


Megiddo Message

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 2003



*How can I say "Thanks"
for all the things You have
done for me?*

HAZARD! TICK SINS

If you have ever lived in tick-infested country, you know what a threat they are, especially the tiny deer tick, which can transmit Lyme disease by its bite. Only about the size of the period at the end of this sentence, it attaches itself to your skin and burrows in. So small, it can go totally unnoticed until the first symptoms of Lyme disease are noticed, sometimes years later. This was my own experience.

Fortunately, I developed a rash in the early stages and received treatment. Left untreated, I might have developed disabling neurological disorders, arthritis or heart disease from this tiny invader. Isn't there a striking parallel here to the effects of the little sins we so easily overlook, yet which can be so deadly?

What was the attitude of the Apostle Paul toward "tick-sins"? Did he just say casually, "It's all right to have a few"? Or did he take the attitude, "Who will notice, they are so tiny"? Or did he say in a self-vindicating tone, "I'd never get infected with a 'tick-sin'"? None of the above. Not even a thought of the above! Paul took sin—any sin, all sin—very seriously. He even included himself, an astute and committed apostle called by Jesus Himself, among those who should take warning. When he drew a lesson from the Israelites in the wilderness who fell because of their flagrant disobedience and rebellion, did he say, "You better watch out—it could happen to you"? No, hear his conclusion (1 Cor. 10:11 NIV): *"These things happened to them as examples, and they were written down as warnings for us"*—what did you say, Brother Paul? *"They are written down as warnings for us,"*—Paul himself and everyone who would come after him. No one exempt. All of us can take the warning. All of us are in danger.

When I first noticed the rash from Lyme disease, I called the health department. The nurse asked me if I had a "bulls-eye" rash. To be sure, I described exactly what the rash looked like. Her immediate response was not casual, but carried a definite tone of urgency, "Get

to your doctor immediately!" She made me feel as if I may already be too late! What should our attitude be toward these "little sins"? A realistic sense of danger is a sign of maturity; we want to take immediate action!

Do we see someone else needing help? Of course we want to help them, but again Brother Paul has a word of caution. No one is exempt. *"If one of you is caught doing something wrong, those of you who are spiritual should set that person right in a spirit of gentleness; and watch yourselves that you are not put to the test in the same way"* (Gal. 6:1 NJB). Yes, *"watch yourselves"*—the same tick could bite you!

And what about the bigger, premeditated sins? Do we think ourselves above deliberate, bald-faced sins? Don't go there, says Paul. Overconfidence has ruined more than one. Every sin starts with a single thought. None of us is beyond the need for caution. Anyone can slip. Anyone can fall.

"If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Cor. 10:12 NIV).

Do you say, "I know my limits. I know what is right for me. I know how to stop before I step over the line. Just a little isn't going to hurt anything"?

Listen to this logic. Just a little cyanide poison in my food won't hurt anything? Just a little cocaine in my body won't make any difference? Just a little Lyme disease bacteria (*Borrelia burgdoferi*) won't hurt me? No need to worry about a little tick bite that I don't even feel...? This is NOT the way we think when our physical health and welfare is at stake! How much more our *spiritual* health and welfare!

Look at David. He only wanted to know how much the nation had grown under his leadership. But it was a sin with serious consequences.

Look at Uzzah. He only wanted to make sure the ark was safe—so he put his hand on it. Such a small infraction, but it was not small to God. Uzzah died for it.

We may not have committed what we call a great sin, but just read the New Testament rosters of sins deserving death, and notice that the little sins—the tick-sins—are listed right along with the cobra sins! Listen as Paul lists these *"acts of the sinful nature"* (Gal. 5:19–21 NIV). He starts out with *"sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft,"* then continues with the rest: *"hatred, discord, jealousy,... selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy."* These last sins don't seem so bad, but any or all such, says Paul, will bar us from entering the Kingdom of God. They are all deadly in God's eyes: *"The man who keeps the whole Law but for a single exception is none the less a Law-breaker"* (Jas. 2:10 Phillips), because any sin will keep us from life!

Yes, small sins, like the tiny tick, can make big trouble. Keep watch for those deadly "tick sins," and get rid of them before they have a chance to dig in.

One day, it will be too late, too late! ♦



*Small sins,
like the tiny
tick, can make
big trouble.*

Keep Yourself Pure

As Paul writes to his son-in-the-faith Timothy about the duties and obligations of the Christian minister, he suddenly interjects this very direct, personal and fatherly word: *"Keep yourself pure"* (1 Tim. 5:22). He does not tell Timothy that he must live in a pure world, or a pure city. He does not even hold him responsible for keeping the members of his Church pure, or his family, but only himself: *"Keep yourself pure."*

It was as if he had said, Timothy, there are contaminants all around you; it is your job to keep them out of your mind and heart. It won't be easy, but you must do it. And it is something that only you can do. *"Keep yourself pure."*

The command is to Timothy and to all who like him aspire to membership in God's family of pure and holy ones. If we hope someday to be of that family, we must be taking on the family likeness now by becoming morally like them. *"Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself just as He [Christ] is pure"* (1 John 3:3).

Purity by God's Standards

What is purity by God's standards? Purity refers to a moral condition of the mind and heart that is not defiled or polluted by anything low, vulgar or filthy. What, according to the Bible, contaminates or pollutes? The *"lust of the flesh,"* *"lust of the eyes,"* and *"pride of life,"* which live in the impure heart.

Purity is the core of the law of Christ. The very thought of it is lifting. The *"pure in heart"* will *"see God."* Jesus said it: *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"* (Matt. 5:8).

Purity describes the mind of Christ, He who was *"holy, harmless, undefiled"* (Heb. 7:26). One basic requirement of Christ's followers, according to the Apostle Paul, is the ability to think as Christ thought. *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 2:5). More specifically Paul defined this as *"whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure...think about such things"* (Phil. 4:8 NIV). Peter gave the identical advice when he wrote: *"Since Christ, then, has suffered physically, you also must arm yourselves with the same attitude"* (1 Pet. 4:1 Berkeley)—the same attitudes, the same concerns, the same spotless purity.

God is a God of purity, uprightness, holiness. In fact, purity and righteousness are inseparable. The very first property of *"the wisdom from above"* is that it is *"pure"* (James 3:17). The believer is said to be *"washed in pure water"* (Heb. 10:22), the water of life, which is *"pure, clear as crystal"* (Rev. 22:1), living water that will spring up into everlasting life (John 4:14-15).

But when so much around us and within us is impure, is it really possible for us to become pure? Can we keep pure and spotless in the midst of what Jesus called a *"crooked and perverse"* world? (Phil. 2:15).

The answer must be *"yes,"* because God would not ask what we could not do, and God has commanded us to be pure. Our question then becomes: How?

All of us are by nature *"children of wrath, even as others"* (Eph. 2:3). Paul was

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*What we allow
ourselves to think
about is extremely
important.*

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We Thank You, Lord

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MEGIDDO MEANS...

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon); "a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

WE BELIEVE...

- ♦ in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- ♦ in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ♦ in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to

heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

- ♦ in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ♦ in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ♦ in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ♦ in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

- ♦ in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

THE HERALD AND THE KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse*" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

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not saying that we are born with any inherited guilt. No, we are born on the animal level, equipped with the animal instincts necessary for survival. And those instincts mean a disposition strongly inclined to disobedience. *"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked"* (Jer. 17:9 NLT)—hardly a description of purity. Paul wrote that *"the first man"*—to which we all belong—is *"of the earth, earthy"* (1 Cor. 15:47). Jesus affirmed this when He pinpointed the source of evil as the human heart: *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts..."* and all the host of other evils that tempt us (Mark 7:21–23). Whether the temptation be fornication or foolishness, promiscuity or pride, selfishness or slander or fleshly lust, we need never wonder where the temptation came from—it is right within us.

At the same time God has equipped us with the qualities we need to rise above the animal level. He has given us will power and the ability to reason and learn from our experience and the experiences of others.

Our second problem in the struggle for purity is our environment, a world on the moral level of ancient Sodom, whose sights and sounds are farthest from pure, where everything humanly corruptible has been corrupted. Everywhere we turn, it seems, there is no place clean. The entertainment world, the political world, the educational system, the media, the social world, the marketplace—all show the effects of contamination.

Watch what you think about!

Since purity is a condition of the mind or heart, what we allow ourselves to think about is extremely important.

The human brain, we are told, is a most remarkable computer, with almost infinite capacity—and one notable difference. The computer's memory can be instantly erased; the human mind retains everything that impresses it, to a greater or lesser degree. Those who have studied the brain tell us that our mind keeps a permanent file of whatever it assimilates.

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*We become
what we think
about.*

Guard the Gates

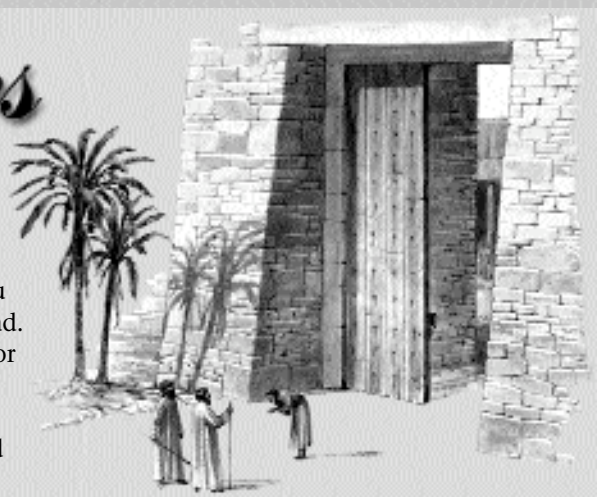
In ancient times, strong cities were protected by strong walls. But the walls could not be solid, because people had to come and go. So they built gates, which became the most vulnerable part of the wall. Gates had to be carefully guarded around the clock if the inhabitants of the city were to be safe. The wall was no stronger than its gate.

Our minds also have gates. Two of the most vulnerable are the *eye gate* and the *ear gate*. The eye gate includes what we read or see; the ear gate, what we hear. By carefully guarding these two gates we shall find that we have a new measure of control over our minds.

To guard the eye gate we must make a conscious effort to limit what we see. *"The eyes of a fool"*—not of the serious Christian—*"are in the ends of the earth"* (Prov. 17:24).

Settle it in your mind that you do not have to see or look at everything that is around you; nor do you have to read everything within reach. *Plan* what you will look at; *ponder* what you will read. Ask yourself: Is this the best food for my mind? Are these impressions I will want to keep to build up my faith and fortify my inner life and character before God?

Said Jesus, *"The eye is the lamp of the body"* (Matt. 6:22 NIV). In other words, the eye is a gate to the mind. To the extent that we can limit what we see, we can control what enters our mind; for everything that reaches our mind will influence our thought-life, whether we want it to or not. And every impure image we carelessly let in programs our mind for more impurity.



