

Return to Eden

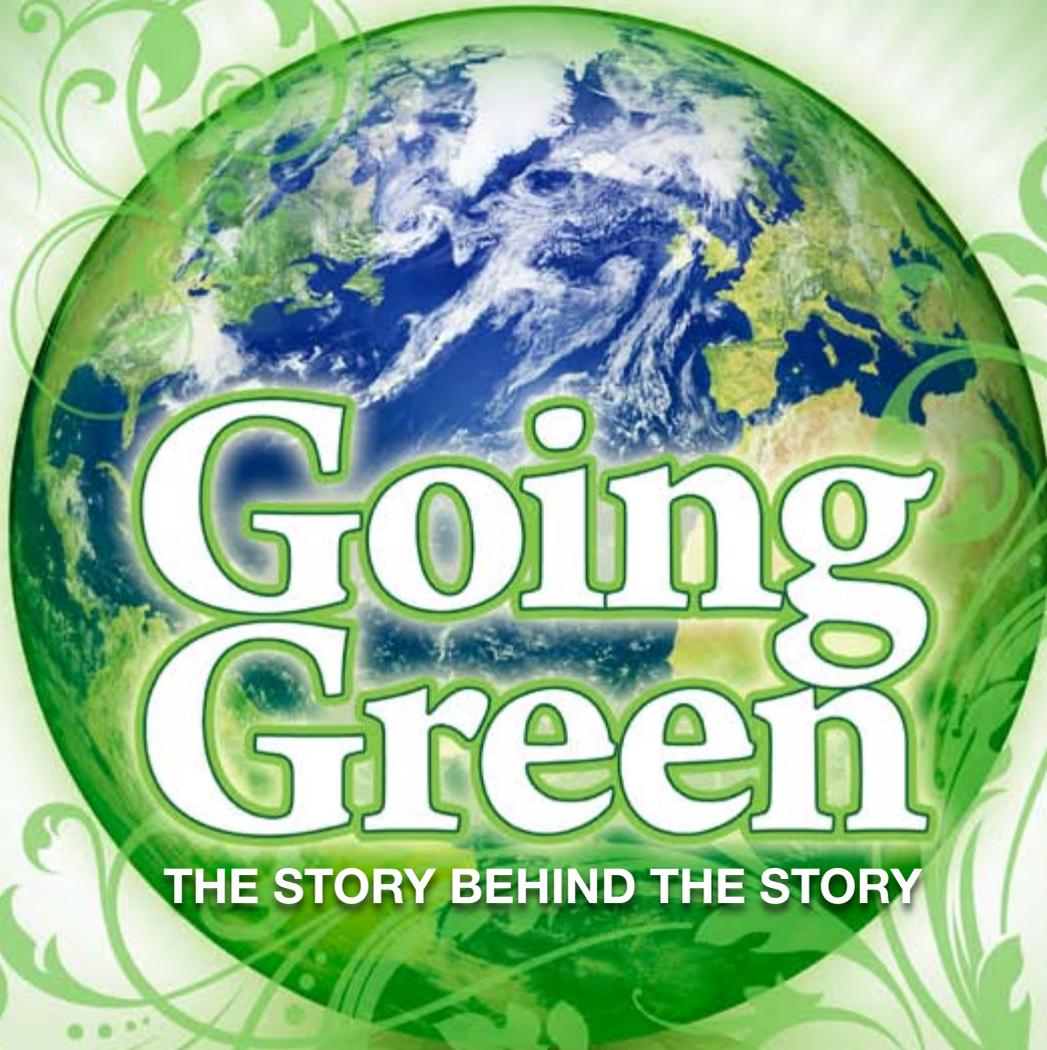
MAN IS A WOLF

School Bullies

October—December 2008

verticalthought[®]

a magazine of understanding for tomorrow's leaders



THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

**Global Warming
Or Global Cooling?**

**Good Government
And Politics**

Greetings From Grand Bahama Island!

**Answers From
Genesis Part 2**

**Hold on to Your
Christian Values!**

Who Will Turn the Earth Green?

When God made the first human being—Adam—and placed him in a garden in Eden, He instructed him to “tend and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). We could call Adam the human race’s first environmentalist. His job was to take care of the garden where God had placed him.

Sadly, humanity hasn’t always followed the instruction God gave to Adam (and through him to the whole human race). Instead, people have often been willing to neglect and damage our planet because of laziness or the lure of financial gain. Recent history has seen serious incidents of oil tankers spilling their cargo and thereby soiling pristine waters and endangering wildlife. Toxic waste sites remind us of accidents that occurred in dealing with nuclear energy, while polluted streams and bodies of water are the evidence of the improper or illegal disposal of chemicals.

In contrast to the ugliness and death caused by pollution, the color of growing things, green, has come to represent anything associated with protecting our planet from contamination and destruction.

In contrast to those who believe human efforts can solve all environmental concerns, the Bible foretells a different scenario.

Believing that emissions of various gases are causing global warming, many developed countries have agreed to limit carbon dioxide and five other “greenhouse gases” in accordance with the Kyoto Protocol—an agreement made under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on Dec. 11, 1997. Yet support for this effort is not universal. Some question the science behind climate change research.

In fact, 31,000 Americans who hold college degrees in science have signed the Global Warming Petition, which claims: “There is no convincing evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gases is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth’s atmosphere and disruption of the Earth’s climate.” These skeptics further believe, “The proposed limits on greenhouse gases would harm the environment, hinder the advance of science and technology, and damage the health and welfare of mankind.”

In spite of the debate over global warming, what should a Christian do? From the instruction given by God to Adam to “tend and keep” his environment, we know that we need to be careful not to needlessly squander the earth’s resources or pollute our land. But in contrast to those who believe human efforts can ultimately solve all environmental concerns, the Bible foretells a different scenario.

After a time of trouble that will include major wars, famine, disease and cataclysmic upheaval in nature, a new era will dawn in which the earth will become extremely green—that is, far more fertile and productive than imaginable today. This greening of the earth will also be characterized by an amazing upgrade in human nature and the replacement of corrupt governments with righteous rulers who will truly serve their people. In this issue, we’re delighted to focus on this amazing greening of the earth promised by God Himself.

VerticalThought

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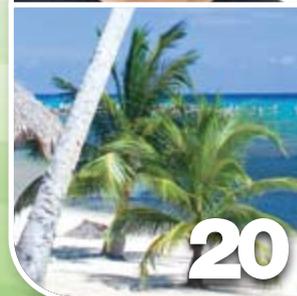
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Twenty years ago, a U.S. Senate committee heard testimony on climate change from NASA climatologist James Hansen. He told the committee that “the greenhouse effect has been detected, and it is changing our climate now.”

Hansen’s landmark testimony triggered an avalanche of research, political debate and environmental activism that continues to this day. However, there are concerns about where all of this is taking us. Some believe there is a dark side to environmentalism that is beginning to overshadow the good work of those who simply wish to take care of our natural resources.

The two extremes

As in every aspect of life, there are extremes in the way people view the environment. Some greedy businesspeople couldn’t care less about the damage they do to the earth. At the other extreme, ecoterrorists seem not to care about people and destruction of property.

Groups such as the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) have claimed responsibility for multiple acts of ecoterrorism during the past decade, including the recent destruction of three luxury homes near Seattle, Washington, with damages totaling \$7 million. Ironically, these homes and the surrounding housing developments were designed to be environmentally friendly.

Said Gary Perlstein, professor emeritus at Portland State University, “This is more than an environmental issue to them, this is an issue of faith” (quoted by Jennifer Langston, “Shadowy ELF Saboteurs May Be on the Rise Again,” *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 4, 2008). But this type of faith is not pleasing to God, putting the creation above the Creator and His laws (Romans 1:25).

Taking care of the earth is certainly an honorable cause, but sadly, the many dangers threatening human survival seem beyond human solution.

As disturbing as this is, some believe that misguided government policies may actually do more damage to both the world economy *and* the environment than the crusades of ecoterrorists. For example, subsidies for corn ethanol are driving up the price of food around the world and pushing millions of poor people into hunger. Such reactionary policies can have unintended consequences.

The solution

Taking care of the earth is certainly an honorable cause, but sadly, the many dangers threatening human survival seem beyond human solution. In addition to the dual challenges of gaining consensus over whether man has indeed caused global warming and what we should be doing about it, many question whether our efforts can have a significant effect. However, the ultimate fate of the planet is already determined. At least that’s what our Creator says.

by Sean Yarbrough

Going Green

THE STORY
BEHIND THE STORY

Global warming has become a major concern of many environmentalists. Will mankind’s efforts to protect our planet be successful?

