

THE

LIVING

CHURCH NEWS

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ARE YOU A POSITIVE PERSON?

Dear Brethren and Friends,

With the beginning surge of end-time prophetic events—which often involve stress and suffering—many of God’s own people sometimes feel discouraged and disillusioned. Some are let down. They sometimes become “weary with well doing.” Some even give up, and fall completely away from God and His way. This should not surprise us. *For all of us are human!*

Yet, we in the Living Church of God need to truly understand and respond to the *powerful encouragement* that God makes available. Jesus Christ Himself described the coming frightful events that will test men’s souls. After describing the coming wave of false prophets, wars, disease epidemics and great earthquakes, Jesus continued, “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Luke 21:25–26). So millions will be genuinely *scared to death* as these final events get underway.

But we in God’s Church are **not** to lose heart. For our Savior and our living Head instructs us, “Now when these things begin to happen, *look up and lift up your heads*, because your redemption draws near” (v. 28).

Dear brethren, we in God’s true Church absolutely *must* have a vital, ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ and with the Father. They must be very real to us through our constant *study* of the Bible, our practice of *meditating* for hours on

the teachings of the Bible and the examples of the great men and women of God. Through *fervent prayer* we must focus our minds on the *reality* of Almighty God and His supreme **purpose** for our lives. We must daily drink in of God’s Holy Spirit. As God’s word tells us, “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).



We must use the awesome power of the Holy Spirit to *get rid* of what the Apostle Paul called the “spirit of fear.” For God’s Spirit gives us *power and love* and a *sound mind*. We must train ourselves to banish negative thoughts. We must emphasize the positive.

In his wonderful book, *None of These Diseases*, S. I. McMillen, M.D. writes some very inspiring words. After describing the peace of mind maintained by William Gladstone, one of the greatest Prime Ministers in the entire history of Britain, Dr. McMillen continues with these words:

“William Ewart Gladstone, on being questioned for the secret of the unusual serenity he was able to maintain in spite of situational stresses, replied, ‘At the foot of my bed, where I can see it on retiring and on arising in the morning, are the words, ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.’

Some psychiatrists have given far more than superficial help in the medical textbooks they have written for physicians. William Sadler advises physicians how to get at the cause of people’s troubles:

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‘Prayer is a powerful and effectual worry-remover. Men and women who have learned to pray with childlike sincerity, literally talking to, and communicating with the Heavenly Father, are in possession of the great secret whereby they can cast their care upon God, knowing that He careth for us. A clear conscience is a great step toward barricading the mind against neuroticism.

Many are victims of fear and worry because they fail properly to maintain their spiritual nutrition.... The majority of people liberally feed their bodies, and many make generous provision for their mental nourishment; but the vast majority leave the soul to starve, paying very little attention to their spiritual nutrition; and as a result the spiritual nature is so weakened that it is unable to exercise the restraining influence over the mind which would enable it to surmount its difficulties and maintain an atmosphere above conflict and despondency.’

He further advises physicians to encourage their patients to engage ‘in daily, systematic Bible reading.’ In fact, in his textbook for doctors, Dr. Sadler prints forty-three different verses as examples of the therapeutic value of Bible reading” (p. 97).

One scripture which Dr. McMillen did not cite, but which I have found to be extremely helpful, is Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” As we experience the horrifying trials that are going to come upon the entire world within the next several years, we will all need to focus our minds on the “Big Picture.” We will need to carefully think through the fact that Almighty God is working with the entire world—*teaching it lessons* for all eternity—and *especially* working with us, His children. He will let us go through these trials for a few minutes or seconds—compared to eternity.

Then, at Christ’s return, we will be given spiritual bodies to live *forever* in magnificent glory. Whatever trials we go through in this life will be **nothing** compared to what God will give us. As Jesus said specifically about these coming days near the end of this age: “Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, *because your redemption draws near*” (Luke 21:28). In our minds and hearts, we all need to learn to “look up” and realize that it is our Creator who is guiding these overall events in the world. We are His children. We are



begotten through His Holy Spirit. If we will just *use that Spirit* to walk with Him, talk with Him, commune with Him and put our hands in His—through every dark valley—we **will** come out on the other side much stronger and more confident. For He will **never** leave us or forsake us.

Frankly, brethren, some of us may be *beaten*. Some of us may be *thrown in jail*. Some of us may have sicknesses or physical weaknesses to bring us down—as the Apostle Paul himself said. But if our eyes are on the Creator and we remember all the things He *has done* for us, *is doing* for us and *will do* for us because of His absolute promises, we must **know**—and *know* that we know—that we will come out stronger on the other side. As Paul wrote, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:16–17).

Many times, Paul and other early Christians could easily have become very discouraged or tempted to turn aside. Paul and others were beaten with whips and thrown in jail (2 Corinthians 11). But they **knew** that God was real and therefore were strengthened by these trials, which forced them to focus their eyes on the ultimate reality of the Creator working out His purpose—teaching them *lessons* for all eternity—and making them more fit to be kings and priests in His eternal Kingdom.

Please, brethren, never forget Christ’s inspired instruction, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the

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EDITORIAL

WHAT EVERY HUSBAND NEEDS TO KNOW!

By Roderick C. Meredith

Nearly 50 years ago, for the *Plain Truth* magazine, I wrote an article reminding husbands of their God-given responsibilities. Those responsibilities have not changed, and neither has human nature; I still hear stories of terribly sad situations—even in our own Living Church of God—where husbands abuse or neglect their wives and fail to provide a Christ-like example for the family members in their care.

I considered “rewriting” the article, but upon reflection I feel that it has stood up well, over the years, and should be helpful to husbands today—and to young men planning to become husbands in the future. Here, then, is that article.

* * * * *

“I’ll teach you to obey me, you lousy scum!” the man screamed in a drunken rage as he lunged toward his frail, terrified wife. With doubled fists he hit and kicked her, knocking her against the wall and finally to the floor.

He was the master of the house, so he said!

The couple’s three children, terrified, cowered in the far corner sobbing quietly. Their eyes were glazed with both fear and hate. They had seen this tragedy many, many times. So many times, in fact, that they would never be able to forget.

Is the above example really unique? Not by any means!

For some of the most shocking, horrifying and sadistic instances of human enslavement imaginable exist within the state often described as “holy matrimony.”

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES

“I want to leave him so that I can rest when I get home from work. His drinking is also getting me real nervous. He talks all night and he gets mean and

crazy. I’ve been putting up with him for many years. But I’ve gotten to a point that I can’t take it any longer.

What would you suggest for me to do?

Unusual? Not at all! For, as all marriage counselors and most ministers realize, cases like this exist by the hundreds of thousands throughout our Western world.

Notice this next letter from a *Plain Truth* reader:

How can a wife live with her husband, when he treats her like a child? I can’t do anything without begging him first.

If I ever get to go out I have to be in the house by a certain time. If I do something he doesn’t like he punishes me in some way. Sometimes he will even hit me.

I don’t know how much I can take. I feel like I am in a prison.

We have two children and I find myself getting very short tempered with them. I just don’t know what to do. Please help me.”

We receive literally thousands of letters like this from new listeners to the broadcast and new readers of the *Plain Truth* who have not yet learned to apply God’s laws to their married life. Often, we publish articles showing the responsibility of both husbands and wives in marriage. But in this particular article—because of the crying need of the situations outlined above—I propose to tell you husbands what your responsibility is in marriage! Perhaps an entire book should be written on this by one of God’s true ministers in due time but the “keys” to being the right kind of husband and having a wonderful, lasting and exhilarating marriage are not too hard to find.

However, you do need to be willing!

HOW WOMAN WAS MADE

At the very beginning of your Bible, God describes some of the purposes He had in mind—and responsibilities—in creating man and woman. If you are ever going to find the answer to happy marriages, you had better be willing to accept instruction from the Great God of creation—the author of marriage and the one who made us male and female!

Notice what He had in mind: “And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:26, KJV). God said: “Let them have dominion. He intended that both the husband and the wife learn to exercise authority and responsibility over all of the creation under mankind.

Verse 27 continues: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” Here is made plain the fact that both man and woman were created in the image of God. They should both share in the blessings, the opportunities, the joys—as well as the responsibilities—of acting for God on this earth and having dominion over the rest of the physical creation.

In Genesis 2:18, God reveals in detail why He created woman after creating the man: “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.”

As I have pointed out many times, it is not that man was the great, all-conquering hero who stood alone against the sky. The fact was that man needed a help! He was not complete! And woman was created to fill that

emotional, mental and physical void in his life.

This is something that all men should deeply appreciate.

A WIFE BALANCES A MAN

For man without woman is often like a train without an engine, an airplane without wings, or a car without wheels.

Most men simply cannot be complete, cannot be fully happy and balanced, cannot function as they ought in the fulfillment of God's purposes unless each has the help of a loving, dedicated wife. Most of us men—even the most highly educated—need to realize this more fully. For this is a bit of “knowledge” that the world seems to be losing in its rush toward material acquisition, false values and even perverted “love” between members of the same sex which God condemns as sin.

Our God says: “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Peter 3:7, KJV).

Frankly and truly, most women deeply realize that they are indeed “the weaker vessel.” They have no quarrel with this and are glad to take their place in life at the side of a strong, balanced and loving husband and act as his help and support. But if a husband takes advantage of this, crushes her in his desire to exalt himself and “prove something” to himself or somebody it is no wonder that her love, respect and trust quickly fades. Only hate and misunderstanding result and, indeed, the “prayers” of that household are greatly hindered—if there ever were such prayers.

The wife was created as a “help.” She was created as the “weaker vessel”—to assist and inspire her husband.

But how do you help and assist a wild beast? How do you help and assist a perverted egotist who is so intent on exalting himself, “proving” to himself that he is great and powerful and acting like a little dictator that he makes life miserable

for all others around him? Or, how do you help and assist a lazy, spineless drunken bum who refuses to support his wife and family, refuses to earn a proper living, and comes in night after night in a stupor—evil-tempered and slapping and beating his wife and children? How do you assist this type of husband?

AN INSPIRED EXAMPLE OF MARRIAGE

Throughout the inspired word of God, the relationship between husbands and wives is shown to be the very type of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church. This is particularly emphasized in the fifth chapter of Ephesians. Notice!

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it” (v. 25, KJV).

“Love your wives”? But what is “love”?

Real love is deep affection, admiration, respect, a feeling of closeness and an outgoing concern for the one loved.

Jesus Christ had an outgoing concern for the Church and so He gave Himself for it.

When a woman decides to marry a man she should—if she is mature enough to understand—have such a strong affection, admiration and outgoing concern for the man she is to marry that she is willing to forsake all others, give up the easygoing freedom of singleness, and give herself to this man to be his sweetheart, his help and inspiration, his nurse and comforter when he is downcast or sick, the mother of his children and who knows how many other things?

But what are the man's responsibilities toward his wife in the sight of Almighty God?