The same is true of the ear gate. Whenever possible we should avoid hearing anything that is deadening to our spiritual effort. If a conversation is not edifying, don't be part of it. If possible, get away from it. If you cannot, at least you can make a conscious effort to "close the gate" by thinking other—higher—thoughts. ♦

*Plan what you
will look at; ponder
what you will read.
Ask yourself: Is this
the best food for
my mind?*

Doesn't this add meaning to Paul's words to Timothy, "*Keep yourself pure*"? In other words, *take definite steps to keep contaminating thoughts out of your mind*. Far easier is it to *keep* pure than to remove impressions that have been made.

It also reinforces the point penned by Solomon, the man who knew but did not do: "*Guard your heart more than any treasure*" (Prov. 4:23 NEB).

We cannot be too careful what we allow into our minds.

That means, then, that as a dedicated follower of Christ I must guard my mind continually, for I do not want my mind to be an open manhole collecting anything that falls into it. A closed mind may seem like a narrow thing, but a wide open mind is even more dangerous! This was what the apostle Peter had in mind when he wrote: "*Prepare your minds for action*" (1 Pet. 1:13). The picture is of one preparing for battle. As believers we are to take charge of our thought-life with a firm hand, bringing it under strict obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

What practical, everyday steps can we take to *keep* our hearts? How do we control the impressions that enter our minds?

But...

But we must live and work and travel and shop in this modern Sodom, and it is inevitable that in spite of all our good effort there will be times when our eyes or ears capture what we wish they had not. What do we do then? What do we do with the images and the thoughts that linger?

There is an answer. The process is much the same as we would apply in cleansing poison from an open wound. Just because there is no way to physically remove every dram of poison or every infectious germ we do not disregard it saying that nothing can be done. On the contrary, we do the very best that we can. We flood it with water, or some other pure substance, to dilute the effect of the poison.

Just so with our minds. We cannot pluck out every evil, much as we would like to. But we can consciously apply our minds to that which is good, and in this way "dilute" the poison.

This was the method recommended—and used—by the apostle Paul:

people" (Deut. 7:6), and Jesus repeated it when He said, "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*" (Matt. 5:48). If we put that into literal everyday terms it is something like saying, Put on your whitest clothes, go into a coal mine, and stay clean. It seems like an impossible command because we are surrounded on every side by the soot of this world. But God is concerned about purity, and He wants us to be concerned about it.

Naturally we pick up what is around us. But buildings, trees, plants, mountains, water and soil do not contaminate. People are the big problem. So the solution is: Get away from the people and stay pure? We have one very large problem here: if we are going to get away from people, we have to get away from ourselves!

Jesus said that the human heart is the source of impurity. Jesus said, "*From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts*" and the whole string

Pure—Inside Out

Is this a command from the Lord? It is!

"Blessed are the pure in heart" (Matt. 5:8)

What does it mean?

Purity is a term foreign to our modern culture but very close to Scripture.

The Lord called His people to be "*a holy*

"Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14 NIV). Paul took two actions simultaneously: *"Forgetting...and straining toward."* We must forget the past and at the same time *reach forward*. As long as we allow our minds to dwell on what tempts, bothers or tries us, the impression only grows stronger. If we flood our minds with all that is true, pure, good, wholesome, holy and upright (Phil. 4:8), the unwanted impressions will become less and less, until we scarcely notice them at all.

There may be no simple way to erase a memory, but it can be crowded out. Just try to recite the twenty-third Psalm and count to 20 at the same time. It was the simple formula of our former pastor Maud Hembree: to *"replace every evil thought with a good thought."* In this way the good can literally push out the unwanted.

Our minds are naturally open to all kinds of vagrants. Trivia, useless incidents, petty events, or thoughts of foolishness, bitterness, slander, malice, jealousy—they will come. But we must crowd them out.

Sometimes our unwanted thoughts may be of ourselves, of pride, selfishness, or personal ambition. They may be self-promoting thoughts, for self and not for God. Whatever their nature, they will settle down and stay unless we *crowd* them out. They will never leave of their own accord!

Our best defense, then, is to have our minds preoccupied with carefully chosen thoughts and impressions. When we do this, we are in command of our minds, and unwanted images will scarcely even register on our mental screen.

Why practice this? Because we become what we think about. *"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he"* (Prov. 23:7).

To the degree that we fix our minds on right things, we pull ourselves upward, above ourselves, above the low feelings and desires.

Sow a thought, reap an action.

Sow an action, reap a habit.

Sow a habit, reap a character.

Sow a character, reap a destiny.

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of impurities (Mark 7:21-23). And Jeremiah wrote, *"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked"* (Jer. 17:9).

The poet who wrote, *"trailing clouds of glory do we come"* had little idea of the facts. He pictured each of us coming into a world a perfect, pure baby where we get more and more contaminated. This is not what the Bible tells us. Jesus said, *"from within"* comes the impurity, from within our own minds. The impurity is something we have to attack from the inside.

How can we make our lives pure? One very great help is to avoid anything impure as much as possible. It is much easier to keep something out of our minds than to get rid of it once it is in.

When I hear a word of profanity, it seems to ring in my ears. I have to think about something else to get rid of it. For that reason, I try to avoid people who use it, and places where it may be used as much as possible. Images are even more penetrating than words. Just glance at a sensual picture, and the image becomes framed in your mind, and it is very hard to remove it. Turn on the television, and you can bring the problem right into your living room.

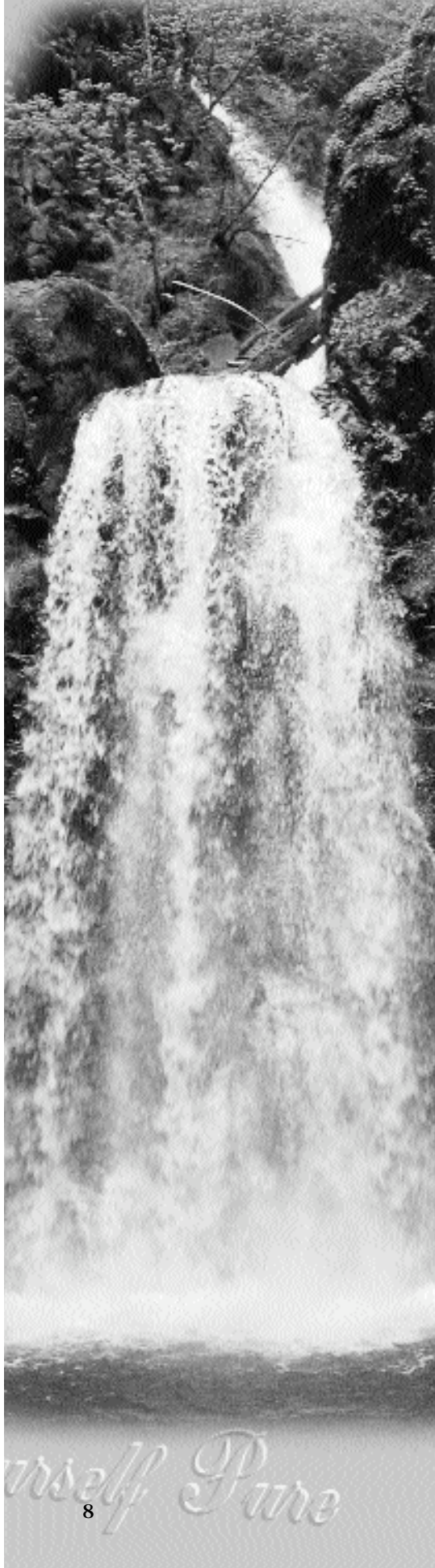
Jesus, it is said, was *"holy, harmless, undefiled"* (Heb. 7:26). He was in the same contaminated world we are, yet He was pure and clean. His day may not have had all the contamina-

tion we have today, but it had most of it.

Yet Jesus was able to live above His environment. Paul was able to also. And He said, *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 2:5). The best step we can take toward purity is to create the right habits in our own lives—habits that will help us be more like Christ. Our habits will either hinder or help us.

In the middle ages, the monks and some of the people that were trying to keep clear of the world's impurity went into monasteries, in the desert. Or they did bizarre things to try to get away from uncleanness and impurity. But chronicles of the time reveal the other side of it. Most were still corrupt in heart. They were not pure. It was not a success because being isolated did not change their heart.

When our country sends people into outer space, they surround them with a protective suit to give them a controlled environment. We can do the same with our minds. We don't have control of the outside, but we can control what is in our minds. The Bible puts great emphasis on *thinking* right, *feeling* right, *speaking* right. Whatever is *"pure"* and *"lovely"* and *"gracious,"* these are the things we should be putting into our minds (Phil. 4:8). Then our hearts will become clean and white, even in a world that is impure. ♦



Avoid, Avoid...

The mind cannot—will not—remain empty. Nor can we tell ourselves simply to stop thinking about something undesirable. Suppose someone says, “Don’t think about slimy, writhing, poisonous snakes swimming in the sewers, slithering up your drain pipes, crawling around your sinks.” What are you thinking about? *Snakes, of course.* And the more you might tell yourself not to think about them, the more vivid becomes the picture.

But suppose someone says, “Think about the most beautiful sunset you ever saw, or the most delightful walk you ever took on a warm, moonlit night”—can’t you see it in your mind’s eye?

What is the best patrol we can use to guard the gates of our mind? The Psalmist posted the Word of God as a sentinel at the entrance of his mind, so that any thought entering had to pass scrutiny. *“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you”* (Ps. 119:11 NIV). Whatever vagrant might come visiting, the Word was on duty, fully armed, ready to give battle.

If the Psalmist needed his mind guarded 3000 years ago, what about us in this modern-day Babylon?

Jesus used this same defense with His ever ready *“It is written.”* The Word was constantly there, on duty. Do we wonder that He said, *“Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God”* (Matt. 4:4 NIV).

The Psalmist had yet another type of defense: the armor of praise. *“His praise shall continually be in my mouth”* (Ps. 34:1). Well he knew that his heart could not be praising God and at the same time entertaining any evil thought. We can use the law of God today in the same way, as a grid, a filter composed of our strong convictions and God-centered thoughts. Such a filter will sort out and classify what comes along, and whatever does not meet the standard will not go through. In this way, we will be guarding our heart, keeping it pure.

It is the same process we use in bringing water into our homes. We cannot prevent rust and foreign particles in our pipes, but by installing a filter we can still have fresh, clean water. Just so the Word of God at the forefront of our minds can keep back what is impure, so that it does not enter and contaminate, so that every thought reaching our conscious minds has passed the surveillance of that Word.

What will be the result of this filtered thinking? One of the most noticeable effects will be in our conversation. What we do not think we will not say. Idle talk, or gossip, or trivia will not get through. Instead, we will find ourselves talking about what we have been thinking on—the Word of God, the deep lessons and insights it has for us, our bright prospect of life in the world to come, and all the inspiring pictures that accompany these thoughts.

Let us take heart from the examples left us in the Word of God. If we watch what we read, what we see, and what we think about, and talk about, we can keep focused on that which is useful and constructive, upbuilding and spiritually stimulating, then one day we may finally become pure even as Christ is pure, and be presented spotless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy! ♦

A Hard Look at TV

Does Watching TV Violence Cause Aggressive and Violent Behavior?