Global Warming or Global Cooling?

According to the Bible, a time of divine judgment is coming on the earth because of humanity's disobedience to God's instructions. Revelation 8:7 states that a third of the earth will be burned up, including a third of the trees.

More destruction will follow, including massive pollution of the world's water supply, pestilence, cosmic disturbances and global war. The extreme nature of these punishments is in keeping with the extreme destructiveness of humanity. The Bible shows that unless God intervenes to stop the process, the human race will be completely destroyed (Matthew 24:22).

The good news is that Jesus Christ will return to the earth at that very moment to establish a new world order. He and His servants will help to restore not only the earth's ecological systems, but also the lives of those who have lived through such devastation.

With this in mind, perhaps we should ask ourselves if we have been taking care of our *spiritual* environment. Do we have pollution problems in our minds caused by unbiblical ideas we have accepted? Is our source of renewable spiritual energy being depleted by an immoral and self-destructive lifestyle? Have we learned to think and live the way Jesus Christ taught? Addressing these issues is even more important to our survival than "going green" when we consider the eternal consequences of our spiritual choices.

Balanced environmentalism

Advocating sound energy policies and environmental practices is certainly important to God. The Bible states that God put man in charge of the earth, to take care of it (Genesis 1:28; 2:15). We therefore have a responsibility to meet God's expectations by taking reasonable measures to protect what He has made.

However, it is only a matter of time before humanity's downward spiral leads God to decide that the time is right to fulfill the major prophecies recorded by the Hebrew prophets and the apostle John in the book of Revelation. Before that time comes, responding to God's calling and then remaining faithful to His instructions will stand us in very good stead with our Creator.

Even though God already has a plan in place for saving our planet, He still expects us to care for it in a balanced way as we prepare for the time when the Kingdom of God will be established here on earth. Then human actions and hearts will be changed in order to restore God's green earth to its former glory.

Sean Yarbrough lives with his wife Kristin and daughter Katie in Tampa, Florida. He works as a home health occupational therapist and is active in the United Church of God.

In recent years scientists have noted that the average temperature of the earth has been increasing. The general assumption has been that man has been the cause of this global warming primarily due to the burning of fossil fuel and the emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

What has been clear is that, on average, global temperatures have been rising. What hasn't been scientifically proven to some is that man is responsible for the increased temperatures.

Of course, the earth has always had gradual fluctuations in temperature. Illustrating this point, Michael Asher wrote on the science blog on Dailytech.com Feb. 26, 2008: "Over the past year, anecdotal evidence for a cooling planet has exploded. China has its coldest winter in 100 years. Baghdad sees its first snow in all recorded history. North America has the most snow cover in 50 years, with places like Wisconsin the highest since record-keeping began. Record levels of Antarctic sea ice, record cold in Minnesota, Texas, Florida, Mexico, Australia, Iran, Greece, South Africa, Greenland, Argentina, Chile—the list goes on and on.

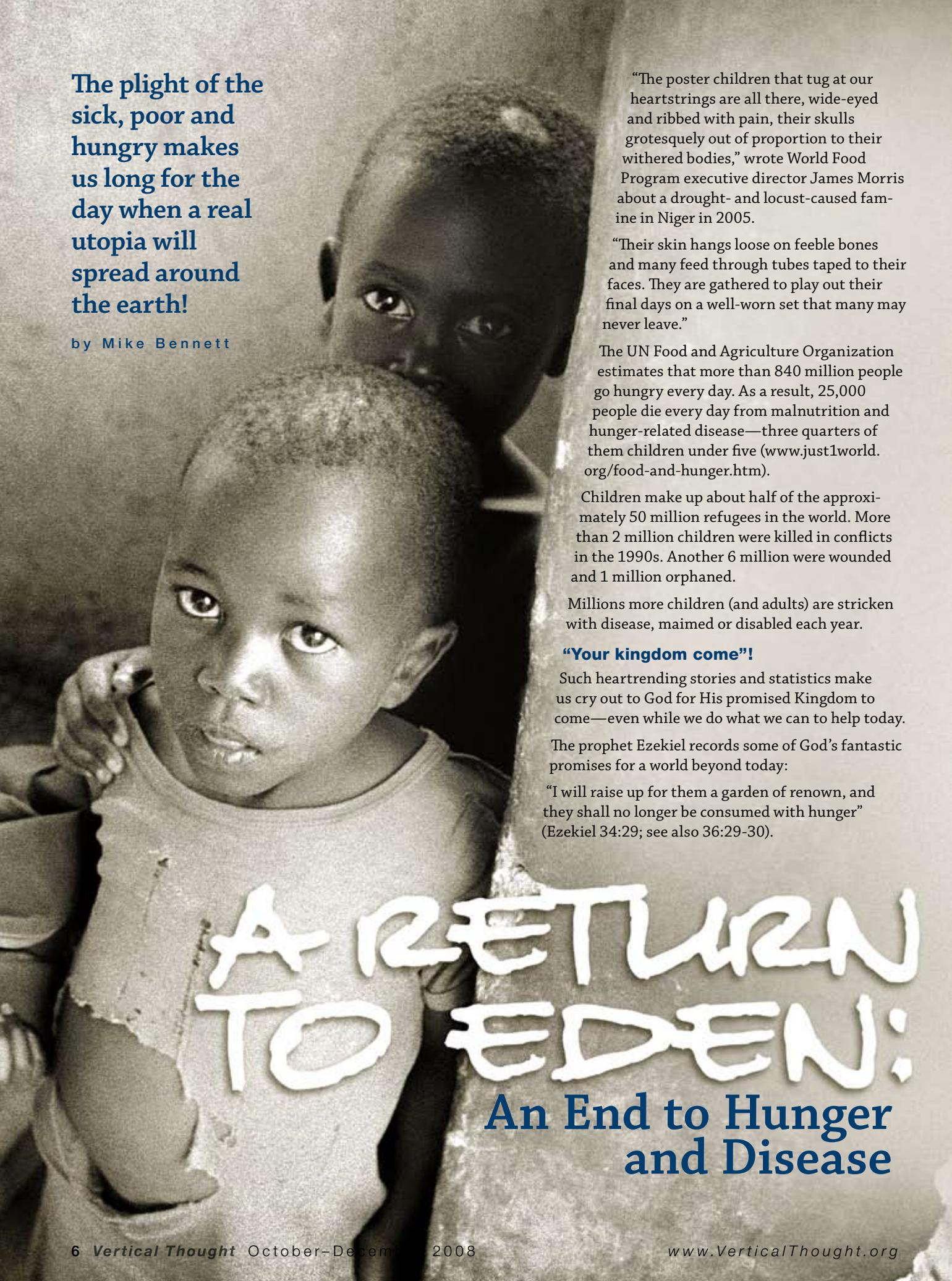
"No more than anecdotal evidence, to be sure. But now, that evidence has been supplanted by hard scientific fact. All four major global temperature tracking outlets (Hadley, NASA's GISS, UAH, RSS) have released updated data. All show that over the past year, global temperatures have dropped precipitously ... The total amount of cooling ranges from 0.65C up to 0.75C—a value large enough to wipe out most of the warming recorded over the past 100 years. All in one year's time. For all four sources, it's the single fastest temperature change ever recorded, either up or down."

This is interesting, but many will point out that one year does not a trend make.

Global warming (or is it global cooling?) has become a hugely contentious issue that has engulfed politics, science, the world economy and efforts to equalize business opportunities for developing nations.

Regardless of the temperatures, we all need to follow God's instructions to take care of our planet, for God says He will "destroy those who destroy the earth" (Revelation 11:18).

—David Treybig



The plight of the sick, poor and hungry makes us long for the day when a real utopia will spread around the earth!

by Mike Bennett

“The poster children that tug at our heartstrings are all there, wide-eyed and ribbed with pain, their skulls grotesquely out of proportion to their withered bodies,” wrote World Food Program executive director James Morris about a drought- and locust-caused famine in Niger in 2005.

“Their skin hangs loose on feeble bones and many feed through tubes taped to their faces. They are gathered to play out their final days on a well-worn set that many may never leave.”

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that more than 840 million people go hungry every day. As a result, 25,000 people die every day from malnutrition and hunger-related disease—three quarters of them children under five (www.just1world.org/food-and-hunger.htm).

Children make up about half of the approximately 50 million refugees in the world. More than 2 million children were killed in conflicts in the 1990s. Another 6 million were wounded and 1 million orphaned.

Millions more children (and adults) are stricken with disease, maimed or disabled each year.