In amplifying the analogy of Christ and the Church, I'm going to set forth five areas of a decent man's responsibilities toward his wife. If a man is so weak and gutless that he cannot wholeheartedly embrace these basic responsibilities, then he is not man enough to marry! If he is already married, he had better—for

his own sake, for his wife's sake, for his children and grandchildren's sake and for the sake of his eternal life—study and pray, that he will be able to inculcate the teachings of Jesus Christ and character of God sufficiently to carry out—for the most part at least—these five basic responsibilities in marriage!

I. LOVE AND RESPECT

Certainly a man ought not to marry a woman unless he really and truly loves her. Yet, sorrowfully, we must acknowledge that millions of men have never learned the meaning of the word “love.” Because of cheap novels, cheap movies, and wrong examples, they have all too often learned to confuse “love” with lust. They seem to think that a base, animal sexual desire to “get” satisfaction from another person of the opposite sex constitutes love. Nothing could be further from the truth!

For true love involves a giving, a sharing of plans, hopes and dreams between two people who want to build an entire life together until death does them part. If they are not able to talk things over, smile into each others eyes, share little joys and intimacies, and stick together when the big trials come—their love is lost indeed.

The Apostle Paul commanded: “Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” (Colossians 3:19, KJV). Some husbands do allow themselves quickly to become “bitter” because their wives do not measure up to an angelic idol of perfection envisioned in their own human imaginations!

But a wife was never intended to be an idol! She was never designed to be perfect in this life any more than her husband was! She was designed to *become* perfect. She was not intended to be a perfect housekeeper, mother, companion and also a Hollywood sex goddess all wrapped up in one individual!

She was designed and created, however, by the Maker of us all to be a sweetheart, help and inspiration to a man who would share himself with her, go over his plans, hopes and dreams with her, give her encouragement and guidance

and lead—not drive—their home in an attitude of confidence and love!

Quoting Genesis, Jesus Christ said: “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh” (Matthew 19:5, KJV). In marriage, a man needs to realize that this “cleaving” is more than a mere physical relationship. It is an active and progressive growing together, a family relationship. A husband needs to concentrate on appreciating and encouraging his wife’s happiness, beauty and personality. He needs to think of her and cherish her—not ever letting his thoughts dwell upon other women in the same way, or allowing his thoughts to dwell upon the negative aspects of his own wife anywhere near so much as upon her positive virtues, love and beauty.

So many scores of women have cried out to me in despair: “My husband just won’t talk to me! That is why we are not close—he just doesn’t share anything with me. He just sits glumly at the table at mealtime or reading a paper or watching TV at night!”

LOVING IS SHARING

Loving means sharing. Every husband worthy of the name ought to cultivate the habit of talking over his plans and hopes with his wife, sharing with her many of his innermost thoughts and desires—not just the negative ones!—and make her feel deeply “a part” of him. This very attitude and approach means more to a woman than most men can even realize!

A man needs to treat his wife as a “sweetheart.” He needs to cultivate and build an atmosphere of love, romance and intimacy in their home—kissing his wife when he returns from work, holding her hand as they are taking walks, and embracing her often throughout the day with free and lavish affection.

True love certainly involves deep and abiding respect. A man ought to be grateful and thankful that the woman who is his wife has decided to leave her own estate and cleave to him above all others unto death. He ought to appreciate

that fact—and the many, many good qualities of help, patience and service which practically every wife possesses. He ought to encourage and bring out the best in her—not constantly harp and carp away at her in belittling criticism which only causes her, in most cases, to degenerate and respond in kind.

A man ought to respect the fact that his wife is an adult human being made in the image of God. He needs to realize that some day—according to the true God’s plan—she will probably become a glorified spirit being ruling with Christ over this earth, even managing angels! (1 Corinthians 6:3, KJV)

II. SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Certainly a man was intended by God not only to be the head of the house but to be the “provider” as well.

God says: “But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Timothy 5:8, KJV).

Every thinking man ought to realize that he is his happiest when he is building, increasing and providing. He will never have real peace of mind or abiding happiness unless he learns to fulfill this part in life. His brain, body and desires all cry out for fulfillment in an occupation to support himself and his family.

But a really dedicated Christian man will certainly want to go far beyond just basic “support” for his wife and children. He will want to provide a really fine home for them—within his means and abilities. This does not mean a mansion or all kinds of luxuries. But with wisdom and extra effort a comfortable, clean and delightful house and home may be provided by nearly every man in the Western world if he is willing to put his brain and his back to the task!

God says: “In all labor there is profit: but the talk of the lips tends only to penury” (Proverbs 14:23, KJV). Obviously a man who sits around hoping, wishing and talking—but never working—is not going to provide a good life for his wife and children.

Again: “The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious” (Proverbs 12:27, KJV). A man who is diligent—who thinks, works hard and drives himself to accomplish—is going to have a fine home and be able to provide a fine life, materially at least, for his family.

However, merely giving physical support to a wife is not enough to fulfill her needs or the needs of her husband. For every normal man—in order to develop his fullest capacities—needs to learn to be encouraging and uplifting to his wife, his children and those around him. A wife certainly needs this “moral support” many times at the end of a hard day of working over the stove, cleaning the house and tending to the needs of active youngsters. A real man should not expect his wife always to encourage and support him. Rather, he should be ready, able and desirous of encouraging and uplifting her when she has her “down” moments as well!

This type of mutual help and support automatically increases the deep love and respect that a married couple will have for one another. If the partner is there with a kind word, a gentle pat on the shoulder, an encouraging embrace, a look of compassion—this can mean more than any number of physical luxuries.

III. LEADERSHIP AND GUIDANCE

A third area of responsibility—and opportunity—for a really masculine husband is that of leadership and guidance. For God made the woman to physically and emotionally “lean on” the man as her head and leader. Unless a woman has by example or training developed a perverted approach to life, she naturally enjoys being led and even dominated by a man who respects, appreciates and loves her.

However, always remember the difference between *dominate* and *domineer*. A man must learn to lead his wife by

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The Narrow Gate

By Dexter B. Wakefield

Can you imagine hearing a sermon given by Jesus Himself? Today, we can—because one sermon He gave is recorded in chapters 5–7 of Matthew’s gospel. That sermon is popularly called “The Sermon on the Mount,” because Matthew’s account of it begins, “And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him” (Matthew 5:1).

Often, people do not understand what Jesus said. In this sermon, however, Jesus made a plain and easily understandable statement that most professing Christians today simply *do not believe*—even if they may say they believe in a “literal reading” of the Bible. They will try to explain away its plain language and meaning, because it conflicts with other beliefs to which they feel they must cling.

What is this easily understood but widely disbelieved statement of Jesus? It is His command, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and **there are few who find it**” (Matthew 7:13–14).

This plain scripture teaches the opposite of what most professing Christians believe, and has puzzled many in the world. It especially confounds those who believe in some form of universal salvation. “How can Jesus’ statement be true?” they ask. After all, more than 2 billion people today profess Christianity—and that is *many*, not “*few*.” So, are only a few of the most righteous going to heaven, with the rest going to hell? Are hundreds of millions in professing Christianity doomed to an eternity of suffering because they were unable to squeeze through the “narrow gate?” And what about the idea that you will get into heaven if you just “believe in Jesus?” Jesus Himself said, “there are few who find it”—a statement that is hard to dismiss.

WIDE VS. NARROW

Jesus presents us with two pictures in this scripture. Each contains a passageway. One is wide: “the **way is broad** that **leads to destruction**, and there are **many** who enter through it.” The other is narrow: “For the **gate is small** and the **way is narrow** that **leads to life**, and there are **few** who find it.” Christ called His Church a “little flock” for a reason.

One of the great lessons of Pentecost is that God is not calling the whole world now. The Church of God in this

age is called the “firstfruits,” and Christ is the firstborn of *many*. We understand that *all of humanity* will in time have a full chance at salvation, but *not all* will be called in this age. The task of those called in this age is to follow Christ’s instruction to follow the narrow way and “enter through the narrow gate”!

To follow Christ’s instruction, it should be helpful to learn about that gate. What makes a wide gate wide? What makes a narrow gate narrow? Clearly, Jesus said the whole of humanity will not be able to enter, and is being sorted out at these “gates”—but is the Church of God *also* being “sifted” at the narrow gate? What can we do that will help us enter through that narrow gate?

There are many steps we can take to help us to enter through that gate, but a foundational step—*one* particular aspect for us to work on during the Pentecost season—is to hold on to God’s truth. We must do so, because that truth illuminates and guides us on the path God has set us on, which leads us to the narrow gate. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). That path is the “narrow” way of which Christ spoke.

WHAT MAKES THE WIDE GATE WIDE?

A false sense of freedom is one characteristic of the wide gate. Lack of restrictions is another. Most people want as much freedom and as few restrictions in their lives as possible. So, millions seek the broader way—the way of this world that rejects God and His way of life. People assume they can benefit from doing what they want, rather than what God says is best. And yet: “There is a *way* that seems right to a man, but its end is the *way of death*” (Proverbs 14:12). Apart from God’s way, we cannot have freedom of choice and freedom from death at the same time.

In God’s Church, we understand that God’s character is expressed in His definition of right and wrong. Therefore, sin amounts to a personal rejection of God. One Bible dictionary put it well: “The foundation and source of the moral law is God’s character. ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery’ is the way the Decalogue [Ten Commandments] is introduced. The Heb. name here used (Everlasting Eternal Almighty) intimates that the principles of law have their standing in the character of God. ‘I am... thou shalt.’ That is the connection.



And that is what makes the moral law so awful [awesome] in its unchangeable majesty. It is law because God is. It cannot be changed without changing the character of Jehovah Himself. Right is what it is, because God is what He is, and therefore it is as unchangeable as God” (*Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, Pg. 256–257, “Decalogue”).

God is building His own character in us, and His Spirit is a *transforming power*. If we are to become like our Father, we must be transformed inwardly so that we learn to choose as He chooses. Our will is our power to choose, and God is changing our wills so that we will choose as He does for all eternity. Converted people in God’s Church see God’s law not as *restrictions* on our lives, but rather as *blessings* in our lives. Because we are not yet complete, we still must make an effort, difficult at times, to submit our will to His and obey even when the flesh tells us not to. However, as we grow in our conversion, and gain more practice in yielding to God’s will, His Spirit changes our will, transforming it to make us more like Him.

For example, when my daughters were growing up, they often had a messy room after a day’s playing. My wife would tell them to put their things away and clean up their room. This was not necessarily something they were happy to do, but they would obey (perhaps after some grumbling)—and soon their room would be restored to a reasonable order.

Obedience occurs when we subordinate our will to someone else’s. When we obey, we are doing what someone else chooses—which is not necessarily what we would choose. It was not the girls’ will to clean up their room, but it was their mother’s will for them to do it—so they did. They had been taught to obey. Now that they are adults, they have their own homes, and they keep them neat as a pin! They choose to keep their homes clean and orderly, because their wills about it have changed. *It is what they want*, and no one has to tell them to do it. It is a true proverb that states, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

Our choices change us. This is why even our trials can be blessings. The broad way and the narrow way do not look the same to Christians as they do to the world. The world rejects the narrow way as limiting what they want to do, but it does not look *restrictive* to us—it looks *inviting* to us. It is what we choose. It brings us closer to our Savior and our Father.

