

The Importance of Marriage

Marriage is the theme of the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation, the Eternal teaches us the importance and spiritual significance of marriage. In Eden, God taught mankind two doctrines: the Sabbath and Marriage. These are related, for the Sabbath is the avenue for our relationship with God, and human Marriage is a God-like relationship with another human being, to help us build our relationship with God.

At the institution of marriage, there was no provision for divorce. However, mankind quickly departed from God. Sin made the marriage relationship more difficult, **Genesis 3:16-19**. Cain departed from the presence of the Lord, **Genesis 4:16**, married, had a son named Enoch, and built a city named after Enoch. Cain's descendant Lamech was the first recorded polygamist. The line of Cain continued to be divorced from God's presence.

Genesis 6 shows wrong marriages, wrong sexual relationships, which led to God's judgment of the Flood. The word translated "violence" is Strong's #2555, *chamas*, the same word for Abraham and Sarah's sin involving Hagar, **Genesis 16:5**. See also **Malachi 2:16**. Marriage is not a contract, but a covenant, **verse 14**. As in the days of Noah, sexual sins will abound just prior to our Lord's return, **Matthew 24:37-38**.

At Sinai, God spiritually married Israel, **Exodus 19:7-8, Jeremiah 3:1-22**. At least three of the Ten Commandments directly relate to marriage and family. Several Old Testament statutes regulated marriage, including **Exodus 21:7-11, 22:16-17, 19, 34:14-17; Deuteronomy 22:13-30, 24:1-4**.

God did not condemn Lamech, Abraham, and Jacob, for their polygamy, but it was wrong, contrary to **Genesis 2:21-24**. God also did not condemn Abraham for lying about Sarah. Isaac, a type of Christ, had only one wife, Rebecca. God teaches us by examples, **I Corinthians 10:1-12**.

Marriage is a *covenant*; without a *force majeure* provision for fraud. See the story of the Gibeonites, **Joshua 9:1-27**, noting **verse 14**. The Israelites did not seek God's counsel, and they went ahead and were duped, yet they were still bound by their oath. The example of Joseph and Mary (**Matthew 1:18-25**) shows how to apply **Deuteronomy 24**. General "fraud" is no grounds for divorce with the right to remarry.

In the New Testament, Jesus' teaching made laws of marriage more binding, **Matthew 5:32, 19:1-12**. In speaking to the carnal Pharisees, Jesus amazed his audience, not siding with the Hillel or Shammai schools, who allowed divorce and remarriage for adultery or any reason whatsoever. Jesus said that only for *fornication* (sexual sins before marriage) can there be divorce with the right to remarry.

The Apostle Paul did not water down the Savior's teaching on marriage. Paul upheld the Bible teaching that marriage is for life, **Romans 7:1-3, I Corinthians 7:39**. As believers, we look forward to the coming marriage of the Church to Christ, **Revelation 19:7-9, 21:2, 9**, the eternal marriage from which there will be no divorce. Our marriages today should prepare us for the divine eternal marriage to Christ, **Ephesians 5:21-33**.

In 1974, the Worldwide Church of God departed from its former teaching on marriage. Marriages were thenceforth held to be valid only as long as both parties are "pleased to dwell" with one another. **I Corinthians 7:12-15** does not provide an escape clause for marriages, which are bound for life, **verse 39**. "Not under bondage" means not obligated to provide support, sexual relations, etc. It does not mean "free to remarry someone else." Man-made marriage loopholes are so big that you can drive a semi-truck through them! The period of 1974-2004 has been thirty years of infamy in the Church of God. Let us return to the Truth of God, teaching and practicing the importance of life-long marriage relationships.

For further explanation of this vital topic, request the free audio cassette, "**The Importance of Marriage**," C120, by Richard C. Nickels, from Giving & Sharing.

Holy Days — 2004

Passover, April 5 (observed the evening before, after sundown)

Feast of Unleavened Bread, April 6-12

Pentecost, May 31

Day of Trumpets, September 16

Day of Atonement, September 25

Feast of Tabernacles, September 30-October 6; Last Great Day, October 7

Avoiding Unclean Meat

It is not easy to avoid eating unclean meat. Pork is more prevalent than most people realize. The popular Olive Garden restaurant commonly has pork hidden in many of their menu items. Their website says: "Does Olive Garden use pork in its recipes? Pork is primarily used as a flavor enhancer and traditionally is a common ingredient in Italian cooking. Pork is included in our meat sauce. With some advance notice, our managers would be happy to accommodate your diet by specially making a ground beef meat sauce to accompany your choice of pasta."

Opportunity to Help Others

We recently received a letter from a vision-impaired prisoner in Texas. He wanted to read material about Babylon, and how false gods originated. I printed out a copy of our Bible Study 185, "All Roads Lead to Babylon," in large 14-point type. That got me to thinking....

Is there a need to supply our literature to the visually impaired? Please let us know if you know someone who would like our literature in large print. Is there someone willing to help us by printing our articles off the Internet in large type size, and mailing them to those who are visually impaired? All your expenses will be reimbursed.

If interested, please contact Richard Nickels by telephone on weekends, 307-686-5191 or Rich.Nickels@giveshare.org.

Giving & Sharing Newsletter

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When Family Dissolution Becomes the Law of the Land

“No woman should be authorized to stay at home to raise her children. Society should be totally different. Women should not have that choice, precisely because if there is such a choice, too many women will make that one.”

That chilling commentary comes from fem-socialist Simone de Beauvoir, in her famous 1974 interview in *The Saturday Review*.

So what happens when the radical feminist agenda becomes the law of the land?

That is not a mere hypothetical question. It can be answered by turning the pages of history back to the tragic early days of Soviet Russia.

When Lenin's Bolsheviks seized the levers of power in 1917, Lenin faced the daunting challenge of jump-starting agricultural and industrial production. So he cast his eye on a vast, untapped workforce: peasant women.

Parroting the Marxist line on female oppression, Lenin incited women to action at the First All-Russia Congress of Working Women: “The status of women up to now has been compared to that of a slave; women have been tied to the home, and only socialism can save them from this.”

In short order, Lenin pushed through laws assuring women equal pay for equal work and the right to hold property.

But as Simone de Beauvoir pointed out, many women would be tempted to go back to the old ways to tend to hearth and home. So the traditional family would need to be abolished. Lenin understood that fact, as well.

So in 1918, Lenin introduced a new marriage code that outlawed church ceremonies. Lenin opened state-run nurseries, dining halls, laundries, and sewing centers. Abortion was legalized in 1920, and divorce simplified.

In a few short years, most of the functions of the family had been expropriated by the state. By 1921, Lenin could brag that “in Soviet Russia, no trace is left of any inequality between men and women under the law.”

But Lenin's dream of gender emancipation soon dissolved into a cruel nightmare of social chaos.

First, the decline of marriage gave rise to rampant sexual debauchery. Party loyalists complained that comrades were spending too much time in love affairs, so they could not fulfill their revolutionary duties.

Not surprisingly, women who were sent out to labor in the fields and the factories stopped having babies. In 1917, the average Russian woman had borne six children. By 1991, that number had fallen to two. This fertility free-fall is unprecedented in modern history.

But it was the children who were the greatest victims. As a result of the break-up of families, combined with civil war and famine, countless numbers of Russian children found themselves without family or home. Many ended up as common thieves or prostitutes.

In his recent book, *Perestroika*, Mikhail Gorbachev reflected on 70 years of Russian turmoil: “We have discovered that many of our problems — in children's and young people's behavior, in our morals, culture, and in production — are partially caused by the weakening of family ties.”

Fem-socialists, hell-bent on achieving a genderless society, are now scheming to repeat the same disastrous experiment in Western society. Naturally, they are hoping that you not hear the story of family destruction in Soviet Russia.

But the truth is there, waiting to be grasped by anyone who cares to see.

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Seventh-day Adventist Teaching on Divorce & Remarriage

The Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement is more conservative than mainline SDA's. They cite the historical SDA position on the permanence of marriage, including several statements from Ellen G. White.

“Till Death Do Us Part”

“And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh,” **Mark 10:8**. “This [marriage] vow links the destinies of the two individuals with bonds which nought but the hand of death should sever,” *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 507. Cited in *The Family Circle*, Lesson 9.

A Lifelong Tie

1. What is the only proper setting for physical intimacy? **Hebrews 13:4**. How did Christ endorse the marriage relation? **John 2:1-11**. “Only where Christ reigns, can there be deep, true, unselfish love. Then soul will be knit with soul, and the two lives will blend in harmony. Angels of God will be guests in the home, and their holy vigils will hallow the marriage chamber. Debasing sensuality will be banished. Upward to God will the thoughts be directed; to Him will the heart's devotion ascend,” *Messages to Young People*, p. 440.