American children watch an average of three to four hours of television daily. Television can be a powerful influence in developing value systems and shaping behavior. Unfortunately, much of today's television programming is violent. Hundreds of studies of the effects of TV violence on children and teenagers have found that children may:

- ❖ become "immune" to the horror of violence
- ❖ gradually accept violence as a way to solve problems
- ❖ imitate the violence they observe on television
- ❖ identify with certain characters, victims and/or victimizers

Extensive viewing of television violence by children causes greater aggressiveness. Sometimes, watching a single violent program can increase aggressiveness. Children who view shows in which violence is very realistic, frequently repeated or unpunished, are more likely to imitate what they see....The impact of TV violence may be immediately evident in the child's behavior or may surface years later, and young people can even be affected when the family atmosphere shows no tendency toward violence.

While TV violence is not the only cause of aggressive or violent behavior, it is clearly a significant factor.

Parents can protect children from excessive TV violence in the following ways:

- ❖ pay attention to the programs their children are watching and watch some with them
- ❖ set limits on the amount of time they spend with the television; consider removing the TV set from the child's bedroom
- ❖ point out that although the actor has not actually been hurt or killed, such violence in real life results in pain or death
- ❖ refuse to let the children see shows known to be violent, and change the channel or turn off the TV set when offensive material comes on, with an explanation of what is wrong with the program
- ❖ disapprove of the violent episodes in front of the children, stressing the belief that such behavior is not the best way to resolve a problem

Published by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP).

See <http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/violence.htm>

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) represents over 6900 child and adolescent psychiatrists who are physicians with at least five years of additional training beyond medical school in general (adult) and child and adolescent psychiatry.

The American Psychological Association has concluded that viewing violence on TV or other mass media does promote aggressive behavior, particularly in children.

A Christian View

TV

As the return of our Lord approaches, the right use of our time becomes more and more important. Are we going to tell Jesus we don't have time for His Word, or we don't have time for family devotions, when we have time to spend in front of a TV set or movie screen, letting our minds be polluted by this world? The command is clear: *"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing"* (2 Cor. 6:17). If we choose to open our minds to the world, we should not be surprised when we find ourselves following its patterns.

Mounting evidence links TV viewing to violence

A new scientific report says television can affect violent behavior—even among adults.

[The link between TV viewing and violence] is no longer a point of debate, it is an established fact...six major pediatric, psychiatric, and medical associations have said that the evidence of a link is overwhelming, citing more than 1,000 studies in the past 30 years....

"Clearly, with more exposure [to media violence, children] do become desensitized, they do copy what they see, and their values are shaped by it," says Susan Villani, a Baltimore, Md., psychiatrist who has reviewed the past 10 years of study on the subject....

One study last year found a 25 percent decrease in violence in a San Jose, Calif., grade school where children received classroom lessons in media awareness and were asked to watch only seven hours of TV a week for several months....

TV's Effect On Adult Behavior

Today's study...is the first survey of its scope to provide evidence that violent behavior is associated with television viewing beyond childhood—well into adolescence and adulthood. In addition, it claims a connection even when other factors such as childhood neglect and low family income are taken into account.

"What this study serves to do is remove some of these variables," says Michael Brody of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

Adolescents who watched more than one hour a day of television—regardless of content—were roughly four times more likely to commit aggressive acts toward other people later in their lives than those who watched less than one hour. Of those who watched more than three hours, 28.8 percent were later involved in assaults, robberies, fights, and other aggressive behavior....

The vast majority of studies support a link. Granted, no study can definitively say that TV caused a violent act—it can only infer. But the results of one of the most researched areas in social science are pretty consistent, says professor Craig Anderson of Iowa State University in Ames. "It doesn't matter how you study it, the results are the same," says Mr. Anderson.

Plus, for many, it's simply a matter of common sense. "If television doesn't influence, then why are so many people spending so many billions of dollars to advertise" says Dr. Brody.

By Mark Sappenfield—Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor
FROM: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0329/p01s05-ussc.html>

Watch out! TV, videos, movies

Is most of the material presented on TV, video or movie today a positive influence for good? Can we take pleasure in seeing people killed, or seeing men and women acting immorally? Even aside from the time it wastes, who can feel that viewing violent or immoral or sensual scenes is a positive influence for good? With the aim of attracting viewers, it is designed to stimulate *"the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life."* Very few programs are free of violence, sex appeal, swearing or blasphemy. Lust is even used to sell toothpaste and food products.

Do we want to resist the lure of more and more? The Bible has the answer: *"Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have"* (Heb. 13:5 NLT). Ask yourself, when was the last time you saw something on TV that you would

feel comfortable watching with Jesus at your side all the way through?

TV and movies portray the subjects God hates, and we should hate them also. Consider the words of the Apostle Paul: *"They are fully aware of God's death penalty for those who do these things, yet they go right ahead and do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too"* (Rom. 1:32 NLT).

Can we claim to love God, and at the same time sit and hear God's name blasphemed, as it is constantly heard on TV?

Can we claim to uphold Jesus' standard of morality and decency, and be willing to watch two lovers in a bed of sin?

Can we profess to be thinking on things that are *"true, honest, just, pure, and lovely"* (Phil. 4:8), yet find pleasure in violence portrayed on TV?

The Apostle Paul warned, *"When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God"* (Gal. 5:19–21 NLT). Do we think that the Lord will make an exception on any of these points for us? We know He will not.

Other Scriptures give warnings just as plain. Wrote the Apostle John, *"Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love the world, you show that you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this evil world"* (1 John 2:15–16 NLT). How much of the entertainment on TV, and how many movies are exempt from *"this evil world"*? And what is the destiny of all such? *"This world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever"* (1 John 2:17 NLT).

We need to take the warning of James to heart: *"Get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the message God has planted in your hearts, for it is strong enough to save your souls. And remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to"* (James 1:21–22 NLT).

Senator Hollings' TV violence "safe harbor" legislation

Decades of research and Congressional hearings have concluded one unsailable fact: there is a link between media violence and violent, aggressive and anti-social behavior in children....

The "safe harbor" legislation does not prevent broadcasters from offering violent programming. It simply directs those programs to hours when most children are not watching—the same way the FCC treats "indecent" programming today. Courts have upheld the regulation of indecency, and furthermore, Attorney General Janet Reno and several Constitutional scholars have testified that the "Children's Protection from Violent Programming Act" would be "constitutionally permissible." If children can be constitutionally protected from indecent material, they should also be protected from gratuitous violence.

From: <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ncs/newsarch/2002/Aug02/violent.htm>



TV Violence And Children's Brains—More Reasons For Policy Reform

Over the past 40 years, I have observed, participated in, and reviewed research on TV violence and I must say that I am impressed by the creativity, energy, and concern shown by psychologists and our colleagues in communications, education and mental health. The scope and sophistication of research on this important issue of media violence is, I humbly submit, well-documented in my various reviews of the literature...as well as that of my colleagues....The collected body of research demonstrates that there are three main effects of viewing media violence: aggression, desensitization, and fear....

My own research has moved from experimental studies of aggression and prosocial behavior in relation to viewing (Ahammer & Murray, 1979) and a field study of the effects of the introduction of television in a rural town in the Australian outback (Murray & Kippax, 1978), to mapping children's brains while they watch video violence (Murray, Liotti, Ingmundson, & Fox, 2000). And, it is this latter study of brainmapping that causes the most concern about our collective neglect of serious discussions of policy in relation to media violence....

This foray into brainmapping and children's response to video violence involved eight children (5 boys, 3 girls, ages 8 to 13 years) who viewed televised violent and nonviolent video sequences while brain activations were measured with functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). The video material viewed by these children consisted of six minutes of violence (two, 3-min. clips of boxing from Rocky IV, a "PG" film), six minutes of nonviolence (a 3-min. clip from a National Geographic special on baby animals at play and a 3-min. clip from Ghostwriter, a CTW children's literacy program), and six minutes of control for visual processing (two, 3-min. clips of an "X" on a blue screen).

We anticipated that we would see activation patterns that indicated emotional arousal while viewing the violence, activation of the limbic system and general right hemisphere activations. And, we were not surprised by most of the findings: Both violent and nonviolent viewing activated regions implicated in aspects of visual and auditory processing. However, viewing TV violence selectively activated [specific sections of the brain]....The concern is the fact that these children were storing "entertainment violence" as though it were a significant life event—a dangerous event that, like post-traumatic stress memories, keeps returning as a memory that guides or disrupts current behavior.

Given the accumulating evidence of the harmful effects of video violence, and particularly the suggestion that neurological processing of "entertainment" violence is not different from processing "real" violence, there are clear reasons for serious concern about the ways in which our culture uses violence in films and video.

By John P. Murray, Ph.D, Professor of Developmental Psychology, Kansas State University, from: <http://ibelgique.iffrance.com/sociomedia/johnmurray.htm>

What is a right routine?

What is a right routine that avoids TV and movies? What can we do if we take these corrupt entertainers out of our lives?

If we remove all TV and movies that are for relaxation and entertainment, we will find that we have time for Bible reading, time to interact with our families, time to share uplifting conversation, time to help others, and time for community services. We will find that we have time for personal Bible study and helpful activities that allow us to enjoy the beauty and glory of God's handiwork outdoors. We will have time to visit those who need our encouragement and spiritual support. This is what James advised us to do when he wrote, *"Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us"* (Jas. 1:27 NLT). Note that last phrase: *"refuse to let the world corrupt us."* It will corrupt us unless we make a conscious effort to keep it out of our lives.

How does an average person get involved in Bible Study? Instead of immersing our minds with sinful pictures from the TV, why not spend time with the Word of God, let it dwell in us richly, and think of ways to build one another up, think on what is edifying, what is constructive, what is noble and good?

The more we spend time with the Word of God, the more we absorb ourselves in its values, the less we will think about this world and its diversions, and the less its pictures will appeal to us. In no case can we justify wasting time on thoughts and pictures that are spiritually detrimental. The Apostle Paul said, *"Be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly"* (Eph. 5:15-17 NLT).

Why have TV?

If we have a TV in our home we should ask ourselves why? What is the purpose? It is easy to rationalize that much of it is good, and we are able to overlook what is destructive. But do we want our children seeing the pictures we rate as "harmless"? Are those pictures encouraging them in

moral, upright conduct? If we use TV for entertainment, our children are even more likely to do so. If we plan other constructive diversions that are healthful and spiritually upbuilding, our children will learn also from this, as well as benefiting from the simple fresh air and exercise.

Lot was vexed in *"seeing and hearing"* the ways and conversation of the Sodomites (2 Pet. 2:6-8). Abraham made the safer choice to be away from Sodom. The ways of Sodom were very likely an influence on his family, and contributed to their downfall. By allowing our families to be exposed to TV and movies, we are doing the same. Is it worth the compromise?

