

# *The* Good News

November-December 2002

A M A G A Z I N E O F U N D E R S T A N D I N G



## Vibrant Health The Crucial Biblical Keys

Follow a Healthy—and Biblical—Diet • Smoking and Health: The Overlooked Key  
America vs. Iraq or America vs. the World? • Was Christ Born on Christmas Day?

## The High Cost of Ignorance

Watching a well-known television news-commentary program recently, I was quite surprised at an exchange between the host and his guest. Although the host openly professes to be Christian and belongs to a major mainline denomination, he utterly rejected his guest's reference to the Old Testament to support his point. "That's all just allegorical," the host snorted. "It doesn't mean anything for us today." When the guest then tried to quote from one of Paul's epistles, the host interrupted again. "That's not the gospel," he snapped.

How sad, I thought, that such a nationally known and respected figure can so casually dismiss the Old Testament—about three quarters of the entire Bible—as "just allegorical" and irrelevant and then turn around and dismiss more than half of what's left over with "that's not the gospel."

It's this kind of thinking that prompted the theme of this issue—that the Bible is *always* relevant and a book for *all mankind*, for *all ages*.

Few people have ever considered the Bible a reliable guide for proper diet and good physical and mental health. Yet scattered throughout its pages are priceless laws and principles that would literally save millions of lives every year—if people would only pay attention to them.

Consider, for a moment, one of today's deadliest killers, AIDS. Probably a week doesn't go by that you don't see the disease mentioned in the headlines or referred to on the evening news. It is the fourth-leading cause of death worldwide. Yet AIDS is *entirely preventable* and wouldn't even exist if people only lived according to the laws revealed in the Bible.

How did the AIDS epidemic begin? No one knows for sure, but now we know that African green monkeys carry a related virus naturally in their blood. Several decades ago the virus jumped to human beings, apparently when hunters killed and butchered infected monkeys for food. Once it entered the human bloodstream, the virus proved deadly and unstoppable.

But it need not have started there, and wouldn't have, if people obeyed God's laws that forbid eating the flesh of apes—a biblically designated "unclean" animal. God's Word clearly states that the flesh of some animals should never be eaten (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14).

So AIDS could have ended there. But it didn't. Those who were initially infected had sexual relations with their spouses—but also with others. In violating God's laws forbidding adultery (Exodus 20:14), those who were infected unknowingly passed on a death sentence to their unsuspecting sexual partners. Some of them, in turn, passed it on to others.

In the Western world the disease—still unnamed and unidentified—was first noticed in homosexual men, among whom it was spreading like wildfire. Researchers soon discovered that common homosexual practices were highly effective ways to spread the deadly virus. Such behavior is condemned in the Bible (Leviticus 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

In most other countries AIDS spread as a heterosexual disease (between men and women). Prostitution, extramarital and premarital sex—all violations of God's commands—saw to it that the epidemic would continue its grim march around the globe. Another factor—sharing syringes to inject illegal drugs—also played a significant role.

Now, because of all of these factors, AIDS is firmly entrenched throughout the world. At any of these stages along the way, the disease could have been confined so that it would have died out within a generation—had not people persisted in disobeying God's laws. The sins of others have affected many innocent people as well, including babies, spouses, and hemophiliacs who received tainted blood transfusions.

The world spends some \$60 billion a year treating AIDS, educating people about it and trying to slow its advance. It has already taken some 20 million lives; another 36 million live under its death sentence.

That's a terribly costly price to pay for ignorance. Isn't it about time we paid attention to what God says?

—Scott Ashley

# The Good News

November/December 2002 Volume 7, Number 6 Circulation: 411,000

*The Good News* (ISSN: 1086-9514) is published bimonthly by the United Church of God, an International Association, 555 Technecenter Dr., Milford, OH 45150. © 2002 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. Periodicals Postage paid at Milford, Ohio 45150, and at additional mailing offices.

Publisher: United Church of God, an International Association  
Council of Elders: Gary Antion, Aaron Dean, Robert Dick, Jim Franks, Doug Horchak, John Jewell, Clyde Kilough (chairman), Victor Kubik, Les McCullough, Mario Seiglie, Richard Thompson, Leon Walker

Church president: Roy Holladay Media operation manager: Peter Eddington  
Managing editor: Scott Ashley Writer-researchers: Jerold Aust, Roger Foster, Melvin Rhodes, Tom Robinson, John Ross Schroeder Copy editor: Dixon Cartwright  
Art director: Shaun Venish Circulation manager: John LaBissoniere  
Editorial reviewers: John Bald, Bruce Gore, Paul Kieffer, Graemme Marshall, Richard Thompson, David Treybig, Lyle Welty, Dean Wilson

To request a free subscription, visit our Web site at [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org) or contact the office nearest you from the list below. *The Good News* is sent free to all who request it. Your subscription is provided by the voluntary contributions of members of the United Church of God, an International Association, and others. Donations are gratefully accepted and are tax-deductible in the United States and Canada. Those who choose to voluntarily support this worldwide work are welcomed as coworkers in this effort to proclaim the true gospel to all nations.

**Personal contact:** The United Church of God has congregations and ministers throughout the United States and many other countries. To contact a minister or to find locations and times of services, contact our office nearest you or access our Web site at [www.ucg.org/churches](http://www.ucg.org/churches).

Scriptural references in *The Good News* are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., publishers) unless otherwise noted.

### NORTH, SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

**United States:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027  
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795

Web site address: [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org) E-mail: [info@ucg.org](mailto:info@ucg.org)  
**Canada:** United Church of God—Canada

Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada  
Phone: (905) 876-9966, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 876-0569  
Web site address: [www.ucg.ca](http://www.ucg.ca)

**Caribbean:** United Church of God, P.O. Box N8873, Nassau, Bahamas  
Phone: (242) 324-3169 Fax (242) 364-5566

**Martinique:** Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France

**Spanish-speaking areas:** Iglesia de Dios Unida

P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.  
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 E-mail: [info@ucg.org](mailto:info@ucg.org)

### EUROPE

**British Isles:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts, WD19 6FZ, England  
Phone: 020-8386-8467 Fax: 01257-453978 Web site address: [www.goodnews.org.uk](http://www.goodnews.org.uk)

**France:** Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France

**Germany:** Vereinte Kirche Gottes/Gute Nachrichten  
Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637

**Italy:** La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24100 Bergamo, Italy  
Phone: (+39) 035-452.16.26 Fax: (+39) 035-58.21.40

Web site address: [www.labuonanotizia.org](http://www.labuonanotizia.org) E-mail: [redazione@labuonanotizia.org](mailto:redazione@labuonanotizia.org)

**Netherlands:** P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, Netherlands

**Scandinavia:** Guds Forenade Kyrka, Mailbox 144, 111 73 Stockholm, Sweden  
Phone: +44 20 8386-8467 Fax: +44 1257 453978

### AFRICA

**Ghana:** P.O. Box 3805, Kumasi, Ghana

**Mauritius:** P.O. Box 53, Quatre Bornes, Mauritius

**South Africa:** United Church of God, Southern Africa  
P.O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East London 5205, South Africa  
Phone and Fax: 043 748-1694 E-mail: [rsa@ucg.org](mailto:rsa@ucg.org)

**Zambia and Malawi:** P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia E-mail: [ucgzamal@ucg.org](mailto:ucgzamal@ucg.org)

**Zimbabwe:** P.O. Box 3393, Paulington, Mutare, Zimbabwe  
Phone: 09 263 20 68102 E-mail: [zimbabwe@ucg.org](mailto:zimbabwe@ucg.org)

### PACIFIC REGION

**Australia:** United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia  
Phone: 07 55 202 111 Free call: 1800 356 202 Fax: 07 55 202 122  
Web site address: [www.ucg.org.au](http://www.ucg.org.au) E-mail: [info@ucg.org.au](mailto:info@ucg.org.au)

**Fiji:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 10577, Nadi Airport, Fiji Phone: 723-678

**New Zealand:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Auckland 1015, New Zealand  
Phone: Toll-free 0508-463-763

**Philippines:** P.O. Box 81840, DCCPO, 8000 Davao City, Philippines  
Phone: 82 241-0150 Web site address: [www.ucg.org.ph](http://www.ucg.org.ph)

**Tonga:** United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 127, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

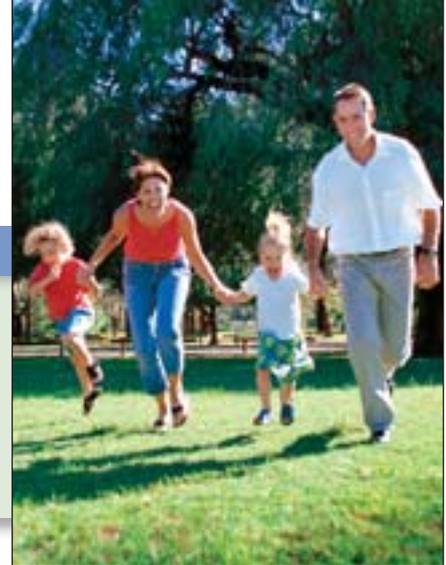
### ALL AREAS AND NATIONS NOT LISTED

United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.  
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 E-mail: [info@ucg.org](mailto:info@ucg.org)

Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement Number 1487140.

Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to  
*The Good News*, Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027.

# Table of Contents



What does the Bible teach us about human health? 4

## Cover Feature

### Vibrant Health: The Crucial Biblical Keys

*We usually take our health for granted—until we start to lose it. Where can we find reliable guidance for a long and healthy life? The Bible has a surprising number of things to say about our health. Researchers have discovered that the health instructions God revealed thousands of years ago are sound—and far ahead of their time. . . . . 4*

### Follow a Healthy—and Biblical—Diet

*You wouldn't put water or diesel fuel in your car's gasoline tank, would you? God designed the human body and proper fuels for it. Shouldn't we pay attention to what He says to put into it and what to avoid? . . . . . 10*



An overlooked key to kicking the smoking habit 18

### America vs. Iraq or America vs. the World?

*Only a year after Sept. 11, America is often viewed as the villain rather than the victim. Why do so many people around the world hate America? How might their hatred impact America's conflict with Iraq? . . . . 16*

### Smoking and Health: The Often-Overlooked Key

*We all know that smoking is devastating to human health. Maybe you or a loved one would like to quit for good. Where can you find the extra help to kick the habit? Learn about an often-overlooked key to quitting. . . . . 18*

### The Bible's Keys to Mental Health

*Why are mental-health problems and disabilities rising at an alarming rate? Could it be that we are overlooking the Bible's keys to healthy thinking? What are those keys and how can we put them into practice? . . . . 22*

### Was Christ Born on Christmas Day?

*Millions celebrate Christmas thinking Dec. 25 is Christ's birthday. But was He born on that day? Plenty of evidence shows He wasn't. If Jesus lived on earth today, would He have anything to do with Christmas? . . . . 25*

### Did Jesus Declare All Meats Clean?

*Many people assume that Jesus' statements in Mark 7 did away with the dietary restrictions recorded in the Old Testament. But is that how we should understand this passage? Are unclean meats even the subject? . . . . 28*



What's the true origin of Christmas and its customs? 25

## Regular Features

**World News and Trends** *An Overview of Conditions Around the World . . . . . 14*

**Letters From Our Readers** *Readers of The Good News share their thoughts . . . . . 31*

**G**ood health is something we take for granted—until we start to lose it. When our health takes a downturn, we quickly begin to question our habits and diet.

One man, lying in a hospital bed while regretting the damage he had inflicted on his body over a lifetime of bad choices and habits, offered a suggestion for God: “How would it be . . . if we arrived in the world with an owner’s manual tied to the umbilical cord?” (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Jan. 25, 1989).

The human body is an “instrument [that is] the most resilient on Earth. It can endure fractures and adhesions. It can endure constant pain and great stretches of tedium. Yet it is also the most fragile instrument on Earth, because it is not built to handle excess, whether this takes the form of nourishment, fuel or additives. Unlike machines, this instrument chokes on poisons when they are administered in continuing doses and mistaken for fuel . . . It is an instrument [that] has moving parts, thinking parts and feeling parts. All of them can be misused” (ibid.).

Many people do not realize that God *does* supply an “owner’s manual” that tells us how to operate the human body, and it’s been with us for millennia. The problem is that not enough people pay much attention to it.

That manual is the Bible, a book that contains instructions for proper maintenance of our moving, thinking and feeling parts. Although it isn’t a medical text, it *is* God’s Word, and in its pages He reveals many basic principles for good health.

The Bible has a surprising number of things to say about your health. In recent years researchers are discovering that its health advice is sound—and far ahead of its time.



# Vibrant Health

## The Crucial Biblical Keys

by Noel Hornor

A major part of the Bible's health instruction dates back to the time of Moses. Yet in our day, some 3,500 years later, many researchers and medical doctors are stunned at the

accuracy and effectiveness of its many provisions.

"The laws given by God to Moses contained remarkable rules pertaining to public health . . . What are the primary concerns of a public health officer today? Water and food contamination, sewage disposal, infectious diseases, health education—these are all dealt with in the Mosaic

bringing significant health benefits. "In 1995 . . . a Harvard Medical School conference [was convened] on the subject of faith and health . . . One study reviewed at this conference found that weekly churchgoers in Maryland were less likely to die from heart attacks (50 percent less), emphysema (56 percent less) cirrhosis (74 percent less) and suicide (53 percent less)" than non-churchgoers (S.I. McMillen, M.D., and David Stern, M.D., *None of These Diseases*, 2000, p. 200).

The recognized father of aerobic exercise, Dr. Kenneth Cooper, stated: "Intrinsic belief . . . characterized by such qualities as profound spiritual commitment, a sense of having found the ultimate meaning of life, a devotion to heartfelt prayer, and a quest for

dating from 1500 B.C. (about the same time God revealed His health laws to Moses).

"The remedies it prescribes make modern readers cringe. A few of the treatments include: statue dust, beetle shells, mouse tails, cat hair, pig eyes, dog toes, . . . eel eyes and goose guts . . . To splinters, the ancient Egyptian doctors applied a salve of worm blood and donkey dung. Since dung is loaded with tetanus spores, a simple splinter often resulted in a gruesome death from lockjaw" (McMillen and Stern, p. 10).

The Egyptians believed evil spirits were the cause of illness. Consequently the priest-physicians applied "magical" cures. Conversely, the biblical instructions regarding health maintenance and recovery from illness involve application of cause-and-effect principles—based on true science—that were given thousands of years before scientists developed the technology that enabled them to discover germs, bacteria, viruses, genes and the like. Modern medical science has *discovered* many principles of good health, but *God* originated them.

## Researchers have found that believing in God and living according to that belief bring significant health benefits.

health laws" (*The Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, 1975, "Diseases," p. 460).

What are some of these health principles that have been rediscovered only in recent times? What do they offer us? What do we have *yet* to learn about the Bible's instructions regarding health?

If we learn and practice the biblical instructions on healthy living, we can enjoy more-vibrant, energetic lives. Let us, then, examine what the Bible says about health and wellness, concentrating on seven key principles.

### Principle one: Obey God's commandments

The first principle, a foundational key to physical and mental health, is simply to obey God. We find this in Proverbs 3: "My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you . . . It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones" (verses 1-2, 8).

It should not surprise us that obedience to God's commandments and other laws would promote health. When we obey them, we operate in accordance with our Maker's instructions. As our Creator, He certainly knows what's best for us. "Fear God and obey His commands, for this is the duty of every person" (Ecclesiastes 12:13, New Living Translation).

Remarkably, researchers have found that believing in God and living according to that belief



a truly transformed life . . . has the capacity to spark major personal enrichment in every area of life—including dramatic improvements in physical health, emotional well being, and levels of fitness" (*It's Better to Believe*, 1995, p. 4).

Some biblical statements about health are specific. "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians" (Exodus 15:26).

What diseases afflicted the Egyptians? ". . . Autopsies on Egyptian mummies have shown evidence of tuberculosis, arteriosclerosis, arthritis, cancer, gallstones, bladder stones, schistosomiasis and smallpox" (*Wycliffe*, p. 459). In short, the people of Egypt suffered from the kinds of diseases that have ravaged mankind throughout history.

God's commandments and statutes include many laws that pertain to pathology as well as spiritual principles. The Egyptians suffered many diseases because they did not understand the health principles God gave Moses. Their ignorance is illustrated in the Ebers Papyrus, an Egyptian medical text

### Principle two: Basic sanitation

In contrast to the unsanitary medical treatments of the Egyptians, God emphasized physical cleanliness to His people. Today no educated person doubts the connection between hygiene and health. The major plagues and epidemics that killed millions through the ages generally originated because this principle was compromised in some way. Cholera, for example, has been one of the major killer diseases throughout history. It breaks out when sanitation principles are violated, and the resultant epidemics can be global.

For example, a cholera pandemic began in India in 1817, then spread to China, Sri Lanka, East Africa, the Philippines, Japan, Persia, Arabia and Russia. Another wave began in India in 1826, following a similar course, but spread also to mainland Europe and the British Isles.

From there it crossed the Atlantic to Canada, and then it made its way to the United States, appearing in Chicago and spreading south into the Mississippi Valley. Also, "it appeared concurrently in New York City and Boston and spread south and west, so that by 1836 cholera was present in most of the U.S. and did not disappear until 1838" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1961, "Cholera").

To this day cholera is endemic to many parts of the world and breaks out when unsanitary conditions prevail. This is especially true when the improper disposal of sewage is present, because the disease is

usually spread from the fecal matter of cholera victims. Should we see a large-scale breakdown of sanitary measures, “the rapidity of travel . . . would make possible the spread of cholera in pandemic proportions in a matter of a few weeks or months” (ibid.).

Yet thousands of years ago the Bible provided instruction that would prevent cholera and other similar epidemics: “Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. As part of your equipment have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement” (Deuteronomy 23:12-13, New International Version).

“Used as directed, this [simple] prescription could have saved more lives than every drug ever made” (McMillen and Stern, p. 34). God directed that raw human sewage must be disposed of in a manner that keeps people and animals from direct contact with it.

Everyone needs to apply these common-sense principles to avoid person-to-person transmission of contagious diseases. Other-

people were to take if they touched a corpse. First, they were to be considered “unclean” for seven days and had to wash with water on the third and seventh days (Numbers 19:12-13). As long as a person was unclean, he was to avoid social contact with others. Although it served a ritualistic purpose, this law also literally served to protect others from exposure to harmful bacteria, even though people



## Dr. Semmelweis arrived at a revolutionary conclusion: It might be contaminants on the medical students' hands that were responsible for spreading death from one patient to another. Thus he ordered the interns to wash their hands in chlorinated water.

wise carelessness by only a few negligent people can start a full-scale epidemic, particularly if the sanitary standards of a community are lax. Collective diligence is essential for avoiding the spread of contagious diseases.

### Death in Vienna

In 19th-century Europe no one knew about bacteria. In a hospital in Vienna, Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis was appalled at the death rate of pregnant women who came to the hospital to give birth. The deaths were attributed to “labor fever.” After the women died, medical students would perform autopsies and then immediately proceed to treat live patients.

After much observation, Dr. Semmelweis arrived at a revolutionary conclusion: It might be contaminants on the medical students' hands that were responsible for spreading death from one patient to another. Thus he ordered the interns to wash their hands in chlorinated water.

He then watched to see the results. “The history books tell us what happened next . . . In just three months the death rate fell from 18 percent to 1 percent” (ibid., p. 20).