“Your kingdom come”!

Such heartrending stories and statistics make us cry out to God for His promised Kingdom to come—even while we do what we can to help today.

The prophet Ezekiel records some of God’s fantastic promises for a world beyond today:

“I will raise up for them a garden of renown, and they shall no longer be consumed with hunger” (Ezekiel 34:29; see also 36:29-30).

A RETURN TO EDEN:

An End to Hunger and Disease

Famine has afflicted mankind throughout history. Every effort to end hunger by greater agricultural production and massive relief programs has failed. Wars, droughts, disease and government inefficiency and corruption have combined to thwart even the great gains of the green and biotech revolutions.

But God promises agricultural abundance that will bring an end to hunger and starvation.

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it... They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them” (Amos 9:13-14).

The *NKJV Study Bible* explains the significance of Amos’ statement: “For the plowman to overtake the reaper would mean such an abundant harvest that it would last all summer and would not be gathered until the plowing started again.”

With the fear of war and hunger removed, all will feel secure and content: “Everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall

“The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing... For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water” (Isaiah 35:1-2, 6-7).

Disease and disability to disappear!

This beautiful chapter also describes the healing of the disabilities that have plagued mankind:

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing” (Isaiah 35:5-6).

God’s healing power will do what medical science has only dreamed of doing—repairing the intricate systems that allow us to see and hear, run and speak.

After describing the sin and the incurable sickness so prevalent in today’s world, Jeremiah records God’s promise: “For I will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds,” says the LORD” (Jeremiah 30:17).

be conquered. People will be taught the causes of diseases and how to prevent them. The huge drain on individuals, families and society caused by the suffering, medical expenses and lost productivity will be a thing of the past.

Where it all leads

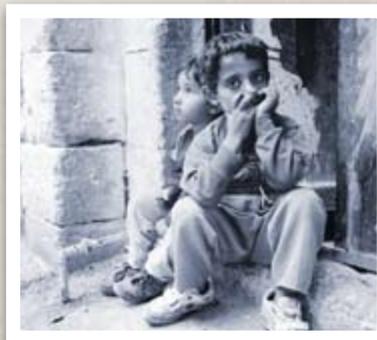
The bountiful harvests, the beautifully restored environment, the vibrant health of the people—all these are wonderful in themselves. But human beings have enjoyed some of these things before and eventually ruined them. What is to prevent that from happening again?

God shows that He intends these physical blessings to lead to something even more incredible.

“Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good [the causes of the suffering of this present age]; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations” (Ezekiel 36:31).

God intends these blessings to lead to repentance—the vehement desire to change from within. God wants to win and change hearts and minds so that we will not repeat the tragedies of this age. Identifying the problems in our

hearts and coming to deeply desire to change ourselves are the first steps to becoming citizens who will not befall or destroy the beautiful world God is bringing.



make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken” (Micah 4:4).

Isaiah painted word pictures of the barren land being transformed into productive and beautiful fields “like Eden... the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody” (Isaiah 51:3).

For thousands of years man’s activities have reduced the amount of productive farmland in the world and increased the size of the deserts. But all that will change in the world beyond today. Isaiah envisioned it this way:

God, as our Creator, knows exactly how our bodies should work and has the power to repair the cumulative effects of mankind’s abuse of the human body over thousands of years. Peter reminds us of this focus of the incredible love of Jesus Christ, “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24). Matthew tells us, “He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses” (Matthew 8:17). Disease, sickness and all the sorrow that accompanies them will finally

For more about the process of repentance and change that can begin now, download or request a free copy of *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*. Allowing God to transform you won’t change the whole world now, but it will dramatically change your corner of it. And it will prepare you to serve God in helping others and bringing His utopian Kingdom soon to this earth.

Mike Bennett, a minister of the United Church of God, is the managing editor of *United News*. He and his wife Becky and their two daughters live near Cincinnati, Ohio.



Vertical thinkers read mankind's stories—and consider how our violent and immoral failures must be reversed.

They want the vertical change of man looking up to God. They hope not for just a better world, but for a *completely* better world. They pine for the time when the true Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, will return to the earth to completely change the nature of things.

This is the story of man, wolf and lamb.

“Man is a wolf to man” is an ancient Latin proverb that describes the warlike animosity and predatory nature that people exert against each other—individuals against individuals, nations against nations. In essence, mankind is wolflike.

If you know a little history, you know how apt the *lupus* (Latin for wolf) label is for human nature.

The dogs of war

University of Hawaii professor emeritus Rudolph Rummel (author of *Power Kills* and *Death by Government*) has researched the numbers of people murdered by their own governments throughout history—not including battle deaths or criminal punishment. In the 20th century alone he estimates that rulers exterminated 262 million of their own subjects.

He cites Shakespeare's famous and somber lines about the violent perversity of mankind: “Tumultuous wars shall kin with kin and kind with kind confound; disorder, horror, fear and mutiny... and this land be call'd the field of Golgotha and dead men's skulls” (*Richard II*, act 4, scene 1).

Dr. Rummel's research does not study deaths caused by wars with other nations. Other experts reckon upwards of 160 million war deaths from 1900 to 1999. With Germany's Hitler, the Soviet Union's Stalin, Japan's militarists, China's Mao and their other dictator “friends,” the 20th century was phenomenally wild-natured and predatory.

It evokes another famous line from Shakespeare, when Mark Antony promises revenge for Caesar's assassination: “Cry ‘Havoc,’ and let slip the dogs of war” (*Julius Caesar*, act 3, scene 1).

What are wolves but dogs with wild, untamable predatory natures? What has human nature been throughout time but wild, self-serving, lustful and murderous—wolflike?

In the wake of 72 million human deaths during World War II, U.S. Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur sadly but correctly surmised planet earth's plight: The solution “must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.” Will there ever be a time when that wild nature is changed? Yes, absolutely!

The wolf and the lamb

Here by ancient prophecy enters the lamb into our story about man and wolf.

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them” (Isaiah 11:6).

What a word portrait of the peaceful farmyard! Former predators with wild natures will then be as faithfully tame around domesticated livestock as our house pets today!

When she was young, I told my daughter hundreds of bedtime stories about a pet grizzly bear named Woofer and the sister and brother who owned him. The time will come when small children can have lions, tigers or grizzly bears for pets—or formerly poisonous snakes:

“The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den” (Isaiah 11:7-8).

Today wild wolves will readily kill and eat lambs, but in the future, they will be like border collies or sheepdogs to the flock. When will this seemingly magical time come upon us?—Soon.

Ending the end time

We live in the end time—the last days of the world as we know it. In but a few years the forces of evil and covetousness will in fact “cry ‘havoc’ and let slip the dogs of war.” It will be an era of unprecedented terror and destruction.

Jesus Christ forecasted tomorrow's news far in advance. He said that “nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom... And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:7, 22). The elect are true vertical thinkers.

The only way that our world's wolflike future war can be halted before humanity is annihilated will be for Christ to liter-

ally return from heaven to earth and stop the fighting and killing. And He will do just that—powerfully and dramatically! Man will no longer be allowed to be wolf to man.

The prophecies in the Bible show that Jesus will personally rule all the nations from His capital in Jerusalem for 1,000 years—a period often referred to as the Millennium. During that peaceful world of tomorrow, Christ will also change the wild nature of the animals to fulfill the prophecies above.

But is taming wild animals what Jesus Christ and the Father ultimately seek?

The greater nature

Animal nature will be changed in the Millennium, but Isaiah's prophecy indicates something far more important.

