the most critically acclaimed—*The Sopranos*, available on cable. So it's complicated.

In terms of movies, there has certainly been a deemphasis on violence. You can't mistake it. It's obvious. The popularity 10 years ago of what I call creeps and killer machines—movies with mass slaughter in them, that kind of film—has pretty much slipped from view. They're just not being made right now. That doesn't mean that

**"This obsession with television is a major contributing factor to marital breakdown . . . because couples don't have time to talk to each other. They are spending a lot of downtime watching [television]. That does nothing to enrich your marriage . . ."**

the movie business is going through some kind of renaissance or that things are vastly better. Anyone who looks at the pathetic quality of movies today can't celebrate.

But there are notable exceptions. One of the notable recent developments was *Prince of Egypt*, the animated film that told the story of Moses, where for the first time a major studio made an effort to reach out to religious believers of every stripe.

It was generally true to the Bible, though perhaps borderline as a teaching tool. They were very, very careful not to offend anybody's sensibility. At the same time they made a visually spectacular, entertaining film and a quite successful one. But Jeffrey Katzenberg of DreamWorks Studio met with several hundred religious leaders, including people like Jim Dobson [of Focus on the Family], beforehand to have them consult and advise on what they wanted to see in the film—and he actually listened to people.

**GN:** Did he also involve rabbis in the process?

**MM:** He did. A number of them, including some Orthodox rabbis, and the film was a commercial movie. But it was such an obvious thing to do to try to get the goodwill of the religious community, and it's just amazing that it wasn't done before.

**GN:** On a related subject, you collaborated with your wife, Dr. Diane Medved, on a book titled *Saving Childhood: Protecting Our Children From the National Assault on Innocence* [1999]. How do the media figure into the assault

on our children's innocence?

**MM:** The book is divided into two fundamental parts. The first part is called the assault, and the second part is called the defense. When we talk about the assault on childhood innocence, we talk about the assault coming at kids from four directions at once.

First is the media, which represent such a huge portion of everyone's life. Secondly, the schools, where the school system no longer has the least respect for childhood in a sense and in fact makes a point of scaring children often

and assaulting their innocence.

The third area is the peer group, and the fourth is the parents, who often play a role in corrupting their own children.

**GN:** On the subject of television viewing, did you have any connection or collaboration with Steve Allen, whose book *Vulgarians at the Gate* was published recently around the time of his death?

**MM:** I did indeed. I knew Steve for many years, and he's terribly missed. He was an absolutely wonderful man. He really represented a lot of what was best about American culture three and four years ago. He was witty and cutting-edge, and he didn't change. He was always a decent, wholesome, good man.

What happened was that the culture changed around him. I worked with Steve in a group called the Parents Television Council, where we were both on the board. He and I largely agreed. The only area that Steve and I might have disagreed on is that ultimately I believe the real solution, particularly for people of faith, is not just working for more wholesome, more substantive TV but actually watching *less* TV, both for adults and children.

I've been telling people on my national show, actually telling them repeatedly, that the real problem isn't the *low quality* of media; it's the *high quantity* of media. Even if the quality were improved, it still would be disastrous for our kids and for us to be spending so many hours a week watching TV. The average American household now watches close

to 50 hours a week of television.

One of the ironic things is that there is talk of a boycott by black families of network TV because of their treatment of African-American characters and issues. I think that would be a wonderful idea because there is a huge problem in the African-American community. The average African-American family spends over 62 hours a week with the TV on.

Blacks watch TV much more than whites do, which helps to explain differentials in school performance. It's become almost commonplace among educational psychologists that if they could cut back on the level of black TV watching some of the differentials in school performance could be reduced.

Children watch too much TV. Parents watch too much TV. It's a major contributing factor to marital breakdown. My wife wrote a book called *The Case Against Divorce*, a very controversial book that came out 12 years ago. It was a first of its kind. It was the first book to really attack the divorce industrial complex.

It's still generating controversy. One of the things that Diane found out in *The Case Against Divorce*, and we allude to in *Saving Childhood*, is that this obsession with television is a contributing factor to marital breakdown—and a *major* contributing factor because couples don't have time to talk to each other. They are spending a lot of downtime watching flickering shadows on a cathode-ray tube. That does nothing to enrich your marriage or to improve your communication.

**GN:** Can it also reshape our thinking, say, from a standard of morals that we were raised to follow?

**MM:** There's no question about it. But the point that I emphasize in *Hollywood vs. America*, and that I've emphasized in all my work, has been that the real power of TV, movies and popular music is not that someone is going to see something and then run out and immediately imitate it. That happens, but it doesn't happen with everyone. What happens with everyone is that we allow mass media to *normalize outrageous and unacceptable behavior*.

That deals with, for instance, language. I don't think there is any question, for anyone who is sensitive to this at all, of the deterioration in language, the breaking away of moral restraints.

I recently took my 14-year-old daughter

*Continued on page 30*



# World News and Trends

## An Overview of Conditions Around the World

### Why is Middle East peace so elusive?

As pressure mounts for a peaceful resolution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, it is important to understand why no easy solutions are in sight.

Much of the world press tends to blame the problems on Israeli intransigence. In the news media's view, Israel, backed by the United States, has the weaponry while the Palestinians are a suffering people that simply wants to return to its ancestral homeland.

Yet it's not so simple.

A recent article by American columnist Michael Barone sums up the situation: "... Israel is ready to accept a Palestinian state. The problem is that the Palestinians refuse to accept the Israeli state."

Former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly made the same points in interviews on American and British television programs. The former head of the Jewish state has explained the difference between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Yasir Arafat, and Hamas, the Palestinian terrorist organization that is generally considered more extreme than the PLO.

Mr. Netanyahu states that Hamas is consistent in calling for the destruction of the Jewish state: It says the same in Arabic to Palestinians as it says in English to the rest of the world. In contrast, Mr. Netanyahu notes, Mr. Arafat says one thing in Arabic and another in English. While appearing to show a willingness to compromise when speaking to the rest of the world, he sends a completely different message when speaking in Arabic to Arabs.

In recent months, for example, he has repeatedly called for "martyrs" (suicide bombers) to march on and liberate

*Much of the world press tends to blame the problems on Israeli intransigence. In the news media's view, Israel . . . has the weaponry while the Palestinians are a suffering people that simply wants to return to its ancestral homeland. Yet it's not so simple.*

Jerusalem. As Israeli troops surrounded his compound in the West Bank city of Ramallah, in a series of interviews on March 29 he told Arab television reporters:

"Let those far and near understand: None, among the Palestinian people or the Arab nation, will be willing to bow and surrender. But we ask Allah to grant us martyrdom, to grant us martyrdom. To Jerusalem we march—martyrs by the millions . . ."

"We are seekers of martyrdom. We are all seekers of martyrdom. The entire Palestinian people is a seeker of martyrdom . . ."

"I may be martyred, but certainly one of our boys or one of our girls will wave the flag of Palestine over the walls of

Jerusalem, over the minarets of Jerusalem, and over the churches of Jerusalem."

The destruction of Israel appears to remain the ultimate Palestinian goal. Schoolchildren in Palestinian Authority-controlled areas learn from textbooks that show "Palestine" where Israel now exists—with "Israel" nonexistent on the maps.

For many Palestinians the return of refugees goes hand in hand with the elimination of the Jewish state. If enough refugees returned to Israel, the Jewish population would be swamped. Israel's democratic system would result in a Palestinian majority that would put an end to the 53-year-old Jewish nation. Even if the numbers returning were smaller, a higher birth rate could eventually have the same result. In the interim, more Palestinians living in Israel would probably mean more violence.

Pressure from the liberal Western democracies and the world's press may endanger Israel's very existence. As Israelis themselves are quick to point out, they have fought four wars for their survival since the nation's founding in 1948. They cannot afford to lose a single one, for if they do their nation ceases to exist.

Israelis remain reluctant to surrender the West Bank for a proposed Palestinian state for two major reasons. First, many Israelis consider it part of the land God promised them in perpetuity through Abraham. Indeed, some of the very places in which the Bible records God making these promises (Genesis 12:6-7; 13:3, 14-18) are today in the Palestinian-controlled West Bank. Second, a return to pre-1967 borders would leave Israel barely a dozen miles wide along much of its length and thus vulnerable to a potentially fatal military assault from hostile neighbors.

As long as Israel's existence is threatened and the Palestinians' hopes are thwarted, any peace agreement is not likely to last. Bible prophecies such as Luke 21:20 and Zechariah 14:1-4 show that Jerusalem and its environs will lie at the center of global strife immediately before Christ's return. Keep your eyes on Jerusalem. The "City of Peace" will continue to be a focus of world news. (Sources: *U.S. News & World Report*, BBC, Middle East Media Research Institute Web site.)

### The world: more dangerous than ever

More than half a year has passed since the cataclysmic events of Sept. 11—a day that lives in infamy. Yet, in spite of American and British efforts to corral terrorism, the world appears as dangerous as ever.

The Middle East is again squarely in the forefront of world attention. In the words of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, "the situation in the Middle East is a tragedy turning into a catastrophe." Yet another Mideast war could break out at any time.

Recent events in Israel and the West Bank have even overshadowed a possible U.S.-led attack on Iraq to overthrow the Saddam Hussein regime. In the words of a British journalist, Iraq is "the poisonous centre of a spider's web" of nations that



support terrorism and are actively pursuing weapons of mass destruction—nuclear, chemical and/or biological.

But the Middle East is far from the only pressure point in the world. According to CIA director George Tenet, war between India and Pakistan, perhaps primarily over Kashmir, is a real possibility. He warned that the continuing conflict could erupt into a catastrophic war between the two nuclear-armed adversaries.

A long mop-up operation drags on in Afghanistan. Parts of Africa, and to a lesser extent Asia, spin in a continual merry-go-round of wars and lesser conflicts. As British author William Rees-Mogg wrote in his weekly column for *The Times*: "War is always unpredictable. It can spring up again at a distance from

***According to CIA director George Tenet, war between India and Pakistan, perhaps primarily over Kashmir, is a real possibility. He warned that the continuing conflict could erupt into a nuclear war between the two nuclear-armed adversaries.***

the original source. No one foresaw . . . that a strike against New York would lead to a war crisis over Kashmir."

If you would like to understand where this war-weary world is headed, you need to write for our free booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*, *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. (Sources: *The Financial Times*, *The Times*, *Daily Mail* [all London], *USA Today*, *Agence France-Presse*.)

### **The President sets America a good example**

George Bush has tried to restore spiritual leadership to the American presidency. One speech this year at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington illustrates his efforts. It included a significant observation about prayer: "Millions of Americans have been led to prayer. They have prayed for comfort in time of grief, for understanding in a time of anger, for protection in a time of uncertainty. Many, including me, have been on bended knee."

But the president recognizes that, besides prayer, a code of moral conduct is also necessary. From Daytona Beach, Florida, he told the nation that "each of us [is] responsible for the decisions we make in life," condemning the feel-good culture that many citizens have bought into.

Like his father, who wanted a kinder, gentler America, Mr. Bush would like to see some changes in the American way of life, altering the country's soft moral culture. He even partially blamed the amoral style of American soap operas shown abroad on TV for misleading foreign terrorists into believing that the United States would not react to a major terrorist attack in New York City and Washington. (Sources: *The Washington Times*, Reuters.)

### **Germany wants a European army**

The German ambassador to Washington has called for a European army "as a logical step toward integration after the successful launch of a new single currency [the euro]."

"Does it make sense to keep national armies? Does it make sense to keep 15 navies?" asked Wolfgang Ischinger in an address before diplomats and scholars at the Woodrow Wilson

International Center for Scholars in Washington.

He is not the only voice calling for a European army. EU Commission president Romano Prodi has stated that "British or French or German soldiers [will] fight under an EU flag and take orders from a European commander."

The concept of a European army reportedly came from Napoleon, who is said to have observed that with French officers and British troops he could conquer the world. In stark opposition to an EU superstate, former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher has repeatedly warned America and Britain of the dangers of mustering a European army. She recently wrote: "The real drive toward a separate European defence is the same as that toward a single European currency—namely the utopian venture of creating a single European super-state to rival the U.S. on the world stage."