Yet more than 3,000 years earlier God had revealed to Moses the sanitary measures

at the time did not know such things existed. The washing procedure cleansed the person of germs, and exposure to fresh air and sunlight between washings assisted in further purification.

Another basic rule of sanitation revealed in the Bible is the practice of quarantine. Bubonic plague, also known as the black death, ravaged Europe on several occasions through the centuries. One of the worst episodes came in the 14th century. Historical estimates of the death toll at that time ranged from 25 to 50 percent of the population. Sometimes whole towns were lost.

Yet, if the biblical law regarding quarantine (Leviticus 13:46) had been strictly practiced, the spread of the plague could have been minimized. In fact, “the origin of the word ‘quarantine’ is the Jewish use of the period of 40 days of segregation from patients with certain diseases . . . adopted by the Italians in the 14th century because of the relative immunity of Jews from certain plagues” (*New Bible Dictionary*, 1996, “Health, Disease and Healing,” p. 455).

### Principle three: Sexual purity

One of the current controversies swirling

around sexual permissiveness in society is the imperative of practicing “safe sex.” The truth is that there is only one kind of completely safe sex, and that is to live by the laws of the Bible regarding sexual behavior. Sexual practices should *always* be monogamous and *always* within the context of marriage.

Rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are surging the world over. “Worldwide, estimates hold that there are more than 300 million cases of STIs annually” (*Johns Hopkins Family Health Book*, 1999, p. 861). And “worldwide in the next few decades AIDS is expected to kill almost 300 million—more than the population of the entire United States” (McMillen and Stern, p. 116).

Some experts push condoms as a reliable way to arrest these epidemics. But condoms are not the answer. “Condoms, long the mainstay of the safe-sex public health model, *do not protect against the spread of nearly all sexually transmitted diseases*, according to a benchmark report released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services” (*Women's Health Weekly*, Sept. 6, 2001, emphasis added).

Huge numbers lose their health, reproductive capacity and sometimes even their lives because of sexual promiscuity. They find themselves regretful only when it is too late. “For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two edged sword . . . And you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed” (Proverbs 5:3-4, 11).

Sexual permissiveness can also cause psychological harm. Adultery saddles a person with guilt and destroys marriages. Sexual profligacy before marriage detracts from happiness after marriage.

For many people cohabitation serves as a substitute for marriage. Yet it is a cheap and ungodly substitute. “People who are cohabiting are less happy generally than the married and are less satisfied with their sex lives” (Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage*, 2000, p. 74).

A systematic study found “higher reported levels of emotional and physical pleasure for married people than for cohabiting or single people” (*Journal of Marriage and Family*, February 2001). Serial cohabitants also run a high risk of contracting STDs, which they are apt to pass on to later sexual partners, including their spouses if they later marry.

The Seventh Commandment—“You shall not commit adultery”—is God's way of preventing epidemics of STDs, as well

as helping us achieve happiness sexually and in other areas of life. “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Hebrews 13:4, NIV).

#### **Principle Four: Circumcision**

Infant male circumcision is a practice at least 4,000 years old, originating in the Bible. Can we find sound medical reasons for it?

Some doctors say no, and some groups have organized to ban the practice. But let’s examine some of the evidence. For starters, “uncircumcised boys [are] ten times more likely than circumcised boys to suffer urinary tract infections” (McMillen and Stern, p. 73). This conclusion draws from a study that involved the medical records of 200,000 infant boys.

It also appears that circumcision impedes the spread of AIDS and other STDs. “In Africa AIDS spreads mostly among tribes that do not practice circumcision” (ibid., p. 76). Why is this? The foreskin of uncircumcised males provides a warm, moist environment for the multiplication of bacteria. This poses a threat to the men, as well as their wives. “. . . The female partners of uncircumcised males have more infections, which in turn result in a higher incidence of cancer of the cervix” (Rex Russell, M.D., *What the Bible Says About Healthy Living*, 1999, p. 11).

Circumcision also provides protection against another disease—penile cancer—that is almost nonexistent among circumcised men and boys.

The Bible states that circumcision, when done, should be eight days after birth (Genesis 17:12). Doctors have routinely performed this procedure soon after birth instead. The result has sometimes been prolonged bleeding because the blood resisted clotting. Researchers have since found that in the first few days of life infants have a low supply of vitamin K, the vitamin that provides the blood’s clotting capability. “After five to seven days . . . infants have built up enough vitamin K to allow blood clotting to withstand circumcision” (ibid.).

Until these discoveries by modern medicine, the instruction to circumcise on the eighth day was believed to be superfluous, but we now know it was based on solid physiological reasons, proving the wisdom of the Bible.

However, it should be mentioned that the New Testament makes it clear that circumcision is not required for salvation in the Kingdom of God (Romans 2:26-29;

1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:6, 6:15.)

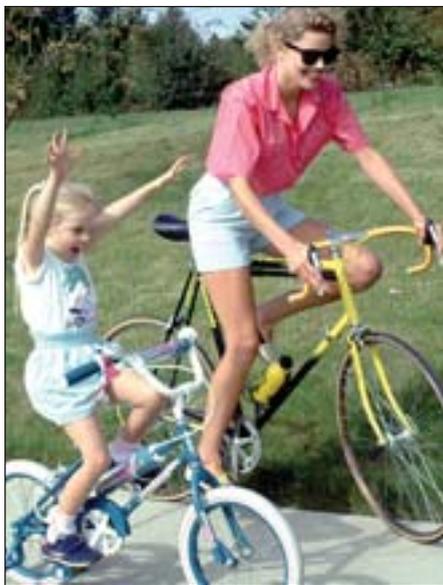
#### **Principle Five: Control Your Stress Level**

Stress is unavoidable and sometimes even helpful because it can add spice to our lives. People who are insufficiently stressed become bored; they find life lacks interest. When most of us use the term “stress” today, we really mean we are in distress or experiencing stress overload. Living with too much stress can bring frustration and anxiety. “An anxious heart weighs a man down” (Proverbs 12:25, NIV).

The list of diseases that stress can exacerbate includes AIDS (by hastening its onset after contracting HIV), cancer, heart disease, herpes, respiratory infections and disorders of the digestive system.

It is critical, especially in our fast-paced world, that we manage our stress load. If we subject ourselves to relentless stress, it will be only a matter of time before our bodies pay a price. The challenge of accomplishing

**It is critical that we manage our stress load. If we subject ourselves to relentless stress, it will be only a matter of time before our bodies pay a price.**



a lot of things and perhaps making a lot of money may be thrilling for a while, “but at the same time, it causes an accelerated wear and tear in our bodies. In a nutshell, stress is accelerated dying” (Archibald Hart, M.D., *The Anxiety Cure*, 1999, p. 136).

Keys to stress management include setting priorities and avoiding taking on more than we can handle. Jesus gently corrected one of His friends who violated this principle. “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things” (Luke 10:41). He

urged her to reorder her priorities as her sister Mary had done (verse 42).

The focus of Jesus’ teaching was the Kingdom of God. He told the 12 apostles to seek the Kingdom of God above all, and, if they did, God would supply their other needs (Matthew 6:33).

One of the keys to stress management is a relationship with God and an understanding of His purpose for life. “. . . Hundreds of studies have examined the relationship of faith and health. Eighty to ninety percent of these studies have reached the same conclusion: Faith makes fit, and doubt makes sick” (McMillen and Stern, p. 199).

One study examined the value of church involvement for recipients of open-heart surgery. “Those who neither had regular group participation nor drew strength and comfort from their religion were more than seven times more likely to die six months after surgery” (Dean Ornish, M.D., *Love and Survival*, 1997, p. 51).

God can lighten the stress of life so you

can deal with it—if you put your trust in Him. “Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you,” says Psalm 55:22. One of the ways to do this is to observe His weekly Sabbath rest. Neither our bodies nor our minds are designed to go days on end without a break in our routines.

Some attempt to cope with high levels of stress by using alcohol or other drugs, including illegal substances. This practice often results in substance abuse and addiction. Avoiding addictions is critical to handling stress and life in general. Addictions are not a solution and will only add to one’s problems.

#### **Principle Six: Exercise**

The Bible contains few commands about physical exercise. Paul wrote that “bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things . . .” (1 Timothy 4:8). Paul did not mean that physical exercise has little value. Indeed, he was acknowledging that there is profit in it. But he was contrasting the short-term physical benefits of physical exercise with the long-term spiritual benefits of living a godly life—to live forever and enjoy true and lasting happiness.

In Bible times it was not necessary to exhort people to exercise regularly. Most people would walk a considerable distance

daily in the course of their regular routines and work. Someone calculated, using maps of the roads during Jesus' earthly life, how far He must have walked in the three-plus years He traveled and taught. That researcher "calculated that the total miles Jesus walked during the three years of His public ministry were 3,125 miles" (Don Colbert, M.D., *What Would Jesus Eat?*, 2002, p. 168).

Today many if not most people lead sedentary lives. The result is a dramatic increase in obesity and a host of diseases that threaten to decrease the quality and length of life.

Aerobic exercise—which can be something as simple as walking—helps control weight, lowers blood pressure and improves cholesterol levels. "In one study, researchers monitored more than 84,000 female nurses for eight years. Those women who exercised regularly had a 54 percent decreased risk of both heart attack and stroke when compared to sedentary women. Similar studies with men have produced similar results" (ibid., p. 170).

Exercise lowers the probability of adult-onset diabetes. Weight-bearing exercise, including walking, provides insurance against osteoporosis because it helps maintain bone density. This disease is a particular threat to women over age 50.

*The Demon-Haunted World*, 1995, p. 10).

### Principle Seven: Emotional Management

Proverbs 17:22 states, "A merry heart does good, like medicine . . ."

In recent years the health profession has affirmed the truth of this ancient wise saying, but a corollary, which could be phrased this way, also applies: A dejected spirit is like a toxin to the body.

"Research has confirmed the existence of systematic links . . . between anxiety, stress,



(Portland Oregonian, Aug. 20, 2000).

According to Stephen Sinatra, director of the New England Heart Center: "When a surgeon operates on a diseased heart, he can't tell if the person has a high-fat, high-cholesterol diet or if he has simmering anger" (ibid.).

Manifestations of anger constitute part of what the Bible calls the "acts of the sinful nature" (Galatians 5:19, NIV). The list includes "hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy" (verse 20). If these or other malevolent emotions are a residual part of your mentality, you are setting yourself up for serious future health problems.

You can begin a process of eradicating these characteristics from your personality by seeking to emulate the attributes called "the fruit of the spirit." These are "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23, NIV). In so doing, you will make life better for yourself and everyone around you. Your new conduct will also please God.

Of course, to truly take on the characteristics of God's Spirit and root out wrong, sinful emotions requires that His Spirit be in us—which comes after repentance of sin and baptism (Acts 2:38).

## God doesn't want anyone to suffer unnecessary illnesses; He wants us to enjoy good health. That's why He gave us the foundation for a program to provide for healthy living.

"There is even evidence that regular, moderate exercise may slightly reduce the risk of certain forms of cancer, especially cancers of the colon, breast and uterus. A nineteen-year study of over a million Swedish men found that those who led sedentary lives had a 30 percent greater risk of developing cancer of the colon" (Paul Martin, M.D., *The Healing Mind*, 1997, p. 246).

The people of the Bible—except for the severely physically disabled and elderly—were not sedentary. Their primary means of travel was walking. The work of men was generally physically demanding, and the same was true for women. Among the chores women customarily performed was the daily drawing and transporting of water for their households. This often required a fair bit of encumbered walking, because water sources were frequently central wells that were some distance from home.

People commonly lived to 70 years of age during biblical times (Psalm 90:10). It is probable that their physical activity coupled with other factors contributed to their longevity. Life expectancy didn't reach 70 in later centuries until 1955 (Carl Sagan,

depression and hostility, and a wide range of physical disorders including minor infections, gut disorders, herpes, allergies, asthma, arthritis, coronary heart disease and cancer" (Martin, p. 32).

Anger—in its various forms—is particularly harmful to one's health. This is something that has only recently gained the attention of medical science. "For most of the twentieth century, medical experts did not consider hostility to be a major health risk . . . Few worried about high hostility" (McMillen and Stern, pp. 206-207).

In one study "researchers tested hostility levels in 255 medical students . . . Over the following years . . . the doctors with high hostility [died] like raging bulls . . . By middle age, 13 percent of the high-hostility men had died. In contrast, only 2 percent with low hostility had died. The men with grudgitis had more hypertension and five times more heart attacks" (ibid.).

How can anger be so debilitating? "Anger management is vital to your health because the chemicals released in your body during a tirade or tantrum are as dangerous to your cardiac health as smoking or a high-fat diet"

### What will you do?

It was not until the modern era that men obtained detailed knowledge of human physiology and medicine. Yet the Creator God, who is sometimes called the Great Physician, knows everything about us.

God doesn't want anyone to suffer unnecessary illnesses; He wants us to enjoy good health (3 John 2). That's why He gave us the foundation for a program to provide for healthy living. The Bible provides the necessary keys. The choice of whether to apply them and reap the resultant benefits is ours to make. **GN**

### Recommended Reading

Looking for more good advice? We've prepared a free guide, *Making Life Work*, to help you discover the Bible's principles for success not only in health but in many aspects of life. You'll also find timeless guidance on family relationships, finances, friendships and your job or career—all to help your life work better. You need to discover the basic rules our Creator handed down to us so we can lead happy, productive, successful and fulfilling lives.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download this booklet from our Web site at

[www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org)

# You Can Have Healthy Children—Here's How

It was a sunny spring morning with a touch of crispness still in the air, a perfect day for a stroll through the zoo. But amid the crowds passing by I couldn't believe what I was seeing. A young mother, perhaps in her mid-20s and grossly overweight, was pulling a four-wheeled cart behind her. In the cart was an obese 6- or 7-year-old. But, worse still, the young boy, sitting cross-legged, was eating from a mound of pretzels and potato chips piled high in his lap.

My heart went out to both. What struggle had this woman already endured in her teen life and young motherhood? What battle yet lay ahead for her son who was heartily imitating her habits?

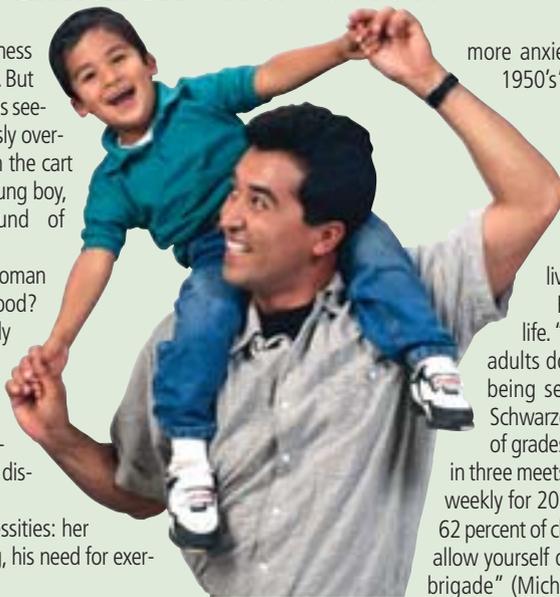
Must children follow a parent's pattern of obesity or ill health? No, it doesn't have to be that way. The cycle of poor health can be broken, but not without discipline in an affluent world beset with and seduced by distractions and fast foods.

I saw in this mother and child three pressing necessities: her need to change the way of life her child was emulating, his need for exercise, and their combined need for a change in diet.

Obesity, long a problem for the wealthy West, is also a growing problem in economically poor nations. A recent UN report noted that obesity is a symptom of economic progress. Now a problem of near-epidemic proportions, growing obesity has led World Health Organization (WHO) officials to develop plans "to head off a global explosion of fat-related diseases that a new generation of Latin Americans, Asians and even Africans could face" (*National Post*, Canada, May 18).

Contributing to the problem are a changing job market with an increase in two-income families and busy parents serving convenience foods, children taking buses to school rather than walking, and people not walking to water wells now that water is piped to their homes.

Egypt was cited as having the highest incidence of child obesity among poor nations,



more anxiety than did child psychiatric patients in the 1950's" (Perry, p. 64).

All this leads to the conclusion that children suffer because of the bad habits of their parents. Mr. Perry, who wrote a book, *The Diabetes Cure*, with Dr. Vern Cherevatenko, quotes his coauthor as saying: "The bottom line is that kids do what their parents do. And most parents aren't living right themselves" (*ibid.*).

Regular exercise is another casualty of modern life. "As of today, fewer than 10 percent of American adults do any regular exercise at all. Our children are being set up for a sickly adulthood. Despite Arnold Schwarzenegger's efforts with schools, the latest survey of grades 9-12 in all 50 states shows that only one child in three meets the minimum standard of exercise: three times weekly for 20 minutes. That's a big *decline* since 1984 when 62 percent of children met the standard. For health's sake, don't allow yourself or your children to be part of the couch potato brigade" (Michael Colgan, M.D., *The New Nutrition*, 1995, p. 201, emphasis in original).

What can we do to help our children adopt healthy habits as a way of life? Here are several proven ways to reverse obesity and ill health, starting your child on the road to better physical and mental health. (A word of caution: If children are afflicted with diseases like cerebral palsy, severe visual or hearing impairment, Turner's syndrome [a congenital disorder that results in multiple physical problems including heart murmurs], or hypophosphatasia [an inherited chemical disease resulting in enzyme deficiency and a degree of deformity], we do *not* suggest that changes in dietary and exercise habits will effect a permanent cure.) The following common-sense advice will help most children.

**Set limits on television viewing, Internet surfing and playing video games.** Study after study links electronic entertainment with declining levels of physical activity, increased consumption of junk foods and overexposure to anxiety-causing violence. Use wisdom and discretion, but get your children away from such habitual distractions and into real life. Perhaps the most effective way is to regularly engage in profitable activities *with them*, rather than just giving them instructions.

**Teach them to guard their bodies and minds.** In regards to diet, do what is good for their health, not just what *tastes* good. Do your homework to learn what foods are junk and why they are harmful. Seek to understand the problems related to food colorings, preservatives and chemical additives. Some helpful books include:

*The New Nutrition*, by Michael Colgan, M.D., 1995.

*Fast Food Nation*, by Eric Schlosser, 2001.

*The Diabetes Cure*, by Vern Cherevatenko, M.D., and Paul Perry, 1999.

*The Carbohydrate Addict's Healthy Heart Program*, by Richard Heller, M.D., Rachel Heller, M.D., and Frederic Vagnini, M.D., 1999.

**For mental health, expose children to challenging physical tests befitting their age.** Teach your children to extend themselves physically and to know they *can* reach worthwhile goals. Begin by getting a physical examination for each of them so you can wisely plan their physical-development program. If they are out of shape, start moderately and gradually build up their endurance.

Barring a limiting disease or physical impairment, encourage them to break through the pain barrier of exercise by participating in such activities as running several miles or kilometers or hiking with loaded packs. These types of activities teach the skill of enduring the trials of life they will inevitably encounter.

Several times weekly, engage your children in some type of aerobic exercise such as tennis, basketball, running or swimming. Make it vigorous enough to leave them sweating and breathing hard. Teach them that ascending to the top of satisfying emotional mountains in life sometimes requires journeys through low valleys.

Here is some rock-solid advice for concerned parents: If you smoke, seek help so you can stop. If you overeat, eat less. If you tend to be lazy, become more active. If you are physically impaired, at least be the cheerleader who inspires your children to be active. After all, your children are just little copies of you. They mimic how you think and what you do. For their good health, aren't your children worth some changes?