“Marriage has received Christ's blessing, and is to be regarded as a sacred institution. True religion is not to counterwork the Lord's plans. God ordained that man and woman should be united in holy wedlock, to raise up families that, crowned with honor, would be symbols of the family in heaven. And at the beginning of His public ministry Christ gave His decided sanction to the institution that had been sanctioned in Eden. Thus He declared to all that He will not refuse His presence on marriage occasions, and that marriage, when joined with purity and holiness, truth and righteousness, is one of the greatest blessings ever given to the human family,” *The Signs of the Times*, August 30, 1899.

2. What must we always remember regarding marriage? **Mark 10:6-8**. Why is this relationship so sacred? **Ephesians 5:31, 32**. “Marriage, a union for life, is a symbol of the union between Christ and His Church. The spirit that Christ manifests toward His Church is the spirit that the husband and wife are to manifest toward each other. If they love God supremely, they will love each other in the Lord, ever treating each other courteously, drawing in even cords. In their mutual self-denial and self-sacrifice they will be a blessing to each other,” *The Adventist Home*, p. 95.

The Nature of Vows

3. What must we understand about the seriousness of making a vow before God? **Matthew 5:37; Ecclesiastes 5:4, 5; Psalm 15:1-4**. “The obligation to which one's word is pledged — if it does not bind him to perform a wrong act — should be held sacred. No consideration of gain, of revenge, or of self-interest can in any way affect the inviolability of an oath or pledge. ‘Lying lips are abomination to the Lord’ (**Proverbs 12:22**). He that ‘shall ascend into the hill of the Lord,’ and ‘stand in His holy place,’ is ‘he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not’ (**Psalms 24:3, 15:4**),” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 506.

4. What should keep us from underestimating the depth of the promises and commitments we have made — including our marriage vow “till death do us part”? **Exodus 20:16; Malachi 2:13, 14**. “If in any matter you make a statement as to what you will do, and afterward find that you have favored others to your own loss, do not vary a hairsbreadth from principle. Carry out your agreement. By seeking to change your plans you would show that you could not be depended on. And should you draw back in little transactions, you would draw back in larger ones. Under such circumstances some

are tempted to deceive, saying, I was not understood. My words have been taken to mean more than I intended. The fact is, they meant just what they said, but lost the good impulse, and then wanted to draw back from their agreement, lest it prove a loss to them," *Child Guidance*, p. 154.

The Seventh Commandment

5. How are all warned against the violation of the marriage bed? **Exodus 20:14; Proverbs 6:32, 33**. Why should we be especially guarded on this point? **Luke 16:17, 18; I Thessalonians 5:22**. "The most solemn message ever committed to mortals has been entrusted to this people, and they can have a powerful influence if they will be sanctified by it. They profess to be standing upon the elevated platform of eternal truth, keeping all of God's commandments; therefore, if they indulge in sin, if they commit fornication and adultery, their crime is of tenfold greater magnitude than is that of the classes I have named, who do not acknowledge the law of God as binding upon them," *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 450, 451.

"All frivolity, all undue attention of men and women, must be condemned and discontinued. Some, even married men, who have indulged in this trifling familiarity, have endeavored to excuse themselves, and escape censure by claiming that they have done no moral wrong. . . . What record is made in the books of heaven by the divine Watcher? Was there no moral wrong done to the souls of those with whom you were so familiar? Indeed there was," *Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 16, p. 6.

6. What does God require of His Church in all cases where the seventh commandment has been violated? **I Corinthians 5:9-13**. "The seventh commandment has been violated by some who are now held in fellowship by the church. This has brought God's frown upon them. This sin is awful in these last days, but the church [members] have brought God's frown and curse upon them by regarding the sin so lightly. I saw it was an enormous sin and there have not been as vigilant efforts made as there should have been to satisfy the displeasure of God and remove His frown by taking a strict, thorough course with the offender.

"It has had an awful, corrupting influence upon the young. They see how lightly the sin of breaking the seventh commandment is regarded, and the one who commits this horrid sin thinks that all he has to do is to confess that he was wrong and is sorry, and he is then to have all the privileges of the house of God and be held in [the] embrace or fellowship of the church.

"They have thought it was not so great a sin, but have lightly esteemed the breaking of the seventh commandment. This has been sufficient to remove the Ark of God from the camp, if there were no other sins to cause the ark to be taken away and weaken Israel. Those who break the seventh commandment should be suspended from the church, and not have its fellowship nor the privileges of the house of God. Said the angel, 'This is not a sin of ignorance. It is a knowing sin and will receive the awful visitation of God, whether he who commits it be old or young,'" *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*, pp. 248, 249.

A Pernicious Trend

7. How does God view divorce? **Malachi 2:16**. How did the erroneous view of marriage as a mere civil contract trigger modern society's indulgence in remarriage after divorce? "France presented . . . the characteristics which especially distinguished Sodom. During the Revolution there was manifest a state of moral debasement and corruption similar to that which brought destruction upon the cities of the plain. And the historian presents together the atheism and the licentiousness of France, as given in the prophecy: 'Intimately connected with these laws affecting religion, was that which reduced the union of marriage — the most sacred engagement which human beings can form, and the permanence of which leads most strongly to the consolidation of society

— to the state of a mere civil contract of a transitory character, which any two persons might engage in and cast loose at pleasure. . . . If fiends had set themselves to work to discover a mode of most effectually destroying whatever is venerable, graceful, or permanent in domestic life, and of obtaining at the same time an assurance that the mischief which it was their object to create should be perpetuated from one generation to another, they could not have invented a more effectual plan than the degradation of marriage'. . . . Sophie Arnould, an actress famous for the witty things she said, described the republican marriage as 'the sacrament of adultery,' *Great Controversy*, pp. 270, 271.

8. How does the current trend toward divorce and remarriage reveal a sign of the times? **Matthew 24:37-39**. Name one area in which our message is to reflect that of John the Baptist — and why. **Acts 3:19-21**. "Herod was affected as he listened to the powerful, pointed testimonies of John, and with deep interest he inquired what he must do to become his disciple. John was acquainted with the fact that he was about to marry his brother's wife, while her husband was yet living, and faithfully told Herod that this was not lawful," *Early Writings*, p. 154. "What of the marriage relation today? Is it not perverted and defiled, made even as it was in Noah's day? Divorce after divorce is recorded in the daily papers. This is the marriage of which Christ speaks when He says that before the Flood they were 'marrying and giving in marriage'." *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 7, p. 56. "As it was in the days of Noah, every kind of evil is on the increase. Divorce and marriage is the order of the time," *ibid.*, vol. 10, p. 261. "In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored," *Prophets and Kings*, p. 678.

"One Flesh" For A Lifetime

9. How does inspiration emphasize the enduring nature of the marital bond? **Romans 7:1-3; I Corinthians 7:39**. "Marriage, a union for life, is a symbol of the union between Christ and His church," *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 46. "My heart is sick when I see the loose way that the marriage vows are held. We are nearing the judgment. I ask you to consider carefully, candidly, your position. There is, perhaps, upon more thorough acquaintance, a dislike of your husband's ways and manners. Will not many people find the same, after the marriage novelty has passed? But when you made your vow before God and holy angels, you knew you were not perfect and your husband was not perfect; but this is no excuse for breaking your marriage vow. There is a need of training your mind and heart that you shall bear with one another, to be kind to one another, and not to allow distrust and hatred to come in," *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*, p. 55.

10. If the "oneness" of the marital bond is shattered, what counsel is given? **I Corinthians 7:10, 11**. Whichever of these two options is chosen, what must always be borne in mind? **Hebrews 12:14-16; Matthew 6:14, 15, 18:21, 22**. "One of the most common sins, and one that is attended with most pernicious results, is the indulgence of an unforgiving spirit. How many will cherish animosity or revenge and then bow before God and ask to be forgiven as they forgive. Surely they can have no true sense of the import of this prayer or they would not dare to take it upon their lips. We are dependent upon the pardoning mercy of God every day and every hour; how then can we cherish bitterness and malice toward our fellow sinners! If, in all their daily intercourse, Christians would carry out the principles of this prayer, what a blessed change would be wrought in the church and in the world! This would be the most convincing testimony that could be given to the reality of Bible religion," *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 170, 171.

Review And Thought Questions

1. What vow do we make before God at our wedding ceremony? 2. How does Scripture emphasize the sacredness of vows? 3. In what ways is the seventh commandment often violated? 4. Why was Herod's marriage unlawful? 5. What is a major key to marital happiness? **For Further Study** *Testimonies*, vol. 7, pp. 45-50. *In*

Heavenly Places, p. 202.

Children's Bible Activities

If you conduct a Sabbath School class at Church, or just for your own children, you probably already know about Children's Bible Activities. If not, you are in for a real treat. What are Children's Bible Activity sheets? They are puzzles, mazes, dot-to-dots, word codes, and more, based on various Bible Stories for children. Many of the activity sheets are colorable. There are three versions for each Bible Story: for younger children, older ones, and a teacher study guide with answers.