WHAT MAKES THE NARROW GATE NARROW?

Not everyone can go through the narrow gate. There are qualifications. Christians who have the Holy Spirit of God, and are led by it throughout their lives, will be resurrected to immortality and will enter the Kingdom of God. Nothing that is profaned by sin will be in that Kingdom—the Holy Mountain of God. Those who die as unrepentant practitioners of sin will not be resurrected to immortality. They will only have a physical resurrection—and, for physical bodies, death is inevitable. So, it is literally true that “the wages of sin is

death.” The Apostle Paul instructed the Church in Rome, “But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to **holiness, and the end, everlasting life**. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:22–23).

So, what do you really want—God’s way of life or the world’s? We are far from complete now, so we can still be **deceived and tempted**. Paul warned the Church about this. He was constantly concerned about deception in the Church—and for good reason, since the narrow way is the path of truth, and once you are deceived, you are off the narrow way. He wrote the Church in Corinth, “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, [and sinned] your minds may somehow be led astray [off the narrow way] from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough” (2 Corinthians 11:2–4, NIV).

THE WAY OF TRUTH

God’s truth sets His begotten children apart. Jesus said, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth” (John 17:17–19).

God’s truth shows us the way, so deviating from “the faith once delivered” is tantamount to deviating from the path He has placed us on—the narrow way. And we see that the narrow gate has sifted out many in the past decades, just as in ancient times. One lesson we remember every Pentecost is that the Church is “a little flock” (Luke 12:32).

God said, through the prophet Ezekiel, “Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you,” says the Lord GOD. I will *make you pass under the rod*, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD” (Ezekiel 20:36–38).

In biblical times, when the flock was tithed—with the tithed portion given to God—they were passed single file through a *narrow gate*, and every tenth one was separated out. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong taught that this scripture is dual—applying both to physical and spiritual Israel. He used to say that he feared that only a tenth of the Church of his day would make it [through the narrow gate] into the Kingdom of God. Could he have been right?

Here is a familiar scripture: “For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you,

and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved [GR. *dokimas*—genuine] may be recognized among you” (1 Corinthians 11:18–19). The ancient Greeks often used the word, *dokimas*, in the context of coinage—genuine vs. counterfeit. That description was applied to people as well.

We know that Jesus called the Church a *little flock*, and we usually think of that “littleness” in relation to the rest of the world. But were the *genuine* members of the Church of God only part of the whole Church? In the letters of Paul and John, we read that there were many false members in the first century Church, and this was certainly true in later centuries. Even a significant part of the *ministry* was false. Look at the Apostle Paul’s warning to the Church in Corinth: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:13–15). The Church had to contend with wolves in sheep’s clothing—and wolves in shepherd’s clothing as well.

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also **from among yourselves** men will rise up, speaking perverse things, **to draw away the disciples after themselves**. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Acts 20:28–31).

How do these deceivers lead others “off track”—away from the narrow way on which God had set them? Usually they divide the sheep away from their true shepherds by giving them resentments and false doctrines. Often the wolf begins by stirring up offenses to create a wedge separating the shepherd from those he is charged with protecting. But offenses can be temporary, especially in God’s Church, so a wolf likes to devise doctrinal differences to make the division more permanent. A faithful shepherd will try to defend the sheep, so division is always an essential part of the wolf’s tactics—“divide and conquer!” Wise sheep discern what is going on and reject the wolf.

So, as Christians, we must always beware of those who seek to exploit offenses and doctrinal disagreements. It is very instructive to note the verses *immediately after* the ones about the narrow gate. They concern wolves in sheep’s clothing. Jesus *first* said that “narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” *Then* He gave a warning: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You

will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore **by their fruits you will know them**. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:15–21). Division is bad fruit!



“ITCHING EARS” BLOCK OUR WAY

This is a matter of great concern for all of us. God has put us on the “narrow way,” which is characterized by His truth. We are told to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Some have lost their way and turned aside, because they had “itching ears” and always want to hear some new thing, on the Internet or elsewhere.

The Apostle Paul warned Timothy, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have *itching ears*, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be **turned aside** to fables” (2 Timothy 4:3–4).

Why? Those who have “itching ears” **do not value the truth they have**. Such disregard is a sure way to find themselves in the market for a deception. Satan and his ministers gladly provide it, leading people to veer off the path that Christ illuminates for us in His word.

Pride, resentment and doctrinal error also put us at risk. God will often allow a member of His Church to continue down the narrow road for a while with these risks unattended, but sooner or later He will bring such a person to a fork in the road. The way they will choose will depend on their spiritual condition at the time. Those who are unforgiving will take the path of the person who can exploit their resentment. Those who are proud will take the path of those who feed their pride. And those who do not sufficiently value the truth they have been given will be exploited by others who satisfy their “itching ears.” People who leave God’s Church usually do so because they came to a fork in the road, and chose the wrong route. So we must not let ourselves become complacent, as *hidden sin literally changes how we see things*.

So, are you on the narrow way? Are you, or some of your loved ones, looking for the narrow gate in the wrong place? It is certainly not found at the end of the broad way—and it is not found by those who turn aside because of division, resentment or pride. We must be sure to use the Spirit that God gave us at baptism, and remain vigilant to stay on the narrow path that will lead us through the narrow gate, into the Kingdom of God! ■

PERISH... THE THOUGHT!

By Gerald Weston

A common belief among professing Christians is that when you die, you do not really die. According to the widespread teaching, your body dies but there is an immortal (ever-living) soul in you—which either goes to heaven to be with God or goes to hell to writhe in pain forever. Is this what the Bible teaches?

This idea that human beings will not really die is found in the Bible—but it may surprise you to learn who actually introduced this teaching. It is a very ancient notion, going back to the time of our first parents. God placed Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden full of trees bearing fruits and nuts of all kinds. No doubt there were vegetables and other foods available to them, but there was one kind of fruit—found on a special tree in the midst of the garden—that they were *not* to eat.

Satan, in the form of a serpent, cunningly asked Eve: “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1). She answered him by explaining that they could eat of every tree, but with one exception. Eve then repeated God’s warning as it was given to Adam. “God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die’” (Genesis 3:3). To this, the serpent replied, “You will not surely die” (v. 4). Here, Satan contradicted God’s clear statement, leaving Eve with a decision: believe God who said she would die, or believe Satan who said she would not die. To this day, most people in the world believe Satan’s statement, not God’s.

Many people misunderstand this first encounter between humankind and Satan, in part because it is a very compressed account. The tree from which they were forbidden to eat was called the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” We should not think, though, that this means God had not given them knowledge of His standards of conduct—He had indeed done so, and as part of that instruction

had forbidden them to eat from that tree. Eve, however, was persuaded by Satan’s temptation that eating from the tree would “make one wise.” Yet her choice—rejecting God’s revelation—was in fact *unwise*, the first of human beings’ countless decisions, up to our present day, to decide for themselves what is good and what is evil.

Adam and Eve rejected God and listened to Satan’s advice. When they did so, their view of life and how to live it began to change immediately. They suddenly became ashamed of their bodies and sewed fig leaves together to cover their private parts (v. 7). Why? What caused this change in how they saw each other? The answer is found in God’s question the next time He met them, after they had given in to Satan’s sales pitch. “Who told you that you were naked?” (v. 11). Remember, they were the only two humans in the garden at the time, and God put them there with no clothes. God did not have a problem with their state, and—until they listened to Satan—neither did they. It was Satan who taught them to feel shame and fear regarding their naked bodies.

DUALISM

The idea that the body is a source of shame is indeed an old one, and it occurs in many forms throughout history. It is a common feature of *dualistic* philosophies which teach that a person’s mind is the “real” or eternal person, and that the body is a temporary, lesser—and often shameful—feature of our existence. Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Descartes and a multitude of other philosophers have contributed to this false understanding of the human self. The Neo-Platonist concept of dualism heavily influenced professing-Christian doctrine, but it all began with Satan’s lie, which taught Adam and Eve to feel shame regarding God’s physical creation.

Modern “Christianity” has been unknowingly so deeply influenced by pagan ideas that the average churchgoer is totally deceived about what the Bible really says regarding this and many other subjects. Most of us who grew up with a professing Christian background were taught that the “soul” is something distinct from the body, and it goes to heaven or hell (or purgatory for a while) after the body dies.

Yet John’s gospel makes it clear that Jesus totally rejected Satan’s assertion. John tells us that no human being other than Christ—which would include such biblical figures as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses—is in heaven: “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven” (John 3:13).

So, what is the human soul? The word “soul” in the Old Testament comes from the Hebrew word *nephesh*, and merely means “a creature.” For example, the first time the word “soul” is used in the *King James Version* is in Genesis 2:7, where we read: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” This alone should cause us to pause. Note that it says “a living soul.” Would that not indicate the possibility of a *dead* soul? The *New King James Version* translates it in a way that leads to less confusion, stating that “man became a living being.”

Genesis 1:21 refers to animal life—apart from humankind—as *nephesh* when it tells of “great sea creatures and every living thing [*nephesh*] that moves.” And notice that Leviticus 21:11 speaks of a *dead nephesh*! So, if *nephesh* is the Hebrew word translated into English as “soul”—and it is—then a *soul* can die! This is confirmed in Ezekiel 18:4: “Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul

who sins shall die.” This is repeated in verse 20: “The soul who sins shall die.”

MAN IS PERISHABLE

When most professing Christians read John 3:16, they fail to notice the importance of a powerful statement it contains. Much attention is paid to the first half of the verse: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” But every part of this “golden verse” is rich with meaning, and should not be “glossed over.”

To gain a better sense of what John is saying, we can pick up his context by reading the passage beginning in verse 14. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him **should not perish but have eternal life**. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him **should not perish but have everlasting life**” (vv. 14–16).

The *Encarta Online Dictionary* definition of *perish* is: “to die... to come to an end or cease to exist.” We know what it means when food perishes. We speak of people perishing in a plane crash. So, when it comes to the biblical matters, why do people push other, incorrect meanings onto *perish*?

The Bible consistently and unambiguously agrees with the standard dictionary definition of “perish”! It clearly teaches that **life** and **death** are *opposites*! Nowhere does Scripture ever describe human life as being inherently immortal. As we have already seen, even the soul—whatever one may think it is—can die (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). God’s word reveals that immortality is *not* something we already have, but rather that it is something we must *seek* (Romans 2:6–7) and “must put on” (1 Corinthians 15:53–54).

Further, we read that Christ “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10), and among all who have ever lived in the human flesh, only Christ now “alone has immortality” (1 Timothy

6:16). Note this amazing comment from the mainstream *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* on this verse: “It is mere **heathen philosophy** that attributes to the soul indestructibility in itself, which is to be attributed **solely to God’s gift**” (p. 223). Paul affirms this very point, that eternal life is a gift from God: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Paul wrote to Titus describing eternal life as something that we **do not** yet have, but for which we **hope** (Titus 3:7). And Jesus Himself tells us: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but **has passed from death into life**” (John 5:24).