—Lynn Marshall

## Whatever happened to simple childhood diseases? Today's children suffer with health problems once common to those much older. What went wrong?

with more than 25 percent of its 4-year-olds overweight. The highest percentage in Latin America occurs in Mexico, with Peru and Chile close behind. The WHO findings identify urban areas as having more such problems than their rural counterparts.

This trend parallels that of the West. The affluent are the first to overindulge in unhealthy food, and children copy the habits of their parents.

A 14-year-old boy came into a doctor's office complaining of headaches, depression and periods of confusion. His mother wanted the doctor to give her son Prozac or some other antidepressant. Instead, the doctor gave her boy a blood test.

"His blood sugar was through the roof," said the doctor. "A few more lab tests and we confirmed that he had type-2 diabetes, the avoidable kind."

This incident, related by health writer Paul Perry, tells us that more and more children suffer from what used to be diseases largely confined to their parents (*American Way*, April 2001, p. 64). Mr. Perry says we should be particularly concerned about the following adult diseases that afflict children:

**"Diabetes:** As many as 45 percent of all new cases of diabetes in children are Type 2, commonly known as 'adult onset diabetes.' Obesity and lack of exercise are the major factors for this disease, which can lead to heart disease, kidney failure and blindness.

**"Osteoporosis:** A dangerous thinning of the bones that usually takes place in women after menopause is now being found in adolescent girls. The culprit, according to one theory, is soft drinks. 'Teens have doubled or tripled their consumption of soft drinks and have cut consumption of milk by more than 40 percent,' says Dr. Grace Wyshak of the Harvard School of Public Health.

**"Stress and anxiety:** More and more children every year are becoming victims of their fears of the world around them. A study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* said that the average American child in the 1980s reported

# Follow a Healthy— and Biblical—Diet

God designed the human body. Shouldn't we pay attention to what He says to put into it and what to avoid?

by Noel Hornor

**M**ark Twain reportedly said, "Don't read health books; you may die of a misprint." Although the great American humorist said this in jest, we should be cautious about whose advice we take on health matters, including diet. The fuel for our bodies is vital to our health. Just as a gasoline engine will suffer damage if we pump diesel fuel into it, our bodies suffer if we consume the wrong fuel.

Few people have considered that the Bible is an authoritative and reliable source of dietary information. However, it conveys numerous principles by command and example. Modern dietary science and research verify that the information it contains is *accurate and beneficial*—and that's only logical, since God, the designer of our bodies, knows what we should eat.

## Benefits of a healthy diet

Other than simply keeping us alive, what benefits should a healthy diet provide?

Perhaps most important, it should fortify our immune system and help protect us against disease. It is common knowledge that a proper diet lowers our risk for many diseases.

It should also enable us to avoid the troublesome weight problems that plague the Western world. "Half of all adults in Europe and 61 percent of Americans are overweight" (University of California, Berkeley, *Wellness Letter*, November 2001).

The situation is serious enough that the surgeon general of the United States "has declared obesity a national epidemic, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says it's fast replacing smoking as public health enemy No. 1" (*U.S. News & World Report*, July 1). This statement illustrates the magnitude of the risk of being overweight, considering that an estimated 500,000 Americans die annually from tobacco-related diseases.

What are the biblical laws that, if obeyed, would promote good health and combat disease?



**A healthy diet should fortify our immune system and help protect us against disease. It is common knowledge that a proper diet lowers our risk for many diseases.**

## Avoid meats the Bible calls "unclean"

The Bible declares some kinds of meat, including pork and shellfish, to be "unclean," meaning they are not meant to be consumed as food (Leviticus 11:4-44). Many don't realize that the dietary laws God gave in this regard still apply. Indeed, it appears likely that God gave these laws because the proscribed meat is simply bad for us, unfit for human consumption.

A common false assumption is that God meant His dietary laws only for ancient Israel, that they constituted part of the Old Covenant and were abolished under the New.

Actually, however, the Bible records commands that make the distinction between clean and unclean animals that predate God's covenant with Israel by *nearly 1,000 years*—for, as Genesis 7:2 records, God instructed Noah to take onto the ark seven pairs of clean animals and one pair of unclean. When God instructed Noah, Noah didn't need to ask God which were clean or unclean because *he already knew*. Indeed, it seems probable that when God created the animals in Genesis 1

He designated them either clean or unclean from that time forward.

For a thorough explanation of this subject, as well as a listing of animals the Bible defines as clean and unclean, we invite you to request our free booklet *Clean and Unclean Meats: What Does the Bible Teach?* This publication thoroughly discusses many biblical passages on the subject, including those that people mistakenly believe give us permission to eat the flesh of any animal. It also discusses health dangers associated with

eating unclean creatures, backed by statements from doctors and nutritionists. (See also "Did Jesus Make All Meats Clean?," beginning on page 28.)

## Eat a balanced diet of clean meats

God created certain meats for human consumption (Leviticus 11:2). Red meat—such as lamb or beef—is high in nutritional value and beneficial for health. But the biblical example is to eat red meat sparingly; often it was served only at feasts or other special occasions.

"It is very likely that Jesus ate beef since we know that many people celebrated His presence in their homes, and we know from Scripture that He attended weddings, where beef was often included as a feast food. Beef consumption, however, would not have been a daily or weekly practice . . ." (Don Colbert, M.D., *What Would Jesus Eat?*, 2002, p. 48).

If you need to reduce your red-meat consumption, you can supplement your diet with more fowl and fish. "During the time of Jesus . . . domestic fowl such as chickens, geese,

pigeons, partridges, duck and quail [were consumed]" (Colbert, p. 66).

"On the shores of the Sea of Galilee, fish was a common article of food in the days of Jesus" (Fred Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*, 1983, p. 51). Several of Jesus' disciples were former fishermen, and Jesus Himself ate fish (Luke 24:42).

Current research demonstrates that fish and fowl are especially healthy foods. *The Wellness Encyclopedia* notes that "a small portion (three to four ounces of cooked poultry without bones or skin) provides about half the daily adult protein requirement and has half to one-third the calories and fat of a similar portion of steak. Poultry is also a good source of B vitamins . . ."

It adds: "Like meat and poultry, fish is an excellent source of protein . . . relatively low in calories, fat and cholesterol . . . Fish also supply certain vitamins . . . Moreover, fish fat contains a special group of polyunsaturated fatty acids known as omega-3s. Research has shown that omega-3s can protect against heart disease" (University of California, 1991, pp. 185, 189-190).

### Don't eat animal fat or blood

The Bible tells us not to consume animal fat and blood (Leviticus 3:17). Scientists now realize that a direct cause-and-effect relationship exists between excess consumption of fat and heart disease. "Over 53 percent of people in large industrialized countries die of heart disease. Heart disease is

most commonly caused by fat deposits that build up in the arteries, often beginning in the teenage years" (Reginald Cherry, M.D., *The Bible Cure*, 1998, p. 34).

But that is not the only hazard associated with eating animal fat. Toxins also tend to concentrate in an animal's fat. While most of the fat in lean, range-fattened clean animals is isolated from the meat and easily trimmed away, "the toxins in pork are held especially in the fat, which is not isolated from the meat as can be the case in lean beef, but rather, it is dispersed throughout the meat" (Colbert, p. 50).

There are also important reasons to abstain from blood. "Scientists have long known that blood carries infections and toxins that circulate in an animal's body. If people eat animal blood, they are needlessly exposed to these infections and toxins" (Rex Russell, M.D., *What the Bible Says About Healthy Living*, 1996, p. 14).

### Limit fat consumption

Our bodies require some fat to be healthy. Nutritionists generally recommend that we ingest no more than 30 percent of our calories from fat. Some sources of fat are healthier than others. The best sources include fish and unsaturated plant-based fat. Fat from olives is among the healthiest plant-based fats. God supplied His people with this in abundance in that He placed them in a "land of olive oil" (Deuteronomy 8:8).

A modern example that indicates olive oil

is healthy for food is the dietary habits of the inhabitants of the Greek island of Crete. "Residents of Crete consume more olive oil per person than any other nation . . . In a fifteen-year period, 38 out of 10,000 Cretans died of heart disease, as compared to 773 out of 10,000 Americans" (Colbert, p. 118).

To realize the maximum benefits from consuming olive oil, it should be "extra virgin or virgin olive oil. If a bottle of olive oil is not labeled 'extra virgin' or 'virgin,' then the oil has been refined in some way" (Colbert, p. 116).

Oils that are beneficial also include canola, safflower and sunflower. Nutritionists frequently exhort us to raise our HDL (high-density lipoprotein) cholesterol, the "good" kind. "If raising your HDL is a primary concern, you should replace saturated fats (found in meats, whole milk, and cheese, as well as coconut oil) with either polyunsaturated fats (as in sunflower and safflower oil), or, even better, monounsaturated fats (as in olive and canola oil). This will lower both total cholesterol and LDL [low-density lipoprotein], and maintain HDL or boost it slightly" (*Wellness Letter*, December 2001).

Be aware that many commercially sold oils are subjected to a hydrogenation process before marketing. When the oils are hydrogenated, their beneficial effects are largely nullified. "Depending on the degree of hydrogenation, these artificially saturated vegetable fats are no better for you than comparably saturated animal fats" (*The Wellness Encyclopedia*, p. 95). Because baked products sold in stores generally contain hydrogenated fats, they should be consumed in moderation.

Are the fats in dairy products healthy for us? They constituted part of the biblical diet (Genesis 18:8; 1 Samuel 17:18) and are beneficial if eaten sparingly. Butter, in moderation, is an acceptable source of fat. "Recent studies reported by Dr. Matthew Gillman of Harvard Medical School . . . confirm that heart patients who ate margarine had twice as many heart attacks as those who ate butter" (Russell, p. 68).

Cheese is high in protein and loaded with calcium but contains a lot of fat. It can be safely consumed in moderation, though many overdo it. "Cheese is the leading source of artery-clogging fat in the U.S. diet, according to a report from the Center for Science in the Public Interest. The average American is eating three times as much cheese today as 30 years ago—on pizza, pasta, burgers, sandwiches, and even salads" (*Wellness Letter*, May 2001).

### Eat whole grains

Bread, made from wheat, barley or millet,

## Fast-Food Fanciers

America pioneered the fast-food industry that is a major part of the nation's economic engine. "In 1970, Americans spent about \$6 billion on fast food; in 2000, they spent more than \$110 billion. Americans now spend more money on fast food than on higher education, personal computers . . . or new cars . . . A generation ago, three-quarters of the money used to buy food in the United States was spent to prepare meals at home. Today about half of the money used to buy food is spent at restaurants—mainly at fast food restaurants" (Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, 2001, pp. 3-4).

In recent years much of the world has emulated American culture in its craving for fast food. "Between 1984 and 1993, the number of fast food restaurants in Great Britain roughly doubled—and so did the obesity rate among adults. The British now eat more fast food than any other nationality in Western Europe" (p. 242).

Asian nations also have succumbed to the invasion. "The arrival of McDonald's in 1971 accelerated the shift in Japanese eating habits. During the 1980's, the sale of fast food in Japan more than doubled" (*ibid.*).

People are drawn to fast food for several reasons. It tastes good, and it's quickly served—the latter

especially important considering the frantic pace of the lives of many people. Fast food also seems predictable and safe in that one can expect the same quality and taste wherever that brand of fast food is sold.

But is it good for us? One doctor who specializes in nutrition described the "worst diet in the world." It would be rich in calories, he said, and contain lots of saturated and hydrogenated fat, be high in sodium and, for meat, contain mostly beef and poultry, commercially grown, injected with an abundance of drugs and hormones. The diet also would minimize fruits and vegetables.

The doctor then wrote: "I would like you to visit three different fast-food restaurants of your choice, study the menus in them, and observe what the customers are eating. Then I want you to think about how closely those menus approximate the Worst Diet in the World we have just designed" (Andrew Weil, M.D., *Eating Well for Optimum Health*, 2000, p. 150).

If your food consumption includes large amounts of fast food, you would be wise to cut back. There are times—when we're in a hurry—when dining at fast-food outlets is convenient. If you limit your use of fast food to those rare or special occasions, you will do your body a great favor.

## The Profit Motive and Meat Production

In the distant past, families grew and prepared much of their food from scratch. Today, however, almost all the foods we eat are commercially grown and prepared. Further, the food industry is understandably concerned about its profit margin. Whenever profit is a major concern, quality may be sacrificed.

Therefore, *let the buyer beware*. Sometimes unhealthy food products are placed on the market because suppliers take shortcuts to save money. The results can be tragic, even catastrophic.

The mad-cow-disease epidemic in Britain is one such example. The disease apparently originated when suppliers began adding ground-up animal parts to cattle feed to add bulk, lower costs and increase profits. The cows were transformed from the herbivores God had designed them to be to unwitting carnivores—and somewhere along the way a new, *always-fatal disease* was born.

The disease eventually affected cattle in at least a dozen countries. This fatal malady can spread to human beings who eat infected beef; it did so in Britain and resulted in some deaths, though the number was relatively low.

The American beef industry has its problems too. Most animals are restricted to large feedlots in preparation for market. Says Don Colbert, M.D.: “The lives of those destined for slaughter are very simple: stand and eat day after day after day. Many animals have anabolic steroids planted in their ears to help them gain weight. Some are given a bovine growth hormone to make them larger. Antibiotics are usually included in the cattle feed so that the animals will not become infected . . . In 1991, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released a startling statistic—approximately half of the fifteen million pounds of antibiotics produced annually in America are used to treat livestock and poultry” (*What Would Jesus Eat?*, 2002, pp. 52-53).

Consuming meat from animals contained in tight quarters increases your risk of contracting disease. “Fecal contamination of red meat and poultry is all too common . . . The worst bacterial infection is the potentially deadly bacteria *E. coli* . . . The bacteria develops when chunks of manure and dirt fall from the animal’s hide onto the meat as the hide is removed . . . Scientists believe this particular deadly strain of *E. coli* mutated because of the overuse of antibiotics in today’s cattle” (*ibid.*, pp. 53-54). In a typical year, thousands of people are stricken with the *E. coli* bacteria, resulting in fatalities to some.

Rex Russell, M.D., observes that “antibiotics administered to animals for more rapid growth can increase the resistant bacteria humans are exposed to as well as the number of allergic reactions we may exhibit to drugs” (*What the Bible Says About Healthy Living*, 1999, p. 75).

In contrast to animals fattened for market in such conditions, free-range cattle are healthier; their meat contains less fat because they exercise through walking. They also are not pumped full of pesticides, antibiotics and growth hormones. Free-range beef can be purchased through some grocery stores and sometimes directly from private producers.

was the staple diet item in Bible times. “Bread was of such importance that the expression ‘eat bread and drink water’ could be used to signify eating and drinking as a whole” (“Bread,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 1962).

The importance of bread in the biblical diet is illustrated by Jesus when He said He was the bread of life (John 6:35, 48). Just as Christ is essential for salvation (Acts 4:12), whole-grain products are essential to healthy eating.

“Eat . . . six or more servings of grains or legumes, daily. Whole grains are especially nutritious. These foods will help you obtain the 20 to 30 grams of dietary fiber you need each day and will provide most of the important vitamins and minerals” (John Swartzberg, M.D., and Sheldon Margen, M.D., *The Complete Home Wellness Handbook*, 2001, p. 18).

One caution, however, concerns hybrid grains. Many of today’s hybrids, including wheat, contain a greatly reduced percentage

p. 247). The vegetables included leeks, onions, garlic and cucumbers.

“The various fruits mentioned in the Bible show . . . the Israelites’ ingenuity in growing, harvesting, and preparing them for use. Fruits were eaten fresh, dried, pressed into cakes, and squeezed for juice” (*ibid.*, p. 254).



## Adding more of these fruits and vegetables to your diet in place of other foods will supply a wealth of nutrition and also help with weight control.

of protein and an excessive percentage of carbohydrates compared with the nonhybrid grains in use during the biblical era. Nonhybrid grains tend to be far more nutritionally balanced than are most hybrid grains.

Grain products also typically undergo major changes in their journey from the field to the grocer’s shelf. For example, wheat is generally processed into white flour. The result? “Both the bran and the germ have been removed, along with approximately 80 percent of the wheat’s nutrients” (Colbert, p. 31). What about commercially produced breakfast cereals? They “usually have more than 50 percent of their calories in sugar and very little to no fiber” (p. 30).

The average Western diet lacks adequate fiber. “Though not a source of calories, vitamins or minerals, it contributes to health in several ways, and deficiency of it in the ordinary diet is a significant nutritional problem in our societies” (Andrew Weil, M.D., *Eating Well for Optimum Health*, 2000, p. 136).

### A biblical dietary comparison

Fruits and vegetables, along with whole grains, constituted the bulk of the biblical diet. “Everywhere the Hebrew people traveled, they included vegetables in their diet” (James Packer, Merrill Tenney and William White Jr., editors, *The Bible Almanac*, 1980,

Fruits mentioned include apples, figs, grapes, berries, apricots, melons and pomegranates.

Grapes were particularly popular. “The Bible has more references to grapes and grapevines than to any other fruit and plant except olives and olive trees . . . Grapes are the first cultivated plant mentioned in the Bible . . . Grapes have been shown to fight tooth decay and to stop viruses, and they are high in caffeic acid, a substance shown to be a strong cancerous fighting agent” (Colbert, pp. 146-147).

Adding more of these fruits and vegetables to your diet in place of other foods will supply a wealth of nutrition and also help with weight control. “Fruits and veggies come loaded with complex carbohydrates and other essentials for life, such as amino acids and essential fatty acids. They also include many of the natural vitamins and minerals vital to human nutrition . . . Fruits and vegetables also have both soluble and insoluble fiber that allows our bodies to select what nutrients are needed. This fiber allows many unneeded calories to pass through the intestinal tract” (Russell, p. 90). As this occurs, superfluous calories are eliminated rather than added as body fat.

“A diet consisting predominantly of fruits and vegetables is the most important factor currently identified in the prevention

of cancer . . . The evidence for this is overwhelming: Study after study has confirmed that people who have the highest intakes of fruits and vegetables have the lowest rates of cancer” (Swartzberg and Margen, p. 16).

Fruits and vegetables may even help prevent Alzheimer’s disease. “A new study . . . says a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and less red meat may ward off the degenerative brain disease, which affects 12 million worldwide” (*U.S. News & World Report*, July 29).

Eating fruit as a substitute for calorie-laden desserts aids weight loss. The natural sugar in fruit is nutritionally superior to processed sugars, which are major contributors to overweight. “In the United States, sugar intake has increased from 1 percent to 20 percent of total calories during the last

200 years . . . The average American consumes 150 pounds of refined sugar a year” (Russell, p. 88).

A large part of that sugar intake comes through soft drinks. “Americans, on average, drink 53 gallons of soda [carbonated soft drinks] per year—40 percent more than they drank two decades ago” (*Harvard Health Letter*, February 2001).

### Eating habits and your health

Proper eating habits are necessary for good health. If we stuff our bodies with food lacking in nutrition, we will eventually pay the price.

Sadly, in many cultures it isn’t easy to select the foods that are best for us. In America, “of the more than 11,000 new food

products that came on the market in 1998, more than two-thirds were candy, snacks, baked goods, soft drinks, ice creams and similar items” (*Wellness Letter*, June 2002).

Once these products are in the stores, advertisers crank up the propaganda. For example, “the food industry spends some \$30 billion a year on advertising. By contrast the entire federal budget for nutritional education equals one fifth the advertising costs for Altoids mints” (*U.S. News & World Report*, July 1).

