

Digging Deeper Links from the Discussion Guide for

THE JOURNEY FROM UNBELIEF TO FAITH

SESSION ONE: A SECOND CHANCE

DOMESTIC ABUSE:

For Abused and Neglected Children: ‘[Validation That Someone Cares](#)’

“Over the years, our experience has shown us, and we deeply believe, that no child can be truly healed unless he is cared for emotionally, physically, and spiritually.”

[Preventing Child Abuse](#)

“‘What about the Children’ in the August issue reminded me that a few years ago one of our congregation members, Baker Kittelson, in cooperation with Director of Christian Education Bob Brantsch, was instrumental in forming a Prevention of Abuse of Children (PAC) Committee, which resulted in a policy manual for our congregation.”

PROJECT CONNECT BOOKLETS:

Has God Abandoned Me?

For Women Facing Domestic Violence

Domestic violence has no boundaries, and it does not care about social standing, age, ethnicity or religion. It traps its victims in a very lonely and frightening prison. This booklet is designed to answer questions and help you understand the cycle of violence, develop a plan for the future and know that God will never forsake an abused woman.

[Download this PDF](#)

Overcoming a Painful Childhood

Hope and Healing for Adult Survivors of Abuse and Neglect

This booklet is for the millions of men and women, whose lives are affected by abuse or neglect as a child, adult survivors of physical, emotional and spiritual abuse. Recovering from a painful childhood is a slow process—and you need not do it alone. With the help from God and people who care, you can learn how to cope abuse, how to care for your particular needs as a survivor, and how to build a better future.

[Download this PDF](#)

[Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod Resources:](#)

To assist church workers and lay members with responding to known or suspected instances of domestic violence, free resources are now available on the LCMS website about domestic abuse, and more materials are being developed on a range of social issues. The domestic-abuse resources are meant to aid church workers, friends, family members, and survivors of domestic abuse in identifying and understanding the issue, and information is provided for how to intervene when such a situation is confronted.

MAKING OUR CHURCH MORE USER FRIENDLY

Strangers in the Pews

You can help visitors to your congregation feel welcome. Here are some practical thoughts to keep in mind.

SESSION TWO: DEAD IS DEAD

LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD MINISTRIES TO JEWS:

- **The Apple of His Eye Mission Society**
- **Chai v'Shalom**

This Lutheran ministry seeks to convert Jews.

JEWISH THOUGHTS ON “DEAD IS DEAD”

How to Help Children of Different Ages Cope with a Death

This article demonstrates the Jewish thinking behind “dead is dead” as Rabbi Earl Grollman advises parents how to help children of different ages deal with death.

PROJECT CONNECT BOOKLETS ABOUT GRIEF:

Take Heart in Your Grief

This booklet explores the common feelings people have during a grieving period when a loved one die. Not even death can stop God's love from reaching out to us.

[Download this PDF](#)

What Happens When I Die?

In this booklet human death--and what Scripture says about the end of our lives--is explained to Christians and non-Christians alike. Examining biblical passages dealing with the "body," "soul," "heaven," "hell" and other topics, this booklet answers this difficult question about death.

[Download this PDF](#)

THE CRUCIFIX

Lutheran Hour Questions and Answers:

What is the Difference between a Cross and a Crucifix?

A listener asks, “Recently, I saw a picture of Pastor Klaus and he was wearing a crucifix. If I remember back to my confirmation days, the pastor said that Lutherans don’t wear a crucifix. They also don’t put a crucifix on their altar. To use a crucifix is telling people that Jesus is still on the cross; or is still suffering for our sins. I wasn’t offended, but I thought I would ask.”

Cross and Church

Rev. Dr. Scott R. Murray writes, “The Lord’s cross must dominate the Church, for the cross shapes the entire life of God’s people by marking the presence of the Gospel. Cross and Church are inseparable.”

Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: [Is the Use of Crucifixes a Roman Catholic Practice?](#) Doesn't the empty cross provide a better symbol for Lutherans? How does the LCMS feel about using a crucifix in church?

SESSION THREE: BURIED WITH BUDDHA

WHAT HAPPENS TO CHRISTIANS WHO LEAVE CHURCH?

['Ex-Christians': Gone for Good?](#)

A Q&A with Drew Dyck, author of *Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults are Leaving the Faith... and How to Bring Them Back*

ASTROLOGY AND THE BIBLE

[The New Quest for the Sacred: The Witchcraft Craze And The Lure Of The Occult](#)

Ralph L. Moellering. In an age of scientific reasons to think there is no need for God to exist, many people are searching for something higher, more spiritual.

[The Religious Movements Page](#)

This page offers profiles of many religious movements.

[Christ and the Challenge of Neo-Paganism](#)

Christ in a pagan world is not about the past. It is about a very real present. This is true because our culture is filled with cults, the occult, neo-paganism, Wicca, the New Age Movement, etc.

[The Quest for Experiencing the Divine: The Rise and Effect of Eastern Religions](#)

Dr. Naomichi Masaki. While the joy in the forgiveness of our sins remains firm because of the Lord's gifts in baptism, the world into which we are placed each day is ever changing. As the "mainline" churches continue to decline in membership "spirituality," the impulse to seek communion with the Divine is thriving.

[The Visit of the Magi: Fact or Fiction?](#)

Dr. Paul L. Maier. "For years, biblical critics have questioned many details in the Christmas Gospels, such as the Annunciation, the Roman census, the Virgin Birth, the angelic announcement to the shepherds, and the infant massacre at Bethlehem. While secular evidence from the ancient world actually supports many aspects of the Nativity, one objection is quite formidable. It involves the Magi..."

SESSION FOUR: X-BOX ATHEIST

CHRISTIAN GAMING SITE:

[Gaming By Grace](#)

Mission Statement: Gaming by Grace is a dynamic and excited group of online gamers who desire to have a good time playing the games we play! We look for other gamers who exhibit mature, respectful attributes and encourage them to be part of the world of mature game play. We desire that all members, Christian or not, experience the fun and enjoyment of the game. We always say “Good Game!” to those we face, win or lose.”

HOBBIES AND PASSIONS

[The Gospel on Their Shoulders](#)

The appeal of miniature donkeys—not least the legend of how a cross came to adorn their backs—has provided an entrée for an Indiana couple to share the faith.

[What I Learned Helping My Daughter Find a Passion](#)

This father pushed his daughter toward the tremendous athletic skill he saw in his daughter. But the performing arts were her real passion.

ANSWERS to BIBLICAL ARGUMENTS from ATHEISTS:

PROJECT CONNECT BOOKLET:

Reasons to Believe

Written to show the reasonableness of the Christian faith, this booklet is ideal as a quick go-to guide on how Christianity makes sense on many levels. In an easy-to-read style, it shows how believing in God, creation, prophecy, man's inner morality, Jesus and salvation is not something far-fetched and out there. On the contrary, based on historical and archaeological evidence, faith in the truthfulness of God's Word is a logical response to the material at our disposal.

[Download this PDF](#)

DOMESTIC ABUSE:

For Abused and Neglected Children: 'Validation that Someone Cares'

<http://blogs.lcms.org/2009/for-abused-and-neglected-children-validation-that-someone-cares-5-2009>

For Abused and Neglected Children: 'Validation that Someone Cares'

on May 1, 2009 in FEATURE, LUTHERAN WITNESS

by Kim Plummer Krull

Every week Mike Permenter drove 45 minutes to the Nelson Children's Center in Denton, Texas, to join 14-year-old Tim for checkers, Battleship, and other board games that, Permenter says, "would make my own kids roll their eyes."