We all know that our bodies will eventually die. That means you, and that means me. But then what? Based on how most people live their lives, this must not be a burning question for them. So, what exactly did Jesus mean in John 3:16 when He said that we might not perish?

SMOKE AND FIRE

Many assume that to perish means to live forever in a place of torment. However, as we have seen above, this is entirely inconsistent with the verses of Scripture cited above. Even so, there are a few scriptures people commonly cite when trying to establish the idea of the immortal soul.

One such verse is Revelation 14:11, which describes that “the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night.” But what is the context of this passage? Is it discussing the final eternal fate of the wicked? No! It concerns the Day of the Lord—the time of God’s wrath on rebellious mankind—during which suffering human beings will experience one trial following closely on the heels of another.

But what about “the smoke of their torment ascend[ing] forever and ever”? One of the plagues poured out during the Day of the Lord involves the

sun giving off much more heat than normal, which will “scorch men with fire” (Revelation 16:8–9). This will no doubt cause fires on the earth, and the smoke of this tormenting plague will ascend up “forever.”

When we hear someone say, “the line went on forever,” we understand the use of figurative language. Smoke is the by-product of combustion, and it is that smoke that is described in this verse as ascending forever. When the source of fuel for a fire is consumed, the fire will cease to exist, but its smoke can disperse upward for a long, long time.

A lake of fire is spoken of in Revelation 19:20. Here we read that the leader of the coming European power, known as the beast, and the false prophet will be thrown into it just prior to the thousand-year reign of Christ on this earth. They are physical beings and—as are all human beings—are vulnerable to physical destruction by fire.

John the Baptist said Jesus would come baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11). John explains the baptism of fire in the next verse: “His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but **He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**”

This will be the fate of the beast and false prophet. They will be burned up with fire—totally consumed and extinguished. Fire by nature is unquenchable (Proverbs 30:15–16). It burns as long as there is combustible material (Proverbs 26:20). Only smoke and ashes are left when the fuel is gone. “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming **shall burn them up,**’ says the LORD of hosts, **‘that will leave them neither root nor branch’**... for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet” (Malachi 4:1, 3).

One scripture that can be confusing in this regard is Revelation 20:10. Part of the

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COURTSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT: A CHRISTIAN APPROACH

By Scott D. Winnail

Dating. Courtship. Engagement. Are these concepts relevant in the 21st century? Or are they relics from a bygone age? Should these concepts be rekindled, repackaged and revived to become *in vogue* once again, or should they be allowed to “rest in peace,” along with chivalry and the dodo bird? What role do these concepts play in the life of someone who was previously married and is seeking a new marriage?

As a recent article on “Dating: A Christian Approach” clearly illustrated (*Living Church News*, January-February 2013, pp. 10–13), the dating norms of Satan’s world are far removed from God’s way. Most in today’s world see God’s way as an antiquated and unrealistic “mystery” (1 Corinthians 2:7). In today’s high-tech “hook-up” culture, few have the time or patience to really “date.” Dating God’s way, however, requires character and skill development. It focuses us on serving and giving to the opposite sex. It is fun, engaging, challenging, character-building and rewarding. And it should never—if truly done God’s way—end in feelings of heartache and rejection. Dating God’s way *builds up* and never *tears down*.

But if dating should be used to “get to know” brothers and sisters in Christ, and to serve God’s sons and daughters, when is it appropriate to move into a more serious, one-on-one relationship? How does one know *when* to begin that *serious relationship* and *what* a Christian should do to begin and sustain that relationship? *What* is the next step from friendship, or from dating a friend?

This article will offer scripturally based principles for moving from friendship to courtship—*when*, *how* and *with whom* it should be done.

ARE YOU READY FOR SOMETHING SERIOUS?

From a very young age, most girls grow up with *precise visions* of their wedding day. The bride will be dressed in the *perfect* gown. The flowers will be gorgeous, with an intoxicating aroma wafting from them. The guests will be abundant and rapt in expectation. The music will create the ideal romantic mood. Even the air temperature will be perfect, and the sun will set with its most brilliant display ever! And, *the groom*—the most handsome man on the face of the earth—will be waiting at the end of the aisle. His eyes will stare lovingly into the depths of her soul, and his outstretched hand will wait, drawing her, leading her into a lifetime of loving matrimonial bliss.

Men, too, grow up with visions of married life. The groom deeply desires to be wed to the perfect woman, with the perfect heart, the perfect wit and the perfect body. She will be his eternal playmate, the queen of his castle, his confidante, his strength, his lover and his friend. She will masterfully direct his castle—the home. She will magnificently raise his subjects—the children. She will always be beautiful, always sweet and always brilliant. She will always look up to and respect him and *always* be deeply in love with him.

Are these visions of wedded bliss even possible, or are they just the stuff of dreams and romance novels? Is it true that dreams like these come crashing to reality after the wedding day? Or, can *happily ever after* really occur? Jesus Christ came that we “may have life,” and that we “may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). In fact, referencing our loving heavenly Father, Christ asked: “If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he

ARE YOU READY FOR COURTSHIP?

Ask yourself:

- **HAVE I KNOWN THIS PERSON FOR LONG ENOUGH AND IN A BROAD ENOUGH CONTEXT TO HAVE AN ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF HIS OR HER CHARACTER?**
- **DO WE HAVE THE SAME RELIGIOUS BELIEFS? ARE WE BOTH BAPTIZED? ARE WE BOTH CONVERTED (REMEMBER PAUL’S ADMONITION IN 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14)? ARE WE BOTH IN THE SAME CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP?**
- **DO WE COME FROM A SIMILAR RACIAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND? [NOTE: THE CHURCH HIGHLY DISCOURAGES INTERRACIAL DATING AND MARRIAGE AND ENCOURAGES PEOPLE TO ASK: WHAT IS GOD’S WILL AND DESIRE?**
- **ARE WE BOTH RELATIVELY CLOSE IN AGE AND “STAGE IN LIFE”?**
- **DO WE HAVE A SIMILAR FAMILY BACKGROUND AND SIMILAR VIEWS AND EXPECTATIONS ON THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY?**
- **DO WE HAVE SIMILAR VIEWS ON HAVING CHILDREN AND CHILD REARING?**
- **ARE WE UNIFIED ON OUR VIEWS ABOUT THE ROLES OF A HUSBAND AND WIFE?**
- **DO WE HAVE SIMILAR VIEWS AND EXPECTATIONS REGARDING LARGE FINANCIAL ISSUES?**
- **DO WE HAVE SIMILAR VIEWS ON HOW TO SPEND LEISURE AND RECREATIONAL TIME?**
- **FOR A MAN: IS HE EMOTIONALLY AND MENTALLY MATURE? IS HE SPIRITUALLY MATURE ENOUGH TO BECOME THE SPIRITUAL LEADER OF HIS FAMILY? DOES HE HAVE ADEQUATE TRAINING AND EDUCATION AND IS HE IN A POSITION TO FINANCIALLY SUPPORT A WIFE AND FAMILY?**
- **FOR A WOMAN: IS SHE MENTALLY, EMOTIONALLY, AND SPIRITUALLY MATURE ENOUGH TO SUBMIT TO HER HUSBAND? IS SHE EMOTIONALLY AND EDUCATIONALLY PREPARED TO LEAD A HOME AND FAMILY?**

—Adapted from the Living Church of God Pastoral Manual, Section 11

asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?” (Luke 11:11). Christ was explaining that the Father *wants* to give us good gifts that we desire, *even more* than a worldly parent does (v. 13)! In the first two chapters of Genesis, God created and commanded marriage. He did it so we have a strong family setting in which to rear godly children (Malachi 2:15), and in which all could be happy, experience His love and understand much more about Him, His relationship with Christ, and Christ’s relationship with the Church. The ideal of wedded bliss in marriage is not some human imagination; it reflects the divinely inspired pattern of our loving Father who wants only the best for His sons and daughters.

MOVING FORWARD

So how does one attain the wedded bliss the Father intends? A godly dating foundation is vital. But when is it appropriate and advisable to build on that foundation? The *short answer* is: “When two individuals are *ready* according to God’s criteria and their own.” A more helpful answer, though, is much more detailed.

Personal milestones should be reached before any man or woman considers moving forward into a serious dating relationship, or courtship. For this article, we will define *courtship* as “a special season of romance where a man and woman are seriously weighing the possibility of marriage.” Courtship is *not* “directionless romance,” but rather, “a romantic relationship that is headed toward marriage”—something that *should be clearly* understood by both the man and the woman involved (Joshua Harris, *Boy Meets Girl*, p. 31).

Entering the serious courtship phase of a relationship requires the commitment and dedication of a man and woman to each other. This commitment, essentially, takes a couple “out of circulation” and means that they will dedicate the majority of their dating efforts to developing a *serious relationship* exclusively with each other, growing to know one another more deeply with the intent of determining whether or not this is a marriage *God* wants to occur.

To be ready for courtship, both individuals should be mentally, emotionally, educationally, financially and spiritually ready to pursue marriage. Entering courtship should imply that the couple is *very likely right* for each other, that they have prepared in these areas and that they are both ready for marriage. If *either* the man or the woman has not adequately prepared, embarking on a courtship is most likely *premature* and *unwise*.

But there are a host of other factors to consider in a future mate. Courtship is *not* the time to determine *whether* these key factors exist! Courtship is a season to gain a deeper familiarity with a person you *already* know well—someone you have *already* determined has the basic qualifications to be a serious candidate to be a marriage partner. Dating, not courtship, is the time to discover whether the basic “big picture” factors (as noted in the list on page 11) are in place.

One very important factor related to marriage is *age*. Age will help indicate, *in part*, the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual maturity of the individual. Mr. Herbert Armstrong gave the following timely advice: “Based on actual experience, my judgment is—and I think it is sound judgment guided and approved by God—that until out of the ‘teens’ a boy or girl is too young to marry! And it is also my judgment—and I think it is sound and approved by God—based on lifelong experience counseling on marriage problems of hundreds of people—that even twenty is too young to be *the best age for marriage*... except in rare cases or circumstances, even twenty is too early an age for marriage” (*The Missing Dimension in Sex*, p. 227).

Interestingly, recent research on the brain and emotional development strongly reinforces Mr. Armstrong’s observations. Physician Meg Meeker points out that the brains of most men and women, as well as their emotions and ability for rational thought, are not fully mature until their early twenties (*Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*, p. 208). Mr. Armstrong suggested that most women in his day did not have the full mental, educational, emotional and spiritual readiness for marriage until age 23–25, and that most men were not ready (also including the matter of financial readiness) until age 24–26 (p. 228). In today’s society, however, we often see young people reaching this level of maturity and responsibility even a few years later than Mr. Armstrong suggested.

COURTSHIP

After a man and woman have prayed and fasted in search of God’s guidance, and have seen that they do have the *essential elements* that indicate readiness, and after they have received positive counsel from parents, older established couples who know them well, and also the ministry, it is time to commit to the next stage in their relationship—courtship.