How great is the health risk if you are overweight? “Avoiding weight gain may guard against cancer of the colon, kidney, uterus, and breast. Being overweight and/or sedentary also increases the risk of heart disease and diabetes” (*Wellness Letter*, November 2001).

Major strides have been made in the last century in increased life expectancy. “At the start of the new millennium, the World Health Organization states that at least 120 countries . . . have a life expectancy at birth of more than sixty years. The global average life expectancy has increased to sixty-six years, compared with only forty-eight years in 1955” (Bradley Wilcox, M.D., Craig Wilcox, Ph.D., and Makoto Suzuki, M.D., *The Okinawa Program*, p. 327).

One reason for this is that many of the major killers of the past are largely under control. For example, in America “deaths from infectious diseases have been decreased by 93 percent,” and “infant mortality has dropped by 93 percent” (*Parade Magazine*, March 19, 2000).

Though our life expectancy is much greater now, we need to be concerned about *health* expectancy. The food we put into our mouths will partially determine not only how long we live but whether we enjoy the wonderful benefits of good health in the time we have. **GN**

## Should You Drink Wine?

Louis Pasteur reportedly said, “Wine is the most healthful and most hygienic of beverages” (Don Colbert, M.D., *What Would Jesus Eat?*, 2002, p. 131).

In recent years some physicians have touted wine as beneficial to health, particularly the circulatory system. A 1992 report in the British medical journal *Lancet* stated: “The French consume approximately a third more fat, including saturated fats, than Americans. They smoke more than Americans and exercise very little. Yet they have one of the lowest heart attack rates in the world. They also have one of the lowest incidences of stroke. These scientists who took a look at the French way of life concluded that this low incidence of heart disease was

Wine also reduces the proclivity of platelets to stick together, which reduces the clotting factor in blood. Overactive platelets can form clots and block vessels in the heart or the brain, bringing on a heart attack or stroke.

According to the Bible, moderate consumption of wine can indeed provide health benefits (1 Timothy 5:23). The Bible also represents the moderate use of wine as a source of pleasure (Psalm 104:15; Ecclesiastes 9:7). It was often served at festive occasions such as weddings (John 2:1-10), and a token sip of wine is commanded in the observance of Passover (Matthew 26:27-29).

However, the Bible warns us about abusing alcohol (Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35; Ephesians 5:18). If abused, alcohol becomes a spiritual problem as well as a serious health hazard. One disease associated with alcohol abuse is cancer.

A noted nutritionist issued this precautionary comment: “. . . Alcohol is not a carcinogen, [but] it appears to act as a co-carcinogen, ‘strengthening’ other cancer-causing factors. Drinking can increase the risk of developing cancers of the mouth, esophagus, and other parts of the body, including possibly the breast, colon, and rectum. If you have a family history of cancer, if you smoke, if you consume a high-fat diet, or have any other risk factors for cancer, it is best to abstain” (Barry Fox, Ph.D., *To Your Health: The Healing Power of Alcohol*, 1997, p. 122).

Just what constitutes moderation in alcohol consumption? “The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines moderation in alcohol intake as no more than one drink per day in women and no more than two drinks per day in men” (Colbert, p. 137).

Many health professionals recommend that pregnant women or women considering pregnancy not drink at all. They also recommend abstinence for people with certain disorders, including liver disease, congestive heart failure and stomach ulcers.

Anyone unable to control the intake of alcoholic drinks should seek help for the problem, which may require abstaining from alcohol altogether. Alcohol addiction can bring inestimable damage to the afflicted and their families.



due to the fact that the vast majority of people in France consume a moderate amount of red wine daily” (*ibid.*, pp. 131-132).

Research into the effects that wine has on the body has produced some probable reasons for wine’s ability to reduce the incidence of cardiovascular diseases. Resveratrol is a substance that occurs naturally in wine. “When wine ferments, the resveratrol level in the finished wine increases to a level high enough to have a pharmacological effect. Resveratrol in the human body appears to increase HDL levels while lowering overall cholesterol levels” (David Whitten, M.D., Ph.D., and Martin Lipp, M.D., *To Your Health! Two Physicians Explore the Health Benefits of Wine*, 1994, p. 40).

## Recommended Reading

Are all kinds of animal flesh suitable for food? Should we avoid certain kinds? Did God design certain animals to be eaten and others not to be eaten? Are Christians free to eat any kind of food, ignoring the instructions of the Bible? Learn the surprising answers—and the science behind them—in the booklet *What Does the Bible Teach About Clean and Unclean Meats?*, yours free for the asking. Discover what the Bible says about your diet!



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download this booklet from our Web site at

[www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org)



# World News and Trends

## An Overview of Conditions Around the World

by John Ross Schroeder

### America and Europe: Are they drifting apart?

**W**e see a steady growth in tension between various European nations and the United States. According to a *Financial Times* feature article, the “common enemy” revealed by the events of Sept. 11, 2001, has “divided rather than unified the West.”

Published for Americans abroad, the *International Herald Tribune* expressed the problem from a European point of view. “A brief flurry of support for the United States after the attacks last September evaporated because of what foreign officials consider a dismissive U.S. attitude toward international treaties and coalitions [and] a tendency to view problems through the distorted lens of the war on terrorism.” The *Financial Times* feature countered with “Americans believe that Europeans live in a dream world, made possible by American protection.”

Other articles in the *Financial Times* sought to take a more objective view of the growing transatlantic gap. One said: “September 11 crystallised a profound change in the relationship between Americans and Europeans. The shift—not so much a rupture but a progressive estrangement—was visible in outcome during the decade after the end of the Cold War.”

Recently U.S.-EU trade disputes are back in the news as well. Earlier this year steep new American steel tariffs threatened to hit foreign steel fairly hard. Subsequently over the months the United States has tried to ease tensions with the European Union by exempting many products from the tariffs. To date, however, the EU still threatens retaliation.

Difficult-to-solve differences of outlook between America and Europe also arose at the recent Earth Summit conference in Johannesburg. In addition, there have been many difficulties over the new

International Criminal Court as the United States seeks bilateral treaties with individual nations to exempt Americans from its presumed jurisdiction.

Michael Ignatieff of Harvard University recently reminded Europe that “it would be good if Europeans, especially the left, woke up to the reality that they are being defended by Americans, that their core values of freedom are nearly . . . identical and that it is neither in their interests nor consonant with their values to let the West fragment into two camps” (*Financial Times*).

Derek Chollet, formerly of the State Department and now a member of the American Academy in Berlin, spotted this divisive trend months ago. In a feature article for *The Los Angeles Times* he stated: “Listening to the voices from both sides of the Atlantic, it is easy to think that the United States and Europe are headed for an irreparable break. Whether it’s about Ariel Sharon, Saddam Hussein or steel, the U.S. and Europe just can’t agree.”

### America and Europe: drifting apart demographically?

**T**he Aug. 24 edition of *The Economist*, based in Britain but published elsewhere as well, took a look at the remarkable demographic differences between the United States and Europe.

Said *The Economist*: “Forget transatlantic rifts about trade, Iraq, Kyoto, or the International Criminal Court. These have been thoroughly ventilated. One area of difference has not got the attention it deserves: demography. It may prove the most important of all.”

According to this report, America will overtake Europe in population by 2040 if not sooner. While U.S. fertility rates suddenly began to reverse their decline in the 1980s, continuing low European

Whatever may or may not happen in the short term, Bible prophecy indicates that a coming rift between America and Europe will expand to the point that conditions will once again mirror the mid- and late 1930s, setting the stage for catastrophe. To

**“Listening to the voices from both sides of the Atlantic, it is easy to think that the United States and Europe are headed for an irreparable break . . . The U.S. and Europe just can’t agree.”**

understand further, please request our free booklets *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *Financial Times*, *The Times* [both London], *International Herald Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*.)

levels did not even replace current populations. While immigration fosters even further American growth, immigrants to Europe are necessary just to stay even.

Spending on defense is another point to consider. The United States already spends roughly twice as much as the entire 15-nation European Union. How much more will this be in the future if growth projections are accurate?

There is much more to the story, but one overall statement in an *Economist* editorial is particularly quotable: “These trends suggest that anyone who assumes the United States is now at the zenith of its economic and political power is making a big mistake.” This is something to think about, although a qualifier appears in the next sentence: “There are plenty of other ways in which America could weaken itself economically or politically, but demography will offer a fine basis for future growth and strength.” (Source: *The Economist*.)

### The “Axis of Envy”

**I**ndications abound that the United States and Israel have struck the same European nerve. Joseph Joffe, editor of *Die Ziet* in Hamburg, Germany, and an associate of the Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University, made this observation in the September-October issue of *Foreign Policy* magazine.

He wrote: “Pick a peace-minded demonstration in Europe these days or a publication of the extreme left or right, and you’ll find anti-Israel and anti-American resentments side by side . . .”

Mr. Joffe further explained that “Israel and the

United States are the most successful states in their respective neighborhoods: Israel in the regional arena, the United States on the global beat. They boast the most fearsome armies, they command impressive technological infrastructures, and the Israeli economy vastly outperforms those of each of its neighbors while the United States has the world’s number one economy. Moreover, both are stable, vibrant democracies. One need not invoke Dr. Sigmund Freud to infer that *success breeds envy and resentment*” (emphasis added).

Mr. Joffe also notes that, regrettably, anti-Semitism is also a factor. American columnist William Safire summarized what former German defense minister

Rudolph Scharping said in a Berlin cabinet meeting about the discussions: “It was all about the Jews. Bush was motivated to overthrow Saddam by his need to curry favor with what Scharping called ‘a powerful—perhaps overly powerful—Jewish lobby’ in the coming U.S. elections.”

Could these trends portend a future threat to Israel and the United States? While noting that Europeans are largely exchanging the national identities that led to two world wars for a vague European identity, Mr. Joffe reminds us that Europe was “the fountainhead of the two greatest evils of the 20th century,” namely fascism and communism. (Sources: *Foreign Policy*, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.)



## German-American relationship chills

**B**ilateral relations between nations don't always mix well with national politics. Germany is a recent case in point.

As soon as Chancellor Gerhard Schröder stated his strong opposition to America's possible decision to wage war on Iraq, his political stock began to rise dramatically within the German electorate. He swiftly overtook his opponent in the opinion polls and won the day over the more-conservative Edmund Stoiber in the September national elections. But his preelection rhetoric alarmed Americans. Germany's justice minister, Herta and Paul Amirian, went much further, apparently drawing comparisons between President George Bush and Adolf Hitler.

Although she has since said that her comments were misinterpreted and the chancellor apologized to President Bush, U.S.-German relations were damaged. American national security adviser Condoleezza Rice said the "atmosphere had been poisoned."

Germany's Wolfgang Schäuble (a member of the Bundestag and the Christian Democratic Union Party's shadow foreign defense minister) went even further. He wrote in a *Wall Street Journal* feature: "German-American relations are at their lowest level since the founding of the state in 1949. A common European position on Iraq is also not in sight because Berlin is blocking it, and so Germany finds itself isolated within the European Union. In the meantime, the Chancellor

## Austrian far right stirs

**T**he break-up of Austria's [government] coalition . . . was caused by a ruthless purge of moderates from the ranks of Jörg Haider's right-wing Freedom Party and their replacement with hardline ideologues, *The Sunday Telegraph* has learned."

Our readers may remember the emergence of this Austrian rightist politician just a few years ago. Although he was forced to step down as the leader of the party, Mr. Haider has remained a significant and influential figure both in his country and among the members of the far right in Europe.

Now we read that "Europe's far-right parties have held secret talks at the mountain lair of the

Austrian populist politician Jörg Haider to forge a pan-European movement." Prominent among those in attendance were right-wing politicians from Belgium and Italy. Apparently another conference is to occur in Belgium at the end of the year to forge a joint manifesto.

According to *The Sunday Telegraph*, Mr. Haider "has a clear political agenda to put together a diverse coalition of far-right parties to exert pressure on the European Union."

Unnerving political forces continue to stir on the Continent. This is nothing new; Europe has been restless for 150 years. Twice in the first half of the 20th century extreme movements led to world wars. (Sources: *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*.)

has put Germany in the unenviable position of being Saddam Hussein's favorite western state."

Mr. Schäuble then asked his own country tough questions: "What is wrong with Germany? Are Germans ungrateful? Have they such a short memory that they have forgotten who defended peace and freedom in Berlin in the Cold War and who made it possible for the country to be reunified in peace in freedom in 1990?"

Now that the national elections are over, Germany's chancellor has begun to try to repair the damage to his country's relationship with America. First he accepted his justice minister's decision to resign because of her remarks. Mr. Schröder then said: "Between friends there can be factual differences, but they should not

be personalized, particularly between allies."

West German (1949-1990) and then German relations with the United States have been remarkably stable for more than 50 years. However, one of the effects of the end of the Cold War has been more difficult diplomatic relations with Western Europe.

As the saying goes, you ain't seen nothing yet. Bible prophecy predicts that a future disruption of monumental proportions will astonish everyone on earth. To learn where these trends are heading, request our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. (Sources: *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The Financial Times* [London], *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *San Antonio Express-News*, *The Times-Union* [Jacksonville], *The Los Angeles Times*.)

## Don't lose sight of China

**W**hile watching events in Europe should be a constant concern, shouldn't we keep a close eye on the People's Republic of China? True, the United

summed up the latest Chinese threat by quoting Michael Ledeen, vice president of the congressionally appointed bipartisan U.S.-China Security Commission: "We are concerned when we see constant rhetorical attacks on the United States, constant warnings to the United States, that if push comes to shove, China is perfectly happy to fight a war against us. And then to see a strategic doctrine from the

## America needs to take note of Beijing's warnings about their intentions regarding Taiwan. China desperately wants to expand its influence in Southeast Asia.

Chinese military that lays out the ways in which they propose to win that war."

America needs to take note of Beijing's aggressive military buildup and periodic warnings about its intentions regarding Taiwan. China desperately wants to expand its influence, viewing the United States as a serious impediment to its growing ambitions in Southeast Asia. According to the U.S.-China Security Commission, the aim of the Chinese military buildup is "to deter, deny or complicate the ability of foreign forces to intervene on Taiwan's behalf."

Columnist Perkins concludes with this astonishing statement: "Beijing is no less a threat to the safety of the American people than Osama bin Laden's terrorists." (Source: *The Washington Times*.)

## 'United Europe' around the corner?

**E**xpect to see considerable changes ahead in the European Union (EU). In October the EU announced plans for a major expansion into central and eastern Europe that would add 10 new member countries by 2004, and possibly several more by 2007. The expansion would add 75 million people—most of them living in former communist states—to the EU's current 400 million.

Meanwhile, pressure is growing to appoint a full-time president to replace the EU's current six-month rotating presidency. Notable leaders expressing support for the idea are current and former French presidents Jacques Chirac and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, German chancellor Gerhard Schröder and U.K. foreign minister Jack Straw.

One proposal suggested that a president be chosen by member heads of government, while another recommended that the president be elected by the entire European Parliament.

Mr. d'Estaing also raised eyebrows when he floated a proposal to rename the EU "United Europe" or "United States of Europe" to emphasize the EU's growing cooperation.

To better understand where this possible emerging superpower may be heading, please request a copy of our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. (Source: BBC News.)



States' main focus is on the twin evils of terrorism and the dictatorial regime in Iraq. Nonetheless our peripheral vision should embrace both Europe and Asia. We have to maintain a worldview of events.

Nationally syndicated columnist Joseph Perkins

# America vs. Iraq or America vs. the World?

One year after Sept. 11, in the debate on terrorism, America is often seen as the villain, no longer as the victim. Why do so many people around the world hate America?

by Melvin Rhodes

**W**ars have a habit of rearranging the world. They also tend to lead to further conflict. After World War I the Treaty of Versailles, which supposedly ended the war to end all wars, only established “the peace to end all peace,” as British field marshal Archibald Wavell put it. He was proved correct. Two decades after the First World War, Europe was at war again as a direct consequence of the punitive treaty imposed on the German-speaking powers of Central Europe.

On the other side of the world, the Japanese invasion of Indochina led in turn to war with France, which led to the Vietnam War. It was to be 40 years before peace returned to the peoples of Southeast Asia.

The Persian Gulf War of 1991 led to the present confrontation with Iraq. The conflict 11 years ago did not end the threat from Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, so now the United States and Britain feel justified in using military action to bring about “regime change.”

But war with Iraq may not be so simple.

Few doubt that the United States and its allies have the military muscle to defeat Iraq and bring about a change at the top. Fresh from having accomplished the same in Afghanistan, Americans in important leadership positions are confident about repeating their success in Iraq.

However, in the same week in early September that controversy over an Iraqi invasion dominated the headlines, Afghanistan’s capital suffered two bomb blasts that killed more than 20 people, and the U.S.-backed president survived an assassination attempt. The new government in Kabul is far from secure. American troops will surely be there for many years if Washington is intent on keeping Islamic fundamentalists out of power.

Afghanistan has historically been largely ungovernable. The various tribal rivalries coupled with the national penchant for fighting, combined with an inhospitable terrain, have made the country a death trap for

domestic leaders and foreign invaders alike.

Much the same can be said for Iraq, a country that did not even exist before the 1918 Treaty of Versailles. It was in Paris after World War I that the victorious Allies divided the spoils. The Arab territories of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire were divided between Britain and France. The League of Nations gave Britain mandates over Palestine, Jordan and Iraq and France over Syria and Lebanon.



**While the United States does not have a formal empire like Britain had, it is nevertheless an imperial power with military and financial interests around the world.**

Britain was to remain in Iraq until 1932.

## Democracy alien to the Arab world

Britain laid what appeared to be a solid foundation for Iraq. American historian Phebe Marr, in *The Modern History of Iraq*, states: “As state builders the British created or developed an impressive array of institutions—a monarchy, a parliament, a Western-style constitution, a bureaucracy and an army” (1985, p. 29).

She then explains how today’s situation began to develop: “The bureaucracy and the army—both of which predated the British—still remain, but the monarchy and the Western-style democratic institutions have since been swept away. This is perhaps not surprising. Britain’s stay in Iraq was one of the shortest in its imperial career” (ibid.).

Regrettably, democracy was alien to that part of the world—and still is. The constitutional monarchy was overthrown in 1958, and eventually Saddam Hussein became dictator of Iraq. Any desire on the part of the United States to establish a democracy in Iraq is not likely to succeed long-term any more than it is in Afghanistan.

Interestingly, the Saudi ambassador to London recently confirmed this. Under attack for writing an ode to a suicide bomber, poet and author Ghazi Alghosaibi was interviewed by *The Spectator’s* Boris Johnson in a Sept. 7 article titled “Bush Is Leading Us to Tragedy.”

“Democracy is a Western phenomenon,” said Mr. Alghosaibi. “If you look now and say 142 governments in the world have elections, that’s a disgusting lie. If you exclude the West, there are no democracies . . .”

There is a great deal of truth to this. Sometimes under pressure from the West,

economically poor nations temporarily embrace a facade of democratic rule, but rarely do they pass the test of peaceful transference from one elected administration to another. Even when a country has a parliament, the president or other ranking official often takes dictatorial powers to himself, and the legislative body acts purely as a rubber stamp, its members content simply to sit in office and receive the financial benefits of their positions, both legal and illegal.

## The match and the powder keg

Mr. Alghosaibi’s comments are particularly pertinent to the Middle East, where only one nation is a functioning true democracy, the tiny Jewish state of Israel. In contrast, the 22 members of the Arab League are all dictatorships of one sort or another.