Many voices in Europe and Britain are raised against the philosophy of Baroness Thatcher. But, like Sir Winston Churchill before her, she understands the history of the Continent and where its political machinations have led it so many times. (Sources: United Press International, *World News Bulletin* [Internet], *Statecraft*.)

### **TV viewing and violence**

Watching as little as one hour of television a day can lead teenagers and young adults to engage in violence such as fist-fights and other assaults later in life, according to researchers who conducted a study that tracked more than 700 young people over 17 years. Researchers also concluded that the more television participants viewed, the more likely they were to engage in violent behavior.

The study began in 1983 when researchers interviewed 707 teenagers, average age 14, about their viewing habits. They followed up eight years later, correlating the amount of television viewing with law-enforcement records and information gleaned through interviews with the participants. Of those who watched TV less than an hour a day, fewer than 6 percent had acted violently in a way that resulted in a serious injury. However, the rate of violence tripled, to 18.4 percent, among those

***Researchers concluded that the more television participants viewed, the more likely they were to engage in violent behavior.***

who watched one to three hours of TV daily. Among those who watched more than three hours of TV, the rate of violence more than quadrupled to 25.3 percent.

Researchers also studied the group after another eight years had passed and most were well into adulthood. Again the differences were startling. Of those who watched less than an hour of TV daily as adults, only 1.2 percent had committed a violent act—compared to 10.8 percent of those who averaged three or more hours a day. This almost fivefold increase led researchers to conclude that adult behavior, too, is shaped by TV viewing.

The impact of media exposure on our thinking, values and behavior is the subject of several articles in this issue. We urge you to read all of them as well as the sources mentioned in the recommended-reading boxes at the end of each article. This study is further proof that what you allow into your mind has major consequences in your life. (Source: *The Washington Post*.)

—John Ross Schroeder, Melvin Rhodes and Scott Ashley

# 'She Used to Be Our Queen, Too...'

by Melvin Rhodes

**W**hen Elizabeth II ascended the throne 50 years ago in 1952, Britain's African possessions were larger than the entire United States of America. Today Britain has no African empire. Yet Queen Elizabeth herself remains popular throughout the continent. Africa's postcolonial realities help us understand why.

Extensive celebrations are taking place across Britain this year to mark the queen's golden jubilee. Her 50-year reign has seen the United Kingdom transformed beyond all recognition from the head of the world's greatest empire to a member of the European Union. The demographic makeup of Britain differs greatly from when Elizabeth became queen, while the morals and way of life of the people have radically altered—including the behavior of a few younger members of the royal family itself.

Nonetheless, much appreciation will rain on Queen Elizabeth II, whose position as head of state for 50 years has contributed to the nation's stability during a time of radical change.

During the celebrations it is unlikely that much attention will be paid to the queen's African role. At one time almost all of Britain's African possessions had their own parliaments, with the British monarch as their own head of state—reflecting the political system evolved over centuries in the mother country, often called "the mother of parliaments."

In a continent that has since become a byword for political unrest and instability, Britain's African territories were noteworthy examples of political stability. Often overlooked is that the nations that have shared in the British system of government have for centuries enjoyed a good measure of political soundness.

No economic progress can come without political stability. Sadly, since independence, most African nations have gone backwards economically. At least one reason for this has been a lack of stability. No country in Africa has developed a political model that works as well as the British colonial political system.

Perhaps this is one reason for what the British publication *The Economist* has

referred to as Africa's continued fascination with Britain's monarchy.

## Major changes in postwar Africa

After World War II Britain's royal family toured the empire's African possessions to thank them for their contributions to the Allied war effort. Wherever the royals went they were mobbed by millions of their sub-

family to which we all belong," the commonwealth of nations that had been the world's foremost power for nearly two centuries. Few at that time realized its end was imminent. Almost no one realized its prophetic significance.

Less than five years later, in 1952, the princess again visited Africa, this time accompanied by her husband, their having



*Britain's Queen Elizabeth II appears in the first public engagement of her jubilee year in January. She assumed the throne in 1952 on the death of her father, King George VI. This year marks her 50th on the British throne.*

jects who at the time still gloried in being part of the empire upon which the sun never set.

It was to be the last such tour before the African world turned upside down. Present on the tour were King George VI and his wife, Queen Elizabeth, parents of the present monarch. They were accompanied by their two daughters, Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret Rose.

While in Johannesburg, South Africa, in the year that preceded the coming to power of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party, which introduced apartheid, Princess Elizabeth turned 21. On her birthday she broadcast her greetings by radio to the nations of the British Empire and Commonwealth.

Less than four months later the rapid dismantling of the British Empire would begin with Britain's granting of independence to India and Pakistan. In her broadcast Princess Elizabeth dedicated her life to the service "of the great imperial

married in November 1947, a few months after that first tour. On a visit to Kenya Colony's Treetops game reserve during the 1952 tour, the 25-year-old princess became queen upon the death of her father, George VI.

George VI's wife assumed the title of queen mother when Elizabeth ascended the throne. (The queen mum, as she would affectionately come to be known, died in her sleep in March 2002 at the age of 101, having enjoyed a long and eventful life of service.)

In 1952, Britain's African possessions still seemed secure. Members of the royal family were warmly received wherever they went. In 1953, the year of the new queen's actual crowning, loyal African troops that had helped fight World War II in the jungles of the Far East and the deserts of the Sahara walked in Elizabeth's coronation procession through the streets of London.

Meanwhile, African nations moved forward. World War II had seen attitudes

change. Fighting alongside British soldiers had altered the Africans' perceptions. No longer were they content to be subservient to their British rulers; they now saw themselves as equals. African nationalist movements were to spring up throughout the continent.

The suffrage widened in many countries, enabling more people to vote. Although voting privileges in Britain's colonies were designed to be nondiscriminatory, before the Second World War parliaments were usually dominated by politicians of European descent. This changed rapidly. Only two years after Queen Elizabeth II's coronation, Britain's most progressive African colony, the Gold Coast (now Ghana), negotiated for independence. Its African "chief minister," Kwame Nkrumah, went to London to draw up a proposed constitution for the new nation.

The independence model to be introduced was the one that had worked successfully in other former colonies, notably Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. All these nations had opted for "dominion" status, whereby the countries became entirely independent of British control but retained loyalty to the British monarch as their head of state, thereby sharing in the benefits of the most stable political system, one that dated to 1688.

These independent nations, all constitutional monarchies, formed the British Commonwealth, often described at the time even by nonmembers such as the United States as an association of free peoples. The Commonwealth was renowned for its political stability, rule of law and basic freedoms (of speech, the press and religion) for all citizens. Sadly, this was all about to change.

### Changes affect the Commonwealth

The seeds of change had already been sown. Two years after independence from Great Britain, the Indian government expressed its desire to remove the British monarch as India's head of state but emphasized its desire to remain in the Commonwealth.

A formula was worked out that would enable India to become a republic but retain its membership in the Commonwealth by recognizing the monarch as head of the Commonwealth, a title Elizabeth still holds. The groundwork for significant change had been laid. Regrettably, dictatorships were to follow independence in many of Britain's former colonies, with resultant negative economic effects, the breakdown of law and order and loss of freedoms.

Ghana is typical of this trend.

Even before independence, Kwame Nkrumah told his British advisers he could "ride a coach and horses" through the constitution once his country gained independence. This is what he figuratively did, with other nations following in Ghana's footsteps.

On March 6, 1957, the modern nation of Ghana was born. Tens of thousands of people carried placards bearing the words "Elizabeth and Nkrumah forever," reflecting their commitment to their new nation and the monarchy. Two years later Nkrumah proposed abolishing that tie. A referendum was held. Many older Ghanaians believe the vote was rigged.

### As Britain celebrates Queen Elizabeth's 50 years on the throne, few could have imagined the astounding changes in the nations of the British Commonwealth—particularly those in Africa—during her lifetime.

Nkrumah became president; the tie with the crown was abolished. One year later parliament proclaimed Nkrumah "president for life." A year after that the parliament was itself abolished. In only four years Ghana's parliamentary democracy, which had given the country stability for a century, was no more. At the same time one of the wealthiest African nations was bankrupt in the wake of government mismanagement and endemic corruption. Ghana and the rest of Africa were on their way to disaster.

After the loss of the Suez Canal in 1956, Britain rapidly dismantled its African empire. British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, addressing the South African parliament in Cape Town, warned that "the winds of change" were sweeping across Africa. Not eager for the effects of those winds, South Africa left the Commonwealth and ended its tie with the queen. With the end of apartheid in 1994, it rejoined the association as a republic.

The neighboring self-governing Colony of Southern Rhodesia (as it was then called)—fearful of the rapid changes in Africa that inevitably led to dictatorship, corruption and nepotism, with an accompanying white flight of skilled Europeans from

chaos and civil war—unilaterally declared itself independent of Great Britain in November 1965 while trying to remain loyal to the British crown.

This ill-fated attempt at halting the tide of history led to seven bloody years of civil war and the ultimate birth of Zimbabwe (as Rhodesia was renamed). One of the most prosperous nations of Africa in colonial times, Zimbabwe is the world's most rapidly declining economy as it descends further into dictatorship and economic chaos.

### Changing role for the queen

Is it any wonder that African nations and other countries in the Commonwealth continue in their fascination with Queen Elizabeth? Older people remember a time of political stability and economic progress, of law and order and guaranteed freedoms. It wasn't perfect, certainly. Only God can establish a utopia. The problem is that nothing better has replaced the system instituted and maintained by the British Commonwealth.

Perhaps a Ghanaian market woman summed it up best when I opened my wallet to buy some produce. She saw there a British bank note with the queen's portrait on it. "Ah, Queen Elizabeth," she said. "She used to be our queen, too. Since then we have had many, many presidents, coups and military dictatorships, and we are worse off. In England they still have Queen Elizabeth."

The British monarch continues to play a role in Africa and elsewhere, visiting Commonwealth nations that have sent her official invitations and with which she is familiar. At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference held in March in Coolool, Australia, virtually every head of government of the 54-nation Commonwealth was scheduled for a private audience with the queen. This included African leaders who also see the queen on visits to London.

Ironically, Elizabeth II seems to be more appreciated in Africa than in countries where she still reigns as head of state, notably the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and some of the islands of the Caribbean and Pacific.

These nations have continued to enjoy political stability as constitutional monarchies on the British model—stability that is largely taken for granted by many of their citizens. Even *The Economist* wrote in its latest yearbook that the introduction of a republic in Australia "would probably require an

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# Mass Media and Bible Prophecy

*Several amazing biblical passages foretell the shaping of the world at the time of the end by a powerful web of global media.*

by Howard Davis

**S**ome of the Bible's most astounding prophecies concern where global media are taking the world.

Though thousands of years old, the Bible has much to say about the "last days" and "time of the end." Some biblical visions and prophecies are descriptions of events, situations and technologies that did not apply to the ancient world and make sense only in a modern context.

Thousands of years ago the Bible foretold a massive revolution in information and communications technology like that we've witnessed in recent years. But it also prophesied a globally pervasive culture of violence and self-absorbed, pleasure-seeking indulgence in sex and greed.

Further, it forewarned us of worldwide manipulation of public opinion through economic forces and political gamesmanship that will culminate in the rise of a world dictatorship and massive religious deception so powerful that true Christians will be silenced, persecuted and even murdered—while the world celebrates their demise.

Shocking? Yes, but read on.

## Daniel and the information explosion

Two prophecies lay the groundwork for many others when it comes to the role modern entertainment and news media are to play in end-time events.

First, God foretold through the prophet Daniel the development of the kind of technology and entertainment media that permeate our world. Yet Daniel lived 600 years before Christ. Through Daniel, God also foretold four mighty empires, the first and second comings of the Messiah and the final subjugation of much of the world by a charismatic dictator who will fight Jesus at His second coming (Daniel 2, 7, 8-9, 11-12).

Although God used him to record these prophecies, Daniel himself admitted that he didn't completely understand them.

An angel told Daniel that some aspects of these prophecies would not be understood in his lifetime: "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9). Their full meaning as they pertain to world events would not be known until the last days,

Technological development in electronic communications exploded in the 20th century with radio, television, computers, satellites and the Internet, which brings these technologies together.



yet even then "none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (verse 10).