Photo courtesy Lutheran Social Services



The mentor and young teen tackled "no heavy spiritual discussions" during their time together at the Lutheran Social Services (LSS) residential treatment center for children with behavioral and emotional problems caused by severe neglect and abuse. But over the months, Permenter was pleased to see Tim gradually become "a happier, shoulders-back, chest-out guy."

This spring, just before Tim (whose name has been changed to protect his privacy) moved from Nelson into a foster home, the youngster received God's gifts in Christ through Baptism. His mentor signed Tim's baptismal card.

"These are the most front-line spiritual consequences I have ever been involved with," said Permenter, a member of St. Peter Lutheran Church, Roanoke, about Nelson's spiritual-care program. "It's not those board games that matter so much. For these kids, it's the validation that someone cares."

The Nelson Center's voluntary spiritual-care program is one example of what LSS President and CEO Dr. Kurt Senske calls "the value added" in the help, healing, and hope offered to troubled youngsters.

"This is what makes us unique from almost every other children's center in Texas," Senske said. "Over the years, our experience has shown us, and we deeply believe, that no child can be truly healed unless he is cared for emotionally, physically, and spiritually."

A total of 165 children are served daily at Nelson and LSS' two other residential treatment centers in Texas—Krause (in Katy) and New Life (in Canyon Lake). Their ages range from six to 17. Most have been removed from their homes because of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, often at the hands of once-trusted adults. Because of that abuse, each child struggles with low self-esteem, anger, or other behavioral and emotional problems—wounds that hurt long after bones and bruises have healed.

In 2006, LCMS World Relief and Human Care provided a \$30,000 seed grant for deaconesses to serve as spiritual-care directors at the treatment centers. Since then, “Miss Ruth” (Deaconess Ruth Drum at Nelson) and “Miss April” (Deaconess April Bishop at Krause) have guided spiritual care that goes hand in hand with physical, emotional, and educational therapies. Typically, the deaconesses are among the first staff members young residents get to know as a person who cares about them.

“The children are usually pretty quick to come to us, whether they need someone to listen or to tell them whom to go to for something they need, like clothing,” said Bishop. “Many times, they just want someone to tell how scared and hurt they are.”



As they get acquainted, the deaconesses inform youngsters about spiritual-care opportunities—e.g., youth groups, Bible studies, chapel services. Participation is voluntary, but most children are drawn to at least one activity.

Even those who reject invitations to Bible study or youth groups seek the spiritual-care directors for one-on-ones that can be heart-wrenching.

“These kids are filled with bad memories and anxiety,” Drum said. “In our conversations, we look for opportunities to share God’s unconditional love, and for them to learn they are God’s dearly beloved children. We try to give them hope, helping them know that someone bigger and stronger really does love them.”

Photo courtesy Lutheran Social Services



A volunteer helps a young resident at the Krause Children's Center in Katy, Texas, with final touches before the center's prom.

As a longtime volunteer and Bible-study leader at Krause, Art Thomas has seen young lives touched by God's Word. One of the most remarkable, he says, was Marsha, a teen who called her parents devil worshipers.

Marsha (whose name also is changed for privacy reasons) initially ignored Thomas when he invited her to his weekly Bible study. "She was very bitter, but, finally, she agreed to have a cookie with us," said Thomas, a member of Memorial Lutheran Church, Katy. Eventually, he says, Marsha became a Bible-study regular who seriously studied Scripture.

As she prepared to leave Krause around age 18, Marsha asked her Bible-study teacher to pray for an opportunity that would allow her to live independently and look for a job. "She said she knew she could never go back to her parents," Thomas said.

Like Art Thomas, many volunteers who lead Bible lessons, serve as mentors and prayer pals, and plan holiday parties, are members of area Lutheran churches. They serve children who may not always seem appreciative, Drum says. But the time and attention of caring Christians does make a difference.

"The kids are smart enough to know that I get paid to be here, but these volunteers are not getting paid and don't have to be here," Drum said. "That makes a big difference."