This is a primary reason that support from Arab governments for American action against Iraq is virtually nonexistent. Because many Arab leaders lead lives that imitate Westerners in their customs and values—which conflict with the national religion, Islam—they are afraid that a ripple effect from war with Iraq could lead to the violent overthrow of their governments.

Early wars between Arab armies and Israel led to the violent overthrow of the Egyptian and Iraqi monarchies, which were replaced by radical Arab nationalist governments that wanted Westerners out. Today the radical threat comes from Islamic fundamentalism, the same force that overthrew the pro-Western shah of Iran in 1979.

So the biggest danger from a war with Iraq is that it will actually *encourage* the spread of Islamic fundamentalism throughout the region as rampaging mobs overthrow their westernized leaders. The public's anger is inevitable as it witnesses the sufferings of the Iraqi people on satellite television, a service not available to them during the earlier Gulf War. All suffering, of course, will be blamed on the United States and Britain rather than on Saddam Hussein.

Already, daily newscasts of Palestinian suffering intensifies hatred of Israel, which in turn leads to greater hatred of the United States, without which Israel could not survive. As the Saudi ambassador put it: "All countries have different reasons [for hating America], but in the Muslim world there is one issue with America, and that is Israel."

Not only could revolution spread throughout the region, but war itself is likely to spill over into other countries. From all accounts, Saddam Hussein is remarkably calm while faced with the prospect of his violent overthrow and an abrupt end to his privileges. But there is a reason for this. Saddam Hussein's strategy is to turn an American invasion of his country into a wider conflict between the Arab world and the West, perhaps even the *Islamic world* vs. the West.

He may do this by provoking Israel into a war with Iraq—perhaps by showering Israel with chemical- and germ-laden missiles—which will then mean the United States, Britain and Israel would be on one side against the Arabic nations. Unlike the 1991 Gulf War in which Israel, under tremendous pressure from the United States, didn't retaliate against a rain of Iraqi missiles, Israel has promised a harsh and swift response if Hussein pursues a similar strategy this time around. Regrettably, this could set up the

Islam-vs.-the-West strategy Saddam Hussein apparently wants to encourage.

Throughout the region, the United States is already perceived as being one-sided in the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians. A wider conflict involving Israel would only confirm America's role as the Great Satan intent on destroying the Islamic world.

But why the wider hatred of the United States in the non-Islamic world?

### Lessons from the World Summit

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg Aug. 24 to Sept. 4, delegates from around the world seemed to spend much of their time condemning the United States and Britain. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell was booed and heckled when he got up to speak. World poverty was blamed on the two Anglo-Saxon powers, the same two countries that have between them dominated the world's economy for three centuries.

Again, let us hear from Mr. Algosaiabi as to why there is so much hatred of the West, and America in particular: "First of all there is great jealousy, of the financial and military power of the West, the gap between rich and poor. There is a common perception that the wealth of the West is the result of looting colonies." This is far from reality, but perception is what counts.

Mr. Powell brought up the controversial issue of Zimbabwe, a Southern African nation that is evicting thousands of white farmers of British descent even though their eviction will bring famine throughout the region. The secretary of state could not continue his speech because delegates obviously did not want to hear what he had to say. After all, it's far simpler to blame everything on the West than to look closer to home and deal with corruption, mismanagement and incompetence at the highest levels of government.

Demands that the rich Western world share its wealth with poorer countries are only likely to increase as the gap widens. But this is no solution. As has been the pattern for decades, any such redistribution of wealth would only benefit the elite tyrants of the third world who would take the money for themselves.

### Why America is hated

Of great concern to the West should be the common thread linking the war on terror, the war with Iraq, the war in Afghanistan, Sept. 11, Osama bin Laden and the World Summit. Quoting Mr. Algosaiabi once again:

"... If you go around the Muslim world, you will find the vast majority of people will support Osama bin Laden, and this is more tragic than the attack itself. Why would such a crime like this find such support, not just on the streets of Riyadh, but on the streets of Turkey, the streets of Tunis, the streets of Britain? That comes to the question of why people hate America. And people definitely do hate America..."

In the Islamic world, as Mr. Algosaiabi said, a major reason is America's support of Israel. But another reason, in both the Islamic world and the non-Islamic world, is the great gulf that separates the rich Western world from the mass of mankind.

On frequent visits to West Africa I see pictures of Osama bin Laden for sale, even in areas with few Muslims. I have even seen his picture in people's homes. Why is he so popular? In the last issue of *The Good News* I quoted from an African Christian pastor whose family is Muslim. "Muslims feel that America is trying to take over the world," he explained. "They see Osama bin Laden as the man who will stop them."

But Bin Laden also appeals to *non-Muslims*. To them, he often represents the poor nations, increasingly frustrated by what is often called American cultural imperialism. Although the United States is not a colonizing power like Britain was, American culture is pervasive. Wherever you go in the world it seems you can buy American products and watch American TV shows, while young people pick up the materialistic, hedonistic attitudes expressed in Hollywood movies. Many people deeply resent this. And, above all, there is America's great wealth contrasting with near-universal poverty in many other nations, fueling even more resentment.

Islam is the fastest-growing religion in

*Continued on page 30*

## Recommended Reading

Where are these trends taking us? If you'd like to understand the biblical perspective behind today's headlines, be sure to request your free copies of our booklets *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*, *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*



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)

# Smoking and Health: The Often-Overlooked Key

We all know that smoking is devastating to one's health. Would you or a loved one like to quit for good? Where can you find the extra help to kick the habit?

by Don Hooser

**"**I've given up on trying to quit smoking. You're wasting your words on me. I just can't do it."

We—many of us—have been there. We sympathize. And we want to help.

Wouldn't you like to quit smoking—for good? Or help someone else quit? Or help yourself or your children to never start smoking? Or just better understand a monumental problem that wreaks havoc with health, happiness, productivity and longevity?

You are about to read a perspective different from what you find in most articles on smoking, a perspective that should give you hope, an incentive and confidence.

A smoking habit is more than just a bad habit; it is a powerful *chemical* addiction as well as a *psychological* and *social* addiction. Tobacco contains an active ingredient—nicotine—that is a highly addictive drug.

Nicotine, in its pure form, is extremely toxic. A whole family of insecticides is made from it. Tobacco smoke also contains tars and other toxic chemicals, many of which have been proven to cause cancer. But tobacco can't be blamed for all of cigarettes' potential to damage smokers' health. Cigarette manufacturers add many chemicals to the tobacco, paper and filter for various reasons. The use of tobacco products is the single greatest avoidable cause of death in the Western world.

## How dangerous is tobacco?

Some people, knowing or hearing of others who have smoked all their lives and were still going strong in their 70s or 80s, have convinced themselves that smoking isn't all that dangerous. Although it's true that some people have good genes and strong immune systems that can withstand the worst ravages of smoking, they also nonetheless will have bad breath, stained teeth and family and friends who don't like to visit much—not to mention seeing thousands of dollars go up in smoke.

But here is what is usually overlooked: Cases of smokers who live to a ripe old age are rare, and will likely become even more so. In the industrialized nations, the amount and variety of chemicals in the environment are



**A smoking habit is certainly more than just a bad habit; it is a powerful chemical addiction as well as a psychological and social addiction.**

proliferating exponentially. Each chemical that enters one's body places an additional strain on the body's ability to cleanse itself, function properly, heal and stay well. And, when two or more chemicals *synthesize*, they combine to form a new chemical that may be even more deadly.

Also, when two or more chemicals interact, they can create new deleterious effects that none of the chemicals would cause independently. Most people's bodies are under a severe strain from the chemicals they eat, drink, breathe and absorb through the skin, as well as other health problems. Using tobacco adds one of the most enormous burdens of all. Smoking is a *highly risky behavior*.

## Nicotine addiction

Many tobacco addicts say smoking helps calm their nerves. What they may not realize is that this tranquilizing effect is the result of becoming addicted to nicotine. When a little time has passed since the last cigarette, the nervousness results from the start of with-

drawal symptoms—the “nicotine fit.” The body is simply craving another dose of nicotine, for which smoking another cigarette provides the “fix.” However, after a person has been a nonsmoker for a few weeks, he is less nervous overall than when he was smoking.

Is there any way to avoid withdrawal symptoms? Modern medicine has made it much easier. When a person tapers off of cigarettes or has already stopped smoking, his symptoms of nervousness, anxiety and irritability can be greatly lessened with medications.

One type is nicotine-replacement therapies (NRT), including nicotine patches, gums, nasal sprays and inhalers. Another type is bupropion, marketed under the brand names Zyban and Wellbutrin. Both types usually can be used at the same time. Consult with your doctor about medications.

## Taking the first steps

You probably already know smoking is bad for you. So why read more about it? Good question. One is much more likely to kick the

habit if he understands *why* and *how* it is bad and *how* to effectively overcome it. Many sources of antismoking information are interesting, practical and valuable.

Reading isn't the only way to learn. Readily accessible are audiocassette recordings, videotapes, professional counselors and support groups. Most people who want to lose an addiction do better with support from others, including former smokers. Like an ad for a center offering help to those with a drinking problem says: "If you don't get help from us, please get help somewhere."

Perhaps the greatest value in educating yourself about the dangers of tobacco is that such education is *motivational*. A fresh reading of available materials brings you face to face with reality and your own mortality. We need to respect *healthy fears* that prod us to avoid and flee danger. Becoming more conscious of the need to forsake smoking strengthens the *desire* and *commitment* to do it. A smoker needs *will*, not just a *wish*.

You might compare a stop-smoking plan to baking a cake. The cake needs *all* the necessary ingredients, not just a huge amount of one or two ingredients. This article isn't an attempt to offer all the ingredients, although many will be touched on. Practical advice and other information concerning smoking are available in abundance on the Internet and in print, much of it free of charge. The point is that an effective stop-smoking plan needs to include all the ingredients—that is, implementing valuable tips, tools, techniques and approaches at the same time.

### The all-important missing ingredient

Several ingredients may be missing in your stop-smoking plan, but one component is *usually* always missing, and it is the *most important* of all. Though many smokers may quit their habit without this ingredient, success is more likely with it.

The all-important ingredient is the *spiritual* dimension. Often people seeking spirituality or religion may look for guidance and power in the wrong directions. More specifically, the right direction—the necessary ingredient—is learning God's astounding purpose for mankind, seeking to conform to His ways and seeking His powerful help to liberate us from any addiction. The Creator of the human body and mind understands His creations perfectly. He knows how best to care for and repair them. He hasn't left us in the dark. The Bible is His Word, inspired and preserved by Him to serve as our *instruction book* for life.

Jesus Christ, during His earthly ministry, regularly demonstrated His love, mercy and concern for others by healing the sick. He taught that God always wants to help us, but we must first ask for help. "Ask, and it will be given to you," He says (Matthew 7:7). Although stopping smoking may seem impossible, He tells us that "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27). Are you a slave to an addiction? Jesus said, "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Sadly, many people think that about all religion has done for them is to make them feel guilty and condemned. Smokers usually already carry a burden of guilt, and they don't want more piled on. But God's purpose for His Church is to be a source of great encouragement and help, like a mother to her children. Jesus said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The Church of God (Acts 20:28) is not like an honorary society of overachievers but more like a spiritual hospital for people who see their need for encouragement and healing. We are broken in different ways, and we need the Great Physician, Jesus Christ (Matthew 9:12).

This doesn't mean God is satisfied for us to remain the same—to remain sick or continue

living contrary to His instructions. We must seek to be made whole and actively strive to live the way He wants us to. God calls to be His disciples people who have all kinds of problems, including addictions—but, just as the original 12 apostles kept changing and growing, we must go forward. We cannot remain where we are. Inevitably, if we do not grow spiritually we will slip backwards.

We have no good excuse for staying in a rut. If we commit ourselves to pleasing God, He is committed to empowering us. If we set right goals, put forth an all-out effort and ask for God's help, He will give it (Matthew 7:11).

### Scriptural principles against tobacco use

Smoking and tobacco use aren't mentioned in the Bible for the simple reason that both were unknown in biblical lands until explorers brought them back from North America, where the indigenous natives had long smoked tobacco. So can we be sure that God disapproves of smoking?

Absolutely. God objects to smoking just as He disapproves of any abuse or neglect of our bodies. Let's look at the biblical evidence.

God inspired the apostle John to write, "My dear friend, I pray that everything may go well with you and that you may be in good health—as I know you are well in spirit" (3 John 2, Today's English Version). God wants us to enjoy good health. Many of His laws recorded in the Old Testament are safeguards to health, with instructions covering safety, sanitation, hygiene, food, moderation, rest, negative attitudes, anxiety and more, as discussed in other articles in this issue.

These laws reflect the validity of the old maxim "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." It's clear that God is concerned about our health and wants us to be concerned too. In fact, He *commands* us to take care of ourselves. Tobacco purveyors want you to smoke because *they make money*

## My Experience With Smoking

**M**y mother died of emphysema. My uncle died of emphysema. My grandfather died of emphysema. Emphysema is a terrible way to go.

My three relatives all undoubtedly would have lived longer had they not been lifetime smokers. You can understand why I deplore the use of tobacco products and feel passionate about this subject.

I thank God I never became addicted to smoking. But I have suffered from seeing my loved ones and many friends suffer from severe health problems, depression and many other smoking-related stresses.

When I was a child, my parents and many adults around me smoked, but their example influenced me *not* to smoke. Their mental suffering—shame, guilt and regrets—as well as their physical suffering seemed to far outweigh what little pleasure they were getting from their smoking. They lamented that they were helpless slaves to their habit and passionately warned me against trying cigarettes. So I developed a healthy fear of any addiction.

I started my teen years by saying, "I don't drink, smoke or chew or go with the girls

that do." But in my later teen years, in spite of the warnings I had received, I occasionally smoked on social occasions. Why? Only for the usual immature reasons—experimentation, youthful recklessness, peer pressure and wanting to be cool.

Though my smoking was infrequent, I eventually might have become addicted had I not received the greatest possible blessing. God opened my eyes to understand, love and want to live by His Word, the Bible. When God's will became important to me, and I realized it was His will that I not smoke, I never smoked again. I wish I could make it that easy for everyone else.

*The Good News* magazine is published by the United Church of God, which has ordained ministers in cities all over the world. Trained and experienced in pastoral counseling, the Church's ministry is deeply sympathetic to those struggling with addictions. Indeed, during my own 36 years as a minister I've given counsel and moral support to hundreds of people struggling to overcome smoking habits. Others in this ministry can say the same. All of us stand ready to help and support those who want to overcome an addiction.

## Alarming Facts About Smoking Addiction

How easy is it to get hooked on tobacco? Teenagers typically underestimate the addictive power of nicotine, partly because tobacco is a legal substance and is not perceived to be as dangerous as many illegal drugs. But a study conducted by Dr. Joseph DiFranza of the University of Massachusetts Medical School and an international team of researchers showed how dangerously addictive tobacco can be.

Their study, published in the September issue of *Tobacco Control*, involved 679 seventh-grade students who were interviewed repeatedly for 30 months. Of the 332 who tried cigarettes or other forms of tobacco, 40 percent showed some sign of addiction, including irritability, difficulty quitting and trouble concentrating without a cigarette.

Many of them had become addicted while smoking only a few cigarettes a day, some as few as two per week. "Some of these kids were hooked *within a few days* of starting to smoke," Dr. DiFranza reported. The experts had thought that young smokers became addicted only when they smoked 10 or more cigarettes a day. The report notes the average child smoker experiments with smoking at 11.7 years of age and begins smoking monthly at 12.8 years. A survey released Aug. 28 reported that worldwide 14 percent of 13- to 15-year-olds smoke, but two thirds of them already want to quit.

A major factor is their early exposure to secondhand smoke. Worldwide, 49 percent live with someone who smokes, and 60 percent are exposed to secondhand smoke

during parts of the day. Studies have confirmed that children are readily influenced by the examples of parents, peers, teachers, movie stars and sports figures who smoke, as well as tobacco advertising. In many countries, tobacco companies still hand out free cigarettes to teenagers. Big tobacco knows how to secure its future sales.

"Women and Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General—2001" relates the findings of a survey on smoking trends among thousands of American women since 1980. Disappointing and disturbing was the rise during the 1990s of smoking among young girls. Indeed, "much of the progress in reducing smoking prevalence among girls in the 1970s and 1980s was lost with the increase in prevalence in the 1990s," said the report.

Tobacco-company advertising expenditures soared from \$4.9 billion in 1995 to \$6.73 billion in 1998, with ads targeted at women "featuring slim, attractive, athletic models." Indeed, antismoking experts point out that many teenage girls start smoking with the hope that the habit will help them control their weight.

Most adults who are hooked on tobacco became addicted when they were teenagers. Studies have shown that it takes the average person who starts smoking as a teen 18 years to break the habit for good. All these findings show that antismoking programs should focus more on trying to prevent young people from starting to smoke, and to help those who are starting to stop before they become hopelessly addicted.

from your habit. But God cares about *you*.

Being health-conscious is not necessarily self-centered. A healthy person can do more for others and for God (compare John 15:16). That's the way God wants us to look at the pursuit of wellness.

### Our bodies and minds belong to God

In fact, we should not live as if we have the option to neglect our health. God has jurisdiction over what He has created. What He created He owns. He's the boss, and He wants His workers to be healthy. He commands us, in a sense: *Stay healthy!*

This ownership concept is expressed in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "... Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit . . . , and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit [your mind and attitude], which are God's."

The awesome purpose of our lives is to receive God's Spirit to transform our mind and nature and make them like His. We can see that we *doubly* belong to God. He not only *created us*, He *paid for us* with the sacrifice of His Son. Jesus Christ's sacrifice paid the penalty for our sins to rescue us from eternal death. Taking excellent care of our lives, for which Christ paid the dearest price, is one way to express our gratitude to God.

It's accurate to say that our Creator has entrusted the care of our bodies and minds to us. This illustrates the concept of *stewardship*, which means we are to care for and properly manage what belongs to God. Jesus related several parables illustrating that God holds each of us accountable to be a "faithful and wise steward" over our lives and opportunities (Luke 12:42). So, *in principle*, the Bible shows the smoking habit to be something

contrary to our own best interests.

Throughout 1 Corinthians 6 we can see the physical and spiritual intertwined. Hence it is not surprising that the Bible emphasizes both physical and spiritual cleanliness. Many biblical laws concern cleanliness, sanitation and hygiene. Smoking clearly is a dirty habit. Most nonsmokers deplore the smell of stale tobacco smoke, the dirty ashtrays, smutty walls, stained teeth and yellowed fingers. Worse than that, think of the lining of lungs that have turned black.

Thanks to God's amazing design of the body, lungs often can, over time, return to a healthy pink after a smoker has quit lighting up. Our desire to be spiritually and physically clean in God's sight should add to our resolve not to smoke.

### The Ten Commandments and smoking

The Ten Commandments show us how to love God and each other. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments," says 1 John 5:3. The Sixth Commandment says, "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13)—and that includes ourselves as well as anyone else. By smoking we are, little by little, poisoning ourselves and perhaps others who also breathe our smoke.

God also says, "You shall not covet" (verse 17). Is the craving to smoke a violation of this commandment? The answer is not simple. "Covet" primarily means *to desire*. While the Tenth Commandment forbids coveting anything that belongs to someone else, other references to coveting in the Bible amplify the meaning of this commandment to include *any* lust for what is evil or wrong (see Romans 7:7-8; James 1:14-15; 4:1-2; Ephesians 2:3).

So what about smoking? God disallows self-destructive uses of anything. If, once we

understand this, we continue to crave this "forbidden fruit," we are coveting.