But God did tell Daniel—and, through Daniel's writings, He tells us—two characteristics of the end-time age, when Bible prophecies would open up to human understanding, to the "wise" who would listen to God.

"... Shut up the words," God said to Daniel, "and seal the book *until the time of the end*; many shall run to and fro [a reference to the availability of rapid mass transportation] and *knowledge shall increase*" (verse 4, emphasis added throughout).

This last phrase is the key: The time of the end is the time of the "increase" of "knowledge."

Daniel's prophecy of a time when "many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase" certainly fits our time. Our age is rightly called the information age. By some estimates the accumulation of knowledge *doubles every 18 months*.

Anyone with a connection to the Internet has vast libraries of information at his fingertips. Encyclopedias of knowledge can be reproduced on CDs for pennies apiece.

But what does the knowledge explosion have to do with modern global media?

This is where the second trend fits in. Behind the knowledge explosion is the development of mass media and the technological transformation that made them possible. Without the means to rapidly spread information abroad to many people, no knowledge explosion would have occurred. In other words, if we have no means to disseminate information, we have no information.

The invention of the printing press brought the proliferation of books, the primary medium for disseminating knowledge in the 18th century's "age of enlightenment." Along with the advent of large-circulation newspapers, public education in the 19th century brought widespread literacy, which made further technological progress possible. Technological development in electronic communications exploded in the 20th century with radio, television, computers, satellites and finally the Internet, which brings these technologies together in one worldwide web.

"At the heart of globalization," writes Thomas Friedman in his best-selling book *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, are "recent advances in technology—from the Internet to satellite telecommunications" (2000, p. 22). Indeed, these two factors allow virtually anyone to instantly see and hear events and other people anywhere on the planet.

## Instant international availability

Such developments are foundational to understanding two ancient prophecies that deal with the way people see and hear a final warning from two servants of God—called in Scripture the "two witnesses"—just before the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to rule the world.

Although these men are public witnesses to God's existence and the world's need to heed the warnings of the Bible to avoid even more disasters, most people will not believe them. But Scripture

indicates they *will* be seen and heard—*throughout the entire world*.

A remarkable prophecy in the book of Revelation tells us that people of every nation will simultaneously see the murder in Jerusalem of these two prophets of God by the dictator mentioned earlier, called the “beast”:

“... I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days [3½ years] . . . These have the power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy . . . When they finish their testimony, the beast . . . will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them” (Revelation 11:3-7).

This prophecy deals with a time of worldwide conflict in which the dictator known as the Beast will rise to power through manipulation of public opinion and religious deceptions, no doubt using the powerful tool of mass media.

But note the indications of the kind of information technology available at the time of these events:

“And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city . . . where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the

## These astounding prophecies indicate that television or similar electronic media will broadcast the murder of these two prophets—probably linked by satellite and the Internet or even more-advanced technologies.

*peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations* will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

“Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ *And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them*” (verses 8-12).

These astounding prophecies indicate that television or similar electronic media will broadcast the murder of these two prophets—probably linked by satellite and the Internet or even more-advanced technologies. Live views of the events will be available instantly and simultaneously throughout the world. These two men will

be the ultimate witnesses as nations of every language behold these startling events while commentators report on them live from Jerusalem.

### Signs and wonders

Before the arrival of the two witnesses, however, their two satanic counterparts—the Beast and a religious leader the Bible calls “the false prophet”—will apparently powerfully manipulate the news media to dazzle the world with supernatural acts most people will think are divine but will really be satanic in origin.

Notice Paul’s prophecy of the religious leader. Writing of the time of “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” Paul tells us this man “will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God” (2 Thessalonians 2:1, 4, New International Version).

Paul continues: “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish

because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness” (verses 9-12, NIV).

Revelation 13:13-14 further explains that he “performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast . . .”

Such passages tell us that these evil leaders will cunningly and massively deceive virtually the entire world. Most people will assume these two represent God and will readily follow them—not realizing they are really tools of Satan. (To learn more about these end-time events, be sure to request your free copy of the booklets *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*.)

### Self-absorbed entertainment

Paul wrote of yet another trend in the last days in which mass media even now play a major role.

“But mark this,” Paul wrote shortly before his death, around A.D. 67: “There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:1-4, NIV).

Does this sound familiar? Each of these abysmal traits can be found in the daily menu of American entertainment devoured by two billion minds on televisions around the world. Welcome to the age of crude amusements and pandering to lust—24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Lust for violence, self-glorification, sex without the commitment of marriage, vicarious indulgence in forbidden fruit without the consequences—these are the themes of the comedies, soap operas, dramas and talk shows that constitute the moral equivalent of a sewer flooding human minds. It’s the sated ancient Roman crowds all over again watching the doomed die in the Colosseum.

The motive for so much filth is simple—money. Delivering eyes to advertisers is the primary objective of network executives. Programming that most effectively hooks the largest audience features fast-paced content centered on a mesmerizing diet of sex, lust, greed and irreverent and profane humor. It’s a sure bet to keep an audience glued to the tube. Produce such material and you make money.

If you own the movie and TV production rights to sex, lust and greed, you make more money. If you own book publishers,

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### Recommended Reading

To better understand prophetic events in the end time, be sure to request our free booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*, *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.



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# Is Your Family Manipulated by Mass Media?

*Does your family properly use electronic mass media? Or do you let the media abuse you? Here are 10 principles to help you regain control and stamp out media abuse.*

by Howard Davis

**B**elieve it or not, your family is probably being abused—by a manipulative seducer you welcome into your home.

Many people unknowingly let media merchants—the creators and marketers of television programs, movies, videotapes, music and video and computer games—abuse them. They do so when they allow such outsiders to intrude into their family affairs and exploit the negative side of their human nature.

Although the entertainment media can be informative and beneficial, we need to recognize that *evil* media exist, and we must learn how to make use of the good and avoid the bad. We should realize, too, that too much of even a good thing can be bad.

How great is the media's influence on the family? According to a 2001 report of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the average American child living at home spends *42 hours weekly*—the equivalent of a full-time job—immersed in watching TV or videos, listening to music on the radio, tapes or CDs, playing video games or using a computer.

Many adults admit they squander much of their health and time in passively viewing—letting television, videotapes and other electronic and mechanical contrivances monopolize their time and keep them from physical exercise and other productive activities and even enough sleep.

Researchers associate excessive TV viewing with violence, depression, obesity and mental problems. Although many people think of television as a stress reliever, research has shown that, at current viewing levels, TV *induces* stress while discouraging exercise and productive motivation.

## Regaining control

What about your family? Many people don't realize that life can be better when we begin to control media rather than letting media control us. Many don't understand that stopping media abuse is a matter

of setting and then diplomatically implementing firm family rules. Establishing principles of media use for your family is the best way to use electronic devices productively rather than letting them use you.

The mass media are designed to stimulate and control your mind through attention-getting techniques—to the point that some researchers compare their effect to addictive drugs. Because the media are so prone to abuse, unless you consciously temper your media use by decisions based on solid biblical values within a consistent and positive lifestyle, you will probably find yourself a victim of media abuse.

Positive media use is advocated throughout a growing field of study called *media literacy*, to be found in many educational systems in many countries. Ironically, in the United States, which because of heavy media use needs it most, media-literacy efforts sadly lag.

Although the mass media's correlation with declining education, increased criminal behavior and deteriorating physical and mental health are increasingly and adequately documented, state and federal lawmakers consistently fail to fund media-literacy efforts. Why? Part of the answer is that the election processes at all levels heavily involve media manipulation by all parties and candidates. Too many elected officials, conservative and liberal, are themselves largely the creations of the mass media.

Effective media-literacy efforts involve helping students and parents develop critical-thinking skills to counteract a culture that conditions us to passively accept almost anything. Psychological and brain-wave studies show that TV and other visual electronic-media use, including many video and computer games, pushes people into a mild trance—what some call passive mindlessness—after only a few minutes.

Surveys by educators show that firm but fair family rules that limit the amount of television viewing—along with rules

restricting or banning sexually suggestive and violent content—are important factors in helping students develop into academic achievers.

## Ten principles of healthy media use

The good news is that you can change many of these negative situations and outcomes. Your family can learn to use the media as assets rather than enemies.

However, doing so requires that most of us begin to break long-established habits.

Not surprisingly, the best advice from educators, the American Academy of Pediatrics (representing 55,000 children's doctors) and government-funded research agrees with a common source—the Bible—when it comes to properly using the mass media. Without quoting specific scriptures or academic citations, and yet adhering to biblical teachings, the following basic principles are easy to understand and not difficult to follow—*once* you make a firm commitment and apply them for a month.

Understand, though, that when making these changes you will need to discuss them with other family members because they will probably require major lifestyle changes. Parents should agree on the rules and explain them to their children.

For a family's new mass-media program to be effective, it needs to involve genuine change. You don't have to throw out the television, but these principles *do* require action.

## Principle 1

### **Focus on doing, not viewing.**

Make sure you and your family involve yourselves in a variety of activities to ensure a rich and balanced life based on thought, talk and action. Limit passive consumption in every area of life. Just as eating too much junk food is harmful, media consumption is bad when it tilts your life out of balance. Make sure your family does more than simply passively

and mindlessly soak up what's presented.

The American Academy of Pediatrics maintains that children should not be exposed to more than one or two hours of television, video recordings and popular music per day. The academy says young children should view television no more than 30 minutes daily. This requires cutting out 65 to 75 percent of television time in the life of a typical 2- to 18-year-old child. Adults likewise need to set the right example by making similar needed adjustments.

## Principle 2

### **Place your television carefully.**

Keep the television set where you and your family have to make an intentional effort to use it. If you don't want the TV and Internet to dominate your time, then don't place your television and computer where they are easy to access. That means keeping the TV out of the kitchen or bedrooms if that's where family members spend most of their free time.

Wise parents place the TV where they can monitor their children's viewing. You might even drape a tablecloth over the set if it's in the living or family room to discourage leaving it on constantly.

Even if you think you may have a war on your hands—65 percent of American schoolchildren have television sets in their bedrooms—patiently explain to your children the reasons that viewing in the bedroom is not a good idea. Virtually all experts agree that TV in children's rooms leads to more viewing, the tendency to obesity and incomplete homework and increased isolation from the rest of the family.

## Principle 3

### **Establish and follow family rules.**

Make realistic rules and follow them. For example, you might want to allow television watching only after your children complete their homework and household chores. Some parents allow no more than one hour of TV before dinner; then comes homework; then one hour of TV viewing before bedtime. Some advocate no TV, Internet or electronic games at all after 10 or 11 p.m.

Whatever the rules, live within them, but don't be unreasonably inflexible or overly arbitrary about following them when circumstances warrant otherwise. Of course, there is always a tendency to decide that a

particular media event is so important we must bend the rules. Don't believe it. With rare exceptions, almost anything can be videotaped to play back later.

Many adults whose parents severely limited their TV time while they were growing up now thank them for those apparently restrictive but, viewed in retrospect, farsighted family rules. They realize they were able to use their time to develop a wide range of skills, from art to sports to musical abilities to auto mechanics. Instead of wasting time on prepackaged audiovisual entertainment, their working hard or reading material requiring them to *think* helped them develop skills that proved valuable later in life.

Those who watched little TV as children generally grew up to be more action-oriented. They became productive people with higher standards than they would have otherwise had, and they developed a genuine sense of accomplishment. Naturally, having now become parents themselves, they want to keep their own children from wasting their youth on passive media consumption. These parents are among the strongest supporters of consistent rules for electronic-media use.

## Principle 4

### **Plan your viewing ahead of time.**

Make a schedule of the coming week's viewing and stick to it. With the exception of disasters, emergencies and late-breaking stories and intermittent special broadcasts, you should be able plan most TV programming in advance.

Be sure to switch off the TV when dining. That is critical for family health and well-being. Don't give up family dining time for television viewing.

## Principle 5

### **Teach your children media-literacy skills.**

Talk about what you and your family members watch and listen to. Point out the impact television and music has on attitudes, thinking and emotions. Question your children. Their answers will tell you how they perceive the information they see and hear and will sharpen your skill in analyzing the media as well.

What do the messages targeted at families mean? Considering and talking about content will help you realize how you may be affected and what steps you may need to institute to build a healthy home atmosphere.