The end is coming

The Prophet Isaiah warned about what we allow our ears to hear and our eyes to see if we would be among the God fearing. He asked a question *"Which one of us...can live here in this all consuming fire?"* speaking of the judgments of God. And he answered the question in this way: *"The ones who can live here are those who are honest and fair, who reject making a profit by fraud, who stay far away from bribes, who refuse to listen to those who plot murder, who shut their eyes to all enticements to do wrong."* How does one get the blessing? By shutting his eyes to evil, by *"refusing to listen to"* those who do wrong. *"These are the ones who will dwell on high....Your eyes will see the king in all his splendor, and you will see a land that stretches into the distance....You will see Jerusalem, a city quiet and secure. The Lord will be our Mighty One. He will be like a wide river of protection that no enemy can cross. For the Lord is our judge, our lawgiver, and our king. He will care for us and save us"* (Isa. 33:14-22 NLT).

Our eyes should be as focused as were those of our Master, who was *"willing to die a shameful death on the cross because of the joy He knew would be His afterward."* And now *"He is seated in the place of highest honor beside God's throne in heaven"* (Heb. 12:2 NLT).

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me"

The Bible is very explicit that the God of heaven must be first in our lives. Jesus said, *"Seek ye first*

continued on page 25

Deadly Inspiration?

Teens Say Video Game Inspired Them in Deadly Highway Shooting

Grand Theft Auto, a video game that allows players to "fire" on people and cars in realistic, shoot-'em-up fashion,...propelled manufacturer TAKE 2 interactive to the top of the video game industry. For the middle and high school students who play the game for hours on end, it's a means of escaping the monotony of teenage life.

But for two stepbrothers, 16-year-old William and 14-year-old Joshua Buckner, that escape turned deadly this summer. They told police they were emulating Grand Theft Auto on the night of June 25 when they took shotguns to Interstate 40, near their Newport, Tenn., home, and opened fire on vehicles.

The boys told police they did not mean to hit people, but the results were catastrophic.

"I have eight bullet fragments all in my body," said 19-year-old Kimberly Bede, of Moneta, Va...Aaron Hamel, a 45-year-old registered nurse from Knoxville, Tenn., traveling in a separate car, was killed....

It's not the first time the game Grand Theft Auto has been linked to bouts of real-life violence.

A gang of teenagers in California, charged with plotting carjackings and murder, say their actions were inspired by playing Grand Theft Auto, morning, noon, and night.

In Oakland, Calif., a group of young people who called themselves the "Nut Cases" told police they played violent video games before going out and robbing and killing random victims on the street. They said their favorite was Grand Theft Auto. The five men and one woman are facing charges in dozens of robberies and five killings that took place in 2002 and early 2003.

http://abcnews.go.com/sections/GMA/US/GMA030906Grand_theft_murders.html

Children's viewing linked to TV violence

Both boys and girls who watch a lot of violence on television have a heightened risk of aggressive adult behavior including spouse abuse and criminal offenses, no matter how they act in childhood, a new study says....The analysis argued against the idea that aggressive children seek out TV violence, or that the findings were due to the participants' socioeconomic status or intelligence, or their parents' childrearing practices. —Associated Press

FAITH in Action

Bible Text: Acts 12:25–13:3 NIV

25 When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.

13:1 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.

2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.



Did you know...

Brother Manaen...

...was known as the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch. The title "foster brother" was given to boys who were the same age as royal princes, and who were raised with them at court. Manaen had been such a boy. He had been brought up with Herod—the same Herod who stole Herodias from her husband, and murdered John the Baptist, and mocked Jesus. He is known as Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great.

We can picture Antipas and Manaen as boys going to school together, playing together, studying together, romping together. But then came the great divide. Manaen became a believer, while Herod became a beast. Manaen became a minister of the Gospel, Herod became a murderer. Manaen found hope and joy in service of God; Herod met shame and disgrace in a life of sin.

by RUTH E. SISSON

SET APART FOR GOD

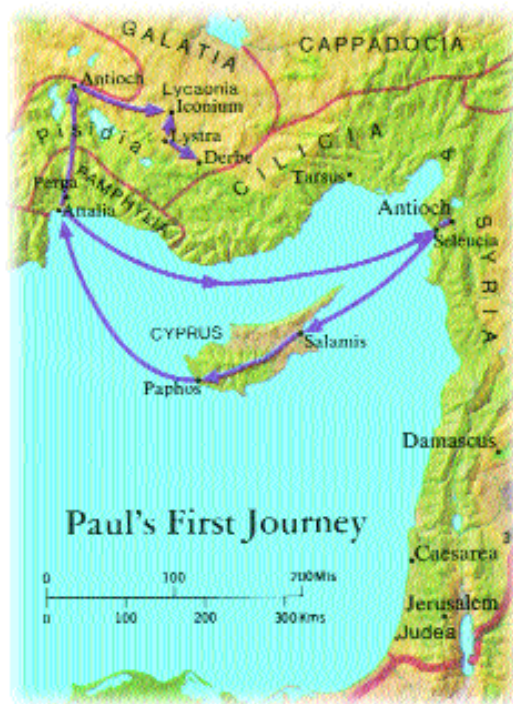


READ ACTS 12:25–13:3

A spirit of helpfulness and hospitality to fellow believers was part of the Gospel of Christ. Jesus Himself said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:40 NIV). When the prophet Agabus in Antioch predicted a famine (Acts 11:27–28), the people of the Church showed this spirit of helpful concern by collecting relief funds. They sent those funds to the elders at Jerusalem by the trusted hands of two deeply committed brothers, Barnabas and Paul (11:28–30). This famine occurred during the reign of Emperor Claudius.

Did the timing of this special mission to Jerusalem coincide with the time of Peter's arrest? We are not told, but if so, Brothers Barnabas and Paul may have been with their brethren in Jerusalem during the arrest and miraculous deliverance of Peter.

When the brothers returned to Antioch, something new was on their minds. They seemed already to know the Lord's plan, that the time was right for a major missionary effort, the greatest ever undertaken. And John Mark was with them—whether as a volunteer or simply a youth looking for adventure, we are not told; but he seems to have been ready to



accompany those whom God called for the mission.

We might call John Mark a missionary intern, which would have been the only way for him to learn at that time. Mark was the son of Mary, a devout and well-to-do Christian woman in Jerusalem, in whose home the Christians met (12:12).

THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

The whole missionary effort of the early Church was planned and launched under Divine direction. The time, the people, the routes, as well as the message, all were Divinely dictated. And the people in the Church at Antioch were ready to cooperate with this Divine effort.

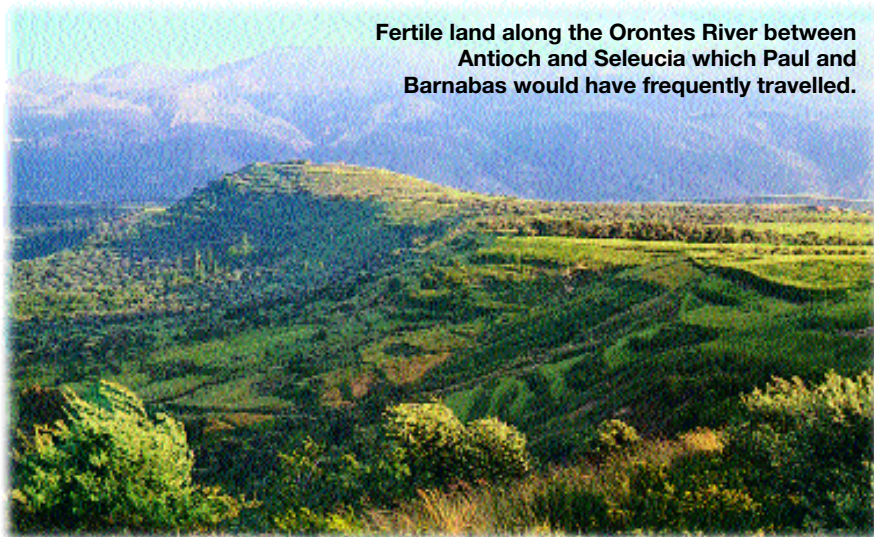
The Antioch Church had five very dedicated *"prophets and teachers."* They were a diverse company—a Jew from Cyprus (Barnabas), a brother from Northern Africa (Lucius), a Jew with the Roman name "Niger" (Simeon), an aristocrat with official courtly connections (Manaen); and a Jew and trained rabbi from Tarsus (Saul). The common thread among them was their faith in Christ.

Wouldn't we like a short bio of each? The Bible tells us only enough to stimulate our interest. Everyone has heard of Barnabas and Saul, but the other three are never heard of again. But what does it matter if our names are sounded in the ears of men, so long as they are written in the Book of Life!

The Lord who reads the heart knew that in spite of their varied backgrounds, they were all men of deep spiritual commitment, all brothers in Christ. And when the Lord through His Holy Spirit gave the command, *"Separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them,"* Barnabas and Saul were ready to go.

1. Which early Christian Church was the center of missionary operations? (13:1) _____
2. Name five dedicated Christian teachers at this location. (13:1) _____
3. Who appointed Barnabas and Saul for the first missionary campaign? (13:2) _____
4. Who dispatched them? (13:3) _____

Did the Church at Antioch selfishly try to keep their two best preachers? Did they say, If we let them go we won't be able to continue as a church? No, they recognized the Lord speaking, and they responded—in the same way that we today must cooperate with the Divine will. God spoke, and the Church at



Fertile land along the Orontes River between Antioch and Seleucia which Paul and Barnabas would have frequently travelled.



Insight

"The Spirit Said..."

How Does God Speak through the Holy Spirit?

We are not told, but we know from the inspired record in the Bible that in times past God used many different ways of communicating with His people. Sometimes His angel spoke in a vision, as to Paul when *"a man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over into Macedonia and help us'"* (Acts 16:9). Sometimes, one who was filled with the Spirit would stand up and speak the Word of the Lord, as Peter did on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14–39). Sometimes it was an audible voice, as when the Spirit said to Philip, *"Go near and overtake this chariot"* (Acts 8:29), and Philip preached to the Ethiopian eunuch. Sometimes it was on-the-spot instructions, such as Paul received (Acts 16:6–7). But whatever the means, God was giving instructions. The plan was God's and the work was God's. The men and women who participated were His instruments.

We have never experienced God working in this way, because God is not working openly today through His spirit. At the present time we have only *"faith, hope and charity."* We do not see angels, we do not hear His voice, or have power from Him to work miracles as did the Apostles (1 Cor. 13:8–13). But God is still working actively, silently; and when the time is right He will send His Son to take control of the affairs of earth, eradicate the evil, and bring in a new era of peace and righteousness. We look forward eagerly to that Day!



Did you know...

Antioch on the Orontes...

A "modern" city of half a million people, about 15 miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea, Antioch in Syria had a spectacular boulevard constructed by Herod the Great and a cannonaded 90-foot wide main street.

Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire, second to Rome and Alexandria. Early emperors visited Antioch, and next to Alexandria it had the largest population of Jews outside Palestine. Antioch quickly became a center of Christian work.