The problem with coveting is that it is selfish and self-centered desire, the way of *getting*. God's love is outgoing in concern for others, the way of *giving*. If you're tempted to pollute the air that your neighbors must breathe, notice this: "Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10).

Furthermore, in Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5, Paul equates covetousness with idolatry. This means that if something we desire is wrong to have according to God, it is not only coveting but also idolatry to continue pursuing that desire—letting it take priority over God's will.

Submitting to a wrong desire rather than submitting to God's will is a form of idolatry. Rather than God ruling over us, the thing lusted for is ruling over us. For instance, God describes gluttons as those "whose god is their belly" (Philippians 3:19). Hence, covetousness becomes idolatry. However, it is usually not the smoker's intent to place cigarettes before God in importance. Addiction is a powerful force. But one must face the reality that the obsession to smoke has become stronger than any desire to obey and please God.

Every form of addiction *must* be broken. Jesus said, "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Matthew 4:10). Yet Paul explained, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves to whom you obey . . . ?" (Romans 6:16).

If you have a smoking addiction, you have allowed yourself to become enslaved to tobacco—and God says you must break free. Of course, He is loving, patient and understanding—as His people are to be. Virtually

everyone realizes that quitting can be difficult and rarely will happen overnight. But you must at least genuinely *try* to quit—and God is there to help you. Don't let the guilt of your past failure carry you farther away from God. Rather, "draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8). Remember that He *wants* you to succeed.

### Conflicting desires

Think of it this way. We human beings commonly have two or more conflicting desires on almost any subject. Many smokers will say, year after year, "Oh, I *want* to quit this nasty habit!" Undoubtedly they do want to quit, but what they need to realize is that they also *want to smoke*.

If you are a smoker, your *actions* show which is your stronger desire. As long as your

thinking about how much better you would feel if only you had a cigarette or cigar or pipe.

You must *decide* to keep your mind occupied with things that demand your full attention and *force yourself* not to give in. You must block the desire for nicotine from your thinking and quit entertaining your mind with fantasies of smoking. If you don't discipline your thoughts, you are almost certain to give in to your old desires and return to your old habits.

How you fight the battle in your mind is crucial. You may have to fight this battle for several months before you permanently win the war. But simply refuse to permit your mind to dwell on how good another smoke would be. Be determined to win.

Choose activities that require your *full concentration*. Put your heart into *purposefully* and *consciously* rejecting pulls on your mind

the many helpful tools and techniques you can use in your stop-smoking plan. *Think deeply* about what you have read, about the harm you are doing to yourself and those around you, about your wonderful future after quitting.

The following points are what gave this writer the motivation to quit smoking (see "My Experience With Smoking" on page 19).

Many have found that reading the Bible daily and then meditating on it—especially its principles of Christian living—can be highly beneficial. Think about how much your worry and guilt over smoking have pulled you away from God and how you should long to please and serve Him more effectively. Seek to build a habit of praying daily and earnestly, asking God to forgive, bless, guide and help you clean up your life in every way—and, in particular, to enable you to free yourself

## Reasons for Not Smoking

### Personal health: Smoking increases the risk of . . .

- Cancer of the lungs, mouth, esophagus, breasts and other forms of cancer.
- Emphysema, pneumonia, bronchitis and other respiratory diseases.
- Insufficient oxygen in the blood, difficulties in breathing.
- Heart attack, stroke, vascular constriction and other cardiovascular diseases.
- Impotence and infertility.
- Weakened immune system, ease of catching infections and contagious diseases.
- Smoker's hack and raspy voice.
- Shortened life span.

### Health of others: Those in the smoker's environment can suffer . . .

- All of the above health problems as a result of secondhand smoke.
- Miscarriages, damage to the fetus, lowered birth weight, and lowered IQ of children when a pregnant mother smokes.
- Babies dying with SID (sudden infant death) and other causes.
- Nursing babies suffering from contaminated breast milk.
- Children being influenced to smoke.

### Quality of personal and social life: Smoking usually results in . . .

- Addiction—chemical, psychological and social.
- Loss of smell and taste.

- Alienation—damage to and reduction of personal relationships.
- Greater difficulties getting a job, finding a partner to marry.
- Ostracism from nonsmoking areas.
- Reluctance to go to nonsmoking events or to be in nonsmoking groups.
- Quandary of where to dispose of cigarette butts without littering.
- Domination of one's life, including the fear of running out of smokes or matches.

### Personal life, hygiene and appearance: Smoking leads to . . .

- Breath odor, body odor and foul-smelling clothing.
- Stained and yellowed teeth and hands.
- Premature aging and wrinkling of skin.
- Increased fire risk in homes.
- Dirty and yellowed walls, ceilings and furniture.
- Smelly upholstery, draperies and furnishings.
- Stale indoor air in homes.
- More lost days from work.
- Loss of productivity and effectiveness while on the job.
- Auto accidents caused by driver smoking.
- More of other types of accidents and increased sickness.
- Higher insurance rates.
- A huge, continuing expense of easily \$1,000 a year for a pack-a-day smoker!

desire to smoke is stronger than your desire to quit, *you will continue to smoke*. When the desire to quit smoking continues to weigh more heavily and the balance scale tips, you will quit. That's why the issue of *motivation* is so fundamentally important. There is no shortage of information, tools and techniques that are helpful to break the tobacco habit. Usually the main lack is a *strong enough motivation* to bring the practice to a screeching halt!

Don't kid yourself that you already have plenty of motivation. If you did, you already would have stopped smoking. So what can you do to increase your motivation, confidence and determination to quit?

Let's start with your desire to smoke. Once you decide to quit smoking, you must find a way to stop constantly wanting to smoke,

that would break your concentration and turn your thinking again to relishing and savoring what you have chosen to give up.

In the end the battle will be won or lost in your mind. If you lose a skirmish, immediately get back into the fight. *Don't give up*. Don't lose the war. And never forget to ask God—over and over, again and again—for the strength and help you need to continue fighting until you do win.

Now let's consider how to bolster your motivation and determination to win this battle—in partnership with God.

### Get the facts, and get them straight

*Read, read, read* about the diseases and other bad effects that result from smoking, about the benefits of a smoke-free life, about

of a debilitating habit and addiction.

If you don't smoke, *please don't start!* If you do smoke, seek God's help to guide and help you in your goal to stop smoking. Make your plans, gather the tools and techniques you want to use, set a date, and commit yourself to kicking the habit for good. After quitting, if you relapse just recommit yourself with renewed determination. Keep trying. To reach this important goal, be willing to suffer a little for Christ's sake—He suffered a lot for you.

You will realize a wonderful blessing when you regain your sense of taste and smell, when your breath doesn't stink, when you're not short of breath and when you no longer see your hard-earned money go up in smoke. You'll have a clear conscience and be a much happier person. And God will be pleased. **GN**

# The Bible's Keys to Mental Health

Why are mental problems and disabilities on the rise? Could it be that we overlook the Bible's keys to healthy, positive thinking?

by Noel Hornor

**D**r. Gro Harlem Brundtland, director-general of the World Health Organization, reported in 2000 that “five of the 10 leading causes of disability worldwide . . . are mental conditions” (*Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 2000, 78).

The five conditions she listed are major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, alcohol abuse and obsessive-compulsive disorders. In addition, significant mental-health disorders plaguing humanity include phobias, generalized anxiety and panic disorder. Any of these maladies can be disabling.

Worldwide, mental-health afflictions are increasing. The total share of disability caused by them increased from 10.5 percent in 1990 to 12 percent in 1998 and is expected to increase to 15 percent in 2020—almost a 50 percent increase in only three decades. Depression, currently the fifth-leading cause

positive thinking. In Philippians 4:8 the Bible instructs us in proper thinking: “And now, my friends, all that is *true*, all that is *noble*, all that is *just and pure*, all that is *lovable and gracious*, whatever is *excellent and admirable—fill all your thoughts with these things*” (New English Bible, emphasis added throughout).

Those who consistently apply these positive words will practice positive thinking, a habit crucial to mental health. “A positive outlook is known to improve recovery from surgery and the immune system’s ability to fight off disease as well as aid in cancer recovery, to reduce the fight-or-flight response and hence stress disease [and can] . . . restore our tranquillity and turn our unhappy, anxiety-producing hormones into happy ones” (Archibald Hart, M.D., *The Anxiety Cure*, 1999, p. 217).

The characteristics of an optimistic mindset include the ability to focus on the positive

Christians at Philippi and exhorted them to follow his example (Philippians 4:9), telling them that if they did so the “God of peace” would be with them. Peace of mind and a clear conscience (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Timothy 1:5) are essential characteristics of sound mental health.

## Reining in feelings and emotions

Where do feelings and emotions come from? When God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27), He included the human personality, which can express godly feelings.

The primary characteristic that summarizes God’s very being is *love* (1 John 4:8, 16). But Paul describes a greater range of godly characteristics and emotions as aspects of the fruit of His Spirit. They include “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23, New International Version). The Bible exhorts us to be full of this Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

If these traits are dominant in our personality, we are less likely to suffer from mental aberrations. Such a mind will be self-controlled; it will be stable and able to endure the difficulties of life. It will be *optimistic*, and optimism is a vital part of a healthy mind. “Optimistic people are more able to roll with life’s punches and slough off stress—and they live longer” (Bradley Wilcox, M.D., Craig Wilcox, Ph.D., and Makoto Suzuki, M.D., *The Okinawa Program*, 2001, p. 273).

Conversely, “a person without self-control is as defenseless as a city with broken-down walls” (Proverbs 25:28, New Living Translation). This person will be vulnerable and driven frequently by negative emotions. His outcome is described in Galatians 5:19-21. His accompanying problems can include adultery, sexual immorality, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, envy and drunkenness. Living this way exacts an automatic penalty that makes one a candidate for instability, unhappiness and mental problems.

We choose our emotions, and we live with the consequences. The types of emotions that prevail in our minds are a major determining factor in whether we succeed at life itself. “Emotions are a mixed blessing. They are responsible for many of man’s finest and greatest achievements. They are also responsible for some of the greatest tragedies in our world” (Norman Wright, *The Christian Use of Emotional Power*, 1974, p. 13). If we choose healthy emotions, we can be happy and achieve success in life.

## Take time out

We live in such a fast-paced world that it is

## The types of emotions that prevail in our minds are a major determining factor in **whether we succeed at life itself.**

of disability, is projected to jump to second place by 2020.

While treatment options—including medication and counseling—are available, *prevention* is the better choice.

Why is prevention preferable rather than treating a problem after it arises? Although treatment often works, it usually is much more costly. The costs often include financial losses, physical-health deterioration and trauma to family members—sometimes resulting in family disintegration.

Many mental illnesses *can* be prevented, and the Bible provides helpful information to that end. After all, it is a handbook from God on what we should think and how our minds should work. Among other things, the Bible tells us how to relieve stress and the kind of stimuli we should allow into our minds. Here are some crucial biblical keys to mental health.

### The power of a positive attitude

We start with the obvious merits of simple

when the negative seems overwhelming. The key lies in turning a problem into a challenge and then working to meet it.

We also must avoid filling our minds with the negative and degrading aspects of the world around us. The apostle Paul wrote that some things are so shameful we should not even speak of them (Ephesians 5:12). Yet many of the degrading things to which Paul referred fill our print and electronic media.

If we want good mental health, we should discipline our minds to avoid a degrading mental diet. The principle of “garbage in, garbage out” certainly applies with respect to our minds. The net effect of what occupies our minds—and often comes out of our mouths—will be as pure or as corrupt as whatever we let enter our minds. We jeopardize our mental health when we subject our thinking to mental trash. To remain psychologically stable, we must discipline our minds to avoid thinking in the gutter.

Paul practiced the advice he gave to the

essential to schedule breaks from our routine. "Taking time to rest is not an option in today's world; it is a necessity. Yet more people struggle here than in almost any other area of their lives. It is perilous not to take time to rest" (Hart, p. 118).

Even Jesus and His apostles felt this need. Notice one such occasion in Mark 6:31:

pushing for a greater emphasis on rest comes from the Bible . . . God rested on the seventh day . . . From the outset, the Bible presents us with the idea that rest is important, and furthermore, that a specific time has to be set aside for rest . . .

"I happen to believe (and a lot of scientific evidence is accumulating to support this

round-the-clock access to news we now can receive a twenty-four-hour-a-day parade of mostly negative information . . . The news, in fact, has become so stressful that some health experts . . . recommend periodic 'news fasts' to improve psychological health" (Wilcox, Wilcox and Suzuki, pp. 237-238).

(To learn more about the biblical Sabbath, please request our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest.*)

### Confront your fears

Everyone is afraid of something. Some fears are healthy, but some are not. When a fear becomes persistent and irrational, it is a phobia. "Specific phobias strike more than one in ten people" (Hart, p. 180). Some major fears are agoraphobia, fear of being in public places, and claustrophobia, fear of confinement or crowded places.

When one has a phobia, he will often anticipate encountering the circumstance that is apt to trigger it, which can set up persistent anxiety. God does not want us to be controlled by such fears. The Bible says, "Do not be afraid of sudden terror . . ." (Proverbs 3:25).

How can we overcome phobias? "They must be confronted, but not in a way that reinforces them. It is possible to overcome almost every phobia. It just takes time and effort. Real-life exposure to whatever situation you might fear is the most effective way to overcome that fear" (Hart, p. 179).

It is often beneficial to seek professional counsel when confronting a phobia that seriously impacts your life, but developing a relationship with God is even more important. In doing so, you can grow in His love, and "love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18).

### Confront anxiety with confidence

Although most people are not phobic, almost everyone has to struggle against worry, which is a form of fear. Our age is the era of anxiety. Everyone experiences some anxiety, and it can be a useful emotion when it triggers us to act to avoid danger. But, if it impacts our life seriously, we must take action to overcome it. "Every anxiety sufferer must learn new ways of thinking and develop methods for changing their former thinking patterns" (Hart, p. 111).

The Bible verifies that this kind of thinking is essential, telling us to "be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Ephesians 4:23).

How do we do this? One anxiety-reducing technique is to cleanse your mind at day's end. Evening is "a good time to do a 'mental wash' when you review anxieties that are cluttering your thinking and dump those that are not important" (Hart, p. 204).

The Bible confirms that this is sound



## Many mental illnesses can be prevented, and the Bible provides helpful information to that end.

"Then Jesus said, 'Let's get away from the crowds for a while and rest.' There were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn't even have time to eat" (NLT).

For mental rejuvenation and avoiding stress overload, we need daily rest. Especially as we get older, an afternoon nap can rejuvenate us. We also need regular vacations if our financial circumstances and work situations permit. Even if one does nothing but stay at home on holidays, breaks from our routines can be beneficial.

In addition, God tells us we need to schedule *one day in the week for rest*. After completing His work of creation, God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2). The Hebrew word for "rested" is *shabbath*, the verb form of the noun translated as "Sabbath" in Exodus 20:10-11, where God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel and commanded the Israelites to keep His Sabbath holy by resting on the seventh day of every week.

### Too much change

Some mental-health practitioners recognize the value of this weekly practice. "One of the most powerful arguments in favor of

belief) that we were designed for camel travel, not supersonic jet behavior . . . Today, however, we are exceeding these limits, not just barely, but by a huge margin. The penalty is an epidemic of stress disease and anxiety disorders, especially panic anxiety" (Hart, pp. 118-119).

About 40 years ago a French doctor who taught at Harvard observed: "If psychiatric illnesses are truly increasing in the Western world, the reason is not to be found in the complex and competitive character of our society but rather in the accelerated rate at which old habits and conventions disappear. Even the marginal man can generally achieve some form of equilibrium with his environment if the social order is stable, but he is likely to break down when the extent and rate of change exceed his adaptive potentialities. For this reason mental diseases are likely to become more apparent in areas undergoing rapid cultural transitions" (Rene Dubos, *Mirage of Health*, 1959, pp. 208-209).

The Sabbath provides a time to take a break from the world of stress and tension. ". . . We live in a culture that is constantly feeding us stress-producing messages . . . With today's

advice in a passage that tells us what to do at day's end. "Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still" (Psalm 4:4).

Sometimes anxieties relate to meeting our basic needs. Jesus said, "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?'" Jesus also recommended a cure for these worries: "... Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:31, 33, New American Standard Bible). The point is that, when our priorities conform to God's will, we can live in confidence that He will help us meet our other needs.

A relationship with God is fundamental to overcoming our fears. The Bible exhorts: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5); and, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (4:13). The only way we can develop the mind of Christ is to first repent of ignoring God's biblical instructions, then be baptized and receive God's Spirit (Acts 2:38). In doing so we can cleanse our minds and develop new mental habits. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

### The healing power of humor

As simple as it sounds, the ability to laugh is an aid to mental health. Joy is akin to laughter, and it, too, is part of the fruit of God's Spirit (Galatians 5:22). "A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance" (Proverbs 15:13), and "a merry heart does good, like medicine" (17:22).

Humor triggers literal physiological and mental changes in your body. Laughter "touches us at a deep emotional and physical level . . . By its very nature it changes our perception and invites us to look at things in a different light. It shows us that life can be silly, even crazy at times, but it still can be enjoyable" (Wilcox, Wilcox and Suzuki, pp. 272-273). One doctor notes that "humor, smiles, and laughter are the very best stress-busters" (Herbert Benson, M.D., *Timeless Healing*, 1996, p. 277).

A relationship with God provides the deepest and most-abiding joy. "The Bible has much to say about the joy, the sheer happiness, of the redeemed . . ." (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1982, "Humor in the Bible"). In one study of more than 500 men, "significant associations emerged between the participants' religious involvement and their health . . . such as less depression" (Kenneth Cooper, M.D., *It's Better to Believe*, p. 5).

Physical activity such as gardening, walking and other regular exercise can also

benefit your mental health.

### Avoid dangerous addictions

People suffering from mental problems—including undue stress—often rely on ingestible substances to help them get through the day. But this kind of crutch can easily lead to a collapse and fall. "Many people who suffer from emotional disorders or mental illness turn to drugs and alcohol to self-medicate, as a way of tolerating feelings that are intolerable. Yet, ironically, this method of self-treating seldom works in the long run and frequently makes matters worse" (*Johns Hopkins Family Health Book*, 1999, p. 1225).

Besides addictions to mood-altering substances, sometimes people become addicted

to things that are normally proper and healthy. Some, for example, develop addictions to food, sex or work. Though not a problem in moderation and within God's laws, losing control in any of these areas will often lead to greater problems.

The Bible addresses the need for balance and control. "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Corinthians 6:12). We should have but one addiction—and that is a devotion to love God and our fellow man. The supreme power that should rule over us is God through the Holy Spirit.

### A social support system

"... Woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up," says Ecclesiastes 4:10. The 17th-century poet John Donne had a related thought: "No man is an island." Good mental health requires contact with other people. One of the first revelations of the Bible is that God designed us to need other people: "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18).

The need for emotionally supporting family and friends is scientifically established. "What happens if we have no close relationships? The message that emerges loud and clear from scientific evidence accumulated since the mid 1970's is that having a reasonable quantity and quality of social relationships is essential for mental and physical wellbeing" (Paul Martin, M.D., *The Healing Mind*, 1997, p. 157).

Human interaction spawns growth and is essential mentally and physically. Proverbs 27:17 tells us that "as iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (NIV).

Perhaps the chief benefit of uplifting social contact is that it provides us the opportunity to learn how to love and serve. This is vital to mental health. "I have never met a person who is genuinely focused on helping others who is unhappy or dissatisfied with life . . . I can assure you that they are happy *because* they are directing their attention away from themselves" (Hart, p. 223).