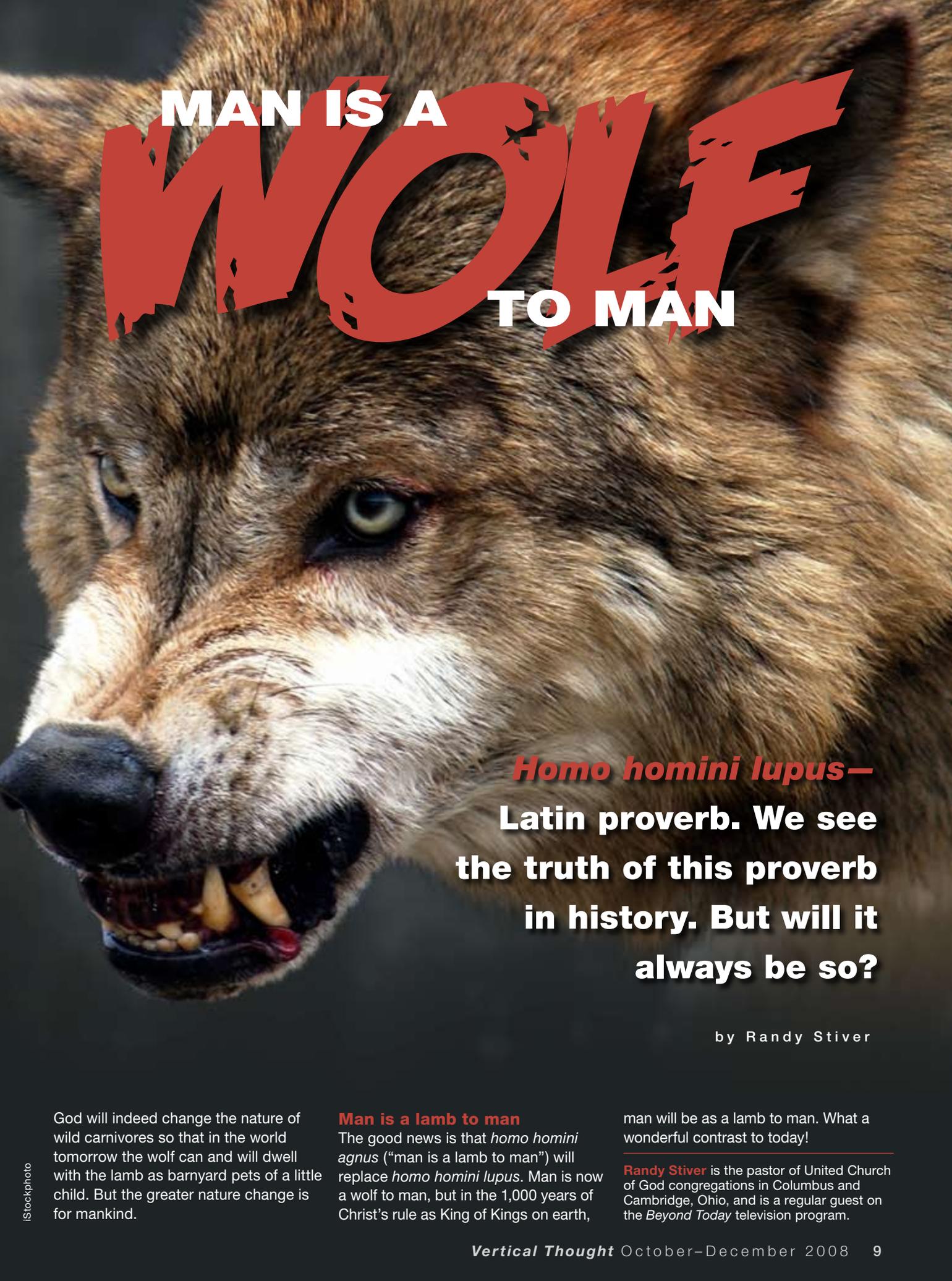
“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

The prophesied change in animal nature, while literal, is also representative of a coming change in human nature—taming the beastly nature of people. After all, did Jesus die for the sins of animals? Is God all about bringing lions and tigers and bears to glory? No.

God values human life phenomenally higher than that of animals even though He made both. The greater potential for you and me is to be the divine children of God in His family and Kingdom. That incredible destiny is not offered to animals or even to angels! Read Hebrews 2:5 about the angels.

In the prophecy from Isaiah, the “holy mountain” is the Kingdom or government of God on earth during the Millennium. God doesn't want people to hurt or destroy each other—no wolfish wars or other behavior. He wants all human beings to be completely filled with knowledge about Him and His way of life like the waters cover the seabeds.

The Father through His Son Jesus Christ is in the business of changing the nature of mankind through spiritual conversion by placing His Holy Spirit—the power of God—within the minds of a humbled and faithful humanity. When that happens, wolflike, selfish, predatory human nature will begin to transform into God's loving, divine nature. Amazingly, this change is your and all mankind's destiny.



MAN IS A

WOLF

TO MAN

Homo homini lupus—
Latin proverb. We see
the truth of this proverb
in history. But will it
always be so?

by Randy Stiver

God will indeed change the nature of wild carnivores so that in the world tomorrow the wolf can and will dwell with the lamb as barnyard pets of a little child. But the greater nature change is for mankind.

Man is a lamb to man

The good news is that *homo homini agnus* (“man is a lamb to man”) will replace *homo homini lupus*. Man is now a wolf to man, but in the 1,000 years of Christ’s rule as King of Kings on earth,

man will be as a lamb to man. What a wonderful contrast to today!

Randy Stiver is the pastor of United Church of God congregations in Columbus and Cambridge, Ohio, and is a regular guest on the *Beyond Today* television program.



Good Government

Is it possible to have good government in

These days, political elections are dangerous business! Besides dividing people, family and friends along party lines, as is often the case in the West, politics in some countries brings persecution, violence and even genocide.

Even in the United States, issues like the war in Iraq, skyrocketing oil prices and a weakened economy divide the country as it prepares for its presidential election this November. And while apathy toward politicians is rampant in many Western nations, developing countries such as Kenya, Myanmar and Zimbabwe are often in fear during elections because of intimidation, violence and even killings.

Regardless of where one lives, leaders generally seem far more interested in acquiring or maintaining power and prestige than in serving people and meeting the true needs of the people who elect them! It is so sad. The question is: Will it get any better?

The purpose and promise of government

Ideally, the purpose of government is to maintain security and public order

to provide fulfillment and happiness. Those outcomes sound great, but how many governments in the world are able to reach these lofty goals? Basic security and a semblance of order are provided in some countries, but fulfillment and happiness are rarely, if ever, the result of today's governments.

While most would-be leaders recognize the need for some kind of "change" in their country, they can only make hollow promises to provide improvements and reforms if elected. Yet virtually all leaders fail to come through on their campaign promises! More seem to be interested in getting elected to power than in solving the real problems of their people and providing meaningful and service-oriented leadership.

Is government structure the key?

A classic book on government, *Today's Isms* by William Ebenstein, is a great college textbook that discusses the types of government that most of humanity lives under. In reading his book, the differences between the basic government structures become very clear.

- One believes that one person knows what is best for the masses.
- Another believes the people should be represented in government to achieve their interests.
- Yet another teaches that the goods and wealth of some should be shared with all!

While the differences between these forms of government go far beyond this simple comparison, a quick study of recent history shows that no country, kingdom or leader has been truly successful at the goal of government, as stated earlier—to maintain security and public order to provide fulfillment and happiness. In fact, no structure or type of government has made it possible for man to successfully govern himself.

What does the Bible say?

God's answer to this sobering question is that things *won't* get better with politics and government in the world we live in. At least not in the short term!

From the earliest days, God told His people not to trust in human beings for leadership as they will fall short! "Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of



by Doug Horchak

Government and Politics

a world of selfishness, cheating and lies?

man, in whom there is no help” (Psalm 146:3). That admonition is just as true today as it was 3,000 years ago.

For all of mankind’s efforts to lead, guide and govern himself, God’s Word tells us that it simply “is not *in* man to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). The sordid facts of history have verified the words of God. By such statements, God reveals to us that something is *missing* in human beings that would enable us to direct and govern ourselves.

Does God have an answer?

While God says that in this life we should respect those in authority and pray for our leaders (Romans 13:1; 1 Timothy 2:1-2), in the end He also reveals to us that it’s the selfishness of mankind and the desire for prestige and power that will doom man’s effort to govern himself!

In Matthew 24:21-22 Christ said that man’s inability to rule himself would result in his near self-annihilation! That is how important this subject is.

The result of thousands of years of man’s rule of nations and kingdoms motivated by selfishness, ignorance, cheating and lies will be catastrophic. The sobering

truth is that even without the Bible as a guide, many people today realize we live in extremely dangerous times.

But all hope is not lost! God’s plan for mankind is based upon *government*. In this case, not only *better* government, but *good* government—*God’s* government. While it won’t happen in this age, in the “age to come” Jesus Christ will return to earth to usher in a time of unprecedented peace, justice and, yes, happiness (Ephesians 1:20-21; Psalm 144:15). That time of peace may very well come in our lifetime!

This government of God will be over all nations and people. Man’s governments will be replaced by the Kingdom of God, which will rule over the whole earth (Daniel 7:27).

The very thought of the rulers of all countries and kingdoms following the lead of Jesus Christ and His government is mind-boggling! To think people could actually have rulers they could trust and who would truly have their best interests in mind is almost too good to be true.

Too good to be true?