Take heed

The Important Accompaniment: Prayer

Notice how important a part prayer played in the work of the apostles. The Antioch Church listened to the command of the Lord to send Barnabas and Saul into the field, and again they prayed for the missionaries as they sent them on their way (13:3). Throughout the Book of Acts, we see great things being done, and always accompanied by prayer.

God wants us to work with Him, to keep His law in our minds and His interests primary, doing everything we do as for Him, as He would want us to do it. But when we pray, we cannot expect His answer to always be yes. Sometimes it will be no, sometimes wait. But the most important point is that we pray and follow His instructions. If so, He will always be there on our behalf.

Antioch said simply, "This is of God and we will do it." They did not hold back or rush into it. They took calm, deliberate steps to make sure all agreed that this was of God. After they had fasted and prayed, they *"laid their hands on them and sent them on their way"* (13:3 NLT).

The whole venture was of God, and when it was over, Paul and Barnabas would come back to the same commending Church at Antioch to give a full report.

Preaching on Cyprus



READ ACTS 13:4-12

Brothers Barnabas and Saul and their young apprentice John Mark set sail for Cyprus from the town of Seleucia, which served as Antioch's seaport. The Roman emperors had spent fortunes trying to improve and enlarge the seaport, but Seleucia was never able to rival great harbors like Tyre and Sidon. But as a passenger port for ships bound for Cyprus, or the mainland of Asia Minor, it was ideal.

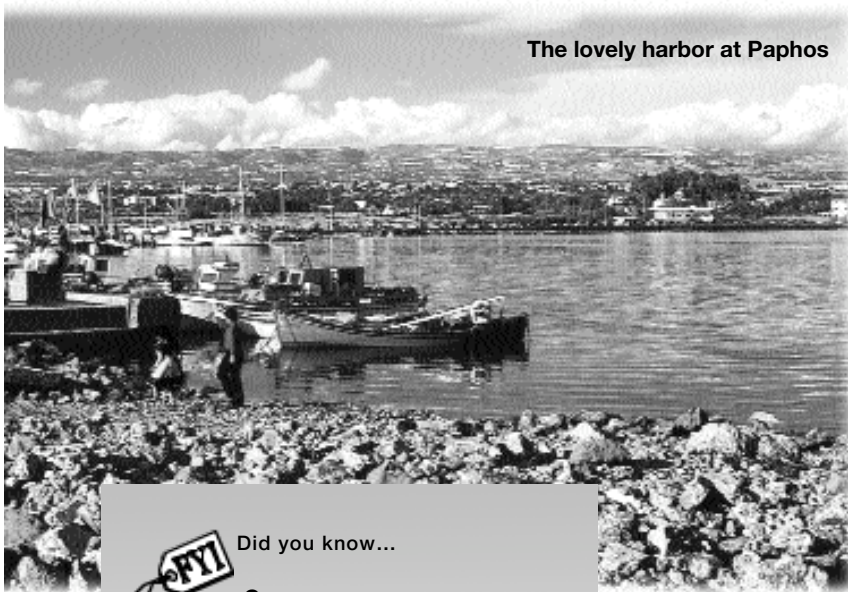
Once the ship had put out to sea, the missionaries could look back at the coastline and see the mountain ranges of Palestine. The island of Cyprus lay straight ahead.

5. Why did they go to Cyprus first? _____

6. What was the first city in Cyprus where Barnabas and Paul preached the Word of God? (13:5) _____

7. Where in the city did they preach? (13:5) _____

The lovely harbor at Paphos



Did you know...

Cyprus...

A beautiful island with a rocky coastline, Cyprus was an important stronghold of Roman power in the eastern Mediterranean. Annexed by Rome in 57 BC, it was incorporated later into the province of Seleucia. By 27 BC the Romans had made it an independent province, and in 22 BC, Caesar gave it a place in the senate and placed a proconsul over it. The city of Salamis was the commercial capital of Cyprus, and Paphos, at the west end of the island, was the political capital.

The city of Salamis in Cyprus was a thriving commercial center, with a number of Jewish synagogues, which Barnabas doubtless remembered from his boyhood days. Following a pattern they would pursue throughout their missionary activities, the Apostles went to the synagogue first, to those who had a basic knowledge of God and His workings with the Jewish people. There they would tell the message of how God worked first with the Jews, and how then He fulfilled the promise of sending the Messiah, who taught and ministered among the people, was crucified, buried, resurrected, and taken to heaven, where He was now at the right hand of the throne of God. At this point trouble often arose. Some would believe, while others were fiercely opposed. These opposers often stirred up the rest of the people, resulting in serious persecution for the Apostles. Sometimes they had to flee for their lives.

In the city of Salamis, they *"preached the word of God"* to the Jews, apparently without opposition. Then they traveled on across the island to the city of Paphos.

8. What city was the political capital of Cyprus? (13:6-7) _____

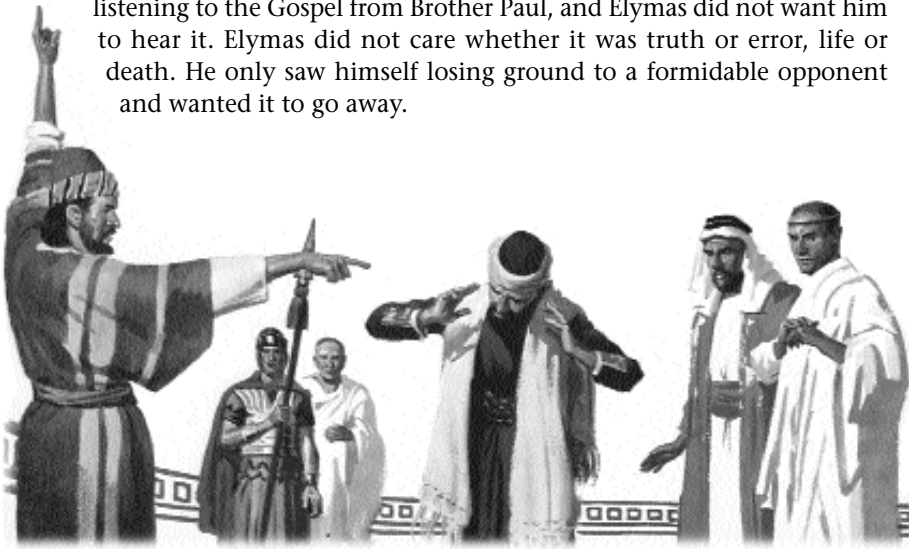
9. Who in that city was in charge of the government? What was his title and name? (13:7) _____

10. What did Barnabas and Saul preach to him? (13:7) _____

11. What was the intention of Elymas the sorcerer? (13:8) _____

The proconsul of Cyprus, a man named Sergius Paulus, invited Barnabas and Saul to preach the Word of God in the palace. This is the first record of Paul's preaching outside a synagogue.

All might have been smooth and easy, except for a certain court magician named Bar-jesus, also called Elymas, who did his best to frustrate the Apostles, even contradicting and cursing them (13:8). Elymas obviously was accustomed to having great influence with Sergius Paulus. But now Sergius Paulus was listening to the Gospel from Brother Paul, and Elymas did not want him to hear it. Elymas did not care whether it was truth or error, life or death. He only saw himself losing ground to a formidable opponent and wanted it to go away.



Confront, Not Compromise

We are not told what Elymas said or did, or what tricks or sorcery he used in front of Paul and Barnabas, but whatever he did brought forth these excoriating words from Paul: *“O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?”* (13:9–10).

Is this diplomacy? Is this the way to make friends and influence people? Is this the way to win over a religious teacher, to call him a liar, a child of the devil, and accuse him of deliberately perverting the truth of God—and right in the presence of the governor? Do you win a new brother by telling everybody that this man is the enemy of all righteousness? Aren't Christians supposed to be always meek, mild, and gentle?

The simple answer is, No. Had Paul been educated in today's schools, he should have started by saying, “My dear Bar-jesus, there are some words of truth in what you say, let's go over them.” But Paul could not do it because there were no words of truth in Bar-jesus to commend. Furthermore, Paul had Holy Spirit power and could read the heart of Bar-jesus and know that he was an enemy of righteousness, not one who would be converted. He was not interested in making friends with Elymas, only in removing him from the path of Sergius Paulus, so that the one who was interested in learning could have the opportunity.

There is a time to confront, not compromise.

12. How can we know Paul was right in the stand he took against the sorcerer? _____

Paul was speaking and acting by the power of the Holy Spirit.

13. What judicial verdict did Paul pronounce on Bar-jesus? (13:11) _____

14. What happened? What was Bar-jesus' reaction? (13:11) _____

The storm, was brief, but it cleared the air.

Bible Text: Acts 13:4–12 NKJV

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

5 And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant.

6 Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus,

7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

9 Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him

10 and said, “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?

11 And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.” And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.



Did you know...

Brother Barnabas...

...was a good man, a kind man, full of compassion and of the Holy Spirit, one who was willing to sell his property and give the money to the Apostles in Jerusalem to further the work of God (Acts 4:36–37). Also called Joseph, the name Barnabas was apparently given to him as an honorary title. It means “son of consolation,” “son of encouragement.”

It was Barnabas who introduced Saul to the Apostles at Jerusalem when the Church was still afraid of him, thinking he was yet an enemy. It was Barnabas who stood as a true friend to Saul, and it was his prestige with the Apostles that gave Saul (Paul) his entrance into the Church.



Did you know...

Paphos was...

the ancient world in miniature. The seat of the worship of the pagan goddess of love Venus, it was a city where the most depraved and immoral forms of worship thrived. Venus (also known as Aphrodite) was said to have been born of a foam of the sea at this very spot. She was actually a barbarous Phoenician or Asiatic goddess.

Universally associated with physical beauty and sensual love, the foul religion of Aphrodite dominated life at Paphos. Her temple acquired enormous fame and wealth. Into the midst of this paganism, vile and raw, wedded to unbridled lust, came the Christian missionaries with their gospel of purity and hope.

Paphos, also, was the seat of the Roman government on the island, where Sergius Paulus, the proconsul, governed.



Insight

Mark...the Quitter

No one wants to be known as a quitter. But John Mark has come down to us with this appendage. And perhaps it is well, because it tells us these were real people, with real personalities, and real struggles, just as we experience today.

The question is, why? Why did Mark turn back? What reasons (excuses?) might he have given? Did he use his mother as an excuse—maybe he thought she was worrying about him? Or was he worried about her? Or maybe he decided that the Church in Jerusalem needed him?

Or was it a personality conflict? Maybe he confided to Barnabas that he couldn't get along with Brother Paul's dominant spirit. Firebrand that Paul was, might he have found it hard to be patient and understanding with a younger brother? We can readily imagine that in Paul's view, anyone who would desert at the first hardship didn't deserve to go. Backtrackers simply weren't Paul's kind. Paul—like the rest of us—still had many lessons to learn.

For one reason or another, Mark quit. Paul could pitch his own tent at night, and wash his own pans, and run his own errands. John Mark was going home.