Even though prayer and fasting were part of their preparation for courtship, God’s guidance should continue to be sought deeply and deliberately, because courtship is a time when the man and woman must both discern whether or not it is *God’s will* and *His time* for them to marry. Mr. Armstrong wrote of this time: “And remember this: It is God who *joins together* in marriage a husband and wife. Therefore it *ought to be*—in your own interest—God who selects *for you* the husband or wife you are going to marry! God will do this, if you ask Him, and then refrain from getting in a hurry and taking it into your own hands! This may require self-restraint and patience, yes, and also FAITH. But if you rely on God, He will not fail you. And if He selects your lifelong mate, you’ll have the *RIGHT ONE!*” (pp. 218–219).

Part of seeking God’s guidance involves seeking **pre-engagement counseling** with a minister who knows the couple well. No couple should assume that they are “too old” or “already experienced” and thus do not need the benefit of pre-engagement counseling. During courtship, a man and

woman must be willing to ask and answer deeper and more personal questions about each other as they explore their individual goals, ambitions, perspectives and life experiences.

In my many years of working with and counseling young singles—and with older singles, too—I have learned that it is incredibly important for men and women *both* to develop a “list of qualities” they feel they *must have* in a future mate. This must be a personal list, developed by the individual considering marriage, but it should also benefit from input given by others who are older and who know the individuals well. Parents and ministers and older married couples will often identify key qualities that an idealistic person in love may neglect. Some examples are outlined in the list below. Consider that *if you do not know what you are looking for, you will not realize you have chosen the wrong person until it is too late.*

Remember that there may be some qualities that would be nice to find in a future mate, but that may not be essential. Recognizing the difference between the “must have” and the “nice to have” qualities is vital for making wise and godly decisions without letting the heart lead one into a mistake that will later be regretted.

We should not think that a courtship has failed if the couple discover they were not meant to be married to each other. Courtship should only begin if a couple think marriage is likely. But when a man and woman are truly seeking God’s will, it should be able to end with the couple remaining friends, with only minimal emotional trauma, if they succeed in discovering that their marriage is *not* God’s will. How can a couple be sure that their courtship is conducted in a godly way that will allow the best outcome? Here are some key points Harris brings out in his book:

- It needs to be God-glorifying and wisdom-guided.
- Both people must treat each other with holiness and sincerity.

- Both the man and woman must make an informed and wise decision about marriage.
- The aim should be to *grow closer* while *guarding each other’s hearts* (the man’s leadership role in this is vital).
- Fight the urge to *assume* you are “going to be married”—at which point the heart tends to take over and the brain shuts off.
- Courtship should be entered after counsel with parents (no matter what age), the pastor and a few others who know the other person and **you**, very well.
- Use a couple of “key” confidants to keep you on the “straight and narrow” during courtship.
- Avoid situations that may allow you to fall into temptation (1 Peter 2:10–12: “Let your conduct be honorable...”)
- Both individuals should guard their hearts and what they *allow* themselves to feel.
- The couple remains physically and emotionally pure.

INTIMACY AND ROMANCE

During courtship, as a relationship grows closer and a man and woman share more trust and more details of their lives, they naturally develop greater emotional and psychological intimacy. As a part of this *growing together* and developing a deeper commitment to each other, romance will and must eventually blossom if a relationship is to lead to marriage. Although premature romance can be temporarily enjoyable, it will eventually lead to long-term hurt (Harris, p. 91). The man in particular must not allow romance to be part of a relationship until he knows *for sure* that the woman will be his wife in the near future.

At this point, romance can be allowed to blossom slowly in a *guarded* and *pure* way. Romance includes the way two individuals treat and communicate with each other. Author Joshua Harris puts it this way: “Romantic feelings and the pure nonphysical

“QUALITIES OF MY FUTURE MATE”

Note: These are example characteristics to seek in a future mate. Make your own list, and have parent(s) or an older friend who knows you well make one (or contribute to yours). You may be surprised at what they offer.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| • DEEP CONVERSION (NOT JUST BAPTISM) | • DEEP LOVE FOR HIS WIFE | • THE ABILITY AND DESIRE TO WORK AS A “FAMILY TEAM” |
| • FOR MEN, THE NECESSARY TRAINING AND EDUCATION TO LEAD AND SUPPORT A FAMILY | • FOR WOMEN, THE DESIRE TO RESPECT AND SUBMIT TO AND FOLLOW HER HUSBAND | • STRONG SPIRITUAL HABITS (“REGULAR” PRAYER, STUDY, MEDITATION AND FASTING) |
| • FOR WOMEN, THE NECESSARY SKILL, EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO MANAGE A HOME AND REAR CHILDREN | • A GOOD REPUTATION AMONG FAMILY MEMBERS, BRETHREN, THE MINISTRY, AND CO-WORKERS | • ORIENTED TOWARD SERVING OTHERS |
| • AMBITION TO CONTINUE TO GROW SPIRITUALLY | • EXCELLENT AND GODLY CHARACTER | • FAITHFULNESS IN TITHING AND GIVING OFFERINGS |
| • FRUITS OF GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT, AND A DESIRE TO “GROW” THESE FRUITS (GALATIANS 5:22–23) | • PATIENCE AND HUMILITY | • DEDICATED TO THE TRUTH AND GOD’S WORK |
| • THE HUMILITY AND DESIRE TO PUT SPOUSE AND FAMILY FIRST | • FOR MEN, THE ABILITY AND CHARACTER TO “TAKE THE LEAD” WHEN NECESSARY | • VALUES THE PRIORITIES OF: GOD, SPOUSE/FAMILY, JOB |
| • FOR MEN, THE DESIRE TO AND ACTIONS TO SUPPORT A | • FOR WOMEN, THE ABILITY TO HUMBLY FOLLOW AND ALLOW THE HUSBAND’S LEAD WHEN NECESSARY | • HAS EMOTIONAL MATURITY |
| | | • HAS A SIMILAR FAMILY BACKGROUND |
| | | • VALUES FAMILY RELATIONSHIP |
| | | YOU FILL IN THE REST... |

expression of those feelings are an essential part of this time in a relationship.... Our goal during courtship is not to stifle our feelings of affection and love, but to submit them to God and to grow in and guard them” (p. 89).

A NOTE ABOUT PHYSICAL INTIMACY

God created sex as a blessing for marriage and a glue to help unify husband and wife. It is so special that God uniquely designed humans to be able to experience a physical, emotional and spiritual connection *through* physical intimacy—something impossible in the animal kingdom. If the starting point of courtship and engagement is to honor God and His son or daughter with your body and mind, then passionate physical intimacy should be delayed until marriage. Some mistakenly assume that certain acts of passionate physical intimacy are “*no big deal*.” But the reality is that “the longer your ‘no big deal’ list is before marriage, the shorter your ‘very special’ list will be after marriage” (Harris, p. 159). Harris goes on to observe, “We can’t make certain parts of sexual intimacy *meaningful* and others *meaningless*—it’s all precious!” (*ibid.*, p. 164).

God and His word should be the guide for determining the proper type of intimacy engaged in before marriage, and a man and woman should work together to determine the types of intimacy appropriate prior to marriage, remembering that lust once engaged in is never satisfied (Proverbs 27:20)! The exact details may vary slightly between couples and cultures, but certain basics are biblical and universal. For instance, notice what Mr. Herbert Armstrong wrote about passionate kissing: “This is *not* to say that a fond embrace and a kiss—if not prolonged—are wrong. But remember, the male is sexually aroused in five to ten seconds—or less. Any such embrace or kiss ought never to be prolonged sufficiently to produce arousal and desire. This is a time to practice self-restraint. This is the time to demonstrate honor with power of WILL” (Herbert W. Armstrong, *The Missing Dimension in Sex*, p. 238).

It would also be wise for a couple to share their guidelines and expectations about intimacy with a trusted advisor who knows the couple well and can “keep them honest” throughout their courtship (and later engagement, if this applies). Knowing that someone might ask about your behavior can do wonders for keeping it “in line”!

Consider, too, that “public displays of affection” will lead others to assume a couple’s intentions. Not only do they present a temptation and potentially dangerous example to those not yet ready for marriage; they can send an unwelcome and confusing message if the publicly affectionate couple later decides not to marry.

ENGAGEMENT

Engagement! The word itself connotes a connection that is not meant to be broken. Engagement signifies that a couple

has determined to marry in the very near future. It *should* mean that a man and woman have taken their time through courtship—proceeding carefully, methodically, and lovingly in gaining answers to their many deep questions, each coming to understand the *true character* of the future mate. It *should* mean that they have completed pre-engagement counseling, received loving encouragement from parents and trusted advisors, and confirmed their love for and commitment to each other.

Engagement is *not* marriage—there is no wedding vow. It is a commitment that begins what will generally be a relatively short period of time (usually not more than a year) during which a man and woman continue to grow closer to each other while growing spiritually closer to God, and at the same time making plans for a wedding.

Even though there has been a kind of commitment, and the man and woman are growing in trust and outflowing concern for each other, they are still *not* married—and thus must remain pure before God and each other. A Christian couple must reject Satan’s false societal notion that the engagement period brings all the *rights and privileges* of marriage.

GOD’S PLAN

When God created human beings almost 6,000 years ago, He said their creation was “very good” (Genesis 1:31). He intended that, in marriage, a man and woman would build their own entirely new family (Genesis 2:24). He intended husband and wife to work together as a unit—serving each other, encouraging each other, and helping each other grow.

God intends for most men and women to marry (Genesis 2:18), and He wants to be involved in the process. He desires to bless us for seeking His will and remaining faithful and true throughout the process of discovering who *His* choice for our future mate will be. Marriage points us to the pure and unified union that will one day take place between Christ and His undefiled bride, the Church (Revelation 19:7–9).

Courtship and engagement, when done God’s way, should be enjoyable, enriching and character-building—and should help us grow spiritually. God wants to bless us in and through this process. But we must first be *ready* and *mature*. We must attain the proper training, skills, education, spiritual maturity and financial stability before we consider making a lifetime commitment to a potential future mate—one of God’s sons or daughters.

When done in true Christian love—according to God’s *will* and *timing*, keeping one’s ultimate focus on seeking *first* God’s Kingdom and righteousness—courtship and engagement can be *all* that God intends them to be! God expects us to strive continually to separate ourselves from the dysfunctional ways of Satan’s society. We must endeavor to practice Christian behaviors that demonstrate we truly are God’s disciples. God’s way is the only way that really works, leading to true happiness! ■

Woman to Woman

A WISE WOMAN BUILDS HER HOUSE

By Faye League

When my husband and I were transferred to Charlotte, North Carolina from Nashville, Tennessee it took us a few days to find suitable housing. We eventually chose a house in an area that was newly under construction. Since moving in, I have had the opportunity to observe the construction workers as they have built a number of new homes in the area.

It is very interesting to see how the different crews do their jobs—each in their own order until the beautiful finished product is complete. This reminds me of how we as Christians are instructed to work together as one body to build and to edify (Ephesians 4:15–16). The Apostle Peter mentions that, “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5).