There are two ways to obtain these excellent resources:

(1) Children's Bible Activities on CD has 300 easy to access, reproducible activity sheets, half for younger ages and half for older ages. Order for \$29.95 from www.comresources.com.

(2) For an annual fee, you can join Children's Bible Activities online at www.bibleactivities.com, which has over 300 Bible stories and over 600 activity sheets for downloading. There is one for younger ages, one for older ages, as well as a Story Guide and Outline for each Bible story. New Bible stories are added every month to the Web site. Also, you can give access to teachers or volunteers in your church to use the site with your account number so they can access it any time from anywhere.

You are allowed to reproduce these activities for all the children in your local church, but not for other churches in your group.

Children's Bible Activity Sheets are doctrinally neutral, just telling Bible facts, so you will not have problems with false doctrines.

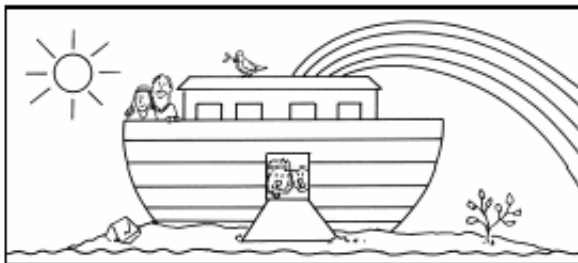
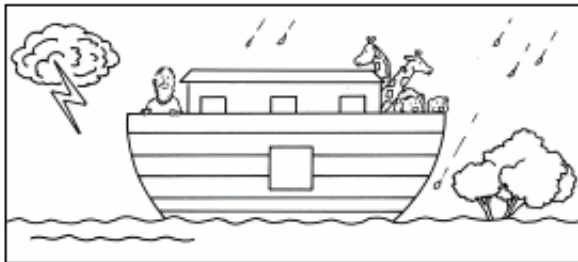
Children's Bible Activity Sheets are ready to go. Your children, younger or older, will enjoy these Bible-based activities that will add to their Sabbath delight.

I have given examples of the sheets for younger and older children for the story of Noah's Flood. Actual size of sheets is standard 8.5 x 11 inch. The Teacher sheet has the answers.



Noah loved God. God helped Noah, his family and many animals stay safe.

Circle 10 things different in the bottom picture.



Name _____

Old Testament Lesson #5



God looked at the world He'd made, and He was very sad ... The men and women on His earth were vicious and bad.

Find an ending to the incomplete words from the list below. Each ending is only used once.

- at
- ly
- ed
- re
- ish
- li
- tant
- nod
- pod
- l
- sings
- me
- tar
- ok
- eil
- onks
- on
- tops
- one
- side
- tunes
- ety
- men
- at
- eth
- lent
- knowen to man.
- day
- could not be seen, no living thing could be found.
- and saw.
- praise
- all those days.

However, there was still one man who 'went with God' all his life - so God would spare him and his sons, his daughters-in-law and wife. This man's name was Noah; God told him what to do. He and his sons would build a house - an ark - a floating zoo! It took 120 years to build it to God's plan, and then they had to fill it with all creatures known to man. When all were safe, lodged in, God shut the ark's big door. Noah thanked God each day - what could he say? For forty days and nights it rained - it covered all the ground. The mountains could not be seen, no living thing could be found. God stopped the rain and opened the door - to start over, fresh and new. What was the most important thing that Noah had to do? He built an altar to the Lord and offered thanksgiving and praise for the blessing God had given him and his sons all those days.

Color the spaces that have an x. Find 5 things from the story.

God made a covenant - a promise - with Noah. He would never destroy the earth again by flood.



Name _____

Christian Education

This world's educational system is based on the philosophy of pagan Greeks such as Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates. Socrates' theory of education, was based on a profound and consistent skepticism. In other words, it is believed that "doubt is the way to knowledge." In reality, doubt is an open door to ignorance. The serpent convinced Adam and Eve to doubt the veracity of what God had told them about not partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. All human misery and suffering resulted from doubting God. On the other hand, truth and faith are essential to understanding knowledge, and truth is a revelation from God.



Alonzo T. Jones (1850 – 1923), famous Seventh-day Adventist leader and scholar who eventually became an independent Sabbath-keeper, wrote an excellent treatise, "Christian Education." He describes how pagan educational philosophy infiltrated the early professing Christian Church and led to the great apostasy. Jones shows how the Bible should be the foundation of true Christian education, how Daniel was educated, and what was taught in the Old Testament "schools of the prophets." Unfortunately, even many so-called "Christian schools" have adopted the educational philosophy of skepticism, from the pagan Greeks. Christian educators and home school teachers and students should read "Christian Education" as a guide for true educational principles. See our website, www.giveshare.org/family/christian-education.html, or for a printed copy, send \$3 to Giving & Sharing for a 28-page reprint.

A Church of Non-Givers?

Some kind folks told us about a Church of God group in India that needs financial help. They need a male goat and several female goats to begin a herd so they can be self-supporting. Former members of the Worldwide Church of God are sometimes loath to contribute to charitable causes, because they feel they were bilked by their former association, and their contributions often squandered. As a result, it is difficult to convince them that any cause is worth supporting.

Too many ex-Worldwidiers are not givers anymore — they all say the same thing: "How do we know where it goes? — we have been burned before." So, we have become a church of "non-givers." We will be judged on our "giving and sharing," and recipients will be judged on what they do with our contributions. What is your attitude? "The measure you give is the measure you receive" is what we live by, and God has never let us down.

— adapted from Karen and Tom Schluter, Duluth, MN.

It is not popular to support Tithing, but we care more about what the Bible says, than what people think. You should be tithing. For proofs, see our free book, *The Tithe in Scripture*, Order Code 012, 60 pages, from Giving & Sharing.

Why are so many people turned off about tithing? Because of the "just send money" pitches of religious hucksters. Recently, a large Church of God group instructed its elders and hosts to "IF AT ALL POSSIBLE — please mail the HDO [Holy Day Offerings] *between* morning and afternoon services. . . ." In the eyes of some, resting on the Sabbath and the Holy Days must be superceded when headquarters wants money.

Mueller, the Apostle of Faith, trusted God to provide funds for his orphanages. God never let him down. A "work of faith" does not need to beg its followers for contributions.

When you search for a job, you look for a company with attractive compensation and benefits. In fact, in some cases, the benefits may be even more important to an employee than the salary they receive. Employees are interested in company-paid pension or retirement plans, medical insurance, as well as paid vacation and sick days. In the United States, company-paid employee benefit costs are typically 30-40% of salaries.

It is surprising that some employees do not avail themselves of company-paid benefits. For example, a relative of mine has a good job for a stable company, yet he does not participate in the company's 401(k) retirement plan, foregoing the company match of tax-free contributions to his retirement savings account.

The Sabbath has more valuable benefits than any employer can provide. However, most of the world does not participate in the Sabbath Benefit Plan. They opt out of the best benefits in the universe. Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man," **Mark 2:27**. Or, in other words, "The Sabbath was made for the benefit of man." Let us examine some of the many benefits of the Sabbath, and see how we can fully participate.

The Sabbath is a family day, a day of joy, a meeting with God, a day of equality, a day of freedom, a day of remembrance, a "palace in time," a service day, and even, if you understand it correctly, a day of work.

Family Day

The daily grind causes us to rush to get the kids off to school in the morning, get to work through rush-hour traffic, work a hard day, return in rush-hour traffic, rush to shop and prepare meals, and often rush to a game or school activity in the evening. We meet our family members in passing, and quickly conduct the necessary business of family affairs during the week.

The Sabbath ends all rush hours. It allows us to take quality time with our loved ones. Our sons and our daughters are to keep the Sabbath with us, **Exodus 20:10**. On Sabbath, the family takes time to get to know each other, to eat together, to talk and engage in quality activities together, such as listening to fine music, enjoying the creation, a light game, visiting friends, family Bible Study, attending Sabbath Services together, etc.

Members of the Mormon Church (Latter Day Saints) understand the necessity for regular family activities. They designate one night a week as "Family night" when the whole family takes time to do spiritual and physical activities together. We need to follow their fine example, especially during the time God has designated as Family Day.

Even some Sabbath-keepers do not fully

participate in Family Day benefits. They load up poor mother with extra work on the Sabbath. I make it an extra point to help my wife Shirley clear the dishes off the table on Sabbath, and do other things to lighten her burden on the Sabbath, so that she can fully enjoy the blessings of Family Day.

You don't have any immediate family? As a Sabbath-keeper, you have an extended family of brethren. Take time to be with them, and enjoy their company.

Day of Joy

Happiness is a state of mind. One of the shortcomings of our modern society is that we are too rushed to appreciate the good things that we have. On Sabbath, we take time to enjoy our family, ourselves, our Creator and His Creation, our accomplishments, good food, fine music, and other simple, yet sublime, pleasures of life. On the Sabbath, even food tastes better. My friend, Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, is a native of Italy. He enjoys spaghetti with special sauce. Authentic Italian sauce takes much time to prepare. It adds zest to the pasta. Dr. Sam says that the Sabbath is like this sauce: it adds zest to life. The Sabbath takes the ordinary aspects of life and adds spice to them!