Photo courtesy Lutheran Social Services



Deaconess April bishop is one of the first people new residents meet at the Krause Children's Center. Many times, Bishop says, youngsters "Just want someone to tell how scared and hurt they are."

Each treatment center strives to equip children to deal with their painful pasts, change destructive behaviors, and successfully transition into new homes—foster, adoptive, or, sometimes, with their own families. Spiritual care provides an opportunity to learn about one life-changing tool—God's love.

Echoing an expression used by Permenter, Senske speaks of "front lines" when he describes the opportunity to touch the souls of youngsters who, in most cases, come from dysfunctional, unchurched homes. "When we talk about reaching out through Ablaze!, few probably think about these children," he said. "But April and Ruth are on the front lines of sharing the Good News of Jesus."

About a year ago, three young boys who had become friends at Nelson asked to be baptized together. Drum recalls praying with the boys in the chapel and sensing how they, like so many children at the center, seemed to crave “these sacred times and places that are so wonderful for their souls and minds.”

The deaconess admits that most days a visitor would note few signs of spiritual transformations. But she believes that staff and volunteers who provide spiritual care plant seeds of faith.

Permenter says he watched those seeds grow in Tim. Considering the teen’s troubled past, he should be “on the streets, on drugs, or even dead by now,” Permenter said. Instead, when Tim left the Nelson Center for a foster home, his former mentor says he had no doubt the youngster was better equipped for life today—and for eternity.

Two Ways to Share Healing and Hope

More than half the children who leave the Nelson and Krause children’s centers transition into foster homes. To ensure their healing and hope continues, Christian foster families are urgently needed.



Dr. Kurt Senske

Noting that May is “Foster Care Month,” LSS President and CEO Dr. Kurt Senske says the demand for foster families is greater than ever. About 650 LSS foster families now serve some 940 children in foster homes in Texas.

Another big need: financial support. Because laws forbid state funds to cover the cost of spiritual-care programs, LSS depends on generous donors to fund opportunities to share God’s love with hurting, mostly unchurched youngsters.

To learn more about foster care, giving opportunities, or other ways you can help children in the name of Jesus through LSS, please visit www.lsss.org or call (800) 938-5777.

The Lutheran Witness — Providing Missouri Synod laypeople with stories and information that complement congregational life, foster personal growth in faith, and help interpret the contemporary world from a Lutheran Christian perspective.

[Return to menu](#)

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

2113 Ravenna Street
Hudson, Ohio 44236
330.650.6550 [Akron line]
330.656.9800 [Cleveland line]
330.650.6685 [Fax line]
www.gloriadeihudson.org
January 11, 2010

Prevention of Abuse of Children Committee Policy Manual

Whereas, the world is increasingly promoting sexual subjects, and

Whereas, the problem of sexual abuse of children is more prevalent, and

Whereas, we at Gloria Dei, as a loving and caring Christian response, want to provide a safe environment for children that attend Gloria Dei and its programs,

Be it resolved that Gloria Dei shall create a policy designated to reduce the risk of any sexual abuse of children at Gloria Dei and of children in any program under the auspices of Gloria Dei and;

Be it further resolved that a formal training program be conducted at Gloria Dei for adult members of Gloria Dei, which is designed to raise the awareness of the child abuse problem and which is designed to train members in the prevention of child abuse, and

Be it further resolved that Gloria Dei support this policy and this training program on a continuing basis.

“...We might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children...”
- Ezra 8:21b NIV₆

“Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has given you charge, as shepherds of the church of the Lord.”
- Acts 20:28 NIV₆

Index	Page
Child Abuse & the Church	3 - 5
Policies	6 - 7
Procedures	7 - 8
Application Form for Children/Youth Workers [Appendix A]	9
Background Investigation Consent [Appendix B]	10
Reference Response Sheet [Appendix C]	11
Reference Response Sheet Cover Letter [Appendix D]	12
Covenant for all Youth Events [Appendix E]	13
Medical Release Form [Appendix F]	14
Standards for Adults Working with Youth [Appendix G]	15
Incident Report [Appendix H]	16
Victim Advocate Job Description [Appendix I]	17
References	18