The truth is that all of the confusion, dis-

couragement and dissension that today’s politics and government foster will come to an end in the future. As revealed by the prophets, Christ will return and restore the leadership and government of God to this earth (Acts 3:18-21). To learn more about the government of God after Christ’s return, download or request a free copy of our booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom* at www.ucg.org/booklets.

Like most institutions of man in this present life, today’s reality is sobering, discouraging and downright depressing! Yet God’s Word tells us of a time in the future when leaders will be selected by the wisdom of God rather than the political processes of man. At that time government will be based on the laws and interests of God rather than the desire of the few to rule and maintain power and authority. Those who lead in God’s government will be led by the Spirit of God to serve others rather than just their own interests.

May God speed this day!

Doug Horchak, husband, father and coordinator of the United Youth Corps program, pastors congregations in Dallas and Sherman, Texas.



What the bully is really on someone is send a message of how powerful he is.

SCHOOL BULLIES

What You Need to Know About

Here are some steps you should take if you or someone you know is being bullied.

by **Becky Sweat**

Have you ever been the target of a bully? Perhaps there's someone at school who makes fun of the way you dress, your height or weight or your ethnic background. Or perhaps someone puts you down because you have an unusual last name, struggle academically or are shy. Maybe you've been slugged, shoved, tripped, teased, mocked or humiliated more times than you care to remember.

If you have, you're not alone. School bullying touches nearly every teenager in America. According to the National Institute of Child and Health Development, 30 percent of teens are bullied on a regular basis, and 70 percent of students experience at least some bullying during their school years. The National School Safety Center estimates that there are about 2.7 million bullying victims in American schools today. Other nations around the world report similar statistics.

Those who are bullied know how devastating it can be. In most cases, it's not just a one-time or even an occasional occurrence. Once a bully has found a target, he usually continues his assaults on a daily basis. Often the bully's cohorts will join in on the abuse as well.

Illustration by Shaun Venish/Stockphoto

This can put the person on the receiving end in a state of constant anxiety, and it can lead to feelings of embarrassment, depression and social isolation. Guys and girls who are bullied may become so upset about what's happening that their schoolwork and physical health suffer.

Trying to do when he picks message to everyone else about

Certainly bullying is the total opposite of the Golden Rule, which tells us to "do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12, New International Version throughout). Psalm 11:5 says of God, "Those who love violence his soul hates." God despises bullying! Those who strive to live by the Golden Rule find the very thought of bullying repulsive too.

Who bullies and why?

Rather than the Golden Rule, what's important to bullies is gaining power over others. In the bully's mind, "if he can pick on someone and get away with it, he's dominated that person, and that gives him power," says Todd Migliaccio, Ph.D., a professor in the Department of Sociology at California State University and a leading researcher into bullying.

However, Migliaccio continues, the bully has a much bigger objective than to just make his victim tremble. "The bully already thinks he dominates over the victim. What the bully is really trying to do when he picks on someone is send a message to everyone else about how powerful he is."

Generally bullies go after kids they think they can control—those who appear to be emotionally or physically weak, seem to be naïve or lack "street smarts" or don't have a lot of friends or social skills. Just about anyone could become a victim, according to Migliaccio, if a bully perceives him or her to be inferior in some way.

Just about anyone could become a bully too. "Bullies come from all social classes, ethnicities and family backgrounds," states Yvonne Vissing, Ph.D., a sociology professor at Salem State College in Salem, Massachusetts, who has done extensive research relating to adolescent bullying.

Most bullies are not the stereotypical Goliath-sized guy who's missing his front teeth, comes from a poor family and is failing all his classes. They're generally students in mainstream academic and social circles, not fringe groups. "A lot of times bullies are popular, attractive, smart kids," Vissing says. Neither gender is exempt. A bully is just as likely to be a girl as a boy.

What all bullies have in common is an aggressive tendency, a lack of self-control and little or no feelings

of empathy toward other people. "Many times bullies come from families where their parents bully them or each other," Vissing says. "They think this kind of behavior is normal because that's all they've ever seen." Other teens fall in with a peer group that uses bullying, and before long they start doing it themselves.

Types of bullying

Sociologists classify bullying into three main types: physical, verbal and relational. Probably the first two on the list are what comes to mind when you think of bullying. Physical bullying is the hitting, kicking, tripping and shoving that younger boys in particular are known for doing. Stealing, hiding and destroying someone's possessions also fall under this category.

Verbal abuse refers to name-calling, taunting, put-downs, threats, racist slurs and sexually-suggestive remarks. Guys and girls of all ages do it.

You may not think of the third type on the list as bullying, but it is. Teens use relational bullying to exclude individuals from social circles. As with verbal abuse, guys and girls of all ages do it. It can include everything from untruthful accusations, malicious rumors and gossip, to excluding someone from your lunch table and influencing others to not talk to or hang out with someone.

Often victims are attacked on many fronts simultaneously. "If you're regularly being beaten up, you're probably experiencing verbal abuse too. If you're being excluded from a social event, you're probably also being bad-mouthed," Migliaccio says. "It can be unrelenting and very, very brutal."

Steps you should take

Bullying is a societal problem that really needs to be addressed by parents, teachers and school administrators. But that doesn't mean there is nothing you can do to help remedy the situation if you are a victim of bullying. Specifically, victims should:

- **Seek help.** Tell your parents, teacher, principal, guidance counselor or other trusted adults what is happening to you. They will be able to help you develop a plan to end the bullying and provide you with the support you need. In most cases it is not possible to end bullying without adult intervention. And even if you were able to stop the bully on your own, chances are he or she would just find someone else to intimidate. Adults need to know who the bullies are so they can be stopped.

Talk to your Father in heaven too. Prayers to God can be a wonderful source of comfort and strength. Romans 8:31 reminds us, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Always remember that God is there to support you.

- **Avoid the bully.** Try to avoid situations where bullying typically happens. If bullying occurs on your walk to or



Don't fight cruel words with more cruel words; harsh responses only stir up more anger (Proverbs 15:1)

from school, take a different route, leave at a different time, or see if your mom can drive you to school or pick you up. If bullying happens in the back hallway as you're coming out of the lunchroom, take the front hallway. If you start to walk into a restroom and realize the bully is in there, use a different restroom. And as an overall safety precaution, it's always wise to avoid areas in your school that are isolated or unsupervised by adults.

- **Use the buddy system.** Make sure you have someone with you when you're at the bus stop, by the lockers, in the hallways, in the cafeteria, on the bus—and wherever else the bully might be hanging out. If you notice the bully coming your direction and none of your friends are in sight, improvise. Start interacting with anyone standing close to you. That may mean walking over to your science partner who's sitting at a table a few feet away from you in the cafeteria and talking with him about the lab project you're working on. "A bully is more likely to leave you alone if you appear to be with friends," says Vissing.
- **Don't show a strong reaction to bullying.** If a bully says or does something that bothers you, don't let him know he's getting to you. That means no sobbing, screaming, arm-crossing or looking down. "Bullies want a big reaction to their intimidation and cruelty," says Vissing. "If you act upset, they are likely to torment you even more." The best thing you can do is to look the bully in the eyes and calmly and firmly tell him to stop, and then walk away. Or you can say nothing and walk away. By ignoring the bully, you're showing you don't care. Eventually, the bully is likely to give up trying to pester you.
- **Never bully back.** Resist the temptation to fight back with physical force (kicking, hitting, pushing, etc.) or with nasty words. The Bible advises, "Refrain

from anger and turn from wrath" (Psalm 37:8) and, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil" (Romans 12:17). Don't give in to anger. If you do, you are bound to do things you will regret later (Proverbs 25:28). Aggressive reactions tend to intensify situations and lead to more violence. The best response is always to walk away, find some friends to hang out with and get your mind on something constructive.

The same principle holds true with relational bullying. If you bad-mouth the girl who just spread nasty lies about you, you'll encourage her to gossip about you even more. Harsh responses only stir up more anger (Proverbs 15:1). The best thing to do would be to talk to the girl in private and tell her how she is hurting you, or go to a teacher and see if she can intervene. But don't fight cruel words with more cruel words.

Bystanders need to get involved too

If you're not the victim of bullying, but a bystander, there is something you can do too. If you see someone being bullied, don't be afraid to step up and tell the bully to stop. Tell the bully that what he or she is doing is wrong.

There may be other students witnessing the bullying episode and they may all be uncomfortable watching what is happening. Yet they don't say anything because they think that if they do, the bully will turn on them next. But, Migliaccio explains, "if just one of you can get the courage to stand up and speak out, others will probably add their support and take a stand too."