Thinking on these scriptures in turn brings me to my subject—Proverbs 14:1: “The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands.” Let us examine closely two opposite types of woman. One is wise and builds her house. The other is foolish and tears it down.

THE WISE HOUSE-BUILDER

A wise woman can build her house in various ways. To consider a few:

SHE SEEKS GOD’S WILL IN HER LIFE. She prays that God will guide her every decision in service to God,

in submitting to her husband, in child-rearing, using her talents, wise shopping and every other facet and area of her life.

SHE SEEKS THE SPIRITUAL RICHES OF GOD THROUGH DILIGENT PRAYER AND STUDY. “Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established;



by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches” (Proverbs 24:3–4). We read in Proverbs 8:10–11 that God’s instruction, knowledge, understanding and wisdom are of more value than silver, gold and rubies. She internalizes these precious spiritual riches and uses them to build her relationship with God, her family and others.

SHE KEEPS HER SPIRITUAL HOUSE CLEAN AND ORDERLY, ALSO HER PHYSICAL HOUSE. Using God’s Spirit she guards her mind, resisting evil thoughts, gossip, slander and idle chatter. She does not allow her

mind to be cluttered with worldly things. “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:15–16). We also read: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1–2). She does not allow herself to dwell on the cares of life until they crowd out her spiritual growth.

SHE SEEKS WAYS TO ENHANCE HER LIFE AS WELL AS THE LIVES OF OTHERS. There are many helpful things a woman can do to broaden her horizons, thus enhancing her life, such as: she can get the family involved in uplifting and educational activities such as the arts and many other cultural opportunities.

If children are introduced to these affairs at an early age, they are more likely to develop an appreciation for them. The availability of things of interest seems endless: free concerts in the park, a suitable theatrical production, musicals, various museums, the symphony, a family vacation to Washington, DC to tour the Smithsonian (it is worth the trip). The list could go on.

Of course we must apply the spiritual intent to all that we do and be balanced. The important thing is

to enhance your life and others' as well, as health, time and finances allow.

THE FOOLISH HOUSE-WRECKER

Now let us consider a few ways a foolish woman can pull her house down.

THROUGH SELF-WILL Instead of seeking God's will, she refuses to fit into the role in which God has placed her in the home and Church.

Before I was called into God's Church, the popular philosophy and teaching of society was that the husband and wife ruled the home equally, fifty percent each. It was referred to as 50/50. My husband and I would tease each other about who was the boss. I had bought into this concept and I thought that the biblical teaching of the husband as head of the house was a bit archaic and out of date for modern times. However, upon careful study of the scriptures, I was convinced that God's word is truth. "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17). Also, "But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4). So I concluded that God's word is always relevant and must be obeyed. Ephesians 5:22–23 states, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body." Also, the Apostle Paul instructs in 1 Corinthians 11:3, "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."

For some women today, having come out of a society filled with liberal feminist teachings, this truth may be somewhat of a "bitter pill to swallow" and very hard for the mind to digest and accept. Surrendering one's will to God can be a very tough thing to do, but once done, it brings tremendous peace and joy.

There are many pressures on women today, as we live in a sex-crazed, youth-oriented society. For instance, women are pressured to have unrealistic supermodel figures and to never look their age as they grow older (think botox, plastic surgery, etc.). A woman cannot even have a decent wrinkle in peace. She is pressured to do everything within her power to look



young, sexy and vivacious forever. How ridiculous!

However, we as Christian women do not have to fall for these satanic deceptions, as we are instructed to keep ourselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27).

THROUGH NEGLECT A woman can neglect to stay close to God by failing to use the spiritual tools of regular prayer, study, meditation and fasting to build and grow in godly character. It is of the utmost importance to build a regular habit of doing these things. Once children learn that Mom and Dad need private time for God, then they will accept and respect it. They can be taught and trained in these areas.

Without proper spiritual maintenance, a woman's house will eventually deteriorate and fall into disrepair.

THROUGH LACK OF DISCRETION "As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion" (Proverbs 11:22). Being indiscreet is a very serious flaw—one that can even ruin a woman's reputation. It

can also bring shame to her husband. "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rottenness in his bones" (Proverbs 12:4).

THROUGH CONTENTIOUSNESS Life can be very stressful at times and one can find many things to be displeased about. Giving in to displeasure can lead to being contentious. Being contentious can lead to anger. "Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman" (Proverbs 21:19). No one likes to be around a contentious person, because it is not a peaceful situation. "The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts" (Proverbs 17:14).

The Apostle Paul instructs us, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). In Matthew 5:9 we are told that we will be blessed if we are peacemakers. In further instruction, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6–7).

In conclusion, as we continue to build our house, let us heed the words of Christ, "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock" (Matthew 7:24–25). So as wise women, let us be doers of the word and not hearers only (James 1:22). We can always remember this scripture, "Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain" (Psalm 127:1). ■

THE COVENANTS, PENTECOST AND GOD'S SPECIAL PEOPLE

By Wyatt Ciesielka

The Old and New Covenants are timeless manifestations of God's sovereignty, His purpose and His love. Understanding the Old and New Covenants is vital to understanding our calling, to understanding the Feast of Pentecost, to understanding God's love toward humanity—and to receiving eternal life.

Anciently, God entered into a covenant with a small, imperfect, but chosen and *special* people. But even in those ancient times, God's plan pointed to *future* events. Under the Old Covenant, ancient Israel became God's Church in the wilderness (cf. Acts 7:38). The Israelites were predecessors of God's Church today, and God offered them His law, blessings and great promises. But, as a whole, and because of repeated national sin, they did not obtain what they sought (Romans 11:7). In New Testament times, God is again working with a small, imperfect—but chosen and *special*—people. These special people, of all ethnicities and nationalities (cf. Galatians 3:28–29), comprise God's Church, and they have been called to become “firstfruits” (Romans 8:23; James 1:18). Better understanding the relationship between the Old and New Covenants and Pentecost will help us better understand how to more perfectly fulfill our role as those special people.

WHY COVENANTS?

Simply stated, a *covenant* is a binding legal agreement between two or more parties. The Bible contains *many* covenants. Genesis 9:8–17 records God's covenant to never again destroy the earth with a flood. The Davidic covenant and the promise that the Messiah will be a descendant of David is found in 2 Samuel 7:11–16 and elsewhere. The New Covenant is anticipated in numerous passages including Jeremiah 31:31–33, and is referenced numerous times, including in passages such as Romans 11:26–27 and Galatians 4:21–31. But covenants were not only between God and people. There were also covenants between people, such as the covenant between David and his friend Jonathan (cf. 1 Samuel 20:8). There were also innumerable covenants that were made throughout history which are not recorded in the Bible, such as treaties between kings or nations, or promises or deeds between common people.

But, there is something unique about God's covenants. When God makes a covenant, He *always* fulfills it, even if the complete fulfillment takes generations or millennia. Notice

that the Abrahamic covenant will be ultimately fulfilled through Jesus Christ as the Messiah at the Second Coming, as the descendant of both Abraham and King David (2 Samuel 7:11–16; Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 37:24; Hosea 3:5; Matthew 1:1).

But *why* did God establish a covenant with Israel in the first place? Scripture reveals that God established His covenant because of *hesed*, a Hebrew word that could be rendered into English as “covenant love.” *Hesed* is more than just a general type of fondness. To display *hesed* is to display *binding love*. And this meaning fits perfectly with *berit*, the Hebrew word for “covenant” which means to “fetter” or to mutually “obligate” oneself to another, as in a binding marriage covenant. The marriage ceremony is the recognition and formalization of pre-existing love (*hesed*). These two terms are often used together when God speaks of His *covenant love* for ancient Israel (cf. Deuteronomy 7:9; 1 Kings 8:23; Daniel 9:4)—where God keeps His covenant (*berit*) in love (*hesed*) with those who love Him.

To more fully appreciate the purpose that God is working out on earth, it is helpful to be reminded that the Old Covenant—this *berit* based on *hesed*—was a divine oath that bound, or *fettered*, God's chosen people to Him in an intimate way. As God's love and sovereignty are absolute, so was ancient Israel bound to its Creator *absolutely*. This special and binding relationship is expressed in numerous passages where God inspires it to be recorded that “they shall be My people and I will be their God” (cf. Jeremiah 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 32:38; Ezekiel 11:20; 14:11; 34:30; 36:28; 37:27; Zechariah 8:8). This language expresses the covenant-love that God had for His people, and the very real and binding oath into which they had entered. Under the terms of the Old Covenant, God even intended to *dwell* with His chosen people (Exodus 25:8; 29:44–46)! Interestingly, these terms and benefits are very similar to what God offers in a more personal way under the terms of the New Covenant. This should not be surprising, since the same God who established the *Old* Covenant also established the *New* Covenant (1 Corinthians 10:4)—and He never changes (Hebrews 13:8).

FAITHFUL TO OUR COVENANT?

We are all familiar with the fact that ancient Israel was *not* faithful to the terms of the Covenant. Passages such as



Ezekiel 20:1–21 and Jeremiah 3:1–8 contrast God’s love and longsuffering with ancient Israel’s dismal failure to live up to its covenant oath. Consequently, Israel (and, later, Judah) suffered curses, national correction, military defeat, eventual captivity and dispersion. But, did ancient Israel’s failure foil God’s great plan to bless and call a people who could become His firstfruits? No, it did not. The time was coming for a New Covenant.

The New Covenant (just like the Old Covenant) is intended to bring blessings (1 Peter 2:9). Under its terms, God dwells in those who enter into this binding oath with Him (Acts 2:1–4; Ephesians 4:23–24; 2 Corinthians 5:17). But, as Hebrews 8:7–8 explains, the New Covenant has certain *advantages* over the Old Covenant—not that the Old Covenant was flawed, but that God makes available additional

promises. Under the New Covenant, Christians are blessed to have Jesus Christ as Mediator (Hebrews 12:24), and—as was powerfully demonstrated on Pentecost 31AD—God’s Spirit can now dwell in us (Acts 2:1–39; Hebrews 8:6–10). The New Covenant is available to Christians *personally*, and Christ lives *personally* in those who have accepted those terms (Galatians 2:20). Very few in ancient Israel personally received the Holy Spirit at the time of the Old Covenant (1 Peter 1:10–11). But in the New Testament Church, the Holy Spirit is available to *all* who repent and are baptized and have hands laid on them in response to God’s call (Acts 2:38; 8:17; 9:17; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

In the New Testament Greek, God inspired the word *diatheke* to be used for the New Covenant. During the Apostles’ time, a typical contract or legally binding agreement would usually be referred to not as a *diatheke*, but as a *syntheke*, which was a legally binding agreement between two parties of relative equality. However, God did not choose to use *syntheke* in the New Testament. He inspired *diatheke*, which is derived from *diatithemai* and conveys the relationship of one with plenary or absolute power over another. In secular Greek the word was usually used to mean one’s last will and testament. The connotation of *diatheke* is that the dispenser—God—is overwhelmingly, entirely and completely superior. His power is absolute in every way. He can dictate His own terms and the other party may not alter those terms. Just as with the Old Covenant, God again asserts His absolute authority over those with whom He enters into covenant. But, again, His covenants are always based on loving kindness.