Though surely disappointed at Mark's turn, Barnabas was likely more understanding. When the time was right in the future, he would talk to Mark and try to help him see where he went wrong, and where he needed to change his attitude. He, too, had been young.

15. What was the reaction of the proconsul? (13:12) _____

If the proconsul had thought the court magician had power, he could see the difference now between fake and genuine power! The proconsul was impressed, deeply impressed with Paul and Barnabas. Here was power as he had not seen it before. Paul had used the power of the Holy Spirit to confirm the validity of his message. There was no question but that God was backing the missionaries. Paul was teaching a message from the God of heaven; the proconsul had seen visible evidence. He was impressed.

What happened to the sorcerer? Did anyone else in the palace believe? We would like to know more, but the account is brief. We must save our questions until Barnabas and Saul are resurrected.

What was the reaction of John Mark? How well was he doing with his OJT (On-the-Job Training)? Was he enthusiastic to go on? Was his heart on fire for the gospel? Was he eager for the next adventure down the road? Or was he already questioning whether this was indeed his calling?

Unfortunately, if we judge from what happened very soon after this, he was not on fire. Maybe the training was already more difficult than he had expected.

On to the Mainland

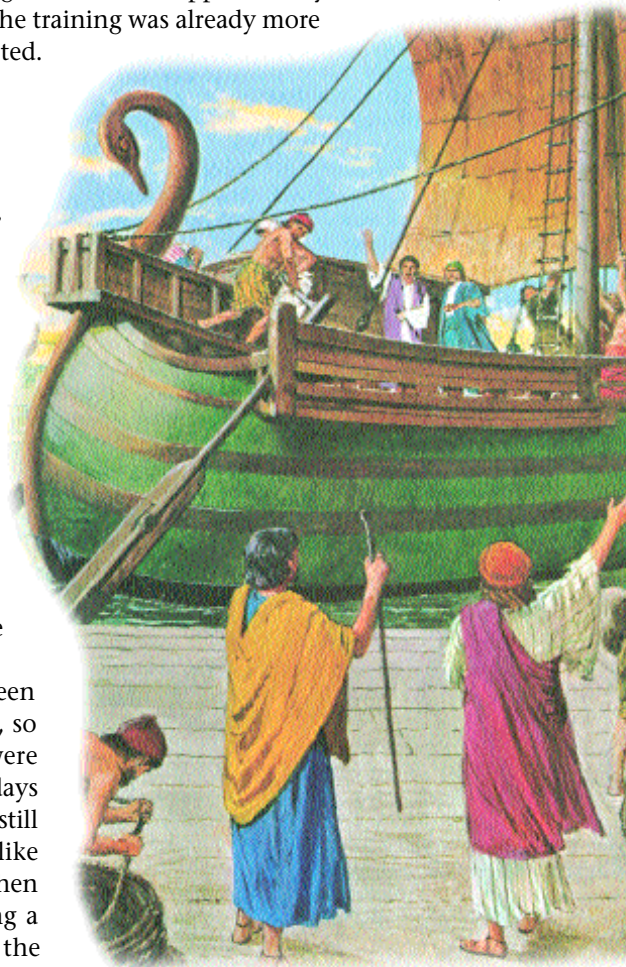


READ ACTS 13:13

The Missionary trio—Paul, and Barnabas, and John Mark— now boarded a ship headed toward the mainland of Asia Minor. Soon Cyprus was behind them and Pamphylia lay ahead. About seven miles inland lay Perga, capital of Pamphylia and another center of paganism. A temple to the Greek goddess Diana stood on a hill outside the city.

Just as Cyprus had been home country to Barnabas, so Pamphylia and Pisidia were familiar to Paul from the days of his boyhood. Paul could still remember trekking hills like these as a Jewish youth, when his heart was set on having a position of influence in the Jewish world. Yes, Cilicia and his home town were only a couple hundred miles to the east. These hills brought back serious memories of a life that Paul had left behind.

But the city of Perga lay on the very edge of peril. Perils were everywhere. The Taurus mountains to the north were dangerous. The coastline was infested with pirates, and the mountains were the home of many types of brigands. The way ahead was steep and full of wild animals. On top of all this, the area was infested with disease. The going would not be easy. None of this deterred Paul and Barnabas. Who would quit a missionary enterprise just because of a few difficulties?



But that was not the attitude of John Mark. To him, the road ahead looked impossible. And as Paul and Barnabas packed their bags for hardship, Mark packed his for home. At Perga, Mark turned back.

It is a little strange that he turned back at a point 7 miles inland, and just having crossed from Cyprus. Why didn't he turn back while still on Cyprus, before crossing over to the mainland? Did hardship suddenly look imminent? Or was there a change in the prospects ahead? Or...? We can only speculate. Scripture is silent. We know only that at Perga, Mark turned back.

And the two missionaries, stalwart and determined, went on.

Antioch and Conflict

 READ ACTS 13:14–52

When the brothers left Perga, their next destination was Antioch in Pisidia. Following their pattern, they went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. When given the opportunity, Paul addressed the people.

16. What was the subject of his message to these Jews? (13:14–41) _____

17. What was the reaction of the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia? What was the response of the Gentiles? (13:42) _____

18. What happened the next Sabbath day? (13:44) _____

19. Why did the Jews suddenly turn against Paul on this next Sabbath day? (13:45) What does the Bible call this all-too-human trait (see Prov. 14:30)? _____

Just when Barnabas and Paul seemed to be gaining so many new converts, envious Jews rose up to silence him.

The same envy that crucified Jesus is seen here against Paul and Barnabas.

We can be sure Paul was not surprised at the Jews' reaction to his message.

20. What was Paul's response to the Jews' enmity? (13:46) _____

What did Paul do when one door closed? He opened another. *"Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold we turn to the Gentiles'"* (13:46). Now the pattern changed. The Apostles, who had been starting with the Jews and using them to reach the Gentiles, now would go directly to the Gentiles.

21. What command of God was Paul obeying by turning from the Jews to the Gentiles? (13:47) _____

It was a critical decision. Paul was not turning away from the Jews; the Jews had turned away from God. They had rejected Christ. Jesus knew that this would happen and commissioned Paul for this special task. The Apostles quoted the Old Testament to confirm their calling: *"For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth'"* (13:47).

22. What was the reaction of the Gentiles when they heard this? (13:48) _____

Bible Text: Acts 13:13-16 NIV

13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.

14 From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down.

15 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak."

16 Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me!



Insight

We all need a Barnabas in our lives,...

someone to help us up when we fall, someone to give us a strong hand of encouragement and a firm voice that says, "Go on! You can do it!"

As the two missionaries covered the miles after Mark turned back, there may have been some very long talks between Brother Barnabas and Brother Saul as they rehearsed the events of recent weeks and strengthened themselves for the tasks ahead.

Apparently, they could not settle the matter, because when it was time for the second missionary journey and Barnabas wanted to give Mark another chance, Paul couldn't do it. He still hadn't forgiven him.

But we are privileged to know a still later chapter in this story. When Mark reemerges some 20 years later, he is a Christian brother who has proven himself. When Paul writes to the Colossians from Rome, he tells them to receive Mark as if he himself were to come to them. So Mark was in with Paul again. And at the very end, when Paul wrote to Timothy just before his death, he said, *"Take Mark and bring him with you, for he is profitable to me for the gospel"* (2 Tim. 4:11).

God does not blame us for falling, but only for staying down. And when Mark had made the change, Paul, in a true spirit of brotherly love, was ready to receive and encourage him—wholeheartedly.

Give thanks to the God who forgives when we turn!

**God Has No Favorites**

God gave special opportunity to the Jewish people because he saw in them the most good material. But He was never partial or exclusive. Always the basis for judgment was one's character, not one's blood. It was always *"to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings"* (Jer. 17:10).

The Gentiles were never excluded as a race. When anyone was seeking God, God was ready to receive such a one. Ruth the Moabitess, Naaman the Syrian, Caleb the son of Jephunah, and any one who would listen and repent, God was ready to accept and bless. And when the faithful ones are finally gathered, they will be *"out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation"* (Rev. 5:9-10).

Bible Text: Acts 13:42-46 NIV

42 As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath.

43 When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.

45 When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.

47 For this is what the Lord has commanded us: ..." 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, ...that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'"

48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

49 The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.

50 But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.

51 So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

23. What was the reaction of the Jews? (13:50) _____

Because the Jews of the city were too few to make much violent opposition to the work of the apostles, they stirred up the rest of the people to oppose them, and probably involved the local government also.

24. What did Paul and Barnabas do in response to the persecution? (13:51) _____

**READ ACTS 13:51**

It was a sharp rebuke. Yet they knew they were leaving behind faithful believers who would carry on after they had left. So they simply shook the dust off their feet as a testimony against those who had forced them away.

By leaving as they did, Paul and Barnabas were following Christ's instructions: *"Whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them"* (Luke 9:5).

By rejecting Paul and Barnabas, ministers of Christ, the Jews were in reality rejecting Christ and God. It was another way of saying what Jesus had said: *"He who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me"* (Luke 10:16).

Paul later wrote that he was three times *"beaten with rods"* (2 Cor. 11:25). One of these beatings was likely at Antioch, because he wrote also about the *"persecutions, [and] afflictions which came to me at Antioch"* (2 Tim. 3:11).

Moving On...

The time had come to move on. Paul was not to settle at one place. God had work for him across the miles.

25. Where was their next stopping point? (13:51) _____

Paul now went into the area of Galatia, heading for Iconium, some 85 or 90 miles southeast. Iconium was the most easterly city in the region.

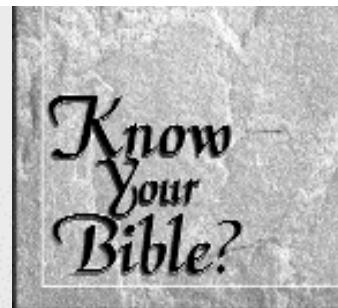
There is a saying that when God closes one door, He opens another. By driving the missionaries out of Antioch, the Jews only made the Gospel spread to another area.

Can't we picture the two disciples, staff in hand, trudging across the miles, praising God while praying for those serious believers they had left behind in Antioch, and seeking God's guidance for the future?

What was the reaction of the disciples? *"The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit"* (13:52). The Word of God was growing mightily. ♦

to be continued





2. This king was seven years old when he began to reign.
3. The children two years of age and under of the town of _____ were killed mercilessly by king _____.
4. This child found a mandrake and brought it to his mother.
5. This man put his least favorite wife and children ahead of his favorite wife and children when going to meet a possible adversary.
6. This boy's mother brought him a little coat each year.
7. This child was hidden at the edge of a river to avoid being killed.
8. This king was 12 years old when he began to reign.
9. This young man was 17 when he was sold into slavery.
10. This king threatened to cut a child in half.
11. This child was dropped by his nurse, and was crippled-for life.
12. This man raised the son of a widow from the dead.
13. Jesus said we must be humble as little children or what?
14. This boy was 8 years old when he began to reign.
15. This child had a twin brother whom his father preferred above him.
16. Jesus raised a young girl from the dead. How old was she at the time?
17. This man raised a child from the dead, after which the child sneezed seven times.