When that happens, the bully is probably going to stop because he has lost what he wants, which is power over the group. (Of course, you should never place yourself at risk. If you think the bully is out of control, run and get a teacher or other school official to come help immediately.)

Whether you're the victim or an onlooker, nobody wants to confront a bully. But sooner or later, you may have to. What will you do? If you are the one being picked on, will you seek appropriate help rather than trying to take matters into your own hands? If you see someone else being mocked, even if it is not one of your friends, will you take a stand and be a hero to someone who needs your support?

Think about what you would—and should—do *before* you find yourself face-to-face with a bully. Be ready to do the right thing—and be part of the solution.

Becky Sweat is a freelance writer specializing in health and family topics. She lives in the Dallas, Texas, area with her husband Tom and their two sons.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT...

The Sabbath Day?

Knowing about the sanctity and purpose of the Sabbath is vital because it concerns the basic concepts of time, life and relationships. Let's begin by noting how our Creator established this 24-hour period of time for mankind.

In the beginning of Genesis, where the creation week is described, we learn: "And on the seventh day [Friday evening to Saturday evening] God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Genesis 2:2-3).

In Exodus 20 we see that the Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments that God gave to mankind: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates" (Exodus 20:8-10).

When God explained to ancient Israel—and to all who would follow His ways thereafter—His special days of rest and celebration, the seventh-day Sabbath was at the beginning of the list (Leviticus 23:1, 3). This list has never changed, and God's instruction has never been revoked.

When Jesus came to this earth as a human being, He came to exalt—that is, to magnify, uphold and further explain—the law (which includes His command to keep the Sabbath) and *not* to destroy it (Isaiah 42:21; Matthew 5:17). This is why He observed God's Sabbaths (Luke 4:16), as did the apostles and members of the Church Jesus founded.

Those who observe the biblical seventh-day Sabbath demonstrate their love for Jesus by obeying His commandments (John 14:21).

Keeping the Sabbath

So how does one keep the Sabbath? This is a challenge in a world that doesn't like any constraints placed on a person's freedom to do what he or she wants, whenever he or she wants. God's intent for giving mankind time

that is "holy" is to have a relationship with us.

He wants us to stop the frenetic pace of running to and fro and consider that life has a higher purpose. To keep God's Sabbath holy requires making the effort to rearrange our lives so we can attend a church service where we can participate in worship and Christian fellowship and listen to God's ministers explain His Word—helping us to better understand and remain mindful of His will for our lives (Leviticus 23:3; Hebrews 10:25).

Those who observe the biblical seventh-day Sabbath demonstrate their love for Jesus by obeying His commandments.

Enjoy a day of rest

In addition to the spiritual purpose of the Sabbath, this day is a wonderful day of physical rest. In observing the Sabbath we don't follow our normal routine of going to work, attending secular classes or doing our own pleasure. Taking time to rest and reflect on life and where we are headed can be energizing and help us develop a deeper relationship with God.

God made the Sabbath as a gift of time to help us get to know more about Him. The more we realize about the miracle of life and the interdependence of life forms and how much we need air, water and all that is green and good, the more we come to realize that the Creator God was thinking about us from the very beginning. Take some time to enjoy this day that God designed specifically as a gift for mankind (Mark 2:27).

Since Jesus Christ proclaimed that He is "Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28), we need to follow His instruction to observe the Sabbath. Take the time to enjoy the Sabbath and you will discover a wonderful gift from God!

To learn more, read our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest* at www.ucg.org/booklets.

—Larry Greider

Hold on to Your Christianity Even in College

by Ken Treybig

Preparing for college can be fun. iPod? Check. Clothes? Check. Cell phone? Check. Credit card? Check. Christian worldview support system in place? *What?*

As we head into fall in the northern hemisphere, many students are entering a new school year—in college or university classes or perhaps in their local junior high or high school. If you're one of them and are a Christian, odds are you haven't given much thought to your Christian worldview support system.

You may have carefully planned your class load or electives, but you probably have not considered the need for help in keeping your Christian perspective intact. However, many Western nations are experiencing an increasingly secular worldview, and education often seems to lead that charge. After all, many consider it more erudite to think we human beings can make all the decisions about what is right and wrong without help from anyone.

To help students hold on to their Christian values as they enter the college or university world, I interviewed three college professors who are Christians. I asked them for their advice on helping students remain true to their Christian beliefs when it seems these values are undermined at every turn. Here is the panel and their answers to the questions posed.

Rick Avent, who has a Ph.D. in civil engineering, recently retired from Louisiana State University. He taught at Georgia Tech for six years and Mississippi State for seven years and spent the last 25 years of his career at LSU.

Howard Baker, who has a Ph.D. in business administration, is currently teaching online classes for Argosy University. He taught for 11 years at Ambassador University, four years at the University of Texas at Arlington and seven years at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. In addition, he has taught at Jarvis Christian College and the University of Texas at Tyler for several years.

Randy Urwiller, who has a Ph.D. in English, teaches at Texas College, where he has been for the last eight years. Prior to that, he spent nine years as an instructor at Ambassador University.

Christian Values . . .

What obstacles have you seen that challenge students to remain Christian, and how can those be combated?

Dr. Urwiller: The social scene, which is new to freshmen in college, is a huge pull on students. It's very easy to get pulled into habits and activities that are in conflict with Christianity when young people are out on their own and away from the daily influence of parents and grandparents. Students should very carefully consider the reputation of the educational institution.

You may have carefully planned your class load or electives, but you probably have not considered the need for help in keeping your Christian perspective intact. Here's a discussion by three Christian professors giving their best advice for students.

Dr. Avent: For years I taught a class to sophomores called "Introduction to Engineering" and required them to give "This Is My Life" speeches. Some described getting in with the wrong group right off the bat in school. They got into trouble, flunked out and had then come back years later when they were more serious about life and education. You need to think very seriously about who your friends will be.

Dr. Baker: Seek out others with conservative views. Many are churchgoers; and even if their doctrines are not exactly in line with yours, they can be a good support group. Many students have sought me out and would spend time chatting with me in my office because they felt I had similar moral values. They would seek me out as a mentor and take many of my classes to have their moral values reinforced.

Dr. Avent: I've experienced the same thing over the years. If you can find and relate to a faculty member of high morals and religious values, it makes for a strong mentoring relationship.

Dr. Urwiller: Colleges are starting to build "cohorts" of 20 to 25 students. Often they are randomly selected and assigned the same classes since studies have shown that students who "connect" with others on campus have a higher retention rate in college. Christians should create their own cohorts of other Christians, choosing their friends carefully. I normally sat in the front part of classes where the more serious, hard-working students sat and established some good relationships.

Dr. Baker: Resident life is a growing problem. Many schools have coed housing, which is an obvious conflict with Christian morals. In addition, for some being away from home for the first time opens them up to the pull of over-indulging in alcohol. I would suggest that Christians consider staying at home for the first couple of years and attending a community college (making sure the classes will transfer). You save a lot of money and have a more conserva-

tive environment. If you cannot do that, consider living off campus with a fellow Christian.

Dr. Urwiller: There is also the problem with drugs. College is "the real world" but perhaps even more intense with the desire to experience pleasure. To resist this pull, Christians should be sure they maintain their prayer life. They should focus on their relationships with God, other church members and their family.

Dr. Baker: They should also maintain a social life with

church members—especially if there is a congregation of their church in the area. Don't just attend services. Get involved in the congregation. Find out if there is someone else in your church going to your college.

Dr. Avent: I would also encourage students to focus more on what they want to study before they leave for college. Most today are woefully unprepared in knowing what they really want to study and switch majors, quickly losing time and money.

What about getting off for special religious days? What advice do you have for students who keep the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) and the Holy Days of both the Old and New Testaments?

Dr. Baker: Our son Greg went to the University of Notre Dame and was apparently the only Sabbath-keeper there at the time. So it can be done. Be wise and study the school's class schedule. Do they offer alternatives to Saturday classes? If you keep the biblical Holy Days, check to see if more of them are on M-W-F or on T-TR in the fall and plan your fall classes accordingly.

Dr. Avent: The best advice I can give if you want to get off for the fall feasts of the Bible is to do all you can to be seen as a serious student. Don't wait until two days before the Feast. Start preparing and establishing yourself as a serious student early.

Dr. Urwiller: After what we've said it may sound a bit scary, but college can be a lot of fun as well as educational. But you must be aware of what's around you and work to maintain your moral footing. After a year and a half you get to study what you really like. If you're the first in your family to go to college, talk to others in your congregation who have gone to college. That can help remove some worry and doubt.