When we walk through a park or on a country road with loved ones on the Sabbath, we stop to appreciate the fresh air, hills and trees, the birds and wildlife, and feel closer to the Creator who made these beautiful things. The grass is greener on the Sabbath!

On a special weekend, we went camping in the Big Horn Mountains, to my favorite place high upon a mountain meadow, a wilderness place where you can see God. On Sabbath morning, I got up early and knelt on a rocky crag to pray. As I was praying, a female deer sauntered along the mountain trail right next to me. She did not hear or see me until she was only a few feet from me. Then, her eyes met mine, and, startled, she paused for a moment of curiosity, then bolted down the trail. As the sun rose, the cathedral-like mountains were bathed in red-orange light. God's presence was so eminent you could practically taste and feel Him. Every Sabbath is like being in God's Country!

One of my favorite joys of the Sabbath is that I have more time to listen to what God says. Many times on a Friday evening, after a hard week's work, after a great meal and family activities, after the rest of the family is in bed, I return to my study to receive from God a "second wind." I am no longer tired; I am refreshed, lifted up on eagle's wings. As I study the Bible, new truths are opened before me. *This Sabbath joy is unspeakable, a deep knowledge of the reality and awesome power of the Almighty.*

Meeting with God

Yes, the greatest joy is our weekly divine meeting with God. The Sabbath is a holy convocation, a *feast* (Hebrew: *mo'ed*, "divine appointment"), **Leviticus 23:2-3**. My dentist's receptionist calls me the day before a checkup, to remind me of my dental appointment. It is easy for me to forget, even with a reminder! However, there are so many benefits of the Sabbath, that in thirty-five years of Sabbath-keeping, even old forgetful me has never forgotten this divine appointment with God! It is too good to pass up.

I have met John F. Kennedy, Bill Gates, and perhaps a few other famous people, but meeting our awesome God on His Sabbath day, tops everything! The Psalmist expresses this well, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore," **Psalm 16:11**.

The famous Patrick of Ireland was a Sabbath-keeper. His biographer, Muirchu, said that "The angel was want to come to him [Patrick] on every seventh day of the week," and further, "Patrick as a man who was *visited by . . . God every seventh day*" (see Leslie Hardinge, *The Celtic Church in Britain*, pp. 78-79). *God visits us every Sabbath day!*

Day of Equality

Ostensibly, Communists want to establish an egalitarian society, where everyone is economically equal. After a seventy-year experiment, the utter failure of Communism should be apparent to all. In Communism's heyday, elite Communist bosses lived like kings, while the working class people toiled in poverty. There was no equality there.

In America, unless you are exposed to inner city ghettos or Appalachian backwoods poverty, you might not notice great inequities of wealth. But, go to a developing country like India, Indonesia, Mexico, or El Salvador, and you will see vast distinctions in class and status, between the elite and the abject poor.

One of the great benefits of the Sabbath is that the Sabbath is a great equalizer. Thomas Jefferson, author of our Declaration of Independence, did not pull out of thin air the phrase, "all men are created equal, and they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, and that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." That idea comes right out of the Bible, to be specific, the fourth commandment. **Deuteronomy 5:14** states that our servants and even our animals, are not to work for us on the Sabbath day. Whether a king or a servant, on the Sabbath day, nobody is to work! But even the king, for example, should make his own bed and clean up his dishes, on the Sabbath!

The rich are not allowed to continue reaping financial gain on the Sabbath. The poor are not forced to work for the rich on God's Holy Sabbath. Keeping the Sabbath demonstrates that every human being is equal in the sight of God. Obviously, this is a great physical benefit, especially to the poor and lowly.

However, the mental benefit of Sabbath equality is far greater than the economic benefit. No matter how far down the social ladder you are, no matter what your physical or mental handicaps, the Sabbath makes you equal to the richest and wisest man in the world. Knowing this, your attitude is totally

changed. The Sabbath enables those of low estate to walk and talk with kings. **Psalm 119:45-46**, “And I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy precepts. I will speak of Thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.”

The Sabbath leads to the recognition of the dignity and worth of every human being as equal in the sight of God. What a benefit!

Day of Freedom

Black Africans wanted freedom from the white man’s colonial rule. Yet, in almost every case, they exchanged fairly benevolent colonial governments for corrupt, brutal, dictatorships, which destroyed and ruined their land of vast natural resources. Today, neither Africans nor most of the rest of the world are free. Many people, in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., want “freedom now.” But, they do not have it.

So, what is freedom? It is the ability and good sense to choose to do the right thing, and the willingness to accept the consequences of making the wrong choices. Freedom cannot exist without God’s Law. True freedom is obeying God’s Commandments.

The Sabbath is a day of freedom. Like the Israelites of old, before we kept the Sabbath, we were in bondage to this world’s rat race. Without the Sabbath, life was a treadmill of never-ending work we “had” to do. No sauce with the pasta.

In the office where I work, there are sometimes “crunch times,” when reports have to be submitted to management or corporate headquarters, and times when critical tasks “have to” be done, “now.” It is not uncommon for Fridays to be especially demanding and hectic. When sundown approaches, I stop work, and am liberated from this stressful situation. No, it is not easy, and sometimes Sabbath-keepers lose their jobs because they refuse to work on God’s Holy Day. But, He never forsakes His people. The freedom to rest from servile work is a wonderful benefit.

We work too hard, we are too stressed, we have too many tasks that must be done, and we worry about jobs not done. We make bricks, with and without straw. As a wit once quipped, “The only man to have his work done by Friday, was Robinson Crusoe.”

“Sabbath” comes from a word which means “stop.” Sabbath is a “timeout” from that which presses down and oppresses us. It is a weekly vacation, a holiday, and much

more, a holy day. **Deuteronomy 5:15** says, “And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.”

The Sabbath is a celebration of our freedom from sin, freedom from endless toil. Those who do not know and keep this twenty-four-hour period of rest, relaxation, and recreation, do not have freedom. *Bless the Lord for the freedom of His Holy Sabbath!*

Day of Remembrance

Am I forgetful or not? One of the biggest complaints of my fellow employees at work is that I sometimes forget the details of a difficult project on which they are working. When they return to ask me for help, they sometimes need to rehearse what they told me before. There are many items on my plate, and my brain only retains so much information, and can focus on only so much. Older people often think of the hereafter. They go into a room looking for something, and wonder what are they here, after!

The Sabbath provides me fifty-two times a year to remember who God is, who I am, who my family is, and what my priorities are in life. The Sabbath is a day of remembrance. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” **Exodus 20:8**.

All too easily, we forget God and our purpose in life. Our plate is full. Sabbath benefits us by clearing our plate of life’s responsibilities, so that we can remember the Lord of the Sabbath. Since Sabbath is a family day, a day of joy and freedom, a day of meeting with God, by nature, the Sabbath creates memorable events that we love to savor. A shined up car, clean and smiling faces of the kids, Sabbath services, fellowship with the brethren, special meals, God’s creation, music, and much more, *the Sabbath reminds us of the joy of our salvation.*

A “Palace in Time”

Abraham Joshua Heschel, in his classic book, *The Sabbath: its Meaning for Modern Man*, gives an excellent philosophical exposition about the meaning of the Sabbath. Religions not based on the Bible sanctify places and images, physical things. In contrast, the religion of the Bible sanctifies

time. The first thing mentioned in the Bible as being “holy,” is not a temple, an altar, a statue, or anything like that. **Genesis 2:3**, “And God blessed the seventh day, and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done,” NIV (see also NAB).

“The meaning of the Sabbath,” Heschel reminds us, “is to celebrate time rather than space.” Six days a week we toil under the tyranny of things of space, this physical world. On the Sabbath, we seek to become attuned to the holiness of time. God is eternal: He was, is, and ever shall be. God fills all of time, past, present, and future. By observing the sanctified special time of the Sabbath, we enter the presence of the Holy One. We turn from the creation to focus on the Creator.

Sabbath is not an interlude so we can go out and do something we think is better. It is the object of the six days of toil. We observe the Sabbath wrongly if we count the hours and minutes until it is over. Instead, we should relish each precious moment of this holy time. Heschel says, “Labor is a craft, but perfect rest is an art.” The seventh day is a “palace in time” that God builds with us through our soul and our joy. It is a day founded on love, and that is why Sabbath-keepers refer to the Sabbath as a “bride.” As a young man eagerly looks forward to being married to his lovely bride, so we are in love with the Sabbath.

There are many palaces on earth today. From the Biltmore House in North Carolina to Hearst Castle in San Simeon, California, people love to tour palaces and see exotic rooms and furniture. But, the greatest palace is the spiritual palace in time, the Holy Sabbath. *In the Sabbath palace, I am a king and the richest person in the world.*

A Service Day, Day of Work

Another great benefit of the Sabbath is that it provides us an opportunity to work and serve others. Have I gone daft? Isn't the Sabbath supposed to be a day of rest? Isn't working on the Sabbath day forbidden?