## Principle 6

### **Have fun with what you watch.**

Some TV programs are both fun and beneficial. But even when a program isn't, sometimes you can have a good laugh when you see foolish commercials or absurd programming. Laugh and joke about the clever methods producers of TV commercials and programs use to sell a particular point of view. Be alert and aware!

## Principle 7

### **Talk about media violence and destructive sexuality.**

Explain the differences between manufactured horror and real-life suffering. Explain that playing with sex outside of marriage always has damaging effects—contrary to the seemingly harmless way it is almost always depicted in movies, TV shows and music. Discuss the realistic and unrealistic use of sex as it is presented by the mass media. Talk about the many sensational portrayals of violence with no ill consequences to the heroes and villains in contrast to more-realistic programs that honestly show the inevitable consequences.

## Principle 8

### **Choose quality TV, video and computer media.**

Make it a part of your routine to view educational TV programs and videos. Many excellent programs on history, biography, culture, science and classic drama are available to enrich and inform us, even humor and inspire us.

## Principle 9

**Model good viewing habits.** As adults, proactively decide what you will watch and make it clear to your children and visiting friends, if necessary, that your household's viewing habits are consistent with your values. Understand, of course, that your children will not willingly restrict their viewing to good material and stick to family rules if parents don't do so.

## Principle 10

**Use TV and videotapes or DVDs to support biblical values.** Make your media-content choices support your biblically based family values. Make them

*Continued on page 22*

# How Can You Counter a Degenerating Culture?

As a reader of *The Good News*, you are probably disturbed by many of the values of the culture around you—and with good reason. How can we counter the degrading influence of much of popular culture?

by Ralph Levy

**C**ulture: It's a word we hear a lot about these days. But what does it mean? One dictionary defines culture as "the particular system of art, thought and customs of a society."

Author Robert Dugan offers a broader definition. He defines culture as "the ways of thinking, living and behaving that define a people and underlie its achievements. It is a nation's collective mind, its sense of right and wrong, the way it perceives reality, and its definition of self. Culture is the morals and habits a mother strives to instill in her children. It is the obligations we acknowledge toward our neighbors, our community, and our government . . . It is the standards we set and enforce for ourselves and for others: our definitions of duty, honor and character. It is our collective conscience" (*Winning the New Civil War*, 1991, p. 169).

Does popular culture—and our attitude toward it—matter?

The Bible contains a disturbing prophetic glimpse of culture in the last days of human civilization. The apostle Paul was inspired to write of the last days as "perilous times" (2 Timothy 3:1). He describes that age as a time when "men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God . . ." (verses 2-4).

Could Paul have been writing of *our* culture, that of the Western world in 2002? He certainly seems to describe a culture bent on pleasure, entertainment, vanity, greed and utter selfishness at the expense of stable marriages, families and other relationships.

Consider a lesson from history. Sociologist and historian Carle Zimmerman, in his 1947 book *Family and Civilization*, recorded his observations as he compared the disintegration of various cultures with their parallel decline of family life:

"Eight specific patterns of domestic behavior typified the downward spiral of each culture Zimmerman studied: Marriage

lost its sacredness [and] is frequently broken by divorce; traditional meaning of the marriage ceremony is lost; feminist movements abound; there is increased public disrespect for parents and authority in general; an acceleration of juvenile delinquency, promiscuity and rebellion occur; there is refusal of people with traditional marriages to accept family responsibilities; a growing desire for, and acceptance of, adultery is evident; there is increasing interest in, and spread of, sexual perversions and sex-related crimes" (quoted in *Confident*



Western culture has become what sociologists call **values-neutral**. Advocates of this approach argue that we should not adopt any system defining absolute right and wrong.

*Living*, November 1987, p. 34).

## Values-neutral philosophy

A major change over recent decades is that Western culture has become what sociologists call *values-neutral*. Advocates of this approach argue that we should not adopt any system defining right and wrong and expect all to adhere to it because no one has a right to impose his values on others.

A former U.S. senator from Indiana, Daniel Coats, reported: "I recently saw the story of a high school values clarification class conducted by a teacher in Teaneck, New Jersey. A girl in the class had found a purse containing \$1,000 and returned it to its owner. The teacher asked for the class's reaction. Every single one of her fellow students concluded the girl had been 'foolish.'

"Most of the students contended that if someone is careless, they should be punished. When the teacher was asked what he had said to the students, he responded, 'Well, of course, I didn't say anything. If I come from the position of what is right and wrong, then I'm not their counselor. I can't impose my views'" (*Imprimis*, September 1991).

But if figures in authority won't—or can't—teach standards to children, where

will they learn them? In all too many cases, from the popular culture around them.

Tragically, most Americans no longer believe in the concept of absolute moral truths. A George Barna poll conducted late last year found that only 22 percent of American adults—and a minuscule 6 percent of teenagers—believed that "there are moral absolutes that are unchanging." Sadly, only 32 percent of those who described themselves as Christians believed in absolute moral standards, and only 26 percent cited the Bible as the source of their moral principles.

## 'Impossible without faith in God'

How are we to establish an ethical and moral cultural base for our societies and families? Previous articles in *The Good News* have highlighted the biblical foundation of true values and the fact that, when the United States was founded, its leaders unashamedly accepted many of the principles of Scripture as the basis for its laws and culture.

Reminiscent of such long-abandoned values, columnist Georgie Anne Geyer wrote: "I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to have a moral community or

nation without faith in God, because without it everything rapidly comes down to 'me,' and 'me' alone is meaningless.

"Today Americans have . . . stopped acting on what they knew was right—and 'me' has become the measure of everything. However, *moral societies are the only ones that work*. If anyone thinks there is not a direct and invaluable relationship between personal integrity in a society and that society's prosperity, that person

because America is good. If America ceases to be good, she will cease to be great" (*Bits & Pieces*, Sept. 17, 1992, pp. 23-24, emphasis added).

These sentiments were echoed by Svetlana Alliluyeva, daughter of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, when she unexpectedly defected from Russia to the United States. Why did she defect? In her own words: "I found it impossible to exist without God in one's heart. I came to that conclusion

determining right from wrong. The result is a culture that staggers like a drunkard unable to find the wall.

### **Crumbling morality threatens a nation**

The dramatic effects of the Western cultural shift are best illustrated by contrasting social trends. Consider some changes over a 50-year period:

"In New York City in 1943, 3 percent of all births were illegitimate. There were 44 homicides by gunshot. In 1992, 1,499 people died of gunshot. 45 percent of births in 1993 were illegitimate. Nationwide, nearly 30 percent of all babies today come home fatherless, 68 percent in Washington, D.C." (Gary Bauer, Family Research Council letter, Nov. 4, 1993).

William Bennett, former U.S. secretary of education, published a book in 1999 titled *The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators*. Here are a few of the statistics he presented, comparing life in 1997 with 1960:

- Violent crime increased by 467 percent.
- Illegitimate births were up 461 percent.
- Divorces rose by 100 percent.
- Children living in single-parent homes increased more than 200 percent.
- Teenage suicides were up more than 100 percent.
- SAT scores dropped by almost 60 points.

Finally, consider the result of a survey conducted in 1988 by the Rhode Island Rape Crisis Center. About 1,700 students between the sixth and ninth grades attended adolescent assault-awareness classes conducted in



has simply not studied history.

"And this should not surprise us. Great moral societies, built upon faith in God, honor, trust, and the law, blossom because they are harmonious; because people love or at least respect their fellowman; because, finally, they have a common belief in something *beyond themselves* . . . Alexis de Tocqueville said it best when he realized even at the very beginning of our national life, 'America is great

myself, without anybody's help or preaching. That was a great change because since that moment the main dogmas of Communism lost their significance for me. I have come here to seek the self-expression that has been denied me for so long in Russia" (quoted in *Morning Glory*, Feb. 5, 1994).

It is faith in God that provides the anchor for a culture. Without it we are cast adrift, lost in a sea of values neutrality or hedonism and robbed of any method of

## **Values Turned *Upside Down* in a Generation's Time**

It may be too easy to overlook the major shifts in Western values in recent decades. Some of the trends were spotlighted by James Dobson and Gary Bauer in their article titled "Children at Risk" (*Word*, 1990, pp. 104-107). Here are highlights:

"In 1960, . . . most children were cared for by their parents, and most politicians knew that any effort to strengthen the family was a good idea.

"In 1990, politicians can't even agree on what 'traditional' families are or whether they are worthy of special assistance. Indeed, a major movement is underway to redefine 'family' to mean any group of people which merely thinks of itself as a family.

"A sizable minority of children is supervised by professional caregivers, while some children, called 'latchkey' kids, are left with no adult care at all during much of the day . . .

"In 1960, there was a general consensus that religion was a positive influence in American life and that it should be encouraged . . . Today a militant secularism prevails. Any public display of religion . . . is immediately attacked by civil liberty attorneys.

"Recently several government officials in Washington, D.C., called on citizens to join in a day of prayer to ask God to lead the city out of its quagmire of drugs, crime, and suffering. They were immediately attacked by a local ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] official who told the *Washington Post*, 'It is always inappropriate for

government officials to ask citizens to pray.'

"In 1960, out-of-wedlock pregnancy was a matter of shame. When it happened, couples often did a quaint thing—they got married, so that the child would have a name and the influence of a father. Girls who 'slept around' were often ostracized by fellow students. A pregnant teenager was sent away to have the child rather than risk the censure of the community.

"In 1990, one out of five babies born in America was conceived out of wedlock. In Washington, D.C., illegitimacy was an alarming 55 percent! In many schools, the virtuous girl was considered odd, and was subjected to the same scorn and ridicule once reserved for the 'easy' date 30 years earlier. Surveys revealed that many of our sons and daughters were embarrassed to admit their virginity.

"In 1960, . . . most couples stayed together for life. Now more than one million children are affected by divorce every year. Mates are traded in for newer models as if they were cars. For each of the last 15 years, there have been more than one million divorces compared to less than half that many in the early '60s."

Such statistics and facts help us gain perspective on the cultural drift that has taken place in only a single generation's time. How much has *your* thinking, and that of members of your family, been affected by such havoc wreaked by the degradation of the culture around us?

schools across the state. Each boy and girl was asked whether a man should have a right to force a woman to have sexual intercourse if he had spent money on her.

The shocking results? Nearly 25 percent of the boys and 16 percent of the girls said “Yes.” Sixty-five percent of the boys and 47 percent of the girls in the seventh through ninth grades said it is permissible for a man to force a woman to have sex with him if they have dated for six months or longer (James Dobson and Gary Bauer, “Children at Risk,” *Word*, 1990, pp. 258-259).

### Influence on Christians?

Let’s not carelessly assume these trends have no effect on those who describe themselves as Christians. The *Community Impact Seminar: Focus on the Family* reported that two out of every five self-identified Christians say you may do anything you want just as long as you don’t hurt anyone else.

In New Testament times, the grinding effect of a permissive, anything-goes popular culture was illustrated by the story of the Church of God congregation in the Greek city of Corinth. Located on a natural harbor and at the intersections of several major trade routes, the city was quite prosperous. But tragically, like the city of Sodom centuries before (Genesis 13:13; Ezekiel 16:49-50), Corinth had allowed its wealth to lure many of its inhabitants into immorality. So legendary had this city become that it even gave its name to the term *corinthianize*, meaning to act in an immoral way.

Christians are not immune to their cultural surroundings. The Corinthians reflected the loose, values-neutral backdrop of their city in their own moral carelessness. The recorded story of the congregation in Corinth tells us of a man who was cohabiting with his stepmother (1 Corinthians 5:1), a sin that was tolerated—or perhaps even condoned—by many in the church (verse

2). The values of Corinthian society had affected them to the point that they would tolerate this kind of degeneracy—much to their shame.

You can also read of their tendency to allow their contentions to boil over in lawsuits (1 Corinthians 6) and their failure to remain faithful to their marriage vows (chapter 7). A sectarian, individualistic spirit (chapter 3), and drunkenness at the solemn occasion of the Passover (1 Corinthians 11:17-22), were among the many spiritual weaknesses of the Corinthians.

Paul had to sternly correct these sins and several others. No, these Christians were not immune to the corroding influences in their culture, just as Christians today aren’t immune to their culture.