BECOMING FIRSTFRUITS

Contrary to what some wrongly assume, the New Covenant is not a less-binding or “softer” agreement between

God and those who answer His call. On the contrary, under the New Covenant (*diatheke*) we become the recipients of the Holy Spirit and we become even *more* bound to God than ancient Israel was. We become His very literal *slaves* and His *bondservants* (*doulos*) as the Apostles often emphasized (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1:1). But just as with the Old Covenant, God’s purpose remains the same. Just as God intended ancient Israel



to be His “special treasure” (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6; Psalm 135:4; Malachi 3:17), He even more so now expects New Covenant Christians to become His royal, special, and peculiar treasure (1 Peter 2:9). Both covenants were based on love. Both covenants make the people a *special treasure* to God. But under the New Covenant, we have the advantage of Christ as Mediator and of the Holy Spirit in us individually. Thus, the New Covenant is more personally binding (Hebrews

6:4–6), but is also a better covenant (Hebrews 8:6).

God entered into the *Old Covenant* with Israel on the day of Pentecost, and delivered the Ten Commandments to Moses at that time, codifying the terms of that covenant. But ancient Israel failed to keep those covenant terms. Then, beginning on the Day of Pentecost in 31AD, and under the terms of the *New Covenant*, God made the Holy Spirit available to His Church. Because of the Holy Spirit in us, we can have the mind and heart to keep God’s law and the terms of the Covenant (John 14:16–20; Acts 2:1–4; Romans 5:5; 8:1–14; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:14–16)! As Ezekiel records, referring to the benefit of receiving the Holy Spirit in us, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26–27).

The Holy Spirit in us gives us a new heart that is able to keep God’s Commandments, *which are the terms of His covenants*. Remember, the “fault” was not with the Old Covenant—it was with the people who refused to keep God’s law. Now, with the Holy Spirit in us, we can have the heart to do what ancient Israel for the most part utterly failed to do—we can keep God’s law; it can be written in our hearts and we can be His special people (Jeremiah 31:33).

When we observe the Feast of Pentecost, we commemorate the wonderful day when God poured out His Holy Spirit upon the Church to call a few now to become firstfruits in His Kingdom. We also celebrate that God has given us *new hearts*, so we may love and keep His law and thus be faithful to the binding oath that we have made with the Creator God who loved us (1 John 4:19), who called us (John 6:44), and who wants us to be His special people (Exodus 19:5–6; 1 Peter 2:9). ■

What Every Husband Needs to Know!

Continued from page 5

exercising all his faculties of wisdom, strength and personality. He must, most of all, set an example for his wife and children to follow if he expects them to gladly follow him.

This is an automatic “leadership opportunity” that every man who is a husband innately has. It is definitely a part of a program the Great God had in mind when He instituted the family relationship.

Every man should appreciate this opportunity—and be thankful that his wife has been willing to leave her father and mother, cleave to him alone, and stay at his side as his help. He should, therefore, respect and cherish that help. Knowing that he is the stronger physically and capable of exercising greater wisdom in all major family decisions, he should do so with confidence and love. Having this true love or “outgoing concern” and exercising his leadership—he definitely should take his wife into his counsel whenever possible, ask for and respect her advice, and then make the decision based upon all the facts and attempting to find the solution to any problem which will best serve his entire family—not just his own selfish wishes or desires.

In leading the family, a man should talk things over with his wife continually. He should give her definite “guidelines”—letting her know in love and in fairness what he expects of her and how far her responsibility for certain decisions affecting the home, the items of food and clothing, etc., extend. Then she will know where she stands—and will be able to cooperate and implement her husband’s decisions and wishes.

The couple should counsel together—often with arms around each other about their future—their plans, hopes and dreams. In taking the lead, the husband should give guidance in seeing the overall perspective of the right future for his family. He should ask God for wisdom and vision and should plan ahead as to the type of home and life which is their goal, the future education and well-being of the children, and the

type of friends the family should cultivate, the type of movies they should see, the books they should read, TV programs they should watch and their ultimate goal—hopefully the Kingdom of God!

A husband and father who will do this not only proves himself more of a man—he actually increases his manhood, his wisdom and his abilities to lead by this very process of being the right kind of husband!

IV. HELP AND PROTECTION

Returning to Ephesians 5, remember that Christ gave Himself for the Church—“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself” (vv. 26–28, *KJV*).

Every right-minded man certainly desires to cherish and protect his wife. She is his sweetheart, his companion, the mother of his children. He ought to realize that she is part of him! “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church” (v. 29, *KJV*).

Realizing that his wife is part of him, a man certainly ought to have a solicitous and protective feeling toward his wife and sweetheart. Even beyond this, though, he should constantly be thinking of helping her as “the weaker vessel” so that she does not strain or overdo and so that her grace and beauty may be preserved throughout all of their married life. A real man will notice when his wife is overworking and lighten her burdens whenever possible. He will leap to action to lift heavy things for her, help her when she is sick, and protectively and lovingly watch over her in many such ways!

Of course, a man should not do this because he is “made” to do it or “henpecked” into doing it! And no right-minded wife would knowingly do this. However, even if a wife sometimes demands too much of her husband, he

can still dominate without domineering and make sure that he is taking the lead in things—still helping her out at his direction and in sincere love and concern for her and their life together.

The woman has her responsibilities, her particular duties in the household and she should gladly do them. But, “help” from her husband comes in as an act of love—given freely and fully when she is sick, downcast or is suddenly faced with an object too heavy to lift, a job too difficult for her to accomplish without the stronger partner of the marriage giving of his help and strength in love to his wife and sweetheart.

Learn this lesson, men! Your wives will repay you in a thousand ways over the years to come if you learn to give this help when it is needed—and give it freely and in kindness.

V. INSPIRATION TO GROW

Probably this fifth area of a husband’s responsibility is the least understood and least practiced by most husbands today. That is simply because we are living in a world that certainly is all too often dominated by the wrong type of feminine leadership and assertiveness. Also, it is because of the fact that men have relinquished their responsibilities—have not even tried to be the heads and leaders of their homes but have been lazy, ne’er-do-well and degenerate individuals.

Inspiration to grow? By this I mean that the husband should not only lead the family in general, but should be the inspirer for each and every member of the family to develop his or her full potential as a human being and heir of God. The husband should think of this, first of all with his wife, of course, and then with the children as they come along year by year.

A wise and loving husband should inspire and encourage his wife to grow in bodily health. He should be solicitous about her getting enough sleep, enough exercise, the proper diet and the right kind of recreation.

Actually, although this should not be his motive, in helping his wife

he is helping himself! For a strong, graceful and healthy body is certainly the basis of a warm, vivacious and loving personality. And certainly every right-minded man would want to keep his wife sweet and beautiful as his “sweetheart” throughout their life together.

He should also encourage his wife in mental development. He should realize that many wives tend to stagnate, become bored with life, bog down in their use of English, their knowledge of world affairs and their intellectual development in general.

Therefore, a dynamic husband and leader should inspire his wife to study different types of books and news magazines, share with her the interesting outside news and information he is receiving in his work and contacts, take her occasionally to the right type of lectures, concerts or educational movies. When possible, an interesting trip throughout the United States (for our American readers) or to the Continent or elsewhere abroad will add a great deal to a wife’s outlook on the world in general and her own life in particular.

Every husband should be most concerned with his wife’s happiness and personality. He should inspire and encourage her constant development and growth in these areas. Certainly by loving and helping her—sharing deeply with her his hopes and aspirations—he will be a tremendous inspiration to her in this regard. Whenever possible, he should express affection to her in the right way—showing by a thousand big and little things that he loves her deeply, appreciates her and wants her happiness above all else. A real leader and husband will correct those under him—even including his wife when necessary. But he will strive to do this with kindness and with patience in a way that encourages one to overcome the fault without feeling beaten down and squelched.

By all of this outgoing concern, and by making sure his wife does get the right amount of recreation, travel

and friendly association with others of like interest, a husband may be assured that his wife is having a full and balanced life as God intended—and is even in this laying up a rich store of treasures which will bring forth happiness in their marriage for years to come.

The area of character development is one also in which a really strong and masculine husband should take the lead.

All too often, especially in our modern world, men seem to think that it is up to the “little woman” to talk about spiritual things and get the children interested in things concerning God and the Church. This is not true and any man who fails his God-given responsibility in this is simply selling out his own birthright! For God intended the man—if he will act on his responsibilities and opportunities—to be the spiritual leader in the home.

Notice this inspired scriptural statement: “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3, KJV).

There are other scriptures, of course, telling the woman to “learn in silence” and other such things. However, my purpose now is not to discuss the woman’s responsibilities but the man’s!

Therefore, let me tell you husbands that it is your responsibility to take and to maintain the spiritual leadership of your home!

DO NOT FAIL YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!

Entirely too many men have failed utterly in this responsibility! They have supposed that religion was for old men, women, children and “goody-goody.” But they have supposed wrong!

For the strongest men who have ever lived have been the servants and prophets of Almighty God! Some day, very soon, you are going to know that!

Every man alive has the opportunity to be the direct representative of God

over his own home—in teaching, instructing, leading and inspiring his wife and children to learn and obey the words of the Holy Bible and to worship and serve the God who made them. Most normal wives and children will instantly and gladly respond if given half a chance! Men need to realize this and, first of all, set a dynamic example of dedication to their Creator, study of His word, prayer to God at mealtimes—and family prayer—and private prayer on one’s knees in the bedroom, closet or other private place.

The man should set an example of self-discipline in the fear of God. He should show that he is man enough, strong enough—to conquer his lusts and control his appetites. By conquering his smoking habit, by controlling his drinking and other appetites, by restraining his emotions and directing them in the right channels, by controlling and guiding his tongue according to the “law of kindness,” he can set an example which will never be forgotten by his sons and daughters as they grow up. And this example will certainly command the respect, admiration and love of any right-minded woman.

Think on these things, then, you husbands! With God’s help, every last one of us can increase in the love, kindness and effectiveness we have shown as a husband and father.

Every last one of us can grow in the five basic areas of responsibility for husbands outlined above: (1) Love and Respect, (2) Support and Encouragement, (3) Leadership and Guidance, (4) Help and Protection and (5) Inspiration to Grow.

By becoming better husbands we will also become better human beings! We will all become happier and healthier, and have a far greater sense of accomplishment than we ever had before.

In marriage, above all other areas of life, we need to experience the reality of Jesus Christ’s inspired statement: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35, KJV). ■

Perish... the Thought!

Continued from page 10

problem is that translators present the Bible in terms of their own preconceived theological perceptions. This may not be deliberate, but is a fact nevertheless. The *King James Version* renders this more accurately than some other translations, but it is not entirely perfect. “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

In this passage, John is focusing on the devil’s punishment, and where he will be cast. The devil, unlike the beast and false prophet, is a spirit being, yet he will be cast into the same fire, from where he will be tormented and will see all his works and deceptive efforts go up in smoke.