Jesus shocked and offended the Pharisees when on the Sabbath He healed a man that had been infirm and unable to walk for thirty-eight years. Jesus retorted, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,” **John 5:17**.

In case you missed an essential point about the Sabbath, let's review a basic

principle. Not *all* work is forbidden on the Sabbath. “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all *thy* work,” **Exodus 20:9**. You may do all *YOUR* work on the first six days of every week. But, on the seventh day, the Sabbath, you can do only *GOD'S* work. You can serve others, but not for gainful employment (servile work). Jesus went out of His way to heal even chronically ill people on the Sabbath. He could have waited to heal them on any other day of the week. Why did He do this? Not to do away with the Sabbath, but to enhance, magnify, promote, elevate, the Sabbath day. Acts of compassion and mercy are not only allowed on the Sabbath, they typify what the Sabbath is all about. God made the Sabbath for man, not man for the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a tool that we should use to serve others, which, after all, truly makes us happy.

You don't have time to serve others? Don't have time to visit an elderly lonely widow, a sick friend, or time to spend with a child needing attention? The Sabbath gives you the time to serve others. And in serving others, we are actually serving God, and ourselves, **Matthew 25:40**.

Jesus “worked” on the Sabbath day serving others with acts of compassion. *If we are to follow His steps, we will work on the Sabbath day doing good for others.*

Remember the Benefits

I have covered some of the benefits of the Sabbath. It would be dumb to opt out of these astounding benefits. Yet, strange as it may seem, many professing Sabbath-keepers don't sign up for all of God's benefits available to them. They don't make the Sabbath a family day; the Sabbath is a harsh day of do's and don'ts to them, rather than a day of great joy; they walk into the doctor's office but miss their appointment with the “doctor”; they treat others, even fellow Sabbatarians, as second-class citizens; like the Pharisees, they make the Sabbath a restrictive burden to themselves and others rather than a day of freedom; they forget God on His day of remembrance; for them, the Sabbath is a hovel rather than a “palace in time”; they miss out on the joy of serving others on the Sabbath.

Don't lose out on the Sabbath benefits! “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits,” **Psalms 103:2**.

— by Richard C. Nickels

Our friend, Pastor Herb Teitgen, gave us this order of service for members of the United Church of God, an International Association. This is one of several formats he uses. This may help those called upon to perform funeral services.

Order of Service

Remembering the Life of _____
Songs of Inspiration (before Ceremony)
Processional with Casket & Body
Opening Prayer
Opening comments
Vocal Solo
Remembering _____ (Comments by Direct
Family Member)
Comments from other Family Members
Vocal Solo
Funeral Message
Prayer
Pallbearers come forward and carry body to
Graveside
Brief Graveside Service & Committal Prayer
Reception, Fellowship, and Luncheon follows

Funeral Service

Good morning/afternoon, FRIENDS.

Thank you so much for making the effort to take time from your schedules and to drive here to be here to GIVE COMFORT and ENCOURAGEMENT to the family and friends who grieve the loss of _____, as we join together to REMEMBER and to HONOR _____ and his/her LIFE.

At times like this, it is also appropriate to reflect on the important issues of life, death, and the purpose of human life. We try to grapple with the questions concerning what lies behind and beyond the shadowy curtain of the grave.

(Comments from obituary and other information about life of deceased)

The first musical selection will be:

Comments from family member:

The second musical selection will be:

Many people focus on a special baby born to His mother Mary long ago in Bethlehem.

That birth and the Incarnation that began the birth process was an awesome event in the history of mankind, and in the history of the Universe.

It is only through the Holy Scriptures that

we have knowledge of the details of what took place and WHY that birth took place. The birth was only the first step in a series of events that resulted in the death of the Son of God — Jesus the Christ — who became our Savior and Redeemer.

This was not an ordinary baby, or just the product of human conception.

(The Islamic community recognizes Jesus as a great Prophet, but NOT as the son of God.)

The Apostle John tells us that God as the Word — the Word of God — became a flesh and blood human being.

John 1:14, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

The identity of this One named as the Word is explained by John.

John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.”

Those things made by Him included the first human beings, Adam and Eve — from whom have come you and I, and all humanity.

The opening book of God’s revelation to mankind — the book of Genesis of the Bible — describes that awesome moment.

Genesis 1:26-27, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: . . . So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.”

We also read that they were made of the dust of the ground and air was breathed into their lungs to cause their bodies to breathe and maintain life.

Genesis 2:7, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

The first humans were given instructions by their Creator.

The first humans failed to heed the instructions of their Creator.

They disobeyed the Creator of the universe and the Creator of mankind and they SINNED!

They were cut off from the Garden of Eden and cut off from the tree of life.

God told them: **Genesis 3:19**, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Adam and Eve eventually died as all flesh and blood creatures will, but when they disobeyed and sinned, they were warned "dying you shall die."

Even this common or ordinary Death is our enemy. It takes us from family and friends and loved ones.

There is a greater enemy — a Second Death — more deadly than this first death.

This Final or Eternal Death results from the transgression of God's holy laws.

This second death — or permanent death — comes as the consequence of sinning and failing to live by God's laws and instructions.

None of us can escape the serious consequences of sin.

We read in Paul's letter to the Romans: **Romans 3:23**, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

There is a way to escape the clutches of this formidable foe!

Back in **Genesis 3**, we have the allusion to the Lamb of God who would be bruised by the Serpent, or Satan, but His shed blood and death would take away the sin of the whole of mankind who receive it.

John 3:15, "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

A believer has faith in Jesus of Nazareth and His sacrifice for sins, and also believes His message and instructions contained throughout His Word.

Edmund Vance Cooke wrote:

"Death comes with a crawl, or comes with a pounce,

And whether he's slow or spry,

It isn't the fact that you're dead that counts,

But only, how did you die?"

We humans must repent and turn from our sins and also accept Jesus as our personal Savior and as The Way. Jesus came to amplify and demonstrate living by the Way of life based on God's commandments as applied through the

love of God and empowered by the Spirit of God.

We can then start on the road to Life — Eternal Life — which God promises to give to those who have been converted and have been prepared by God and have accepted God's pardon and reconciliation through repentance of sin and belief in Jesus — His shed blood and His message — the gospel of the kingdom.

When we come into the presence of death, we are reminded of:

- Our OWN MORTALITY,
- Our OWN VULNERABILITY,
- Our OWN TEMPORARY CONDITION . . . as a FLESH AND BLOOD HUMAN BEING.

MAN and all other EARTHBOUND creatures MUST FACE DEATH. We are not designed to live forever in our present form and substance.

Ecclesiastes 9:5, "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten."

Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

The Scriptures tell us that the DEAD are NOT CONSCIOUS; They DON'T FEEL PAIN or SUFFER or COMMUNICATE.

UNLESS and UNTIL something EXTRAORDINARY and UNUSUAL occurs, the DEAD will STAY DEAD in a SLEEPLIKE condition.

This same after-death condition will befall all mankind who die, including you and me.

Hebrews 9:27-28, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

The ancient patriarch Job pondered death and what lay beyond the grave.

Job 14:13-14, "O that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that Thou wouldest keep me secret, until Thy wrath be past, that Thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again?"

The Bible also tells us about — the HOPE OF THE DEAD! There IS LIFE after DEATH!

The Bible warns of a difficult time of trouble that will come about at the end of the age, before the kingdom and ruling government of God is set up on this earth.

There will be an illusion of peace that will

lull and deceive mankind before sudden catastrophe strikes.

But Jesus, the Prince of Peace, will return to take over the reigns of rulership and usher in a time of true worldwide peace. At that time, He will open the graves and call forth His elect.

Daniel 12:1-2, “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt [later on, after the 1000 years of peace].”

Jesus Himself spoke of that hour. **John 5:28**, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice.”

Jesus explained to His Apostles, recorded in the famous Olivet Prophecy regarding the conditions and time of His return to the earth: **Matthew 24:29-31, 44**, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. . . . Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

The Apostle Paul writes powerfully and eloquently of THE RETURN of Jesus Christ to this EARTH and the LONG-AWAITED RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD — of human beings who once lived but are now in a state of SLEEPLIKE UNCONSCIOUSNESS in the GRAVE:

I Thessalonians 4:13, 16-17, “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. . . . For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall

we ever be with the Lord.”

- Death is an ENEMY, a BIG ENEMY.
- But — DEATH will be DEFEATED.

The Apostle Paul again encourages us in the well-known passage in **I Corinthians 15:50-54**, “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

The true believer believes these verses and puts his/her hope in the resurrection by faith in the Lord and Master and soon-coming king.