ANOINTED

1. This young man was quickly anointed king by command of his father.
2. The prophet Samuel poured a vial of oil on his head and kissed him.
3. He had orders to anoint a plowman.
4. Following instruction from God, he looked over eight young men, then finally took the horn of oil and anointed the last one he interviewed.
5. After being clothed with special garments, he and his sons were anointed.
6. He was anointed king over Israel by a young man who fled afterwards.
7. A woman anointed this man's feet with ointment.
8. After this seven-year-old boy was anointed king, a wicked queen was killed.
9. He anointed a stone that he had used for a pillow.
10. During a mourning period of three weeks, he fasted and refrained from anointing himself.

CHILDREN IN THE BIBLE

1. This boy was 12 years old when his parents lost track of him in Jerusalem.

BUSINESS

1. He sold his birthright to his brother for a meal.
2. He sold his threshing floor to the king.
3. She sold purple cloth.
4. He banned the Sabbath sale of goods in Jerusalem.
5. He sold a field to his cousin, who was a prisoner.
6. He joined a man-and-wife team in the tent-making business.
7. He sold a widower a burial ground.
8. He set up a widow in the oil business to pay off her debtors.
9. He used unfair labor practices in his brick-making establishment.
10. He, with his brothers, sold his young brother to a camel caravan.
11. He threw the money-changers out of the temple.

ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

ANOINTED

1. Solomon (1 Kings 1:32-34)
2. Saul (1 Sam. 9:17; 10:1)
3. Elijah (1 Kings 19:16, 19)
4. Samuel (1 Sam. 16:10-13)
5. Aaron (Ex. 28:39-41)
6. Jehu (2 Kings 9:1-10)
7. Jesus (Luke 7:37-38)
8. Joash (2 Chron. 23:11-15; 24:1)
9. Jacob (Gen. 28:18)
10. Daniel (Dan. 10:2-3)

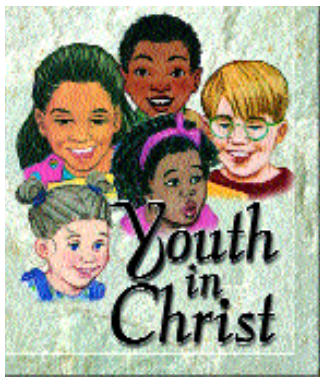
CHILDREN IN THE BIBLE

1. Jesus (Luke 2:21, 42-46)
2. Joash (2 Chron. 24:1)
3. Bethlehem, Herod (Matt. 2:16)
4. Reuben (Gen. 30:13-15)
5. Jacob (Gen. 33:1-3)
6. Samuel (1 Sam. 2:18-20)
7. Moses (Ex. 2:1-10)
8. Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1)
9. Joseph (Gen. 37:2, 28, 36)

10. Solomon (1 Kings 3:15-28)
11. Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 4:4)
12. Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-23)
13. We will not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:3)
14. Josiah (2 Kings 22:1)
15. Esau (Rom. 9:11-13)
16. Twelve (Mark 5:36-42)
17. Elisha (2 Kings 4:32-35)

BUSINESS

1. Esau (Gen. 25:31-33)
2. Ornan (1 Chron. 21:22-25)
3. Lydia (Acts 16:14)
4. Nehemiah (Neh. 13:15-19)
5. Hanameel (Jer. 32:6-9)
6. Paul (Acts 18:1-3)
7. Ephron (Gen. 23:10-18)
8. Elisha (2 Kings 4:2-7)
9. Pharaoh (Ex. 5:5-16)
10. Judah (Gen. 37:25-28)
11. Jesus (Matt. 21:12)



Don't Let It Happen

I am Joanna Michaelson. I want to share an experience with you. A week ago our family eagerly awaited the arrival of my brother's son Jordan. Kevin, who is two years younger than Jordan, was especially keen on having a big brother for ten days. Since Jordan is from a non-religious home, we wanted to share with him the Light of Life and to show him by example, the better way of living. Being aware that we might be the only Bible he would read, each of us determined to let Christ shine out through everything we might say and do.

All went well for nearly a week, the whole family cooperating in a Christ-like way, until—

This particular morning started well also. Kevin and Jordan had returned from an early morning fishing trip with shining eyes, and looking into the creel full of fish, Jordan had exclaimed for the umpteenth time, "What beauties!" Then noticing the car, he added, "But look at your car, Kevin. That muddy old road didn't improve its complexion."

"Sure got muddy," agreed Kevin. "Shall we let Mom keep the creel of fish while we give it a wash up?"

"Sure thing," Jordan replied. "Let's race. You take—", and off they ran.

I listened with pleasure to their happy talk as the boys unwound the hose and gathered sponges and brushes from the garage cupboard. Finally the race was on. And then it happened.

"I'm winning," taunted Kevin gleefully.



Jordan, who had just stepped around for a towel, shot back, "But what a sloppy job!"

"Sloppy?!" Kevin retorted.

"Yes. Sloppy. Didn't suppose you would cheat that way. Look at the mud on the hubcap and around the front fender."



"Hold on a minute, will you? I haven't finished yet." Kevin's eyes flashed with anger.

"Then why are you starting on the headlights?"

And so the argument grew hotter until Kevin flung his sponge at Jordan and stomped into the house.

Jordan deftly caught the sponge and, resisting the urge to return it, tossed it into the pail. Then, wiping his face on his sleeve, he returned to work—mechanically now—as his thoughts raced over the word battle of the last few minutes.

Jordan hadn't expected Kevin to blow up like that. He understood that the Michaelson family believed it was un-Christ-like to get angry—yet Kevin sure had exploded. It seemed Kevin's religion was no different than anyone else's. However, Jordan's conscience wouldn't let him blame it all on Kevin. Jordan knew that it takes two to make a fight, and that he had added some very unkind words. Also, he was two years older and perhaps had some advantages. Jordan's dad had been a real super teacher and had taken a lot of care to show Jordan how to do things carefully, and had encouraged him to be proud of a good job. Maybe Kevin hadn't had that advantage. But Kevin had also cheated. How could he let that go?

Kevin stumbled into the kitchen distraught with the realization of what he had just done. "How could Christ have let me down like this?" he asked. While I was still thinking what to say, Kevin continued in a disappointed tone. "Mom, I was so excited about showing Jordan a real life for Christ."

"Christ let you down?" I asked in disbelief. "Kevin, the failure is not Christ's but yours. You were the one that let it happen. It's a case of the old nature getting the better of the new, son. You've been doing well lately controlling your temper but I'm afraid you've—."

"I know, Mom, I know. But how can one avoid such defects." Kevin's broad shoulders slumped in discouragement as he leaned his head against the door casing.

"The Bible has the answer: '*Your word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You,*' Son. I know you and

Jordan enjoyed your early-morning fishing trip, but before you went, did you think to pray to God for help to make this day a success?"

Kevin's eyes dropped. "But Mom, how could I know Jordan was going to find fault with my work and call me a cheater?"

"You couldn't know, Kevin. But if you had put on the Christian armor this morning, don't you think you might have resisted those 'darts of the devil'? What was the verse that we discussed the other night?"

The red crept up Kevin's throat and spread over his face. "*Cease from anger and forsake wrath. Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil*" (Ps. 37:8).

"That's it, Kevin.

And that's what you're going to do, isn't it? We read and hear lots of good things, but they help us only as we apply them to ourselves. We can't overestimate the value of keeping our mind filled with the true, the just, and the pure. It works, Kevin, every time."

"Well," Kevin spoke with reservation,

"maybe. Anyway, thanks." Turning on his heel, he bounded out of the kitchen.

I don't know what Kevin said to Jordan, but the two boys resumed the car washing.

At the table that evening Jordan blurted out, "Your religion must be for real. This is the first time I've ever seen someone admit he was wrong in losing his temper and ask for forgiveness."

This wasn't the lesson I had planned for the day but I was sure neither boy would ever forget it. And Jordan had an opportunity to see that our Christianity must affect us all the time—even when we're washing the car. ♦

PRAYER:

Lord, help me to keep myself under Your control at all times.

POINT TO REMEMBER:

There is never a good reason to do wrong.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Whatever your work is, put your heart into it as done for the Lord and not for human beings." —Col. 3:23

Join the *Anti-Feather Plucking Club*

I thought you might be interested in a lesson we learned from our young chicks recently.

One little chick seemed to be in bad with the others, and all were picking at it. So, as an act of mercy, we removed the hapless chick from the flock for a day or so, then one evening we put it back, thinking the others would leave it alone. But the next evening we were grieved to find it dead, with half its feathers picked out. It had been literally picked to death by its friends.

How like the chicks we humans are, always ready to "pick." Often nothing important or significant, it may be just a notion of ours that does not meet with another's approval, but we "pick." Anything that doesn't seem just right to us in another—"Pluck!"—there goes another precious feather!—as though we believed that the more feathers we pick from our neighbor's cap, the more we add to our own!

But it doesn't work that way. And some day, if we keep picking, we may find that instead of adding feathers to our caps, we have instead

been picking stars from our crown—in fact, we will have no crown at all!

Maybe we need to join an anti-feather plucking club, and each time we are tempted to "pick" at another's feathers with a word, a comment, or even a look, ask ourselves: Why do I want to say this? Is it really necessary? Is it true? Is it right? If the situation were reversed, would I want this said to me?

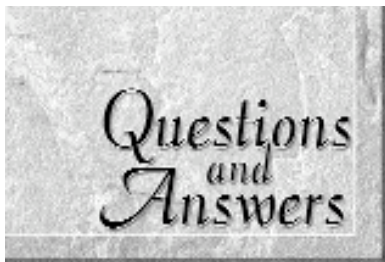
If our unspoken words can pass this test, our neighbors' feathers will be safe, and so will our own.

Feather plucking at its worst is deadly; at its best, unnecessary. But whatever the effect on the person being plucked, it's deadly to the plucker!

Join the anti-feather plucking club.

That means, **Don't pluck!** ♦





GENESIS AND SCIENCE— IN CONFLICT?

If God made day and night (dark and light) the first day, how does this make sense if God made the sun, stars, and moon on the fourth day? How was day and night different, or how could you tell the difference? I'm doing a project for school, and would like to prove creation is the answer, but I need help. Thank you for your time in helping me.

Your observation is correct. Day and night being dependent on the rotation of the earth in relation to the sun, how could there be either day or night without the sun?

Your question has puzzled many thoughtful people, and we would very much like to address it with you. If you would send us your address, we would be glad to forward you a copy of one of our publications which will give you a different view of the Genesis narrative and we believe will help to answer your questions: "God's Spiritual Creation."

Because of space limitations we cannot fully explain the subject here, but let us give a brief overview.

For the very reason that you mention, we believe that the first three chapters of Genesis describe not the literal creation of the earth and the heavens but a spiritual creation. They outline a plan by which God is developing (creating) individuals to compose His Heavenly Kingdom on earth.