Ken Treybig is the director of United Youth Camp Carter and pastor of United Church of God congregations in Big Sandy and Texarkana, Texas.

Answers for Genesis

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e continue with general questions about the book of Genesis. Here are the answers as we best understand them in light of the Bible.

• **A young man recently asked, “The bones or fragments of bones like the skull cap of what is called a caveman have, from what I have found, been [dated as being from] a long time ago—some bones being from 80,000 years ago. The question is, if men were created 6,000 years ago, how could these bones exist?”**

We need to understand that paleontological findings are typically overlaid with hypotheses (educated guesses) based on the theory of evolution, which casts considerable doubt on their value. Man’s origin as recorded in the Bible does indeed date to about 6,000 years ago. So how do we reconcile this with the fossil evidence?

We need to understand that paleontological findings are typically overlaid with hypotheses based on the theory of evolution, which casts considerable doubt on their value.

One of the first things to consider regarding these finds is the way they are dated. Radiometric dating methods can give results that vary widely for the same fossil (see, for example, Marvin Lubenow’s book *Bones of Contention*), and a number of factors—including the worldwide flood that occurred during the life of Noah—may skew the results.

Thus, it is possible that some of these human-like bones may actually be those of human beings who lived prior to the worldwide flood described in Genesis 6 to 9—making them only 4,500 to 6,000 years old. Scripture reveals that people then lived for hundreds of years, which could account for the fossils’ thick skulls and bone structure.

Even if these bones are of manlike creatures that

existed *prior* to 6,000 years ago, we must remember that the Bible records the history of physical life only as far back as the renewal of the earth in preparation for the creation of Adam and Eve. It does not speak of creatures that lived on the earth before that time. Without divine revelation, and with so many past geologic upheavals of the earth, there’s no way of knowing for sure what these creatures were, what they actually looked like, when they existed or what purpose they served.

But the Bible is clear. Twice in Scripture, Adam is called “the first man” (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47). Clearly, Adam and Eve were the first human beings God made “in His own image” (Genesis 1:27).

Their descendants have a spiritual component, called “the spirit” in Ecclesiastes 12:7 or “the spirit of the man” in 1 Corinthians 2:11. The joining of this spirit with the Holy Spirit of God is what

makes conversion possible (Romans 8:16). This would set human beings apart from any supposed prehistoric man (or manlike ape)—if there was such a thing.

The United Church of God (which sponsors *Vertical Thought*) deals further with these subjects in its booklet *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?* You can read it online or request a free printed copy at www.ucg.org/booklets.

• **On the fourth day of creation week, the Bible says God “made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also” (Genesis 1:16). How can that be when He created light on the first day, and also separated day from night (Genesis 1:3-5)?**

First, it is helpful to know that there is a difference between the original Hebrew terms translated *create* and *made* in Genesis 1. Where verse 1 says,

from Genesis

Part 2

Understanding how God made things in the beginning can help us understand things now.

by Mario Seiglie

“In the beginning God *created* the heavens and the earth,” the term for “create” is *bara*, which “is only applied to a divine creation, the production of that which had *no existence before*” (*Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament*, emphasis added throughout).

Thus, when God created the heavens and the earth, the “heavens” included the sun, moon, planets and stars. This is why there was light, day and night on the earth *on the first day*.

However, the Hebrew word translated “made” in verse 16, *asah*, generally means to make or reconstitute something *that already exists*. So, instead of God creating the sun, moon, planets and stars on the fourth day, it is more accurate to say He fixed these objects in their places and made them “divide the day from the night” and set them “for signs and seasons, and for days and years” (verse 14).

As *The Expositor’s Bible*

Commentary explains: “In other words, unlike the syntax of verse 6, in verse 14, God’s command assumes that the lights *were already in the expanse* and that in response to his command they were given a *purpose*, ‘to separate the day from the night’ and ‘to mark seasons and days and years.’”

Therefore, the emphasis in Genesis 1:14-16 is not about creating *something from nothing*, but about establishing the *purposes* for these great lights in the heavens. In particular, it was to place all these objects in their proper orbits, thus setting the astronomical standards for the calendar and being able to measure the days, months and years.

• **What is meant by giving mankind “dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth” (Genesis 1:26)? Does this give man the right to exploit the earth?**

No, God did not give His beautiful earth to mankind so people could destroy it.

In fact, He gave Adam precise instructions on how to take care of the earth: “Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to *tend and keep it*” (Genesis 2:15). He did not place him there to carelessly neglect it, but instead to enhance and take care of it. The entire earth was, by extension, also to be properly maintained and its ecology preserved.

As some Bible scholars explain: “The gift of ‘dominion’ over nature was not intended to be a license to use or abuse selfishly the created order in any way men and women saw fit. In no sense

“The gift of ‘dominion’ over nature was not intended to be a license to use or abuse selfishly the created order in any way men and women saw fit. In no sense were humans to be bullies and laws to themselves.”

were humans to be bullies and laws to themselves; Adam and Eve were to be responsible to God and accountable for all the ways in which they did or did not cultivate the natural world about them” (*Hard Sayings of the Bible*, 1996, p. 90).

Unfortunately, man has not been a good “keeper” or steward of the earth God created for him. Just as the prodigal son squandered his father’s goods (Luke 15:13), so has most of humankind mismanaged the earth. Let’s not blame God for it, but place the blame squarely where it belongs—on man and on Satan, who has influenced and deceived him (Revelation 12:9). Thankfully, God will yet set things right.

Mario Seiglie is a father and pastor of United Church of God congregations in Garden Grove, California, and Honolulu, Hawaii.

Greetings! From

by Ken Treybig

Teenagers attending the United Church of God congregation in Freeport recently provided insight into what it's like to be a teen living on Grand Bahama Island in the nation of the Bahamas. Ariel, Ashley, Daniel, Destiny, Gabriel, Hubert and Kevara range in age from 12 to 17. Here are their answers to questions posed by *Vertical Thought*.

★ What would you like people in other countries to know about your nation?

Daniel: "Our nation is made up of a lot of islands. It is a very relaxing place where tourism is the number one industry. We used to be a British territory and became independent in 1973."

Destiny: "The Bahamas is a very peaceful nation and most of our people are very religious. I'd like for everyone to know that we have United Church of God congregations in both Freeport and Nassau."

Ariel: "Those of us in the Church are scattered on different islands, so it makes it hard for us to stay in touch. One of the ways we do stay in contact with each other is through the Internet."

The other teens added that the Bahamas have very friendly people, great beaches and a culture that likes to eat.

★ What are the biggest challenges for United Church of God teens?

Daniel: "I think the number one problem is peer pressure. There is a lot of premarital sex, teenage pregnancy, smoking, etc., going on; and you have to know right from wrong to not go astray."

Kevara: "Not giving in to temptation is a challenge."

Ariel: "There are pressures from others who don't know God's way to go out on Friday nights [the beginning of the weekly Sabbath]."

Destiny: "It seems to me that our biggest challenge is probably the Sabbath. And it is also the Holy Days. Of course, most people also don't understand why we don't eat pork."

Ashley: "Most of my challenges involve keeping the Sabbath holy. Parties and activities are usually held on Saturdays."

Kevara: "For me it is peer pressure to do bad things."



Grand Bahama Island!

Hubert: “The Sabbath is hard for me to keep because I like to play sports—especially baseball and tennis—and these activities take place on the Sabbath.”

Daniel: “I go to a Seventh-day Adventist school, so I don’t face as many problems there as youth do who go to government schools. The main thing I face is not celebrating Christmas.”

★ Is it difficult for you to keep the seventh-day Sabbath?

Destiny: “Earlier it was confusing for me, but now that I know what the Bible says, I’m able to deal with it. Many of my friends have parties on the Sabbath, but I tell them I can’t come.”

Gabriel: “It’s hard for me to keep the Sabbath because my favorite TV programs are on the Sabbath.”

Ashley: Sometimes it is difficult because of all the fun things happening. But when I pray about it, God gives me strength.”

Daniel: Keeping the Sabbath isn’t that hard since my parents take me to church.”

Ariel: “It isn’t hard for me to keep the Sabbath because my family and church give me a lot of support.”

Kevara: “It used to be difficult for me, but I’ve gotten used to it. I wanted to do sports on the Sabbath, but my parents wouldn’t allow me. Now I’ve accepted this.”

★ Are you excused from school to observe the Feast of Tabernacles?

Destiny: “As a senior I’m only allowed to be absent 10 days from school, and my time off for the Feast counted as eight days. So far, it doesn’t look like this will be a problem.”

Daniel: “My parents have to write a letter to the school officials and then I can get advance assignments. This way I can attend the Feast without any difficulty.”