LET US PRAY:

- Thank you for _____ and his/her life and the chance to enjoy life’s experiences with _____.
- Remember _____ on that day of the resurrection and all those that are Yours now waiting in the graves.
- Dwell with us to give us comfort and hope.
- Help us to remember and appreciate the life of _____ in a positive way.
- Comfort and strengthen us in our grief and loss through your Truth and Presence.
- Help us to reach out to one another with love and care.
- Please send Jesus Christ soon to set up His kingdom on this earth.

The pall-bearers and the family may rise to get their coats.

After these have escorted the body from the church building, the remainder of you may get your coats and join the family at graveside.

There will be a graveside service at the cemetery.

After that you are invited to enjoy a luncheon and visitation.

NOTE: the following section is a basic funeral service and guidelines, by the United Church of God, provided by Herb Teitgen, and edited by Richard C. Nickels. For local UCG congregations, see www.ucg.org.

Basic Funeral Service

Applicable for Both Chapel and Graveside Service

There is always a sense of loss, sadness, in the face of death, even when the death brings relief to one's suffering. There is nothing wrong with this. It is most natural to grieve over a loved one, whom you will miss in this physical life.

(During the service it is normally a good idea to read an obituary and add comments about the deceased of a personal nature. This provides more of a personal touch to your message.)

There are a number of scriptures to which you could turn to in giving the basic funeral service. Here are a few for your consideration:

Hebrews 9:27. We're physical, mortal creatures. This life is only temporary. Death is something we all will eventually have to face.

We view death differently than God, primarily because many of us do not understand it, nor do we know what lies beyond. There is only One who really knows. The scriptures are the only authentic source we have when it comes to such a subject as death.

I Thessalonians. 4:13-18. Paul wanted them to have the facts about the death of their loved ones. Ignorance leads to fear, and excess sorrow.

Christ said in **John 8:32**, that you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free! The truth frees us from wrong ideas, excessive sorrow, worry, etc.

We must address some difficult issues. The question "What is the state of the dead?" must be addressed. **Psalms 146:4** reads, "His [man's] breath goeth forth, he returns to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish." **Ecclesiastes 9:10** states: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest."

These and many other scriptures show there is no suffering after death. Death is revealed in dozens of places in the Bible as simply being like a deep sleep.

I Thessalonians. 4:14-18. There is a hope held out to all, the hope of the resurrection. There is an entire chapter in the Bible devoted to the subject of the resurrection. This chapter is **I Corinthians 15**.

I Corinthians 15:19-26. For most people, death is a feared enemy.

I Corinthians 15:22. God made man physical first to give him the opportunity to learn how to live and how not to live, to build

within him His Godly character.

As the inner man is changed, so the outer man will be too! **I Corinthians 15:42-49.**

I Corinthians 15:50-55. God has a plan He is working out. Man is not an evolutionary accident. God is developing a spiritual family, a spiritual kingdom, not of physical human beings subject to human problems, and weaknesses.

I Corinthians 15:51, ". . . we shall all be changed." It is through the resurrection that God destroys death.

John 5:25-28. All the dead will be resurrected. In **I Corinthians 15**, we learn there is an order to resurrection.

Revelation 21:1-4.

(Prayer) Thank God for His truth, for the life and example of the deceased and ask for comfort for the family.

At the Graveside, the Interment

Job 14:13-15. Everyone who has ever lived will one day live again, in a different world, better hopes, dreams, with a knowledge of laws that lead to happiness, and fulfillment.

{Prayer} Committal of the deceased to God for His keeping until the resurrection.

Early Death of An Adult

Most of the previous information could be used, especially emphasizing that all who have died will live again, that we will have an opportunity to some day be with him/her again!

Psalms 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints."

It is impossible for anyone to understand or be able to explain why some suffer more than others.

Job was a good man, a righteous man, yet he went through a very discouraging season of time in his life in which he despaired of life itself. In **Job 7:16**, Job was wanting to give up and simply die.

Job 7:17-18. What is man? Is he the product of, the offspring of, evolution? Why is man? Job's words: "Why is man so important

to you? Why pay attention to what he does? You inspect him every morning and test him every minute.” (Good News Version)

John 1:10, 12-13. Man was created for a purpose — to become members of God’s family. Paul called this a mystery. Peter said for us to become holy as our Father is holy — to become like Him even in this life.

Suffering is a part of the process. “We must through much tribulation enter the Kingdom of God,” **Acts 14:22**. See also **I Peter 4:12-13**.

Romans 8:16-21. Paul writes that it is through this suffering that we learn what life is all about. It is more than meat and drink. Christ said “that a man’s life consists not in the abundance of things that he possesses.”

Today’s difficulties are sometimes time and chance. Sometimes it is part of our education; sometimes an act of mercy for future consideration.

It might be appropriate to read the following as well:

Isaiah 57:1-2. We now live in a time of world trouble — a time of war and fear of war, famine, incurable diseases — and this, according to prophecies, is only the beginning of sorrows, with even more terrible times to come. So God mercifully takes some away from the evils the rest of us may have to live through. We cannot bring the dead back to us in this evil, unhappy world, but we can join them in the coming Kingdom of God.

We look forward to seeing our loved ones in the resurrection.

Conclude with a prayer asking God to comfort the family.

At the graveside, the interment:

Job 14:14-15. A change must occur. This change is first of all in the inward man. The ultimate change takes place later in the resurrection. Man is changed from mortal to immortal. Finally, man is brought into the family of Almighty God. He is the Potter, and we are the clay.

Death of A Child

Ordinarily, on the average, mankind is given 70-80 years to live in this physical life. Even after a full lifetime, there is still sadness and sorrow when a life comes to an end. These feelings are amplified when that life is taken prematurely — when one does not have the opportunity to live out those allotted years!

Often our minds are filled with many questions. We ask why? Why would God allow this to happen? Certainly it is part of being

human to wonder why certain things happen the way they do. We simply cannot answer these questions. **Ecclesiastes** speaks of time and chance, of simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. It rains on the just and the unjust.

We are unable to provide the definitive answer in such cases. There are some things we can say:

1. We know that when one member suffers the whole family suffers. We all suffer with the bereaved family, **I Corinthians 12:26**.

2. There is no suffering in the grave. **I Thessalonians 4:13**, “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope” (NKJV). It is like a deep sleep. We can take comfort that there is no pain, or suffering after death.

3. This is Satan’s world, and he is the author of the violence and hatred presently in it. This life is not all there is, **I Corinthians 15:19**. There is a future and it will be a better world. We have the hope of the resurrection, the hope of the world to come.

4. We serve a God who has the power to strengthen us and comfort us in times like these, **II Corinthians 1:3-5**.

5. Death is not permanent. **John 5:28-29**, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth.”

The New Testament reveals to us that this world (this age) is now under the influence of Satan. He is called the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air. But when Jesus Christ returns, He will bind Satan and bring an end to his influence. In time, all who have lived will live again in God’s world. Those who have died prematurely will have an opportunity to live out their natural lives in a better world.

Isaiah 65:17-23 speaks of this time, as does **Revelation 21:1-4**.

Still Birth

(A few times we have been asked to conduct a funeral of a baby born dead and in some cases one which had not gone full term. Here are some thoughts for such cases.)

A study was conducted a number of years ago of women who gave up their babies for adoption. Some of the women’s babies were taken from them at birth — the mother never saw them. For many of these women, the following years were difficult. Often times

around the date of the child's birth, they would go into seclusion, celebrating the birthday alone. They would wonder about every child they saw who was of the same age as theirs. Could this one be their child?

The other group of women in the study had seen their babies and had in many cases handed them over to their new mother. They, through this, were able to terminate their own relationship with the infant. This group as a whole did not have the same problems as the other. They had been able to say goodbye to their little one. That had made the difference.

A funeral service is for the living, not for those who have died. Your goal is to serve the grieving family under these adverse circumstances.

It is part of being human to wonder why certain things happen the way they do. We're not always able to know. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. It rains on the just and the unjust.

The following items may be helpful to cover with the family:

1. This life is not all there is, **I Corinthians 15:29**. There is more to come which will be better than anything we have experienced. We have the hope of the resurrection, the hope of the world to come.

2. We also know that there is a divine reason for human life, a divine purpose for our lives. This life is a training ground for the future, **I Corinthians 15:57-58**.

3. We serve a God who has the power to strengthen us and comfort us in times like these, **II Corinthians 1:3-5**. We are called to help Christ teach and counsel others in the world to come. God calls people from every background and with all types of life experiences. This makes it possible for there to be an understanding of what others have experienced.

We must keep looking forward to the time of the Kingdom of God when the sufferings and problems of this present evil world will be corrected, **Revelation 21:1-4**.

(Prayer of comfort for the family, committal of the remains.)

Suicide

In this case a simple, basic funeral service would be appropriate. To focus on some of the points dealing with the condition of this present evil world ruled by Satan that too often brings

people to great hopelessness would be proper under the circumstances.

Focus on the fact *every* person who has ever lived will live again. God has promised and He cannot lie. People need to be given hope that eternal judgment has not been rendered on these individuals. They need to understand that there is a hope for the future.