As for the creation in which we live, we firmly believe that God is the Creator. We do not accept the theory of evolution as an explanation for the origin of the earth, life, or the various species on earth. Neither do we believe that the earth was created a mere 6000 years ago. The evidence of scientific studies of the rocks, the fossil records, the dinosaurs, coal, and many other formations, all add evidence to the point which the Bible does not contradict: that the earth is many millions of years old. God does not tell us about its creation, only that He is the Creator. "The

Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens" (Prov. 3: 19). "Says the Lord, your Redeemer...I am the Lord, who makes all things, who stretches out the heavens all alone, who spreads abroad the earth by Myself...I have made the earth, and created man on it. I—My hands—stretched out the heavens, and all their host I have commanded....For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is no other....Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens;" (Isa. 44:24; 45:12, 18; 48:13). The Prophet Isaiah also said, speaking to apostate Israel, "You forgot the Lord your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth" (Isa. 51:13).

The same God is our Maker. "It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture" (Ps. 100:3).

Is it right to invest in stocks?

I assume that you are trying to distinguish between investing one's money, which should be lawful, and gambling.

Both investing and gambling involve risk, but all risk is not wrong. We take a certain amount of risk every time we drive to the grocery store, or cross the street, or take medicine from the pharmacy, or eat food from the store, or even get out of bed in the morning.

But the difference between these risks and gambling is that gambling is risk based totally on chance. For that

reason it is reckless risk. When we cross the street, we can be cautious and try to be safe. The gambling person has no way of influencing or anticipating the outcome. Gambling is abusing the property God has entrusted to our care.

Both investing and gambling may fail due to factors beyond our control, so why is investing not gambling? While the determining factor in gambling is chance, investing should be based on one's understanding of a company's potential, or on the advice of someone knowledgeable. If investing is based on one's best judgment and resources, it still involves risk, but it is not reckless. The investment may fail because one had insufficient or inaccurate information. One cannot depend on a company to grow. Also, a company may falsify their reported earnings to drive up stock prices which will later fall. An investment may fail because of factors beyond anyone's control, but it was still an action taken in good faith, not depending on chance.

Most investment advisors recommend long term investing, adding regularly to the investment and diversification, all of which help to remove it from having an aspect of gambling.

Any action has to be taken with the right motive to be lawful in the sight of God. The command is, "Do all to the glory of God." If one is greedy for gain, those investments are nearer to the realm of gambling than to a conservative use of one's resources.

Historically, stocks have outperformed certificates of deposit and some other savings, but we do not advise regarding specific investments. ♦

*Patience is often bitter,
but its fruit is sweet.*

TV: A Christian View

continued from page 13

the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Even the Law of Moses said, "Thou shalt have none other gods before me" (Deut. 5:7). Our focus must be in only one direction. If TV comes ahead of our Bible study, or our family devotions, our mealtimes together, or our time for prayer, or even the hours of sleep we need, if it offers entertainment that detracts from our interest in God and His Word, we are serving two masters, a situation which Jesus said cannot be (Matt. 6:24).

We can hardly teach our children to dedicate their minds to God's Word if they see us torn between two gods. If we truly love our children and want to teach them to love God, we have to show that nothing is coming between us and our Master. Young minds constantly fed a mixed diet, some of God, and some of the world, will naturally be attracted to the more "exciting" diet of the world, and away from God. Our worshipping God is a growth, it can easily be displaced if the gods of this world demand our attention.

Israel succumbed to this weakness many years ago. They were told to keep "other gods" out of their homes, out of their lives, even out of their conversation. But they did not do it. They allowed the "cursed things" to come in and destroy them (Deut. 7:25-26).

This warning applies to us just as much as it did to ancient Israel. If we allow the abominations in our houses and then in our minds, they will lead us astray.

"Clean and White"

The Bible compares right doing to a woven garment of fine linen, "clean and white" (Rev. 19:8). It is our responsibility to keep this clothing unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:26). God has given us everything we need to have our garments clean. But we cannot stay clean, if we allow the influence of the world in our homes and in our minds. It is said of the faithful ones, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood [Word] of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14). ♦

As I sit here writing this article on the snowy, windswept plains of Kansas, my gaze falls upon a bright red piece of paper that arrived in the mail this week. The paper is a Subpoena from the Circuit Court of the 17th Judicial Circuit in Broward County Florida in which I am ordered to appear and give testimony in a murder trial.

This case involves a very young teenage boy who is charged with "Murder 1st Degree/Premeditated" for the death of a six year old girl with whom he was wrestling—trying out "moves" from his favorite television program, WWF (World Wrestling Federation) extreme wrestling. The murder trial is scheduled for January and I have been thinking about this youngster. I do not know the young man but what little I have been told suggests that there are many issues in his life. I know what I will say about the research evidence on the effects of TV violence; I can guess what others might say. However, I am unable to turn back the clock for the little girl who is dead.

By JOHN P. MURRAY, Ph.D, Professor of Developmental Psychology, Kansas State University
The Advocate, Volume 24, Number 1, February, 2001, pages 1-4.
FROM: <http://ibelgique.iffance.com/sociomedia/johnmurray.htm>

A study by the American Psychological Association has shown that children have witnessed 8,000 televised murders and more than 100,000 other violent acts on television before they complete elementary school.

From: <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ncs/newsarch/2002/Aug02/violent.htm>

Repeated exposure to media violence

"Repeated exposure to media violence" is among the 3 major factors responsible for causing a 300% increase, over the last 15 years, of children with troubled behaviours.

—From a report issued in February 2001, the Quebec Superior Council of Education

Source: <http://www.acmecolalition.org/countertvviolence.html>



Have you ever felt that your patience was tested to the point of endurance? Mine was today at the laundromat.

First, I must say how grateful I am to a very kind friend who provides my transportation. When she dropped me off at the laundromat, we agreed that she would pick me up in just one hour. That should provide me ample time to do my small amount of laundry.

As I walked around the room at the laundromat, I quickly realized that just about every washer was full.

"Be patient," I said to myself.

Looking all around the large room, I discovered only two

unused machines, one of which was marked "Out of Order."
More patience.

Needing two machines and having only one hour of time, I located the lady proprietor to express my dilemma. The lady pulled out her keys and went immediately to check the sick machine, commenting that the people who had all the washers in use had gone out "on errands."

Still more patience.

Opening the coin box on the non-working machine, she pulled seven unused quarters from the coin slot and dropped them into my hand. "It's all yours now...should work fine." Apparently the previous operator had not put enough quarters into the money slot to activate it.

Success!

So in addition to having the two washers I needed, I was paid for being patient! And when my friend came by, I was ready and waiting.

It takes practice to overcome our faults, but aren't we better in every way when we learn self-control? We can't put the blame on any other person; each of us is responsible for his own deeds.

Every day has a special opportunity, if only we look for it, an opportunity to grow in patience. God has not promised us a bed of roses. But we can change ourselves if we will. We don't have to be the easily irritated, quick-tempered person we started out to be. And when we change, others may be encouraged to do the same. We never know who is watching us!

Lord, help me to grow in patience. ♦

The 11th—20th Commandments

11. Thou shalt **not worry**, for worry is the most unproductive of all human activities.
12. Thou shalt **not be fearful**, for most of the things we fear never come to pass.
13. Thou shalt **not cross bridges before you come to them**, for no one has yet succeeded in accomplishing this.
14. Thou shalt **handle only one problem at a time**, and leave the others to the Lord until their turn comes up.
15. Thou shalt **not take troubles to bed with you**, for they make very poor bedfellows.
16. Thou shalt **not try to carry the problems of the world on your shoulders**, for nobody (except for One) has a back that is broad enough.
17. Thou shalt **be a good listener**, for God often speaks to us through the mouths of others.
18. Thou shalt **not try to relive yesterday**: for good or ill, it is forever gone.
Live in the now and rejoice in it.
19. Thou shalt **firmly dismiss feelings of frustration**,
for 90% of it is rooted in self-pity and will interfere with positive action.
20. Thou shalt **count thy blessings**, never overlooking the smallest,
for our biggest blessings are composed of many small ones.

—Author Unknown

Be thankful for what you have received and also for what you have escaped.

If I bear the fruits of righteousness, their sweet fruits my life will bless.

Thanksgiving is good, thanksgiving is better.

Gratitude to God should be as regular as our heartbeat. How else could we "pray without ceasing"?

Blessings are flowing out to us continually. How often do we thank God for them?

THANK YOU, GOD, FOR LITTLE THINGS

*Thank you, God, for little things that come our way,
The things we take for granted but don't mention when we pray,
The unexpected courtesy, the thoughtful, kindly deed,
A hand reached out to help us in the time of sudden need—
Oh, make us more aware, dear God, of little daily graces
That come to us with "sweet surprise" from never-dreamed-of places.*

Thankfulness puts life in perspective. It helps us to recall how small we are, and how very much we need God.

A thankful spirit is like sunshine on the fields.

Happiness is not something you search for and find—

*It's waking up and beginning the day
By counting your blessings and kneeling to pray.*

*It's giving up thoughts that breed discontent
And accepting what comes as a gift He has sent.*

*It's taking what God has determined for us,
And pursuing our tasks without fret, fume or fuss.*

*For in completing what God gives us to do
We find real contentment and happiness, too.*

—Selected

*Lord of the harvest, Your liberal hand
Bestows new plenty o'er the land,
When sounds of music fill the air.*

*We too will raise
Our hymn of praise,
For we Your common bounties share.*

*Lord of the harvest, all is Thine:
The rains that fall, the sun that shines,
The seed once hidden in the ground,
The skill that makes our fruits abound:
New every year,
Your gifts appear;
New praises from our lips shall sound.*

*Attitudes sour in the life that is closed to thankfulness.
Soon selfish attitudes take over, closing life to better things.*

A handful of good living is worth a bushel of good learning.

Thankfulness doesn't depend on what we have. We can be content with little and miserable with much.

If you have nothing to be thankful for, make up your mind that there is something wrong with you.

Be thankful if your job is a little harder than you like. You can't sharpen a knife on a piece of rubber.



We Thank You, Lord

We thank You, Lord,

*for those whose encouragement has made us strong;
for those in whose company the frightening things
were not so alarming, and the hard things not so difficult;
for those whose strong arm has saved us from falling into
temptation, and who have helped us choose the right.*

Save us, Lord,

*from making the same mistakes over and over again;
from doing things which we know annoy others;
from magnifying trifles into principles;
from failing to realize our own weaknesses and
refusing to see our own faults;
from persisting in courses of action which we learned
long ago lead to trouble.*

Forgive us, Lord,

*for the times we have been ungracious and ungrateful;
for the times we have discouraged others instead
of encouraging them;
for the times we have grumbled and complained,
or been cross, irritable, fault-finding, and
difficult to live with.*

Help us daily

*to grow stronger, purer, kinder;
to shed old faults and to gain new virtues;
to live as befits those who begin each day with You
and who go out to live every moment of it
in Your presence.*

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