Jesus recognized this and demonstrated that love and service are keys to happiness and mental health. He performed the menial task of washing His disciples' feet to demonstrate that His disciples were to serve one another as He had served them. After washing their feet Jesus said, "Now that you know these things, happy are you if you do them" (John

## The chief benefit of uplifting social contact is that it provides us the opportunity to learn how to love and serve.

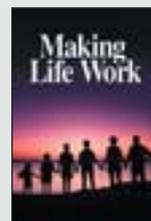
13:17, Twentieth Century New Testament). Later in the same chapter He told them, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (verse 34).

Jesus earlier said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). One of the two great commandments in the Bible (verses 37-40), this is a message that is consistent throughout Scripture: We should all be friends. The book of Proverbs extols the benefits of friendliness and neighborliness. "The neighbourly qualities which Proverbs urges on the reader add up to nothing less than love" (Derek Kidner, *Proverbs, an Introduction and Commentary*, 1964, p. 44).

Obedience to the commands of the Bible and nurturing a relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ form the foundation to completeness and mental well-being. "This is the end of the matter: you have heard it all. Fear God and obey his commandments; this sums up the duty of mankind" (Ecclesiastes 12:13, Revised English Bible). **GN**

### Recommended Reading

To learn more about building a successful, happy life based on biblical principles, request your free copy of *Making Life Work*. This full-color, illustrated guide will show you some of the best biblical advice on health, family, friendships, job and career, marriage, parenting and finances. Discover how you can make life work today!



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download this booklet from our Web site at

[www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org)

# Was Christ Born on Christmas Day?

Do you observe Christmas because you think it's Christ's birthday? Was He born on or anytime near Dec. 25? If Jesus lived on earth today, would He celebrate Christmas at all?

by Jerold Aust

**W**e should sit up and take notice of remarks from a popular American comedian and actor, Drew Carey. At a White House correspondents' dinner on May 5, Mr. Carey directed his comments to the president and vice president and their wives, several military and civilian dignitaries and a host of Hollywood entertainers:

"I can't watch the news lately," he said. "It gets too depressing. What I do now is turn the news off, get out my Bible and turn to the book of Revelation. I start just checking things off . . . Got it, got it, need it, got it, need it . . . Red dragon, seven horns, 10 crowns, got it.

"Yeah, I read the Bible a lot, you know. It's just crazy [the way] we celebrate holidays in the United States. I found out just recently there are so many religious holidays we celebrate here in this country that have *nothing to do with the Bible at all*. Real famous holidays, like Christmas. Christmas has *nothing to do with the Bible*.

"The birth of Jesus is in the Bible, but not Christmas. The tree is not in the Bible, you know. Gifts—that's not there either. There's no place where it says, "'Celebrate my birthday,'" says Jesus.' It's a *pagan holiday* that the Romans invented that we just do. But everywhere you go, I'm telling you, I've seen this so many times, you see a nativity scene and there's baby Jesus, the manger, sheep, shepherds, Mary, Joseph and Santa Claus right in the middle. Who's he? Mary's [birthing] coach? Santa Claus has nothing to do with anything."

Drew Carey actually brought up a serious side of Christmas: that history exposes the holiday as nothing more than a pagan observance dressed up in Christian garb.

Does the question of whether Christmas is biblical or not make any difference? What must Jesus Christ think about the feel-good, commercially driven season that supposedly honors Him?

## Christmas before Christ?

Just what are the origins of Christmas?

Did it really originate among pagan peoples before Jesus' birth, as Mr. Carey said?

History, in fact, shows that Christmas predates Christ by many centuries. Tertullian, an early cleric of the Catholic Church (A.D. 155-220), taught that Christmas and the New Year's season were pagan—in other words, they were based on the polytheistic religions of ancient Rome and its predecessors. He acknowledged that this infamous annual

## Just what are the origins of Christmas? History shows that Christmas predates Christ by many centuries.



pagan season stretched from early December to early January. To the church, Tertullian railed against the entire season as a time of wholly heathen practices.

Born a non-Christian, Tertullian was sent by his parents to Rome to study law. There, according to Walter Elwell, "he was converted to Christianity and rejected his licentious mode of life. Returning to Carthage, he gave himself passionately to the propagation and defense of the gospel [as he understood it]. Ultimately disenchanted with the

laxity of the Roman Church, he broke away and espoused the rigorous asceticism and enthusiasm of Montanism . . . [He weighed the] practical aspects of Christian living [against] the failings of early Catholicism and [offered] polemic arguments against the heathen and heretics" (*Tertullian*, 2001, p. 1176).

Tertullian defended the Christianity of his day against the growing influx of heathen practices, particularly in the Christmas and New Year's season. In his comments we see reference to the pagans' holiday trappings that have passed down largely unchanged to our day: "On your day of gladness, we [Christians] neither cover our doorposts with wreaths, nor intrude upon the day with lamps. At the call of public festivity, you consider it a proper thing to decorate your house like some new brothel. We are accused of a lower sacrilege because we do not celebrate along with you the holidays of the Caesars in a manner forbidden alike by modesty, decency, and purity" (quoted

by David Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, 1998, p. 342).

Continuing his comments on the season of Christmas and New Year's, Tertullian wrote: "The Roman traitors clad their doorposts with green and branching laurels. They smoked up their porches with lofty and brilliant lamps" (*ibid.*). Addressing Catholic Christians of his day about Christmas, he admonished, "Furthermore, you Christians [should] have no acquaintance with the festivals of the Gentiles" (*ibid.*).

Tertullian also contrasted the pagans' faithfulness to their pagan festivities with Christians' faithlessness and their tendency to compromise their beliefs: "The Saturnalia, New Year, Midwinter festivals, and Matronalia are frequented by us! Presents come and go! There are New Year's gifts! Games join their noise! Banquets join their din! *The pagans are more faithful to their own sect*. For, even if they had known them, they would not have shared the Lord's Day or Pentecost with us. For they would fear lest they would appear to be Christians. *Yet, we are not apprehensive that we might appear to be pagans*" (*ibid.*, emphasis added).

What an incredible admission by an early Latin-church leader. The pagans were more faithful to their traditions than the church was to its traditions. Tertullian chastised professing Christians of his day by reminding them they were following pagan

traditions that predated Christ's birth.

### The surprising origins of Christmas

Many reputable authors have written well-researched books documenting the origins of Christian holidays, and many encyclopedias summarize the same information. They have no religious axe to grind; they simply report the historical record.

One such book is *The Oxford Guide to Ideas and Issues of the Bible* (Bruce Metzger and Michael Coogan, editors, 2001). In its entry "Christmas," this source reports: "Twenty-five December was by the fourth century [A.D.] the date of the winter solstice, celebrated *in antiquity* as the birthday of Mithras [an ancient Persian god] and of Sol Invictus [the 'unconquered' sun god]. In the Julian calendar the solstice fell on 6 January, when the birthday of Osiris [the Egyptian

the balance. An instructive relic of the long struggle is preserved *in our festival of Christmas, which the Church seems to have borrowed directly from its heathen rival.*

"In the Julian calendar the twenty-fifth of December was reckoned the winter solstice, and it was regarded as the Nativity of the Sun, because the day begins to lengthen and the power of the sun to increase from that turning-point of the year. The ritual of the nativity, as it appears to have been celebrated in Syria and Egypt, was remarkable. The celebrants retired into certain inner shrines, from which at midnight they issued with a loud cry, 'The Virgin has brought forth! The light is waxing!'

"The Egyptians even represented the newborn sun by the image of an infant which on his birthday, the winter solstice, they brought forth and exhibited to his worshippers. No

kindled lights in token of festivity. In these solemnities and festivities the Christians also took part. Accordingly when the doctors of the Church perceived that the Christians had a leaning to this festival, they took counsel and resolved that the true Nativity should be solemnized on that day and the festival of the Epiphany on the sixth of January. Accordingly, along with this custom, the practice has prevailed of kindling fires till the sixth.'

"The heathen origin of Christmas is plainly hinted at, if not tacitly admitted, by Augustine when he exhorts his Christian brethren not to celebrate that solemn day like the heathen on account of the sun, but on account of him who made the sun. In like manner [Pope] Leo the Great rebuked the pestilent belief that Christmas was solemnized because of the birth of the new sun, as it was called, and not because of the nativity of Christ. Thus it appears that the Christian Church chose to celebrate the birthday of its Founder on the twenty-fifth of December in order to transfer the devotion of the heathen from the Sun to him who was called the Sun of Righteousness" (pp. 416-417).

Thus we see that one of the ancient world's most popular celebrations—a festival honoring pagan gods—was renamed and reborn as traditional Christianity's most popular celebration.

### Born on Dec. 25?

Honest scholars admit that the customs of Christmas and a Dec. 25 celebration long predate the birth of Christ. Nevertheless, wasn't Jesus born on Dec. 25? Let's look at some of the scriptural evidence.

Luke's Gospel, describing Christ's birth, tells us: "So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. *Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night*" (Luke 2:6-8, emphasis added throughout).

We see that when Jesus was born shepherds were spending the night with their flocks in open fields. In that region, from December to February, though the heat of the day might feel comfortable enough when the human body is covered, the cold of the night was piercing. Thus the shepherds never kept their flocks and herds out in the open country from December through February—it was simply too cold (Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, 1959, p. 2). This in itself tells us that Jesus could not have been born anywhere near Dec. 25.

## One of the ancient world's most popular celebrations—a festival honoring pagan gods—was renamed and reborn as traditional Christianity's most popular celebration.

god of the dead] was celebrated at Alexandria. By about 300 CE [A.D.], 6 January was the date of the Epiphany in the East, a feast always closely related to Christmas.

"The earliest mention of 25 December for Christmas is in the Philocalian Calendar of 354, part of which reflects Roman practice in 336. Celebration of Christ's birthday was not general *until the fourth century*; in fact, as late as the fifth century the Old Armenian Lectionary of Jerusalem still commemorated James and David on 25 December, noting 'in other towns they keep the birth of Christ'" (p. 95, emphasis added).

Modern Christians should be shocked that as late as the mid-fourth century not all Christians *had yet* begun celebrating the pagan festivals of Christmas and New Year's. *The Oxford Guide* also notes that Christmas has its roots in the winter solstice, celebrated anciently as the birthday of the sun and the Persian deity Mithras.

### More on Mithras

Sir James George Frazer wrote a well-researched book on Christian holidays, *The Golden Bough*. He expands on the origin of Christmas as the birthday of the ancient Persian god Mithras: "... There can be no doubt that the Mithraic religion proved a formidable rival to Christianity, combining as it did a solemn ritual with aspirations after moral purity and a hope of immortality. Indeed the issue of the conflict between the two faiths appears for a time to have hung in

doubt the Virgin who thus conceived and bore a son on the twenty-fifth of December was the great Oriental [i.e., Middle Eastern] goddess whom the Semites called the Heavenly Virgin or simply the Heavenly Goddess; in Semitic lands she was a form of Astarte [also known as Easter]. Now Mithra was regularly identified by his worshippers with the Sun, the Unconquered Sun, as they called him; hence his nativity also fell on the twenty-fifth of December" (1996, p. 416).

Like many good researchers, Sir James Frazer followed the thread of Christmas through historical records and came up with one inescapable conclusion: Christmas is but a relic of the worship of a pagan god known by the Persians as Mithra or Mithras. In other words, those who observe Christmas today simply keep an ancient idolatrous holiday season dressed in Christian symbolism!

### Paganism relabeled

Why did the early Catholic Church adopt the pagan holiday of Christmas? Frazer continues: "What considerations led the ecclesiastical authorities to institute the festival of Christmas? The motives for the innovation are stated with great frankness by a Syrian writer, himself a Christian.

"'The reason,' he tells us, 'why the fathers transferred the celebration of the sixth of January to the twenty-fifth of December was this. It was a custom of the heathen to celebrate on the same twenty-fifth of December the birthday of the Sun, at which they

The Roman census system is another historical proof that Jesus wasn't born in December. Luke 2:1 tells us that "it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered." However, this would not have happened in winter because "the middle of winter was not fitting for such a business, especially for women with child, and children to travel in. Therefore, Christ could not be born in the depth of winter . . . And if any shall think the winter wind was not so extreme in these parts, let him remember the words of Christ in the gospel, 'pray that your flight be not in the winter'" (Hislop, p. 92).

The Romans were efficient administrators. They would never consciously choose a time to register every man, woman and child when travel would have been so difficult because of cold and inclement weather. Here, too, is biblical proof that Jesus was not born in December's cold weather.

A far more likely scenario is that Jesus was born in the autumn, around the time of the biblical Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:34-36), when Joseph and Mary would have traveled to Jerusalem to keep the Feast along with thousands of other Jewish families. This also helps us understand why in the town Bethlehem, a few miles to the south of Jerusalem, "there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7)—the town would have been crowded with other travelers keeping the Feast at this time of year. (For additional biblical evidence that Jesus was likely born at this time and not on or near Dec. 25, request our free booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Really Matter Which Days We Keep?*)

### Did the apostles keep Christmas?

It's clear that Jesus wasn't born on Dec. 25. But could the apostles have instituted Christmas in the Church after Jesus' death and resurrection?

Nowhere in the New Testament can you find one iota of scriptural evidence that Jesus or any one of the apostles ever kept Christmas or taught anyone to keep this pagan celebration.

Jesus sternly corrected the religious teachers of His day who substituted *human traditions and teachings* for God's truths: "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites . . . All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your *tradition*" (Mark 7:6-9).

Further, Jesus instructed His apostles not to vary from God's edicts in the Old Testament: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to

you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17-19).

One of the commandments to which Jesus referred concerned God's instruction about honoring Him with pagan practices—the very thing Christmas does. Notice it in Deuteronomy 12:30-32: ". . . Do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' *You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way . . . Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.*"

Rather than teaching Christians to adopt pagan practices in their worship, Jesus and the apostles plainly kept and taught Christians to keep God's Holy Days and festivals first recorded in the Old Testament (see Leviticus 23).

They kept the Christian Passover (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), the Days of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8), Pentecost (Acts 2:1; 20:16) and the fall feasts—the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement (called "the Fast" in Acts 27:9), the Feast of Trumpets, and the Feast of Tabernacles, along with the Last Great Day (John 7).

The apostle John is direct in his evaluation of any who claim to be Christian but refuse to follow Christ's laws and commandments: "He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4).

Scripture proves God never sanctioned Christmas, nor does Scripture reveal Jesus' birth date. Available evidence suggests that He might have been born sometime in late September or perhaps early October. "There is no certainty as to the month or day of the birth [of Jesus]. The Christmas date, December 25, is first met within the West in the 4th century, and was then possibly borrowed from a pagan festival. December, in the winter season, seems unlikely, as unsuitable for the pasturing of flocks. A more probable date is a couple of months earlier" (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1986, "Jesus Christ," p. 1628).

### Would Jesus keep Christmas today?

Faced with these historical facts, and God's clear instruction about mixing pagan practices with worship of Him, we can conclude only that Jesus would *not* keep

Christmas today. Christmas is, in fact, *an affront* to Him.

In the Old Testament, God pronounced a curse on Israel for adopting pagan feast days: "Behold, I will rebuke your seed, and will spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your feasts; and ye shall be taken away with it" (Malachi 2:3, American Standard Bible). The Scriptures give us no reason to think that God's abhorrence of the celebration of pagan festivals to honor Him is any less today!

Satan, the great deceiver (Revelation 12:9), has duped mankind for millennia with his pagan holidays. He doesn't portray them as they really are, which Paul describes as "fellowship with demons" (1 Corinthians 10:20). Paul knew that Satan "transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). Satan has, for the time being, successfully substituted himself as this world's god in the place of the true God. He has counterfeited God's truth and true Holy Days, substituting his false religious holidays in their place.

If you keep Christmas and other religious holidays not sanctioned by the Bible, you have been hoodwinked by the god of this world into honoring *him* as an angel of light. Christmas trees, mistletoe, holly wreaths and Santa Claus don't honor Jesus' birth; they represent and honor pagan cult figures that predate Christ by centuries. Jesus was not born on Dec. 25, and, if He were on earth today, He not only wouldn't keep Christmas but He would rebuke any who would. God finds Christmas offensive because it blinds mankind from Him and His truth.

If you want to know which days Jesus wants you to keep, simply write for our free booklet on God's true feasts and Holy Days. You'll be surprised at what you'll learn. **GN**

## Recommended Reading

Many people are shocked to discover the origins of our most popular religious holidays. They're also surprised to find that the days God commands us to observe in the Bible—the same days Jesus Christ and the apostles kept—are almost universally ignored. Why? Also, why are today's supposedly Christian holidays observed with so many rituals and customs that are not sanctioned anywhere in the Bible? For detailed answers, be sure to request your free copy of the booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Really Matter Which Days We Keep?*



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download this booklet from our Web site at

[www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org)

## Did Jesus Declare All Meats Clean?

Many assume Jesus' statements in Mark 7 did away with the dietary restrictions recorded in the Old Testament. How should we understand Christ's words?

by **Larry Walker**

**I**n this series of articles we have examined statements of Jesus Christ that when understood correctly are surprisingly different in meaning from the way they are commonly understood. In the case of dietary restrictions recorded in the Bible, the surprise may be the result of understanding not just what Jesus said but what He *did not say* in the Gospel of Mark.

Many believe that in His encounter with the Pharisees recorded in Mark 7:1-23, Jesus abrogated the laws of clean and unclean meats revealed in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. In fact, many modern translations of the New Testament insert additional words into the text of Mark 7:19 to reflect this understanding. For example, the New International Version ends the verse with: "(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods 'clean')."

The New King James Version has "thus purifying all foods" and includes the marginal explanation: "NU [an abbreviation for the text used by many New Testament translations] sets off the final phrase as Mark's comment, that Jesus has declared all foods clean."

But is this textual variation correct? Does it capture the meaning of the passage in question? What exactly did Jesus mean by His statement?

### Context provides the answer

One of the foundational principles for understanding a scriptural passage is to examine the context. What is the topic of discussion here?

We should first notice that the subject is *food in general*, not which *meats* are clean or unclean. The Greek word *broma*, used in verse 19, simply means food. An entirely different Greek word, *kreas*, is used in the New Testament where meat—animal flesh—is specifically intended (see Romans 14:21; 1 Corinthians 13:8). So this passage concerns the general subject of *food* rather than *meat*. But a closer look shows that more is involved.

The first two verses help us understand the context: "Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault" (verses 1-2). They asked Jesus, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" (verse 5).

Now we see the subject further clarified. It concerns *eating "with unwashed hands."* Why was this of concern to the scribes and Pharisees?

The covenant God made with Israel at Mount Sinai was based on many laws and other instructions that ensured ritual purity. Jewish observance, however, often went beyond these in embracing the "oral law" or "tradition of the elders"—passed on by word of mouth and consisting of many additional *man-made* requirements and prohibitions tacked onto God's laws. Verses 3-4 of Mark 7 provide a brief explanation of the specific practice the Pharisees and scribes were referring to in this account: "For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders . . ."

Notice that food laws are not in question here. The topic is *ritual purity* based on the religious traditions of the oral law. The disciples were being criticized for not following the proper procedure of *ceremonial hand-washing* prescribed by these revered religious traditions.