### Countering the culture

So what can you do?

First, you have to *recognize the influence of popular culture* on all aspects of your life. What manner of person would you have been if you had been born in another place and another time? How are you different now because of the culture around you?

Familiarizing yourself with the history of our cultures, and with the changing value systems of the modern world, will allow you to begin to appreciate the impact of the time and place of your birth.

Second, you must *develop moral and ethical convictions*. What do you allow yourself to do? What has shaped your standards and morals, your values? Do you recognize there is a cause and purpose much greater than you, much greater than life itself?

There are indeed proper definitions for the terms *right* and *wrong*, *sin* and *righteousness*. Those definitions are provided in the Word of God, the Holy Bible. Studying that book was once commonplace. Your studying it now will provide you a moral and cultural anchor.

Third, *diminish your concern about what others will think*. There is no point in worrying about them, because convictions never bring universal approval.

Those who accept a moral code derived from the Holy Scriptures will find themselves opposed by many (though not by all). Yet your concern needs to be not what *people* think, but what *your Creator* thinks.

Finally, *stand up for what you believe*. Remember the saying: If you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for anything. The courage to stand up for what’s right may carry a price tag in the short term, but it will reap valuable returns in your character over the course of this life and into eternity. **GN**

# Family

*Continued from page 19*

fit your personal quest to have the best family life possible. Should negative media intrude into your home and life, analyze and discuss why the content doesn’t support the ideals and goals you are striving to maintain.

Depending on the age of your children, if at least some of these 10 principles do not describe your way of life, you may have to exercise diplomacy and patience in implementing them. Applying right principles can require thought and planning, but you will find the results well worth the effort.

All 10 principles will lead to a better life and a realistic view of the world. We live in the mass-media age, but that doesn’t force us to be mass-media slaves. God wants us to be the best we can be, which requires that we live a principled life—controlling media input rather than letting it control us by brainwashing us with its often-corrupting values and standards.

Gaining control over a problem requires three simple steps to implement change: acquiring knowledge of the problem, committing to a solution, and consistently following through.

A major theme of the Bible is that “whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). If you sow these principles of success when it comes to using the electronic media in your home, you can reap rich rewards in a balanced, positive life.

For further information, you can obtain a summary of sound principles for media use from the American Academy of Pediatricians through your local pediatrician, on the Web at [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) or in books such as *Screen Smarts: A Family Guide to Media Literacy*, by Gloria DeGaetano and Kathleen Bander, in public libraries and bookstores. **GN**

### Recommended Reading

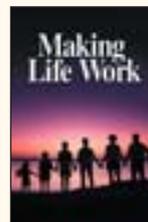
Can you find a proven source for lasting standards and values? God revealed the heart of His standards—the Ten Commandments—long ago at Mount Sinai. But what sets them apart from man-made rules and guidelines? What do they reveal about the nature of God Himself? Discover the answers in your free copy of *The Ten Commandments*.



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### Recommended Reading

The publishers of *The Good News* offer a free, fully illustrated booklet called *Making Life Work*. It abounds with sound biblical principles that serve as crucial background material for living a life full of meaning. It advocates the self-control needed to implement the principles set forth in this article. Please request your free copy of *Making Life Work*.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download them from our Web site at [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org).

# What Is Salvation?

*Millions of professing Christians believe they are “saved.” But from what are they saved? How and when does salvation take place? Let’s cut through the confusion and understand the truth.*

by Noel Nornor

**W**hat is salvation? Why do we need it? How do we receive it, and when? If salvation results in everlasting life—as Christianity teaches—what will those who are saved *do* for all eternity? What is the penalty for those who fail to achieve salvation?

If Christians rely on the Bible for their knowledge of these matters, why do we find so many differing beliefs?

The publishers of *The Good News* believe the Bible is the revealed Word of God. In this article we see what the Bible teaches about salvation. As we do this, we discover that some popular views aren’t supported in the Scriptures. You should read for yourself what God’s Word teaches on this subject. It is much too important to simply accept what you’ve been told. You need to prove it from the Bible—because *your happiness and your eternal life are at stake*.

Salvation simply means the act of saving. When used in a religious sense, to save means to rescue someone from the eternal consequences of sin. Everyone needs salvation because, as the Bible tells us, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” and the wages of sin is death (Romans 3:23; 6:23).

## How sin began

Sin entered the world with the first man. When God created Adam, He placed him in the Garden of Eden. The garden also included two special trees. The Bible account calls one of them the tree of life and the other the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:8-9).

The tree of life represented life. If Adam made the right choice, if he chose to eat of the fruit of this tree, he would eventually inherit eternal life. But, if he chose the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would come under a sentence of death (Genesis 2:17).

Why? Something called “the tree of life” obviously had to be good. But what was so bad about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

God explained to Adam that He alone knew what was best for man. Partaking of

the tree of life represented obedience to God, doing what He says is good. Godly obedience would eventually gain for Adam the fruit of eternal life (see also Proverbs 11:30).

On the other hand, if Adam disobeyed, as represented by his eating of the other tree, his disobedience would amount to deciding right from wrong for *himself*. This would ultimately result in disaster because human beings, beginning with Adam, have lacked the innate ability to know what is good and what is evil.

As Proverbs 14:12 tells us: “There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” Human beings are not always able, without God’s instruction, to discern what is God’s will and what is sin (the opposite of God’s will).

The history of the human race illustrates that people have failed miserably at rightly discerning between good and bad. We have some ability to distinguish and choose what will benefit us, but we demonstrate serious deficiencies in knowing right from wrong in many crucial areas. This is why the history of humanity is scarred with so much pain. *Sin* is the cause of suffering. When people reason for themselves what is right, without God’s revelation, the result is a life plagued by the miseries that result from sin.

Adam, responding to Eve’s persuasion, chose to eat from the tree that leads to death (Genesis 3:6). His rebellion against God was sin—and all humanity from that time has repeated Adam’s and Eve’s error. “. . . Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned . . .” (Romans 5:12).

Human beings do not usually die immediately after they sin, but they do come under a *death sentence* at that time. The Bible speaks of two kinds of death—the natural death that everyone experiences (Hebrews 9:27) and “the second death” (Revelation 21:8). The second death, which is permanent cessation of life without possibility of resurrection, is the ultimate penalty for sin (see “The Penalty

for Unrepentant Sinners,” page 24). It is this death sentence from which we need God to save us.

God wants to save all of humanity. He wants every person to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). God is “not willing that *any* should perish but that *all* should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9, emphasis added throughout).

The Bible explains God’s plan for saving mankind. As the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: “. . . From childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to *instruct you for salvation* through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15, New Revised Standard Version). (If you have not proved for yourself that the Bible is God’s Word, please request our free booklet *Is the Bible True?*)

## How can we receive eternal life?

Eternal life is God’s gift to us. He tells us specifically how we can receive it. “. . . The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12). Jesus Himself said: “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved” (John 10:9).

Once we sin and place ourselves under the penalty of death, we can do nothing that will ever free us from the sentence of death. Rather, we must receive forgiveness and redemption through Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24).

Redemption means *to free or buy back someone or something by paying a price*. It is akin to paying a ransom for someone who has been kidnapped. To redeem humanity, the price that was paid for the sins of mankind had to be greater than *the total value of all human life*. Because He was the Son of God who never sinned as well as the very Creator of mankind (Hebrews 4:15; Ephesians 3:9), Christ’s life was of sufficient value to purchase everyone and pay the price for all sins (compare Hebrews 2:9-10).

Sin maintains a claim over us until God redeems us through Jesus’ sacrifice. “We have redemption through His blood, the

forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:14). Jesus died an excruciatingly painful death through crucifixion, shedding His blood for us. This is why the Father sent Him into the world: “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

### What must we do?

To have Jesus Christ as your Savior you must acknowledge that you have sinned, that your sins have placed you under a sentence of death and that you need forgiveness through Christ’s sacrifice. You must then accept Jesus as your personal Savior, recognizing that He died for you.

Regrettably, many people stop right there and think that’s all there is to it. They fail to recognize the crucial necessity of *personal repentance*.

In recognition of Christ’s sacrifice and a desire to change our lives to please God, each of us must forsake the sinful ways that brought the death penalty upon us and made Jesus’ sacrifice necessary in the first place. We cannot continue to live as we lived before. We must undergo a life-transforming change of heart and direction, a process the Bible calls *repentance*.

Peter said, “*Repent*, and let every one of you *be baptized* in the name of Jesus Christ for the *remission* of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts

2:38). *Remission* means *release*—that is, release from guilt for your sins. When you are baptized, God forgives your past sins and clears your record.

Baptism pictures the washing away of sins and signifies our faith in the sacrifice of Christ as payment for them. After our baptism, Christ’s ministers are to place their hands on us and pray for the gift of God’s Spirit for us. It is at this point that God gives His Spirit to a repentant, baptized person (see Acts 8:18).

The Bible says that, through the Holy Spirit, God *seals* us, His Spirit serving as a *guarantee* of or *down payment* on our salvation (2 Corinthians 1:22). The reason for this guarantee is to assure us *we will receive eternal life*. In other words, our sealing with the Holy Spirit is the proof we belong to God and Christ. “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His” (Romans 8:9), and “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (verse 14).

### A life of obedience

After baptism and our receiving of God’s Spirit, we are *justified*—that is, we become righteous in God’s sight. God counts none of our past sins against us (Romans 3:25). If we stumble and sin after baptism, we must ask God’s forgiveness so that our state of forgiveness is not lost by our return to

our old sinful way of life (1 John 2:1-6). When we are justified, God deals with us as though we had never sinned; the death penalty has no hold on us.

John made it plain that after baptism Christians at times will still stumble and sin. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9). John wrote these words after several decades as a Christian and an apostle of Christ, and he included himself among those who still fell prey to sin.

The difference in the life of a Christian after repentance and baptism is that he no longer practices unrighteousness as a way of life. “In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:10).

A Christian practices righteousness by *obeying God’s commandments* (compare Psalm 119:172). This behavior is consistent with Jesus’ words to a young man who approached Him with a question: “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” Jesus responded, “. . . If you want to enter into life, *keep the commandments*” (Matthew 19:16-17).

When the man persisted in questioning

## The Penalty for *Unrepentant Sinners*

**D**o sinners go to hell? God told Adam that if he disobeyed he would come under a penalty of *death*—not eternal life in another state or place. Yet many people through the ages have believed that the penalty for unrepentant sinners is to suffer forever in the fires of hell.

The 18th-century Puritan preacher Jonathan Edwards struck fear into the hearts of many who heard his sermons in which he raged against sin and threatened sinners with an eternity spent in an ever-burning hell-fire: “The pit is prepared. The fire is made ready. The furnace is now hot, ready to receive them. The flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit has opened her mouth under them. . . O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in.”

Many religious people now reject this view of hell. Polls show that comparatively few believe that God will send sinners to a place of eternal fiery torment as punishment for their sins.

Some still believe in hell, but, when questioned about its nature, they fall back on concepts such as “separation from God” or “an anguished state of existence.” Most who believe in this updated version of hell envision unrepentant sinners spending eternity there, though apparently few people believe they will go there themselves. One poll reported that only 4 percent of Americans thought they would go to hell.

In reality, the Bible does not teach the existence of any kind of eternally continuing torment in hell as the penalty for sin. (For a full explanation and proof from the Scriptures, request the free booklet *Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?*)

The belief that sinners will be consigned in death and confined to hell for eternity is an outgrowth of another erroneous belief—that men possess an immortal soul. Belief in the immortality of the soul was imported

into Christianity from Greek thought and is often attributed to the influence of Plato. “Plato . . . believed . . . that the soul was a fallen divinity, out of its element, imprisoned in the body” (Karen Armstrong, *A History of God*, 1993, p. 35).

In essence, if people believe that man has an immortal soul, they believe that man *already* possesses eternal life. The concept of hell as a place of eternal torment developed as an explanation of where supposedly immortal souls of evil people will spend eternity.

The Bible does not teach that human beings have immortal souls. In Genesis 2:7 we find that, when God created Adam, he *became* a “living soul” (King James Version). In Genesis 9:12 the same two Hebrew words are translated “living creature” and refer not to human beings, but to every sort of animal distinct from man.