“Without the help of the Lord it is useless to build a home or to guard a city. It is useless to get up early and stay up late in order to earn a living. God takes care of His own even while they sleep. Children are a blessing and a gift from the Lord.” –Psalm 127:1-3 CEV¹²

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a little child and had him stand among them. And He said: ‘I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ‘And whoever welcomes a little child like this in My name welcomes Me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.’ –Matthew 18:1-6 NIV⁶

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is a legal classification describing various maltreatments of children. Some variations exist within individual state/provincial laws.¹

What Terms Relate to Child Abuse?

For the purposes of this manual and Gloria Dei Lutheran Church these are the terms that relate to child abuse:

- ❖ **minor** 19 years old or less.
- ❖ **youth** anyone about 13-19 years old.
- ❖ **child** anyone 12 years old or younger.
- ❖ **situational molester**: an opportunist who engages in misconduct when a situation develops or exists that makes the abuse possible.¹
- ❖ **preferential molester**: A perpetrator who actively seeks out children, intentionally develops situations, and grooms the victims. A Preferential Molester generally is a male, single, over 25 years of age, lives alone or with parents, has an excessive interest in children, seeks access to children, frequently moves to avoid being caught, maintains pornographic collections, and photographs children.¹
- ❖ **victim advocate** a Christian lay member of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church who "stands with" the victim throughout the process, expressing Christian care and concern.

"Jesus said, 'Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these.'"

*Matthew
19:14 NIV⁶*

What are the Types of Abuse?

- ❖ **Sexual Abuse** - Any form of sexual activity with a minor, whether in the home or any other setting. The abuser may be adult, adolescent, or any minor usually at least about four years older than the victim. (*adapted from National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse, 1992*):

Types of Abuse Involving Touching²

- Fondling
- Oral, genital, and anal penetration
- Intercourse
- Forcible rape
- Inappropriate touching⁸

Types of Abuse Not Involving Touching²

- Verbal comments and jokes with sexual innuendo⁸
- Pornographic videos
- Obscene phone calls
- Exhibitionism
- Allowing children to witness sexual activity

*"You, O Lord, will protect us; You will guard us from this generation forever. On every side the wicked prowls, as vileness is exalted among humankind"*⁷

- ❖ **Physical Abuse** - Violent non-accidental contact which results in injury. This includes but is not limited to striking, biting or shaking. Injuries include bruises, fractures, cuts and burns.¹

- ❖ **Emotional Abuse** - A pattern of crushing a child's spirit and attacking his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling. Emotional abuse affects a child's emotional development leading to low self-esteem, problems with feelings and emotions, and difficulty with relationships. ¹
- ❖ **Neglect** - Includes failure by a caregiver to provide for a child's emotional needs such as love and attention; physical needs such as food, clothing, shelter and health care; and failing to offer supervision when it is within his/her power to do so. ¹

"Discretion will protect you and understanding will guard you. Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways, who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways. -Proverbs 2:11-15 NIV⁶

What are Some Facts About Child Abuse?

- ❖ In about 80% of the cases of child sexual abuse, the perpetrator is an adult known to the child. ¹
- ❖ As of June 2006, there were 175 registered sex offenders within an approximate six mile radius of Hudson, in Northern Summit & Northwest Portage Counties. Three were women.³
- ❖ Most abuse takes place within the context of an ongoing relationship. ¹
- ❖ Child abusers often are married and have children. ¹
- ❖ As much as 56% of reported child molestation cases are committed by adolescents, mostly male. ¹

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly;" - Proverbs 31:8-9a NIV⁶

"You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you." -Psalm 32:7-9 NIV⁶

Why is the Church Vulnerable?