Ashley: “My mom also writes a note asking my teachers to give me my homework in advance, and so far it hasn’t been a problem.”

Ariel: “My school is very understanding because many members of our family have been taking off for the Church festivals.”

Kevara: “My parents send a letter to the principal of the school and we are excused.”

Gabriel: “My teachers let me make up work when I miss school for the Feast of Tabernacles, so it works out.”

★ Where have you most enjoyed observing the Feast of Tabernacles?

Daniel: “Our family used to go to Jamaica quite often, but now we have our own Feast site at Freeport on the island of Grand Bahama in the Bahamas. I like keeping the Feast here.”

Ariel: “I also like keeping it best here at Freeport. It is fun hosting it.”

Destiny: “Jamaica has been my favorite place. I’ve also enjoyed Jekyll Island, Georgia, because of the shopping.”

Ashley: “Jekyll Island is my favorite place because of all the activities.”

Hubert: “I enjoyed keeping the Feast at Jamaica because it is an all-inclusive site—meaning you can eat all the food you want and play a lot of games.”

★ Have you had any opportunities to show others God’s way of life?

Ariel: “In talking with a friend who was doing a report on atheism, I showed

him a copy of *Vertical Thought* that addressed that subject. In the process he learned about our Church. I also show my friends in the Bible why I keep the Holy Days.”

Destiny: “When I go to the Holy Days, I get to explain why I keep these days.”

Daniel: “At school I try to be friends with everyone and do the right thing. I try to let others see God in me.”

Ariel: “I try to forgive people who have hurt me.”

★ How has *Vertical Thought* (VT) helped you grow spiritually?

Destiny: “VT uses language that I can more easily understand. A lot of questions I have are answered in the magazine.”

Ashley: “The magazine addresses questions and problems I face.”

Ariel: “The interviews with other teens let me know that there are others facing the same problems. It helps my faith to be stronger.”

Daniel: “I find it is very informative. There are a lot of things in it that I hadn’t thought about. I can understand it better than a sermon that is intended for adults. I find things in it that I can apply to my own life. It makes God seem friendly and it encourages me to study my Bible.”

Gabriel: “VT helps me a lot. I’ve been praying about overcoming anger and God is helping me.”

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



Flip-Flops Flop

The thwack-thwack-thwack of a flip-flop clad walker is a familiar sound in the summer months, but a recent study has found some pretty painful flaws in the form of the familiar flip-flop.

Researchers at Auburn University in Alabama studied 39 college-aged men and women who wore flip-flops and athletic shoes. They found that flip-flops fail to absorb shock, resulting in aches and pain in other parts of the body as the force of impact was absorbed by joints instead of shoes.

Flip-flop wearers also take shorter strides, contributing to joint stress and fatigue from the increase in steps needed to cover distance (Barbara Kantrowitz and Pat Wingert, "Flip-Flop Flaws," *Newsweek*, June 10, 2008).

Foot specialists often see an increase in patients toward the end of summer complaining of injuries related to flip-flops. Depending on the country of origin, they can often contain chemicals that result in rashes on the feet.

Not only are flip-flops nonsupportive, but if worn during sports activities, they can result in sprains and twists (Jennifer Gish, "Flip-Flops Put Health of Users on Poor Footing," *New York Times News Service*, June 21, 2008).

40%

Increase in the risk of developing mental disorders from using marijuana.

Associated Press, May 9, 2008

>In the News<

Compiled by Amanda Stiver

"Teens report that they most often write by hand for both out of school writing and school writing" because it's easier than taking the time to start up a computer (Peter Hildebrandt, "Pew Study Examines E-Communication's Impact on Teens' Writing," *EContent-mag.com*, May 16, 2008).



Don't Dial and Drive

The state of California has enacted legislation that will ban the use of handheld mobile phones while driving—a move that follows the lead of the states of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Washington, as well as Washington, D.C. Mobile phones have been implicated in 2.8 percent of crashes, a number believed to be four times too low according to statistics from Canada and Australia. About 80 percent of crashes, according to



a study for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, involved some form of distraction within three seconds of the crash, and the most frequent distraction was a mobile phone.

Driving is an intense multitasking activity, and adding the further distraction of a cell phone conversation only serves to increase the potential for danger. Researchers at the University of Utah found that "inattentive blindness" occurs when drivers are talking on a phone, hands-free or not. Drivers become so distracted that they fail to see objects on the road ("Driving Under the Influence," *Economist.com*, June 27, 2008).

Porcine Superbugs

The detection of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in pork is causing scientists concern that these dangerous bacteria may be passed along to those who eat pork or work with pigs.



In 7.1 percent of 113 pigs tested, researchers from the University of Minnesota found antibiotic-resistant superbugs. Doctors at the

University of Iowa found the same strains of bacteria in 147 of 299 pigs tested. Ontario Veterinary College researchers likewise found similar bacteria in 10 percent of 212 samples of ground pork and pork chops from four Canadian provinces.

Several cases of human beings infected with these same bacteria in Scotland and the Netherlands give reason to think that cross-contamination leading to the human population might be possible (Thomas Burton, "Bacteria in Pork Showing Resistance to Antibiotics," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 16, 2008). This could become a definite concern for government health agencies in light of the international trade of meats and other foods.

Thankfully, this possible outbreak should pose no problem to those who follow the biblical guidelines that identify clean and unclean meats. Pork is listed as an unclean meat and is therefore not meant for human food. For more information, please request or download *What Does the Bible Teach About Clean and Unclean Meats?* at www.ucg.org/booklets.

Photos: iStockphoto

Look Before You Leap Into a New Job

When approaching a career change, experts suggest becoming well informed about any potential job, particularly if it is offered by a close friend or associate and the job description is vague in nature. Trying to do a fair day's work and get good results is very difficult if you can't identify how much authority you have in a new setting or what kind of compensation you are expecting.

Likewise, don't take a new job offer just because it promises a lot of money or a position of prestige (Jack and Suzy Welch, "Before You Go Job-Hopping ...," *BusinessWeek*, May 1, 2008).

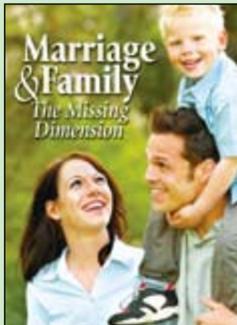
Fitting into a job that you like and that likes you has the potential for greater happiness than a job that looks good on the outside only to be unexpectedly unpleasant once you are on the inside.

Antipromiscuity Trend

On college campuses, where "hooking up" for random sexual encounters has been one of the hallmarks of university life for decades, a new trend has emerged against promiscuous sex. Virginité clubs, such as True Love Revolution at Harvard and Anscombe Society at Princeton, support sexual abstinence before marriage for philosophical reasons. They reject recreational sex because it is harmful to society and to personal health and happiness ("Rise of the Rebel Virgins," *Christianity Today*, July 1, 2008).

While this is a promising cultural trend, it is still important to remember that the main reason for refraining from sexual activity before marriage is because God says to refrain in His law. Sex is an innate part of the marriage relationship between one man and one woman for life. Anything else is outside proper context.

For more information on this subject, request or download the free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* at www.ucg.org/booklets.



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The Dangers of Shower Curtains

Toxic chemicals emitted by vinyl shower curtains have been linked to serious health problems, such as damage to the liver and the central nervous, respiratory and reproductive systems. The vinyl material releases high quantities of phthalates and organotins and other chemicals that produce dangerous effects when absorbed by the human body.



Recent tests found that new polyvinyl chloride shower curtains can release as many as 108 volatile organic compounds into the air, resulting in a distinct smell, and often causing headaches, nausea and other health problems. Researchers fear that heat and humidity during shower use can only increase the

concentrations of chemicals released (Tami Abdollah, "That 'New Shower Curtain Smell' Gives Off Toxic Chemicals, Study Says," *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 2008).

Teen Writing and Technology

An April 2008 study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project and the National Commission on Writing finds that 60 percent of teens don't view instant messaging, text messaging and other social writing as real writing. Instead, they view it merely as simple communication, like a short chat.

The study found that 64 percent of teens have accidentally used text

shortcuts like "LOL" in school writing. Only 11 percent of teens think that e-communication has harmed their writing abilities, while 27 percent of parents feel it has done damage (Peter Hildebrandt, "Pew Study Examines E-Communication's Impact on Teens' Writing," *EContentmag.com*, May 16, 2008).

Maintaining knowledge of traditional formal writing is a vital skill for students as they make their way through the shifting trends and protocols of technology.



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