According to the Bible, the soul is what the person *is*; it is not something he *has*. Ezekiel 18 tells us plainly that “the soul who sins *shall die*” (verses 4, 20)—not that the soul will live forever in some other place or state of consciousness.

The New Testament confirms the Old Testament teaching (see Matthew 10:28). In a familiar passage, Paul explains that “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). He clearly contrasts the two. Those who please God receive salvation—eternal life. Unrepentant sinners, in contrast, do not live forever while enduring torment in hell; instead their fate is *annihilation*—eternal, permanent death from which there will be no resurrection.

For further proof on this subject, write for our free booklet *Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

Christ as to which commandments he must keep. Jesus responded by reciting several of the Ten Commandments, which summarize God's spiritual law. Repentance involves a commitment to live your life in obedience to that law.

Shortly before He died, Jesus again affirmed that Christians must obey the Commandments: "He who has My commandments and *keeps* them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21).

It is important to remember that our obedience to God's law *does not* save us. It is *God* who saves us through Christ. The law cannot save us, but our striving to obey it is a *condition* of our salvation. If we ultimately *refuse* to obey God, He will not ultimately save us, as we will see shortly.

God's law is our guide to how we should live if we are to please Him. It is the law of love (Romans 13:10), reflecting God's nature, which *is* love (1 John 4:8, 16).

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," Paul wrote (Philippians 2:5). One who lives as Christ lived and whose mind is being transformed to be more like His is one who truly "has the Son" (1 John 5:12). It is such people who are being saved.

### When is a Christian saved?

Is a Christian saved immediately upon baptism? Once you are baptized, have accepted Christ as your Savior and have committed your life to obeying God, are you saved? Is your salvation complete?

According to the Bible, repentance and baptism mark the *beginning of the salvation process*, the time of a Christian's commitment to continue to serve God. The completion of our salvation, as long as we remain in this physical life, is *yet in the future*. As Jesus said, "He who *endures to the end* shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

Paul wrote, "... Having now been justified by His blood, *we shall be saved* from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, *we shall be saved* by His life" (Romans 5:9-10). Notice that Paul wrote in the future tense: *We will be saved*. Our salvation is not complete.

We must endure faithfully to the end of our lives. Or, if we remain alive until Christ returns to earth, we must endure until the time of His coming. If a Christian at some time during his life, after

committing to serve God, turns away and renounces Jesus and God's way in word or action, he will *lose* his salvation—unless he repents of his error.

Jesus described such a situation. "... If that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites" (Matthew 24:48-51).

"Carousing with drunkards" can describe the literal behavior of an errant Christian, or it can be a metaphor for evil habits in general. *Drunkenness* is sometimes used in the Bible to symbolize those who are immersed in the sinful attitudes and practices of the world.

Paul made it plain that a Christian *can* fall away and even lose salvation. He wrote that in his own life he found it necessary to practice firm self-discipline, guarding against the encroachment of sin, "lest, when I have preached to others, *I myself should become disqualified*" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Once we commit our lives to obeying God, the process of being saved has begun in us—although it is still possible for us to fall away (Luke 8:13). Paul said we will be saved if we continue to the end while *holding fast* the truth preached to us (1 Corinthians 15:2). Our salvation is assured if we do. But our salvation will be complete only at the second coming of Christ—when "He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

Salvation—assuring eternal life—will then go to those in the faith who have endured and overcome. Those who are engaged in this spiritual battle need not harbor fears that they will fail to receive eternal life. As we ask God for help, He will keep us from stumbling (Jude 24). "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Indeed, we can be "confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

### What will salvation be like?

When Christ returns from heaven and our salvation becomes an eternal reality, what will we be like? What will be the form and appearance of those who receive eternal life? Does the Bible tell us?

Indeed it does! "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called *children of God!* . . . Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, *we shall be like Him*; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:1-2).

This may sound incredible, but when our salvation is complete we will have *the same glorious appearance* as Jesus Christ (see Revelation 1:13-16). Like Him, we will be glorified children of God—though obviously He will forever be greater.

In recent years—with the development of gene therapy, organ transplants and artificial intelligence—some scientists have come to believe that science will someday provide man a form of immortality. But this is a far-fetched hope at best. Even if such could be accomplished, that sort of existence would be inferior to God's gift of eternal life.

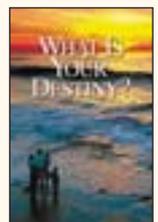
God's salvation will provide us an existence that far surpasses anything this present life offers or that scientists can conjure in their wildest hopes. After Jesus died and was resurrected, He returned in a new spirit body and appeared to His disciples. We will have a body like Christ's. God "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body . . ." (Philippians 3:21).

Our new bodies will never tire nor grow ill. Further, we will have minds that possess the kind of supernatural abilities God has. We will possess greater power than even the angels have. We will reign with Christ (Revelation 2:26; 3:21; 5:10) and help bring peace to the world.

We can live forever in God's eternal Kingdom. This is what salvation is. This is what God offers you. God's gift of salvation truly is *good news* for all. **GN**

### Recommended Reading

This article has only briefly outlined the biblical teachings on repentance, baptism, conversion and salvation. For a deeper understanding of these crucial truths and what God expects you to do, be sure to request the booklets *What Is Your Destiny?*, *The Road to Eternal Life* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*. All are yours free for the asking.



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# God, Money and You

*Does the Bible help us see the proper relationship between God and wealth for those who sincerely desire to serve and please Him?*

by Tom Kirkpatrick

**G**od, money and you: What is the proper relationship of these three? Have you ever thought about it? Has God promised you lots of money if you please Him? On the other hand, will you please God if you give Him all your money?

Is it even possible to please God if you have lots of money? If you are wealthy, is money your god?

As with all of the great questions, opinions vary. But what does God say? In short, does the Bible say anything about your relationship to God in the context of money matters?

Indeed it does. However, we must examine all the scriptures that relate to money, wealth and possessions before we can come to a balanced and informed understanding of God's will. To focus on only one or two scriptures can lead to an unbalanced and erroneous conclusion.

## Seek a right perspective

For example, if you limit your scriptural search for insight to verses such as Luke 6:20 ("Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven") and Mark 10:25 ("It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God"), you can easily conclude that God wants you to have virtually no money at all, nor the things you can buy with it. You may think you should avoid money like the plague or that it is inherently bad for you.

Some read these verses and conclude that money and physical wealth are curses, a spiritual drag on one's life. They further conclude that God is displeased with any but the poor. Some even take pride in being one of "God's poor."

On the other hand, if your scriptural focus is limited to certain other passages, you might come to an altogether different conclusion. You might conclude that God promises to bless all those serve Him with an abundance of money and material wealth. For example:

- Proverbs 10:22: "The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it."
- 3 John 2: "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health,

just as your soul prospers."

• Malachi 3:10: "... 'Try Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.'"

Some people use scriptures such as these to support what some have called a "health and wealth" gospel. In this view God promises physical and financial abundance to any who please Him.

Yet we can gain a balanced understanding only by considering the *entirety* of God's instructions in the Bible.

## Properly framing the issue

The issue of the proper relationship between God on the one hand and you and money on the other is best framed by the scriptures already quoted and others including the following:

Psalms 24:1: "The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness . . ." God is the creator and owner of everything. All our wealth ultimately comes from the ground (the earth), and the earth belongs to God. Mankind in general, and you as an individual, can enjoy the things that sustain and give enjoyment to physical life only by using some of what is ultimately God's possession.

It's important to keep this in mind. As the apostle James wrote: "Every good gift and every perfect gift [including material possessions and the money that makes possible their acquisition] is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

God spoke to the ancient Israelites words that are still relevant and instructive. He warned them about developing a wrong-headed, self-reliant, disobedient attitude about wealth and its acquisition:

"For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; . . . a land in which you will . . . lack nothing . . . Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you

today, lest . . . when your heart is lifted up . . . then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' . . . For *it is He who gives you power to get wealth . . .*" (Deuteronomy 8:7-18, emphasis added throughout).

Not only do the earth and its wealth belong to God, but we should ponder that even the "power to get wealth," mentioned in the above passage, is a gift from Him. That includes our abilities and aptitudes, minds and creativity and the health and strength it takes to work and make a living.

All of these are a gift from our Creator. If a person recognizes and believes this, His approach toward money and wealth will be quite different from his attitude if he is not conscious of or thankful for God's blessings.

Jesus warned all who would be His disciples to "take heed and beware of covetousness" (Luke 12:15). Why? Because "one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (same verse). God knows that we as physical beings need physical things to sustain us. He provides for our real needs. We are not to worry about or be obsessed by the pursuit of more things, even life's necessities.

Jesus' words should settle our minds: "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on . . . For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Matthew 6:25-32).

To yield to covetousness is to put our desire for physical things on a plane that should be reserved for God alone. Money and things can become idols in the human heart. Colossians 3:5 tells us to "put to death" such selfish desires as "fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desires, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

## Put God first

God, not the pursuit of money and wealth, should be first in the lives of those who seek to please Him. It comes down to a matter of whether we humbly and faithfully acknowledge God as sovereign in our lives. Is His will more important than anything

else, including money? Is honoring Him our chief desire?

Our lives consist of time. In most cases (except for inheritances or gifts), the wealth we acquire represents the wisdom we have used in spending our time in productive effort. So our income is usually a monetary reflection of the wise use of our time.

If a person's life is dedicated to God's service, so will be a portion of his wealth or income. God's Word tells us to "honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase" (Proverbs 3:9). If God is a priority in your life, you will desire to honor Him with your life and your time—as represented by your income, your money.

God reveals in His Word that one way to do this is to tithe to Him. Tithing is giving the first 10 percent of one's income ("increase," Deuteronomy 14:22) to God. To tithe is to give God what is *His*, not ours. However, even though it is really *all* His (Psalm 50:12; 89:11), He lays claim to just the first 10 percent of our increase (Leviticus 27:30).

Obviously we have no way of giving cash or a check directly to God in person. Our Creator has directed, through the ages, that the tithe that is His be given to those on earth whom He designates to receive it, those actively doing His work.

Abraham, the "father" of the faithful (Romans 4:16), gave tithes to Melchizedek, God's representative (Genesis 14:16-20). Indeed, He was the preincarnate Jesus Christ (request our free booklet *Who Is God?* to learn more). Later, under the terms of the covenant between God and the nation of Israel, God assigned the tithe to be given to the tribe of Levi for the work of the tabernacle and later the temple (Numbers 18:21).

However, since Jesus Christ's resurrection to be the High Priest of the New Covenant (Hebrews 6:20), the tithe no longer goes to the Levites but to His Church and the faithful ministers who serve under Him in proclaiming His true gospel and caring for His flock (Hebrews 7:12). (You can learn more about the Body of Christ in our free booklet *The Church Jesus Built*.)

### Does God need our money?

Because God doesn't need our money, it may seem ironic that God would tell those who want to serve Him to give a tithe for His work. As God, He could devise some other way to finance His work on earth. Indeed, He could simply miraculously create money and give it to those He designates to oversee His work (compare,

for example, the remarkable account in Matthew 17:24-27).

But those who serve God are the ones in need, and one of their needs is to learn to properly honor Him. One way we do that is with a portion of our increase. It keeps us mindful of the fact that God is the source of all our increase when we give to Him the first 10 percent for the purpose of spreading His message to others.

One of the greatest examples of a man who understood that honoring God, by giving back to Him physical wealth, is not a burden but a privilege was David. At a time when this king had led the nation in generously giving offerings for the furtherance of God's work, he prayed some instructive words. Rather than reflecting smug self-congratulations at his (and the nation's) large offering, David's words capture the essence of spiritually mature giving to God:

"Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given to You" (1 Chronicles 29:13-14). Truly this is the sort of humble and cheerful giving that God honors and loves (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Another need is that we learn spiritual maturity and develop God's giving nature (Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 9:7). God's nature helps us not to be covetous, selfish, grasping in physical things. Indeed, it helps us to be ever mindful of something bigger than ourselves.

In the book of Malachi, God puts into stark language the spiritual issues related to tithing: "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 3:8-10).

### The balanced approach

God's Word reveals a balanced view of the relationship between God, money and you. At certain times and places, faithful servants of God have been wealthy. Abraham, the father of the faithful, was a prosperous man. So were Job, David and Joseph. At other times, equally faithful servants of God have suffered poverty. For example, the faithful church of God at Smyrna suffered not only poverty but great trials and tribulation (Revelation 2:8-11).