The *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, explaining the background of verses 2-4, offers a description of this custom: "Mark's explanation of a . . . ritual handwashing, in these verses corresponds to the details set forth in Mishna tractate *Yadayim* [the Mishna is a later written version of the oral tradition]. In the marketplace one may touch ceremonially impure things; the impurity is removed by rinsing up to the wrist. Orthodox Jews today observe [ritual hand-washing] before meals. The rationale

for it has nothing to do with hygiene but is based on the idea that 'a man's home is his Temple,' with the dining table his altar, the food his sacrifice and himself the *cohen* (priest). Since the *Tanakh* [Old Testament] requires *cohanim* [priests] to be ceremonially pure before offering sacrifices on the altar, the Oral *Torah* requires the same before eating a meal" (David Stern, 1995).

By the time of Christ many had made these *additional* practices a top priority and in so doing sometimes overlooked and even violated the fundamental principles of the law of God (Matthew 23:1-4, 23-28).

### Spiritual principle of purification

After decrying the hypocrisy of this and other religious traditions and practices of the day, Jesus gets to the heart of the matter. He explains that what defiles a person (in the eyes of God) comes not from the *outside*—by what one puts into his mouth—but from *within* (verse 15).

He said it is far more important to concentrate on what comes *out of your heart* than what you put *into your mouth*. Jesus explains: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man" (verses 21-23).

Some of these same qualities are listed in Galatians 5:19-21 as "works of the flesh." They are contrasted with the "fruit of the Spirit" (verses 22-23). "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness [and] self-control" are qualities of a spiritually purified heart.

The ceremonial washings and purification practices of the Old Covenant were physical representations of the spiritual purification to be offered in the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:11-14). Hebrews 9:23 tells us: "Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens [referring to the tabernacle, altar, priests,

etc.] should be purified with these [ceremonial purifications], but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.” So the apostle Paul writes that Jesus “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14).

“Blessed are the pure in heart” is one of the fundamental teachings of Christ (Matthew 5:8).

## Unwashed hands don't defile the heart

In Mark 7 Jesus explains that ceremonial washing is not necessary for spiritual purity or sound spiritual health. He points out that “whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods” (verses 18-19).

Jesus is simply stating here that any dirt or other incidental impurities not removed through elaborate hand-washing will be purged out by the human digestive system in a manner that has no bearing on the heart and mind of a person. Since spiritual purification involves the heart, ceremonial washings are ineffective and unnecessary in preventing spiritual defilement.

Several Bible scholars recognize the error of interpreting this passage as an abrogation of the laws of clean and unclean meats. Certain grammatical factors, as well as the context of Scripture, determine how to properly translate verse 19. The Greek word translated “purifying” is a participle and must agree in grammatical gender with the noun it describes. Because this participle has a masculine ending, it cannot refer to “stomach,” which is in the feminine gender in Greek. Thus many scholars instead relate “purifying” back to “He said.”

However, another alternative provides a better explanation. The expression “is eliminated” in the New King James Version is a euphemistic rendering of what the original King James Version translates as “goeth out into the draught.” “Draught” (draft) is an archaic way to translate the Greek word *aphedron*, which means “a place where the human waste discharges are dumped, a privy, sink, toilet” (BibleWorks software). *Aphedron* is a masculine-gender noun, so “purifying” can refer to the end result of human waste, the toilet.

The *Commentary on the New Testament: Interpretation of Mark* explains the passage on the basis of this pertinent information: “The translation . . . ‘*This he said*, making

all meats clean’ makes the participial clause [‘purifying all foods’] a remark by Mark . . . that Jesus makes all foods clean— a remark . . . that we cannot accept . . . He is explaining to his disciples how no food defiles a man . . . As far as this thought is concerned, Jesus expresses it already in the preceding clause: ‘and goes out into the privy.’ What he now adds is that the privy [the end result of the digestive process] ‘makes all food clean’ . . . for all foods have their course through the body only, never touch the heart, and thus end in the privy . . . Since the disciples are so dense, the Lord is compelled to give them so coarse an explanation. *In this, however, he in no way abrogates the Levitical laws concerning foods*” (R.C.H. Lenski, pp. 297-298, emphasis added).

The *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, in its note on verse 19, summarizes well the overall meaning of this passage: “Yeshua [Jesus] did *not*, as many suppose, abrogate the laws of *kashrut* [kosher] and thus declare ham *kosher!* Since the beginning of the chapter the subject has been ritual purity . . . and not *kashrut* at all! There is not the slightest hint anywhere that foods in this verse can be anything other than what the Bible allows Jews to eat, in other words, *kosher* foods . . .

“Rather, Yeshua is continuing his discussion of spiritual prioritizing (v. 11). He teaches that *tohar* (purity) is not primarily ritual or physical, but spiritual (vv. 14-23). On this ground he does not entirely overrule the Pharisaic/rabbinic elaborations of the laws of purity, but he does demote them to subsidiary importance.”

## Peter's testimony is significant

Can we find other biblical evidence that this view is correct, that Jesus never changed the biblical food laws? We find a telling event from the life of Peter well after Jesus' death and resurrection.

Peter is a central figure in the early Church. Jesus charged Peter to strengthen the brethren (Luke 22:32). Peter delivered a powerful sermon that led to the conversion of thousands (Acts 2:14-41). His boldly claiming the name of Christ resulted in the miraculous healing of a lame man. He powerfully preached on repentance to those who gathered to witness the miracle (Acts 3:1-26). Later the mere passing of Peter's shadow over the sick resulted in dramatic healings (Acts 5:15).

Surely Peter would have understood

something as fundamental as whether Jesus had repealed the laws of clean and unclean meat. Yet, years after Christ's death and resurrection, when he experienced a vision of unclean animals accompanied by a voice telling him to “kill and eat,” notice Peter's spontaneous response: “*Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean*” (Acts 10:14, emphasis added throughout).

Ironically, many believe the purpose of this vision was to do away with the dietary restrictions regarding clean and unclean meats. Overlooked is the significance of Peter's initial response. He obviously did not consider these laws as having been rescinded by Christ!

This strange vision came to Peter three times, yet he still “wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant” (verses 16-17) and “thought about the vision” (verse 19). Peter did not jump to conclusions as too many do today. He already knew what the vision did *not* mean. Later God revealed the true meaning: “God has shown me that I should not call any *man* common or unclean” (verse 28).

Peter came to realize that the significance of the vision was that God was opening the way of salvation to gentiles (non-Israelites), so Peter shortly thereafter baptized the first uncircumcised gentiles God called into the Church (verses 34-35, 45-48). Peter was never to eat unclean animals, but he did learn this vital lesson in the plan of God.

## Lessons for today

The moral of this story is that food laws and righteousness are not mutually exclusive. God gave His food laws for sound reasons. True righteousness entails submission and obedience to all of God's Word (Psalm 119:172; Matthew 4:4; 5:17-19). **GN**

## Recommended Reading

Are all kinds of animal flesh suitable for food? Did God design certain animals to be eaten and others not to be eaten? Are Christians free to eat any kind of food, ignoring the instructions of the Bible? Learn the surprising answers — and the science behind them — in the free booklet *What Does the Bible Teach About Clean and Unclean Meats?*



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download this booklet from our Web site at

[www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org)

# America

*Continued from page 17*

Africa—and also, as it happens, in the United States and Western Europe. Islam appeals to the poor and downtrodden. In Western countries, conversions in prisons are high. In Michigan’s Jackson Prison, one third of all the prisoners are Muslims, most of them converts. In Western Europe, Islamic militants often come from poor neighborhoods. Throughout the Middle East, fundamentalists work with the neglected poor in big cities, who then support their radical agenda in opposition to their corrupt, often westernized, leaders.

Ironically, Osama bin Laden and most of the 19 hijackers responsible for 9-11 came from affluent backgrounds. But that doesn’t alter the fact that tens of millions of the world’s poor are being recruited to Islamic fundamentalism. A high birth rate among Muslims, coupled with limited economic development, will ensure a continual source of suicide-bomber recruits for decades to come.

## Greater Arab unity likely outcome

Chapter 11 of the book of Daniel, written in the sixth century B.C., contains a detailed prophecy of events in the Middle East, most of which was fulfilled in ancient times. But the last few verses are to be fulfilled “at the time of the end” (Daniel 11:40). A future

“king of the South” is prophesied to “push against” (King James Version) the “king of the North.” This could be a military attack, more terrorism or even an economic “push” such as cutting off oil supplies. At that point, the king of the North will come against the king of the South with the result that “many countries shall be overthrown.”

The king of the North in ancient times was the Seleucid dynasty of Syria, and the king of the South” was the Ptolemaic dynasty of Egypt. Seleucus and Ptolemy were both generals of Alexander the Great, who conquered the known world in the fourth century B.C., well after Daniel recorded his prophecy. The terms “North” and “South” reflect their locations in relation to Jerusalem, the Jewish capital that suffered greatly during the constant conflicts between the two powers.

Because of the nonexistence of a Jewish nation for almost 1,900 years, we see a great time gap in Daniel 11, with the last few verses remaining unfulfilled. With the restoration of many Jews to their former homeland in 1948, the last few verses of the prophecy can now be fulfilled. New kings of the North and South are yet to appear on the political horizon, leaders who will impact the modern nation of Israel. A prophesied king of the South will “push” against a king of the North, likely the 10-nation European-centered “Beast” power prophesied in Daniel 2 and 7

(and Revelation 13 and 17). This move will pose a significant threat to the European power represented by the king of the North.

At this point the Islamic nations of the Middle East are too weak to accomplish anything like this. One reason for that weakness is that the Arab world is divided into 22 nations. Including the 22, 56 nations make up the Islamic Conference, most of whose governments are Islamic.

For these nations to become effective in threatening another geopolitical power, the king of the North, they will have to come together. This has been a dream of the Arab world for centuries. It is also a dream of Saddam Hussein, who sees himself as a latter-day Saladin, the Arab leader who drove the Europeans out of the Middle East during the Crusades. Curiously, he also sees himself as a modern-day Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king who figured prominently in one of Daniel’s prophecies (Daniel 2:36-38).

Hussein’s plan is that a U.S. invasion will backfire and bring about a united Arab front against Israel and the United States. At the same time, America faces the risk of increased hatred abroad against itself and Britain as the two nations go to war with Iraq—hatred that may translate into condemnatory votes at the United Nations.

Certainly a great deal is at stake in this vitally important region of the world. **GN**

## The Wealth and Poverty of Nations

**E**ighteenth-century British economist Adam Smith (1723-90) first wrote of the connection between freedom and national economic success. In his monumental work *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, Smith showed that national prosperity would naturally follow if governments allowed their peoples the freedom to succeed financially. This is still the foundational principle of what is often referred to as the Anglo-American economic model. A recent survey showed that eight of the ten most prosperous countries on earth have one thing in common—they are all former colonies of Great Britain.

Nineteenth-century economist Karl Marx taught that the state should control the means of production, thereby ensuring a fair distribution of wealth. His model was the foundation of the communist system, which failed miserably to either produce wealth or distribute it fairly. This did not stop countries from embracing his economic philosophy, usually nations accustomed to strong centralization.

What is often referred to as the “third way” is a mix of both systems, with some economic freedoms but a big role for central government.

Certainly the Anglo-American model, though not perfect, has produced the greatest degree of wealth for the maximum number of people.

The ancient book of Genesis showed this would be the case. In chapter 49 Jacob (Israel) called his 12 sons together and told them what would “befall them in the last days” (verse 1), the time leading up to the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Speaking specifically of the United States and Britain, whose common ancestor is Joseph, Jacob said: “Joseph shall be a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall.” History bears this out. Wherever the British and American peoples have gone, prosperity has followed, both for themselves and for those living with them.

Sometimes, however, this prosperity has led to resentment. An early illustration of this can be found in Genesis 26.

Isaac, Abraham’s son and the father of Jacob, was dwelling among the Philistines (verse 8), where he “began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous” (verse 13). Verse 14 adds: “So the Philistines envied him.”

As a result of this envy, they forced Isaac off the land. Isaac simply moved away and started prospering elsewhere—and was again resented by the Philistines. Eventually, they allowed him to stay, which was in their best interests because his wealth improved their conditions as well as his own, exactly as was promised to his father, Abraham: “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you” (Genesis 12:3).

Great prosperity was brought to the world through the British Empire and later the United States. But, as the British retreated from their empire, many of their former colonies suffered rapid economic decline as successor governments tried a different model, that of controlling everything.

The result is a whole generation of people who remember nothing of the fairly prosperous past but see the former imperial master wealthy while they are poor. To them, logic dictates that the British and the Americans must have stolen their wealth from the poor of the world. Hence, the increasing hatred directed toward the two Western nations.

Sadly, this is unlikely to be rectified until Jesus Christ returns and fulfills some specific Bible prophecies. In Micah 4:1-4, for example, we read that “many nations” will “go up to the mountain [kingdom] of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; [where] He will teach us His Ways and we shall walk in His paths.”

One of His ways is an economic system built on private-property rights and family farming, as shown in verse 4: “But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid.” There will be no corrupt governments trying to take the wealth for themselves. Today it is the lack of respect for private property that discourages investment and the creation of wealth in many backward nations. An essential prerequisite for removing the threat to private wealth is an independent judiciary, one of the contributing factors to the success of the Anglo-American model.

In one respect, though, the United States and Britain have deviated from Smith’s model, and that is in the accumulation of debt, both corporate and private. This is a fundamental weakness of recent experience that should not be copied. It does not bode well for the future of the two greatest English-speaking nations.

# Letters From Our Readers

## Impact of *The Good News*

I have been a slowly progressing Christian for 20 years or so and have been disillusioned with established churches for various reasons. I find your publication most refreshing and a great help. It is well balanced and has helped me with my perspective in this depressing and stressful world. I have a close friend who was involved in the world of cocaine in a big way. I saw something in him that I really liked, so I gently dropped bits of Bible prophecy into our conversations. To my surprise he quickly showed a real interest, so I asked him if he'd like me to get him on your mailing list.

Since he started receiving *The Good News* about six months ago, he has quickly accepted the Bible as the Word of the one true God. His grasp of creation, love, Christ's purpose and so much more has been a joy to behold. This is quite amazing since he cannot remember ever reading a book in his life. Now he comes to me and tells me about things he's learned from your publications. We are both sinners struggling to cope with the world, so please pray for us.

L.D.M., Royston, England

I really appreciate *The Good News*. I found your magazine in front of a shop in San Francisco. The titles caught my eye, and I took one. After reading, I fully appreciate it because this magazine teaches a lot of things we forget or think we know. I'm 34 and want to meet a girl for marriage who believes in God. But girls I meet like going into bars for dancing, smoking—in short, they do not believe in God. So I can't go with them because I've changed my life and want to live by God's rules. A long time ago I stopped having sex because of my belief in God and fear of bad diseases. Thank you so much for making your magazine and Web site available.

I.Z., San Francisco, California

I want to thank you for *The Good News* because we are at present living in a world where most people have forgotten what it really means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. In this uncertain world your magazine has come as a message of hope and understanding to many seekers who do not know where to find soul-saving truths anymore. Please continue to send this wonderful magazine to me—with a message that has enough soul-saving guidance and truth in it to lead a

whole lost world back to God again.

J.M., Bellville, South Africa

## Searching for truth

I have recently received some of your literature and am very happy to find that many of the beliefs I have correspond to your Church's. I am searching for ways to understand and serve God and have been doing so for much of my life. But I find I cannot accept many of the mainstream religious teachings. My family brought me up a Catholic, but it has been many years since I have been associated with that church. I long to find association with followers of the Bible and Christ's teachings. Do you have any suggestions as to the steps I can take to become more involved with the correct way to serve God? I am a 50-year-old woman who is still searching for a way to answer my heart's calling.

J.A., Cliffwood Beach, New Jersey

*We deeply appreciate your attitude and approach to truth. To begin with, you might want to request three of our booklets, Transforming Your Life, What Is Your Destiny? and The Church Jesus Built. These free publications give basic spiritual guidance in preparation for whatever further steps God may show you.*

## God's test commandment

Thank you for the article "God's Test Commandment" in *The Good News* [July-August 2002]. Excellent! Excellent! God has been speaking to me (and others) about this.

A.S., Prince George, B.C., Canada

I have been a member of a Sunday-worshiping ministry. However, I came across the booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*. Honestly speaking, I was impressed to discover the truth of the Scriptures through your wonderful booklet. And I thank the Almighty God for revealing Himself to me through this booklet too. To be frank, I have stopped going to church because of Sunday worship.

G.I., Gambia

## Who is God?

Thank you so very much for your Web site, for offering the wonderful materials for free with no obligation or ulterior motive other than to educate people (which is unheard of these days). I am absolutely

fascinated with learning as much as I can about God, Jesus, Christianity and the ultimate questions: Why are we here, and how can we accept, understand and know God? As hard as I may try, I will never understand what or who God is. But it certainly helps to know that I'm not by any means the only one struggling with such issues, nor am I alone in wanting very much to be a part of God's family, one of His children.

L.C.T., Internet

*We suggest that you request our free booklet Who Is God?*

## Reader from Iraq

I shall be thankful if you send me new issues of *The Good News* and booklets. I haven't received any for months.

Reader from Iraq

*In these stressful times in the very shadow of a potential war, we should remember that our readers in Iraq may experience great difficulty in receiving The Good News and other literature published by the United Church of God.*

## Appreciates free literature

I have been a regular subscriber to *The Good News* since March 2000. Additionally, I have subscribed to your 12-lesson *Bible Study Course* and received such publications as *Who Is God?*, *The Ten Commandments*, *The Church Jesus Built* and *God's Holy Day Plan* and a host of other free publications. I am most impressed with your ministry of proclaiming the true gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations by providing biblical literature at no charge to those who request it. It is my experience and belief that this philosophy is atypical of the ministry of so many other ministers, evangelists, teachers, conference hosts, etc.

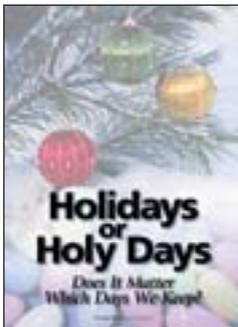
Realizing that your association relies greatly upon the voluntary contributions of the general public, I am enclosing a small personal contribution in recognition of and appreciation for your efforts.

G.H., Portsmouth, Ohio

*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).*

# Do You Know the *Real* Christmas Story?

**W**ith the Christmas season fast approaching, do you know the origin of modern Christmas customs and this celebration's connection to Christianity? Take the following short quiz to assess your knowledge.



**1 True or False?** The first Christmas was observed by Christians at the birth of Jesus Christ.

**2 True or False?** The custom of giving gifts for Christmas originated with the exchange of gifts among the wise men.

**3 True or False?** The growth of Christmas around the world is one of the best indicators that the world is becoming more Christian in its outlook.

**4 True or False?** The Christmas tree and mistletoe come from Christian tradition.

**5 True or False?** The Bible gives us permission to adopt any holiday customs we choose so long as they are done to honor Christ.

**6 True or False?** Putting Christ back in Christmas is the best way to honor God at this time of year.

**7 True or False?** Christmas is God's favorite celebration.

Brace yourself: The correct answer to all of these questions is *false*. If you missed some, you need to understand the real Christmas story as explained by history and the Bible in our free booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?*

Too many people go through life thinking they are honoring their Creator through Christmas celebrations. For many it is the most joyous time of the year. But, before you celebrate another Christmas season, why not consider what God thinks about this holiday? As a serious Christian, don't you think it's time you considered His view?

For your free copy, contact any of our offices listed on page 2 or visit our Web sites:

[www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org) | [www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org)



**United Church of God**  
an International Association