If the family members are willing, to visit or phone after the funeral would be appropriate. Families that have gone through such a traumatic episode in their lives will need assistance to recover. To offer your help beyond the funeral service is appropriate and can do a great deal of good for the grieving family members.

Memorial Service

Occasionally you may be called upon to deliver a memorial service where there is no body. This can occur in the case of a cremation or failure to recover a body from an accident or suicide. A memorial service may be conducted shortly after the death of an individual, or in some cases several days or weeks later. While it may be awkward delivering a service without the presence of a body, the purpose of the service is the same — to bring comfort and encouragement to the bereaved. Never take such a service lightly. Take the time to prepare your message as though this was a normal funeral service.

In the case of a cremation, there may be a graveside committal along with the memorial in a church or chapel. A brief comment and short committal prayer are both appropriate in these cases.

Concluding Comments

We must never forget that our primary function at the time of death is to assist the family. Their feelings must be uppermost in our minds as we think through the procedures that will be expected of us. One item that often gets forgotten whenever there is a death in the family is the follow-up. Our care for the family should not end with the ceremony. Cards, phone calls, and personal visits can provide great support and comfort to a grieving family. Never minimize the impact you may have on someone's life during such a time. Ω

Note: False doctrines of going to Heaven or going to Hell when you die distort the understanding

Gopherwood and Current Scholarship

The Bible states that the Ark of Noah was to be made of gopherwood. The Hebrew word (Note 1) is *gopher* (#1613). This word only appears once in the entire Bible. The following verse, **Genesis 6:14**, is from the New King James Version of the Bible: “Make yourself an ark of *gopherwood*; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch.”

What was gopherwood? The response of one Bible dictionary is typical (Note 2). “Gopher Wood: the wood from which Noah’s ark was made (**Genesis 6:14**). The word “gopher” is unknown elsewhere in Hebrew or allied languages. It may refer to some resinous wood, like pine, cedar, or cypress; or the reference may be to boats made of interwoven willow branches and palm leaves, coated on the outside with bitumen.”

Many Bible commentaries have entries for gopherwood. Unfortunately they do not shed much light on the subject of what exactly gopherwood is. The two citations below are representative of the comments that will be found in most Bible aids about Noah and the ark.

“Both the providence of God, and the grace of God, own and crown the endeavours of the obedient and diligent. God gave him very particular instructions concerning this building, which could not but be admirably well fitted for the purpose when Infinite Wisdom itself was the architect. It must be made of *gopher-wood*. Noah, doubtless, knew what sort of wood that was, though we now do not, whether cedar, or cypress, or what other.” (Note 3)

“Make thee an ark — ark, a hollow chest (**Exodus 2:3**). *gopherwood* — probably cypress, remarkable for its durability and abounding on the Armenian mountains. Pitch it within and without — mineral pitch, asphalt, naphtha, or some bituminous substance, which, when smeared over and become hardened, would make it perfectly watertight.” (Note 4)

Bible translations are not much help. The New Living Translation (Note 5) and the New Revised Standard Version (Note 6), respectively, translate **Genesis 6:14** as follows: “Make a boat from *resinous wood* and seal it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks

and stalls throughout its interior.”

“Make yourself an ark of *cypress wood*; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch.”

Almost all the other Bible translations use the word cypress, cedar, or gopherwood in describing the wood used in the construction of the Ark. Although cypress wood is often used in the place of gopherwood the two terms are not equivalent. The Hebrew word for cypress is *Tirzah*, #8645. If the translators of the Bible wanted to say cypress they would have used the word cypress just as they did in the book of **Isaiah 44:14** (NKJV). “He cuts down cedars for himself, and takes the cypress (*Tirzah*) and the oak; he secures it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it.”

Another common word that is used in the place of gopherwood is the word cedar. Once again there is a Hebrew word for cedar (*erez*, #730) that could have been used by the translators. This word is used more than 67 times in the Old Testament where it is translated cedar tree, cedar timber, and cedar wood. A good example is found in the book of **I Kings 6:9** (NKJV). “So he built the house, and finished it; and covered the house with beams and boards of cedar [*erez*].”

Obviously, the word gopherwood used in **Genesis 6:14** cannot be interpreted or translated as cedar, cypress, or any other type of modern-day wood. Thus one can see that Biblical scholarship is silent on the meaning of this word.

Similarity to Other Hebrew Words

Although the word gopher (#1613) only appears once in the Bible, there are some Biblical words that are very similar to the word used for gopher. The word for pitch that is used twice in **Genesis 6:14** (KJV) is translated from two closely related Hebrew words. “Make thee an ark of gopher [#1613] wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch [#3722] it within and without with pitch [#3724].”

These Hebrew words are shown in Table 1. Notice that the words for gopher, *kaphar*, and *kopher* are all very similar in their English translation, in their Hebrew spelling, and in their pronunciation.

Hebrew	Pronunciation	Strong's #	Lexicon Definition (Note 7)
Gopher	go'-fer	1613	Cypress?, gopher, gopherwood, wood of which the ark was made, meaning and exact type unknown.
Kaphar	kaw-far'	3722	To cover, purge, make an atonement, make reconciliation, cover over with pitch.
Kopher	ko'-fer	3724	Price of a life, ransom, bribe, asphalt, pitch (as a covering), name of a plant.

*Table 1. The similarity between the Hebrew words translated “gopher,” and “pitch” in **Genesis 6:14**. [The Hebrew word for brimstone (**Genesis 19:24**, etc.), gophreeth, #1614, is derived from gopher, #1613.]*

The Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible (Note 8), which uses Hebrew names and words in the text for clarity, has an interesting translation of **Genesis 6:14**. “Make a *teivah* of *gofer* wood. You shall make rooms in the *teivah*, and shall seal it inside and outside with *kofer*.”

The word for gopherwood and the word for pitch are very similar. The word *kopher* comes from the root word *kaphar* (see Table 1), *kaphar* is often translated atonement (**Leviticus 16:6**). This was similar to the effect that pitch or *kopher* could have on the surface of the material it covered. It would have a covering or purging effect, which is what atonement, means in a spiritual sense. An Old Testament play on words is taking place in **Genesis 6:14**. The word *kopher* meant to cover, protect, purge, and atone for sin. The very similar word gopher, which was wood covered with pitch, would imply the same in a physical sense. The gopherwood (pitch covered wood) would cover, protect, and purge any harm directed toward the family of Noah by the rising floodwaters. The gopherwood was a type of atonement barrier. It pictured the protection and salvation of Jesus Christ through his payment of his life as a ransom and atonement for humanities' sins.

This atonement scenario and the similarities between the Hebrew words in **Genesis 6:14** seem to indicate that the word gopher and gopherwood are closely related to the word for pitch. ***In other words, the word gopherwood is not a type of wood but a wood process.*** Specifically the process of using pitch or bitumen combined with wood. It has often been assumed that the pitch process applied to the wood may have been only on the sides, that is the inside surface and the

outside surface of the ark. In actuality, the pitch process would have been internal as well as external. Since atonement must take place not only in the outward actions of a person but also in the heart, the analogy would be complete with gopherwood having an internal coating of pitch.

Use of Pitch as Glue by the Ancients

The word pitch refers not only to natural bitumen, which is often found seeping from the ground, but also to manufactured pitch. There are many examples of how pitch was used by the ancients. In the ancient Roman Empire boiling birch bark and extracting the resins yielded a glue-like tar. This resin was used to glue together broken ceramic pots. Birch bark tar chewing gum was also used thousands of years ago in the Neolithic times as a cleaner for teeth (Notes 9, 10). A recent article, among many others, shows how this glue was manufactured. This ancient “super-glue” was detected on remnants of two tools that were unearthed in Germany. The site called Koenigsau, in the foothill of the Harz Mountains revealed the technical abilities of the people that produced the glue. The glue had been used to secure flint implements to wooden handles. One of the finds showed an impression of a fingerprint on the surface of the pitch, which was prepared by heating birch bark to between 340-400°C. Lower temperatures would not allow the resin in the wood to melt and be extracted. If the temperatures were too high this would burn the tar that had been extracted from the birch and render it unusable. This required a large amount of intellectual and technical knowledge. “The very fact that birch bark pitch was identified [in the artifacts] already

proclaims the intellectual and technical abilities of the Neanderthals.” (Note 11)

In the Middle East natural bitumen was used to haft spears heads and flint knives on wooden handles, to set jewelry, as a coating for boats, as a glue to repair damage to statues, as a sealant for pipes and plumbing and as a glue in the manufacture of compound bows. It was also used as a medicine in varying concentrations. It had extensive uses as documented by much scientific literature (Note 12). It was used by Neanderthal man anciently, long before the flood of Noah, and still is being used to this day. This pitch or resin-like glue would undoubtedly be used in the constructions of beams and wooden structures as a preservative and a strengthening agent.