Notice that in the *New King James Version*, the word “are” is in italics. This means that it is not in the original, but was supplied by the translators. And it can be misleading. For example, my father before his death arranged to have his dead body cremated. His ashes were put into an urn and placed in a cemetery. That is where he is now. We know that he is dead, but the cemetery is where his ashes are located.

In the same way, the lake of fire is where the beast and false prophet will be cast—and is where their ashes will be! In time sequence, the beast and false prophet “were cast” (a better rendering of the Greek phrase in Revelation 20:10) into the lake of fire a thousand years before the devil.

Regrettably, some read this passage and get the mistaken idea that the beast and false prophet will remain conscious

and experience eternal torment. Some translations, reflecting translators’ preconceived ideas, go so far as to say *they*—meaning these two humans—shall be tormented day and night forever and ever, but this would contradict both the immediate context and that of the entire Bible.

The Bible consistently describes the dead as being unconscious. “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psalm 146:3–4, KJV). “For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing” (Ecclesiastes 9:5). “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

LAZARUS SLEPT

John relates the account of Jesus’ friend Lazarus who was gravely ill. On the way to see him, He told His disciples, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.’ Then His disciples said, ‘Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.’ However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead’” (John 11:11–14). The Apostle Paul also likened death to sleep (1 Thessalonians 4:13, 15).

The Bible is abundantly clear that human beings are mortal, and will utterly perish unless they receive God’s grace. As it says in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, **that whoever believes in Him should not perish** but have everlasting life.” ■

Are You a Positive Person?

Continued from page 2

soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matthew 10:28–30).

As our Father in heaven looks down from heaven on *every one* of us, His children, He knows about “every hair” on our heads. He will take care of us. He deeply desires us to be in His Kingdom—so much that He gave His only begotten Son. Remember David’s inspired words: “The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. From the place of His dwelling He looks on all the inhabitants of the earth” (Psalm 33:13–14). And later in this inspiring Psalm: “Our soul

waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name” (vv. 20–21). Each of us must learn to genuinely **trust** in God—to truly believe that He is our Father who created us and has now “called” us to be His full sons. So we must truly *walk with God* by constantly studying and drinking in of His Word, by “feeding” on Christ (John 6:57). We must learn to *pray fervently* each morning and to start out each day by talking earnestly with our Father in heaven and asking for His divine guidance and strength. Make God the very center of your life. Then, Almighty God will *always* be with you to strengthen and to encourage you. Keep your mind on what the prophet Isaiah wrote, in a verse said to have been the favorite Bible verse of former British Prime

Minister William Gladstone: “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You” (Isaiah 26:3).

Brethren, please really *walk with God*, as I have described. Learn to focus on the *most magnificent* future that can even be imagined by mankind: the opportunity to become *full members* of the Family of God—our faces shining like the stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:3). *This* will be your future if you never allow yourself to become discouraged. *This* will be your future—if you become a truly *positive person* and learn to genuinely *walk by faith*.

With Christian love,



LOCAL

CHURCH NEWS



SOUTH AFRICAN LIVING YOUTH CAMP

Births

Mr. and Mrs. David (Alison) Poole of Barrie, Ontario, Canada, are happy to announce the arrival of their second daughter, *Eva Jade Poole*, on August 17, 2012. She weighed 7 pounds, 13 ounces and was 20½ inches long. Her grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Roger (Tricia) Poole of Barrie, Ontario, Canada and Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth (Colleen) Frank of Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Mr. and Mrs. Jamal (Antonia) Austin, of the Baltimore, Maryland congregation, are happy to announce the birth of their son, *Jamal Whitney Austin, Jr.*, born October 9, 2012. Jamal, Jr. weighed 9 pounds, 11 ounces and was 22 inches long. His two sisters joined in rejoicing at his arrival.

Mr. and Mrs. Leif (Jennifer) Kareliusson, of the Washington, DC congregation, are delighted to announce the birth of their second child, *Silas Leif Kareliusson*, born November 15, 2012. Silas weighed 9 pounds, 3 ounces and was 22 inches long. This is the second grandchild of Mr. and Mrs. Bud (Gale) Kareliusson, and the fifth grandchild of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond (Rhonda) Clore, also of the Washington, D.C. congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Michael (Brienne) Blanchard of Nashville, Tennessee, are pleased to announce the arrival of their first child, *Sophia Jeanette Blanchard*, on December 14, 2012. Sophia weighed 6 pounds, 6 ounces and was 18½ inches long. She is the third grandchild of Mr. Michael J. Blanchard of McMillan, Michigan and the fifth grandchild of Mr. and Mrs. Larry (Judy) Wilsbach, also of Nashville.

ORDINATIONS

Mrs. Misty Johnson was ordained a deaconess on Sabbath, December 29, 2012 by Pastor Martin Fannin. Mrs. Johnson serves in the Blairsville, Georgia, congregation.

Mr. James Kingsmore was ordained a deacon on February 2 by Regional Pastor Rod King, Pastor Henry Cooper and Elder John Murphy. Mr. Kingsmore serves in the Belfast, UK, congregation.

Weddings

Mr. and Mrs. Shane Kruse of Mississauga, Ontario, are pleased to announce the marriage of their daughter *Holly Kruse* to *Derek McQuattie* of Guelph, Ontario. The ceremony was performed by Mr. James Ginn on Sunday, December 23, 2012 at the Butterfly Conservatory in Cambridge, Ontario and it was followed by a wedding brunch. The couple will reside in Guelph.

Mr. Adam Walker and *Miss Tiffany Millich* were married on February 1 in a small and beautiful ceremony. Tiffany's father, Mr. Rand Millich, walked her down the aisle and performed the ceremony. The happy couple are members of the Living Church of God in the Kansas City area.

In Loving Memory

Long-time Glasgow, Scotland member *Mrs. Mary McAuley* succumbed to cancer on April 29, 2012, after a brave fight. She was 68 years old. Mary and her husband were among the first in Scotland to be baptized into God's Church during this era, in 1968. She is survived by her husband Danny; two daughters, Yvonne (Matt) and Esther; and three grandchildren. Mr. and Mrs. McAuley would have been married for 50 years in December 2012. She will be affectionately remembered by a great number of brethren for her joyous demeanor, generosity and readiness to serve. Funeral services were conducted by Pastor Henry Cooper at Alexandria Cemetery on a scenic hillside overlooking Loch Lomond on one of the loveliest days of the year.

Mrs. Emelia Isaac of Malaysia died November 20, 2012 after several years of health trials. She was 50 years old. Mr. Rajan Moses conducted the funeral. Mrs. Isaac was baptized in 2001 during the Feast in Penang and has been attending the Living Church of God for the past 12 years. She is survived by her husband, John; two sons, Jerry and Jeffrey; two daughters, Jasmine and Jennifer; two grandsons and two granddaughters. Mrs. Isaac will be greatly missed.

Mrs. Leva Witt, widow of Leonard "Bill" Witt, died December 3, 2012 after a long illness. She was a long-time member of the Church of God, baptized in 1963. Mrs. Witt is survived by seven children, nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. She attended the Living Church of God in Berea, Kentucky. Funeral services were conducted on December 6 by Pastor Lambert Greer. Her presence and smile will certainly be missed.

Long-time member, *Mrs. Katherine June Pittman* died January 23 after a lengthy illness. She was 90 years old. Since her baptism in 1965, Mrs. Pittman served in the local congregation by mentoring, comforting and giving encouragement to those in need. For many years, she made sure that the sick received a signed "Get Well" card from the local congregation. She is survived by her four children, Jan, Marty, Marleen and Maureen; seven grandchildren; five great grandchildren; one sister; four nephews and two nieces.

Mr. Charles Boeckler of the Ocala, Florida congregation died on February 2. Mr. Boeckler was born January 1, 1936; he and his wife Norma, who survives him, were baptized January 1, 1984. He was faithful to the end.

Anniversaries

Mr. and Mrs. Garry (Margaret) Johnson of Somercotes, Derbyshire in the UK celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on December 22, 2012. Mr. Johnson has attended God's Church for five years and was baptized in 2010. Their marriage has been blessed with four children, nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. On December 15, the Birmingham, UK, congregation presented them with a card and gift to recognize this significant milestone.

The Adelaide, Australia, congregation celebrated two wedding anniversaries on December 26, 2012. *Mr. and Mrs. Mark (Lina) Mager* celebrated their 20th anniversary and *Mr. and Mrs. Dexter (Amy) Javate* celebrated their 10th anniversary. (The Javates' anniversary is actually on December 28.) To recognize these milestone occasions, the

couples, with family and friends, dined at the Bath Hotel in Norwood, South Australia.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack (Yvonne) Routledge of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, are very thankful for their 69 years of marriage. They were married on December 29, 1943 at Melfort, Saskatchewan. They especially praise God for their calling (both were in their 80th year) which led to their baptism on March 9, 2002, and for their faithful fellowship with the Calgary congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Don (Velma) Yale celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on February 6. The Hawkins, Texas, brethren honored them with a special reception and anniversary cake. The Yales were baptized into God's Church 42 and 41 years ago respectively. They serve the Hawkins congregation as deacon and deaconess.

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COMMENTARY

THE ULTIMATE HELP

In my younger years, I served aboard a ship of the United States Navy. Navy ships were always in one of three conditions—they were either underway, anchored, or in need of help in the form of a push or tow. This is true of any vessel. A ship under power is productive. If it is anchored, it is doing nothing. If neither, it needs help.

We often find this pattern in people's lives. Some seem to be underway and productive—working hard, getting things together, making progress. Others seem to be anchored and “resting” in place. Finally, some appear to need a push or shove. Many in this last category are unaware of their need, but others are searching desperately, crying out their “S.O.S.” This is especially painful to see, especially when it involves people's spiritual lives.

What can we say about productive people who are like moving ships? God clearly expects His people to reach this point in their lives. We read: “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1). The instruction here is to move forward in Christian life with power and strength. God's calling requires Christians to be “under power” to fulfill their calling.

What about those who are anchored in place? Notice how Christ described people who become unproductive:

“Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22). When the water gets rough, they quickly “drop anchor”—as did the lazy servant in Christ's parable of the talents: “But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money” (Matthew 25:18). Far from being productive, some people simply quit willfully—they stop working, or in their spiritual lives stop praying, studying or attending church. Some even give up on God completely.

Then, we have what appears to be a very large group—the ones who only seem able to move with the assistance of another. In the book of Acts, we find a powerful example of one such person. When the Ethiopian came reading about Isaiah, the Lord sent Philip to him (Acts 8:26). Asked if he understood, the Ethiopian replied, to Philip, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” (v. 31). When Philip preached the gospel, the Ethiopian was quickly baptized, and he set out on a new course in life: one that brought him great joy and purpose (vv. 38–39). And all it took was a little nudge.

A little help goes a long way—especially when we feel weak or helpless. And by the power of God's Spirit—the ultimate help (John 14:16)—even the weak may plot a course toward eternal life.

—Charles Knowlton