Paul the apostle experienced both abundance and need at different times. "... For I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased [live humbly], and I know how to abound [live in prosperity]. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Philippians 4:11-12).

Notice how Paul could maintain such contentment whether he was rich or poor: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (verse 13).

This was the same Paul whom God inspired to write, for our edification: "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire [in a spirit of covetousness] to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money [not its right use] is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:7-10).

The balanced approach is to recognize that money and wealth are temporary and may be used for good or evil. God's truth and plan for us, however, are eternal. We should honor God with the biblical proportion of whatever money we have and not set our hearts on—that is, covet—wealth (see King David's advice in Psalm 62:10), knowing that God in His wisdom will care for our needs.

Again, Jesus' words should be our guide: "... Do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you" (Luke 12:29-31). **GN**

### Recommended Reading

What advice does the Bible offer about wealth and our attitude toward it? For a thorough discussion of God's instruction about tithing and the personal financial responsibility that should accompany it, please request our free booklets *Managing Your Finances* and *What Does the Bible Teach About Tithing?*



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# The Scourge of Corruption

*What does the Bible tell us about corruption and its causes and consequences?*

by John Ross Schroeder

Thousands of employees and investors saw the bulk of their retirement funds wiped out when Enron, the giant energy company, imploded in December in the largest-ever corporate bankruptcy in the United States. The ugly scenario was repeated the next month when Global Crossing, a huge telecommunications company, became the fourth-largest bankruptcy.

True to form, the bankruptcies of these two corporate giants bore the earmarks of major money scandals. Enron's included the shredding of potentially incriminating documents, ruined lives and the suicide of a high company official. Investigations of Global Crossing revealed that the chairman of the Democratic National Committee had pocketed almost \$18 million on an investment of \$100,000.

The collateral damage from the Enron debacle has already spread to the company's auditors, the multinational accounting firm Arthur Andersen. With employees admitting shredding documents, that company is under federal indictment and faces its own struggle for survival. Enron's long shadow also appears to have reached across the Atlantic to Britain, where some government officials allegedly took cash from Enron and free advice from Arthur Andersen in exchange for changes in some government regulations.

## Campaign finance reformed?

Ironically, as fallout from these giant failures spread through the economy, Congress debated and passed campaign-finance-reform legislation that, in the opinion of some observers, has the primary effect of creating major hurdles for future political challengers. Some even cynically dubbed it the Incumbency Protection Act of 2002.

Revealing was that the new campaign-finance laws will not go into effect until after the next round of elections late this year. Equally revealing was the spectacle of hundreds of politicians of both parties fanning out from Washington to attend fundraisers, scooping up donations of the sort that would be banned under the legislation they had just passed.

It's no wonder cynicism about political and corporate power is growing.

Sound business and governmental ethics, not to mention basic honesty and accountability, are fundamental to the long-term success of any nation. In the long run the greed-is-good philosophy will damage any nation.

## Does sin win?

The "Book of the Week" column in Britain's Feb. 24 *Sunday Times* featured a new work by Marc Lewis curiously titled *Sin to Win*. Mr. Lewis, a successful entrepreneur, sold his Internet company, Web Marketing, for some \$30 million, then wrote his book, apparently promoted as a key to business success. In brief, "*Sin to Win* promotes the idea that the seven deadly sins—pride, lust, covetousness, envy, gluttony, anger and sloth—are, to varying degrees, *necessary attributes for success in the commercial world*" (emphasis added throughout).

Overall, the *Times* reviewer gave the book poor marks. But, to be fair to Mr. Lewis, he simply articulates and advocates the practices of far too many in the multinational, corporate world. As much as we decry such ungodly practices, at least he was honest about how these dubious business methods characterize some individuals and companies in our world of global commerce.

But do fraudulent dishonesty and sin win? If they didn't, *temporarily*, few would practice them. Moses wisely forsook "the passing pleasures of sin" in Egypt (Hebrews 11:25). Solomon tells us evil thrives when "the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Psalm 73 describes how the wicked prosper—at least for a short time.

The inevitable consequence is often delayed, but it is as sure as tomorrow's sunrise. In the long term, corruption does not pay.

## The roots of greed and fraudulence

The apostle John defined sin as "the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, King James Version). The Ten Commandments constitute the supreme law against harmful activities. The Eighth Commandment reads, "You shall not steal." But, since thought usually precedes action, we then are told by No. 10 that "you shall not covet . . .

anything that is your neighbor's."

The prophet Micah explained that the evil conceive their actions in their thinking. "Woe to those who devise iniquity and work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hands. They covet fields and take them by violence, also houses, and seize them, so they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance" (Micah 2:1-3).

There are always innocent victims when people pursue what isn't theirs. What about the Enron employees who lost their jobs because of the nefarious activities of a few? What about those at Global Crossing and Arthur Andersen who knew nothing of wrongdoing? They are already suffering. In principle this is what Micah describes.

Our individual, private transgressions do quite enough damage not only to ourselves but to a circle of family and friends who rely on our good behavior. But the effects of fraudulent behavior by government and business leaders can be colossal, bringing disgrace to nations and multinational corporations alike, throwing thousands out of their jobs, depriving citizens, employees and stockholders of their due reward for their labor and threatening them with poverty.

## Leaders and covetousness

Certain people possess enormous power, and sometimes they use it in ways that bring devastation to many others. "He who is greedy of gain troubles his own house," wrote King Solomon (Proverbs 15:27).

In ancient Israel, Moses' father-in-law advised him to "select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, *hating covetousness*; and place such over them . . ." (Exodus 18:21). Roughly 1,500 years later the apostle Paul told Timothy that a chief consideration in the ordination of church leaders was that they not be greedy for money (1 Timothy 3:3, 8). Paul knew that "those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Timothy 6:9).

Is this not also an apt description of what happens to government and business leaders when they lack these basic qualities? Solomon adds: "A ruler who lacks

understanding is a great oppressor, but he who *hates covetousness* will prolong his days” (Proverbs 28:16).

The teachings of Christ are clear. “Take heed and *beware of covetousness*, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses,” He said (Luke 12:15). Christ’s basic spiritual teachings go against the grain of our human nature and our secular value systems. Humanly, money and materialism are supremely important in our way of thinking.

Of course, money and possessions themselves are not the real problem.

### Right approach to wealth and power

The Ten Commandments assume and sanction the private ownership of property. On the other hand, they condemn coveting—enviously desiring what belongs to someone else. Christ’s parables of the pounds and talents advocate godly career-

advancement goals and the wise investment of funds. The Bible teaches that “the laborer is worthy of his wages” (Luke 10:7). Again, money is not wrong in and of itself—it’s the *love* of money that entraps us in evil. Hear King David’s wise advice: “If riches increase, do not set your heart on them” (Psalm 62:10).

Paul advocated generous giving not only to the poor but for the needs of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. Yet he sought no gain for himself. As he wrote to one congregation, “I do not seek *yours*, but *you*” (2 Corinthians 12:14). Paul wanted those whom he was reaching with the gospel to receive everlasting life in the Kingdom of God. His motivation was to *serve*, to *give*.

He added that Jesus Christ Himself had taught that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). Paul told the Ephesians: “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his

hands what is good, *that he may have something to give him who has need*” (Ephesians 4:28).

Giving, wrote Paul, is *the antidote to covetousness and blatant dishonesty*.

Notice Jesus’ explanation of the kind of attitude He expects from anyone in a leadership position: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet *it shall not be so among you*; but whoever desires to become great among you, *let him be your servant*. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to *be served*, but to *serve*, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).

This is the attitude God will instill in leaders of government and business in the transformed society Christ will build in the world to come. Only then will the scourge of corruption forever be a thing of the past. **GN**

## Corruption: A Way of Life for Much of the World

Writing of her childhood in Africa, Alexandra Fuller remembered the land reforms that took place in many African nations following independence from European colonialism.

“This is how land redistribution goes. First, the nice farms, near the city, are given to [the president’s] political allies.

“Then, the nice farms far from the city are given to those politicians whom [the president] must appease, but who are not best-beloved.

“After that, the productive, tucked-away farms are given to worthy war veterans—to the men, and a few women, who showed themselves to be brave liberation strugglers.

“Then farms like ours—dangerously close to existing minefields, . . . with sporadic rains, unreliable soil, a history of bad luck—are given to [the president’s] enemies, whom he is pretending to appease” (*Don’t Let’s Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood*, 2001, p. 151).

Those who needed help the most, the African peasants who daily struggle for existence, were left out.

Such corruption is all too prevalent throughout Africa, where the vast majority are penniless peasants while a ruling minority have made huge personal gains in the name of liberation. As Ghanaian writer George Ayittey put it: “In Africa there are two classes of people: the real people (the peasants) and the parasitic elites” (*Africa Betrayed*, p. xvii, 1992).

After independence, many African leaders amassed vast fortunes at the expense of their own people. Subsequent poverty and economic collapse were then blamed on the former colonial power or on Western “imperialism.” Government officials and policemen asking for bribes became common—and still are. I can attest to this based on my own firsthand experience living in Africa.

For example, when I applied for a driver’s license in an African nation, I learned that I had a choice. Either I could take the test, fail and then pay a bribe for a license, or I could bypass the test and simply pay the official a bribe and receive my license. Judging from the standard of driving in that particular nation, I would say that most people chose the latter course. Even hospitals operate this way. When my wife needed hospitalization for malaria, no doctor was available until a bribe was offered.

Africa isn’t alone in its long history of bribery and other corruptions. The Russian author Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852) exposed corruption in czarist Russia in his two famous works, *The Inspector General* (1836) and *Dead Souls* (1842). Nothing has changed. Corruption survived the empire,

persisted throughout communist rule and continues today. The Latin countries of southern Europe and South America also have long histories of corrupt government officials. Argentina is the latest nation to suffer economic upheaval as a result of this virulent plague.

Having experienced corruption in a number of countries, I find that one fact is clear: the more government, the more corruption. When the Israelites asked for a king to be like the other nations, God warned that human government inevitably expands and takes more and more away from the people. Leaders would seek material benefits for themselves until the people would “cry out” for relief (1 Samuel 8:18).

When commerce is hindered by excessive legislation, opportunities abound for corrupt government officials. Anyone wanting to operate a business in most countries has to apply for multiple permits. Every government department will expect its cut. Is it any wonder so many nations remain economically undeveloped? While the leaders may prosper in such a system, ordinary people are denied jobs and hope of economic advancement.

Aid organizations openly admit that up to 80 percent of what they routinely send into some countries disappears into the hands of government officials, who then sell the donated items—often desperately needed food—for personal gain. Attempts by Westerners to oversee distribution are contemptuously dismissed as interference or even neocolonialism.

In cultures in which corruption is a way of life, the biggest single step any government can take to reduce its effects is to ease the requirement for permits to operate a business or other organization. This boosts employment and economic growth while reducing corruption at all levels. But leaders have to set the example.

A seemingly simple step that Western democracies could take to reduce corruption in poor countries would be to prevent their leaders from stowing plundered funds in Western bank accounts. But even this small step has proved impossible—too many officials in Western countries need those secret accounts to stash away their own ill-gotten gains.

It seems little will be done until a complete change in government is instituted—a change that will not take place until Jesus Christ returns to earth and establishes His Kingdom. Then “He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths” (Micah 4:2).

—Melvin Rhodes

# Medved

Continued from page 11

on a trip to a big city where I used to live. It was the first time I had been there in three years. But walking down the streets with my daughter was incredible this time. Of course people, like those on a construction site, would use a lot of four-letter words. For them that's normal. But here, walking down an upscale street and seeing elegantly dressed people hollering at each other, effing this and effing that—it's just really collapsed out there. There's no question that mass media have led that trend. They haven't just followed it.

**GN:** So it's not just a matter of art imitating life.

**MM:** Right. This is just one example. The other example would be homosexuality. If you read every study, gay behavior is very, very rare. It is not 10 percent of the population. It's not even 5 percent of the population.