Laminated or Layered Wood

Interestingly, older dictionaries (Note 13) will provide insight into the word gopher. The words *wafer*, *gauffer*, *goffer*, and *gopher*, all deal with related concepts. Definitions include: layers in a wafer, layers glued together, an adhesive to glue together layers of paper, and layers of lace in women’s

clothing. The concept of layering and lamination is implied in all of these words. The term, “goffering,” comes from an old French word which is the process whereby irons are used to flute and press together various layers of lace. The early French settlers in the United States named rodents that burrowed in the earth and created layers of honeycomb [tunnels] — gophers.

The Bible reveals that Noah’s Ark was covered inside and outside by pitch. This would serve as a waterproofing agent. This pitch covering was probably natural bitumen that was commonly found in seepages in the Middle East. But what many people do not realize is that the ark’s design would also include laminated or layered wood that was glued together with a resinous tar-like coating. This manufactured glue was expressly produced for the lamination of wood and was well-known throughout the ancient world. This lamination would provide strength for the large beams required for the construction of the ark. As shown gopherwood was actually a process in which the ark’s wood was laminated and glued together with pitch and resin, a type of ancient plywood. — by Arnold C. Mendez, Sr.

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Are You a Follower of Herbert W. Armstrong?

We recently received a letter from someone who claims to be a follower of Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986). I replied that this didn't tell me very much, because Armstrong taught opposing views over his 55 years of ministry. Here is a table showing some of the stark comparisons:

Earlier Teaching	Later Teaching
Hierarchical Church Government is the Image of the Beast, should NOT be practiced.	Hierarchical Church Government MUST be practiced, as it is "God's Government."
Pentecost is on Monday.	Pentecost is on Sunday.
Marriage is for life.	Divorce and remarriage allowed for almost any reason.
Peter was not the chief Apostle; Petrine Doctrine is of the Devil.	Peter was the Chief Apostle; Petrine Doctrine should be practiced today; HWA was the Chief Apostle of our day.
Sabbath-keeping includes not hiring workers to work for you on the Sabbath.	It is all right to hire contract workers to labor on your premises on the Sabbath.
World political leaders are inspired by Satan.	Armstrong gave expensive Steuben crystal gifts to dictators, lauded them as great leaders.
Ministry should be humble and live simply.	Ministry lived in opulence; Armstrong's luxurious living would make a President or Corporate Executive blush.
Feast of Unleavened Bread and Feast of Tabernacles observed in simple, natural surroundings by all the brethren for eight days each festival; emphasis on spiritual activities, Bible Study, fellowship of the brethren.	Feast of Unleavened Bread observed only first and last holy days; Feast of Tabernacles observed at expensive resorts, often in worldly atmosphere; emphasis on physical.

Where exactly do *you* fit in, following Herbert W. Armstrong? I lean toward the earlier teachings, because they are more Biblically sound. Please see our book, *Early Writings of Herbert W. Armstrong*, \$9 from Giving & Sharing, or on the Internet at www.giveshare.org/library/hwa.

Sex Abuse Cases Reflect Theological Problems

I read with concern and dismay a recent article stating that the Archdiocese of Boston asked a judge to dismiss all sexual abuse lawsuits against it, claiming that "the First Amendment . . . does not permit courts to tell churches how to conduct their internal affairs." My first reaction was to ask, what about the First Amendment rights of the victims? Not only is this a weak legal argument, which is unlikely to prevail; it is downright insulting to common sense and moral decency to suggest that the Bill of Rights offers any organization, let alone a religious organization, the right to harbor criminals. Nor does the Bible offer such protection. **Romans 13** teaches that civil authority is ordained by God and is for our good. Only in cases where man's law conflicts with God's law, does the Bible tell us, "We ought to obey God rather than men," **Acts 5:29**.

Another article on the same page cited a New Hampshire bishop as having “suggested that it is less serious for a priest to have sex with someone from outside the parish than with a parishioner.” Do you suppose the victim or his or her parents would agree with, or take comfort from this assessment? His point seemed to be that the former is a private matter that would not fall within the jurisdiction of the church. This reasoning also does not hold up in the light of Scripture.

I Timothy 3:2 says a bishop “must be above suspicion, must be a faithful, married man, must be sensible, must have self-control,” (Simple English version). This passage does not imply any restriction on conduct within the congregation. In fact **verse 7** says, “Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil.” The Living Bible vividly paraphrases, “so that Satan can’t trap him with many accusations, and leave him without freedom to lead his flock.” We are seeing this warning coming back to haunt many religious leaders who have violated these principles.

The longstanding theological concept of celibacy should be reconsidered in the aftermath of the sordid sexual deeds that are now being brought to light. I would call attention to the requirement that a bishop “must be a faithful, married man.” Paul emphasizes the importance of a bishop being the head of a happy, successful family. Otherwise, he asks, “How shall he take care of the church of God?” **I Timothy 3:5**.

Celibacy has a long history rooted in the dualistic concept that the epitome of righteousness is to forego physical pleasure in order to attend wholeheartedly to “spiritual” matters. Celibacy was advocated by some early “church fathers” who held distorted views of sex and marriage. Augustine considered marriage as “a covenant with death.” (*Confessions*, book 6). He regarded celibacy as a more holy state than marriage. Thomas Aquinas considered that a woman “is defective and misbegotten” (Aquinas, *Summa*, Q. 92, art. 1). Clement of Alexandria emphasized Jesus’ example of celibacy and regarded marriage as a form of prostitution and a practice introduced by the devil.

Many misinterpret **I Corinthians 7** to claim that Paul advocated celibacy. However, Paul’s advice to remain single should be understood as a temporary measure — not to make major life changes because of a time of “present distress,” **verses 25-31**. A recently married person devoting the time and attention to building his marriage could interfere with a maximum effort to endure this temporary time of “distress.”

When Paul wrote, “I wish all men were even as I myself” (**verse 7**), he was referring to the gift of self-control (**verse 9**), not being unmarried. Paul did not advocate celibacy. On the contrary, it was Corinthian members (in a letter to him) who suggested this as a solution to the immorality of the world around them (**verse 1**). Paul countered that a healthy sexual relationship within marriage was the best antidote to immorality (**verses 2-5**). Paul boldly proclaimed that forbidding to marry is “a doctrine of demons,” **I Timothy 4:1-3**. God created mankind male and female because he said, “It is not good for the man to be alone,” **Genesis 2:18**. The bitter fruits of clergy sexual abuse document this vital truth.

— by Larry J. Walker, Pastor, United Church of God, Bend, Oregon.

This article was published in the *Bend Bulletin* newspaper.

Was Michael the Archangel Jesus?

Some say the meaning of the name, Michael, is, “one who is like God.” But Strong’s has, “Who is like God,” as the meaning of the name, Michael. The name is a rhetorical question asked in **Exodus 15:11**, “Who is like thee, O LORD, among the gods?” Also, in **Hebrews 1:5**, another question is asked: “. . . unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?” Had God said that to Michael, would not Paul have so informed us?

— by Jimmie Parr

Mel Gibson's Slaughter of Christ

Mel's Gibson's movie, "The Passion of the Christ," has generated considerable controversy. Perhaps some good will come from this movie if people realize more deeply the awesome sacrifice of their Savior, Jesus Christ. The movie may lead some people to read their Bibles and repent of their sins. That would be good.

However, those who have seen the movie point out a number of negative aspects of "The Passion of the Christ." It distorts many incidents relating the last hours leading up to the Crucifixion of Christ. It adds Catholic fables, and creates a false image of Christ.

If you are thinking of viewing this movie, consider first: *are images portraying the Messiah a violation of the Second Commandment?* **The answer is yes.** "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God . . ." **Exodus 20:4-5.** Pagans make images of their gods, as aides to worship. They do not believe the image is their god, but it is a representation of their God. Jesus, the Son of God, is eternal. He is God. Pictures of Jesus and impersonations of Jesus, break the spirit of the Second Commandment. *Don't participate in this sin!*

When the Almighty led the Israelites into the Promised Land, He told them, "Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and *destroy all their pictures*, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places," **Numbers 33:52.** Carnal mankind wants images, pictures, or some other physical representation of their god. Instead, we worship an invisible God who tells us not to worship Him through pictures.

The religion of the Bible is based on the written Word, not passion plays, movies, or pictures of Jesus and God. The Gospel narrative of Christ devotes more time to Jesus talking with the thief on the cross next to Him, more to the Roman soldiers parting His garments, more to Jesus providing for the care of Mary, than the scourging or suffering He endured. Mel Gibson loves brutality. "The Passion" movie is a Catholic mass in action. If you have not yet seen this move, don't. Instead, read the Book.

Read more comments about the movie, "The Passion of the Christ," on our website, www.giveshare.org/newsletter/bookreview/mel-gibson-passion-christ.html. Or, watch the "Tomorrow TV" program, "The Hollywood Jesus," produced by the Portland United Church of God, at www.tomorrowonline.org/tv/p427.htm.

— by Richard C. Nickels

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