**GN:** Aren't those percentages actively promoted?

**MM:** Yes, they are. Of course, on TV and in the movies there is such a tremendous emphasis on it. This was incredible to me: The Lambda Gay and Lesbian Education Fund released a study showing that gay behavior has gone up dramatically in America in the last 10 years, and nobody is able to figure it out—because they say you're programmed, you're born gay, you can't do anything about it. So why would this behavior go up? The spokespeople for these gay organizations said it was media influence. They said that the normal appearance of gay people in mass media made it more acceptable for people to express their gay sexuality.

**GN:** Doesn't that suggest our gullibility?

**MM:** Yes, it goes without saying because if you see the most glamorous people in the world engaging in some behavior, whether it is violence or promiscuous heterosexual sex or homosexuality or foul language or whatever it is, it provides a sanction, an acceptability, for others to do the same.

That's the whole idea behind advertising. That's why they have sports stars and movie stars appearing in ads: because you want to be associated with these people, so you're going to imitate the behavior that you see. It not only works in ads, unfortunately. It works in programming entertainment. We're imitating what we see, much to our own hurt. **GN**

# Queen

Continued from page 15

extensive rewrite of the constitution if it were not to introduce the danger of an over-powerful head of state" (*The World in 2002*, p. 42).

In other words, political instability would likely be the outcome of removing the hereditary monarch as head of state, though certainly to a lesser degree than in third-world nations that were once a part of the British Empire.

Often underappreciated, even at home in England, is the primary purpose of the restoration of the monarchy in the 17th century—the desire on the part of the people never to experience another dictatorship, whether royal or republican. A dictatorship was England's experience during the reign of Charles I and under the ill-fated republic of 1649-60. America's founding fathers created another republic a century later with weaker central government, a system that has worked well for the United States but has met far less success anywhere else, including Africa.

As for Africa, hope for the troubled continent lies in the future, when African countries will again come under a constitutional monarchy. This time it will be a perfect government that will last forever. The King will be Jesus Christ, the constitution the laws of God. You can read about this future in your Bible:

"Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever" (Isaiah 9:7).

"... He [Jesus Christ] will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3). **GN**

## Recommended Reading

What was behind the surprising rise and sudden decline of the British Empire? For a deeper understanding of where the British Commonwealth fits in Bible prophecy, be sure to request our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download them from our Web site at [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org).

# Prophecy

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magazines, cable and satellite systems and video-rental stores, you make even more money—lots and lots of money. It's no wonder we've seen so many massive media mergers in recent years.

The implications are sobering. Children increasingly think, say and do what they see on commercial and "public" programming. More and more people cannot discriminate between Hollywood-produced drivel and real life. Their lives become almost surreal.

The consequences, according to the Bible, will be devastating. God's Word indicates these trends will play a major role in the downfall and destruction of the United States and other major English-speaking nations (be sure to request your free copy of the booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*).

Research shows that children's anti-social behavior in schools directly relates to the amount and content of the television they watch. In one survey 35 percent of imprisoned violent criminals said they got the ideas to carry out their crimes from watching television.

## The last days and you

Ninety percent of Americans claim they believe in God. But they don't know who He is. They can't recite the Ten Commandments, name the four Gospels (much less the books of the Old or New Testament) or explain the difference between Abraham and Muhammad. As Paul predicted, the motivation of people in the last days will not be personal achievement, noble character or love of neighbor. Men, women and young people will be "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."

So what about you?

God says to any who are caught up in the end-time materialistic system, mindset and culture that pervades the world, "Come out of her, My people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

The way to come out is to recognize where our materialistic, self-obsessed entertainment and media are leading us. Turn off the consumption; turn away from the self-obsessed way of life promoted by our global media system. Instead, turn to God and His Word, the Bible. Remember, God recorded these warnings to us for a reason. **GN**

# Letters From Our Readers

## **The Good News**

I really do appreciate your wonderful *Good News* magazine, which a friend introduced to me a couple of years ago. I especially appreciate the way you provide such easily understood information supporting the Bible, Christian belief, etc. This is very helpful in view of the great stampede in today's world to belittle the Bible and Christianity. Although I don't always agree with every interpretation you have of the Bible, I am blessed greatly by reading your magazine and some of the materials you have sent me.

*T.D., Spokane, Washington*

This is just an acknowledgment to let you know what a great job you are doing. It is really good to learn about the goodness of God and to know that there is a better life to look forward to. Your organization has been a new learning experience for me and has opened my mind to a whole new perspective about God's goodness and Christianity in general. It has helped me to build a stronger foundation for my life in Christ. I appreciate all of the free literature that you provide me with from time to time. I would just like to say thanks.

*J.A.W., Trinidad, West Indies*

I was very happy to read *The Good News* because I am attending a congregation in Saudi Arabia. It is very useful for my preaching. I request you to kindly accept this letter as a subscription renewal.

*G.J., Saudi Arabia*

I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate your magazine. As soon as it arrives, I devour it and really feel I have much to reflect on and new ammunition for daily life.

*A.L., Albuquerque, New Mexico*

## **Creation or evolution?**

I am a prisoner in Texas. Recently someone showed me a copy of your booklet *Creation or Evolution: Does it Really Matter What You Believe?* I found it to be one of the best arguments for creation that I have ever encountered. The evolution-vs.-creation debate is one that has enthralled me for years. Unfortunately, I had to return the booklet to its owner. Would

it be possible for you to send me a copy?

*J.T., Midway, Texas*

*Your free copy has already been mailed. Why not also request the companion booklet Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*

## **Managing Your Finances**

I have recently received a copy of your booklet *Managing Your Finances*. This booklet is good source material for Christians in resolving financial challenges. It also teaches how to maintain righteousness in a world that is entangled with lust for money and earthly treasures. I commend the efforts of the church that God has inspired as a vessel to accomplish this task.

*J.O., Nigeria, West Africa*

## **Bible Reading Program**

I am studying your new Bible Reading Program, and it is wonderful! I print it out from my computer and put it in a loose-leaf notebook so when I am through I can go back and read it any time. I have read the Bible through several times, and there is always something new. This course explains things in ways I had never thought of.

*L.P., White Oak, Texas*

## **Holy Days or holidays?**

I saw my first *Good News* magazine, which was the March-April 2001 issue. I found a lot of interesting stories about Easter holidays and festivities that are pagan in origin. I believe they are a threat to Christianity. I am writing to ask for a copy of the booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?*

*M.S.Z.K., Malawi, Central Africa*

Thank you so much for sending *Holidays or Holy Days*. I notice that you didn't ask for an offering, but I am grateful and am sending what I can. It's well-researched material. I've always wanted to know the truth about a lot of our traditions.

*P.D., Greensboro, North Carolina*

## **Readers seek to attend church services**

Just a note to thank you for your magazine. It is truly the most complete and truthful information I have ever received

in the Christian field. I enjoy and have passed your information on to many of my Christian friends and coworkers. I wish you had a church in my area.

*M.D.C., Houma, Louisiana*

I have been reading your magazine for some time now and find that many of the beliefs I have been brought up with may not be God's will according to Scripture. Do you have church congregations to attend?

*A.I., Internet*

I'd like to know if you have a minister near Butte, Montana. I wish to be baptized.

*S.S., Butte, Montana*

I would like to be able to talk to someone in the Portland, Oregon, area about going to the United Church of God. It is hard being a Christian with no help. I went to a Sabbath-keeping church because I believe in the Saturday Sabbath, but I did not like following their pagan rituals (Christmas, Easter, etc.). I need help because the world is hard enough without trying to fight it alone with none who have the same basic beliefs. The United Church of God has helped me to find what I was searching for, and that is the truth.

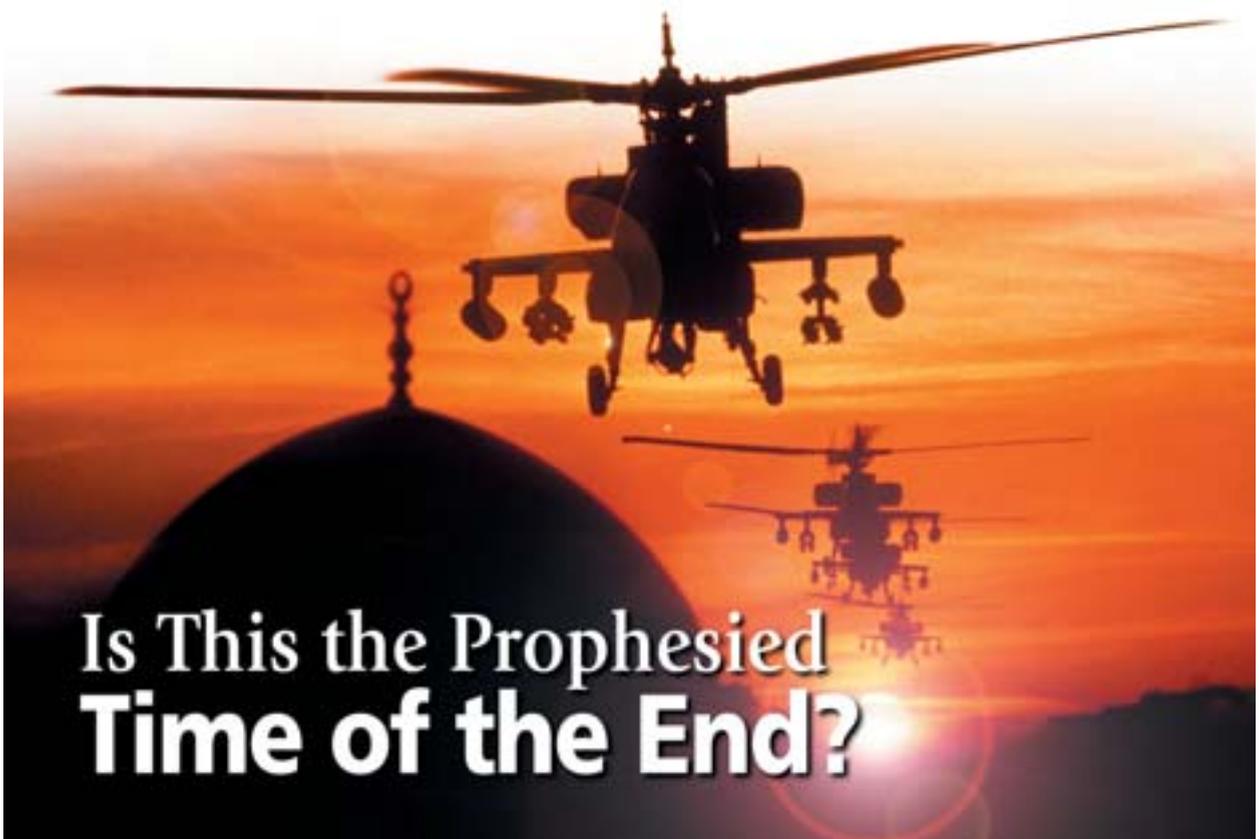
*D.L.H., Portland, Oregon*

*We deeply appreciate reader interest in attending our church services, being baptized or contacting a United Church of God minister. Our reader-services staff and personal correspondents gladly communicate with all who request help. We have sent telephone numbers of the nearest pastors to those above.*

Your magazine *The Good News* is excellent, and I truly appreciate your sending it to me. God bless the work you are doing. I have attended some Sabbath services and am impressed at the display of unity and harmony in the group.

*D.C., Vancouver, B.C., Canada*

*Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to The Good News, Box 541027, Cincinnati, Ohio 45254, U.S.A., or E-mail ginfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).*



## Is This the Prophesied Time of the End?

**F**or thousands of years people have been fascinated with predictions of the end of the world. If we look into the inspired writings of the biblical prophets and apostles, we find many prophecies that refer to the time of the end.



Should we take their messages seriously? Are world conditions such that these predictions could be fulfilled in our day?

Jesus Christ Himself foretold a future time so horrendous that no human beings would be spared "unless those days were shortened" (Matthew 24:22). Was He referring to our troubled age?

Many prophecies leave us in no doubt that increasingly cataclysmic events will occur before God's direct intervention in human affairs. These terrifying prophecies will see their fulfillment at some future time. The crucial question is *when*.

This eye-opening booklet, *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*, examines exactly what Jesus Christ, His apostles and the prophets of old really said about the intriguing days they refer to as the time of the end. Request your free copy today!



**United Church of God**  
an International Association