- ❖ It is a community of trust. ¹
- ❖ There is often ignorance of facts. ¹
- ❖ There are usually few safeguards. ¹
- ❖ There are a number of opportunities to be in contact with children and youth. ¹
- ❖ There is easy access to children and youth. ¹
- ❖ There is a constant need for volunteer workers. ²
- ❖ Turnover among volunteer workers is high. ²

What is the Impact of Child Sexual Abuse?

- ❖ Victimization of children ⁸
- ❖ Shattered trust ⁸
- ❖ Damaged families ⁸
- ❖ Psychological, emotional, and spiritual damage to individuals ⁸
- ❖ Spiritual damage to families and congregations ⁸
- ❖ Congregational disunity & polarization ⁸
- ❖ Litigation and financial cost ⁸

***"The Lord protects
the simple hearted;
when I was in great
need, he saved me."
—Psalm 116:6 NIV⁶***

***"Jesus said: 'Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your
Name –the name you gave me- so that they may be one as we
are one.'" –John 17:11b NIV⁶***

Policies

1. **Six months.** Any volunteer working with minors must be a regular worshiper of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church for at least 6 months. Each volunteer shall complete the Gloria Dei "Application Form for Children/Youth Workers." Appendix A.⁸
2. **Age difference.** All overnight accommodations involving minors must be arranged so that the minors staying in each room do not have more than a 4 years age difference, except in the case of siblings.⁸
3. **Child minimum.** All overnight accommodations must have at least two minors when one adult is present. ⁸
4. **Separate accommodations.** A minimum of two adults should be present at an overnight activity. If participants are both male and female, the adults should be both male and female. If these conditions cannot be met, the event should be canceled. On outings that require that an adult share the same room as a minor, the parents or legal guardians shall give prior consent. The adult must avoid occupying the same bed as a minor, again with the exception of a parent or legal guardian. Males and females should sleep in separate rooms at events and have separate access to bathroom facilities. When separate facilities are not available, times for male and female use should be scheduled and posted for showers. ⁴
5. **Curfew.** A curfew must be established for overnight events for all participants. ⁸
6. **Two-deep leadership.** Any church event involving minors should have a minimum of two non-related adults present throughout the event. In the event two adults are not present, the activity must be visible through a window in the door or open door. Activities should be conducted so as to avoid isolation of one adult with one minor. Two adults should be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle or other enclosed area during all children's and youth activities. In the event only one adult is available, the parent or legal guardian should be notified of the situation. ⁸
7. During the Sunday School hour, one administrator [i.e. Pastor, Director of Christian Education, Sunday School Superintendent, Sunday School Secretary] should check the facility at least once.
8. **Prior sexual convictions.** Any adult who has been convicted of any criminal sexual misconduct or abuse or who may pose a threat to children or youth will be prohibited from working with any minors. ⁸
9. **Prior driving convictions.** Anyone convicted of serious traffic violations can not drive for any activity at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church. ⁸
10. **Designated drivers.** Any parent, adult, or legal guardian that is suspected to be inebriated or consuming mind altering drugs, may not drive their child or other children. Gloria Dei adult leaders will provide a designated driver or call for a designated driver. If the adult refuses a designated driver, the police will be called.
11. **Identification System.** The leaders of any activity involving minors shall ensure that they know each minor and the minor's parents or legal guardian. The leaders shall obtain

"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible."

– Ephesians 5:11-13 NIV⁶

appropriate contact information, in case of emergency. Leaders should have an identification system for children 6 and under. [ID, clipboard sign-out, or pager, etc.]
8

12. **Background checks.** A background and reference check will be made on any person [18 & older] at Gloria Dei working with minors. All employees shall be subject to a background check. [Appendix A & Appendix B]
13. **Personal Interview.** A personal interview shall be conducted with any person at Gloria Dei interested in working with minors. All employees shall be subject to a personal interview as well.
14. **Covenant & Medical Release Forms.** All participants of any Gloria Dei Lutheran Church off-site activity must complete the "Covenant For All Youth Events" [Appendix E] and the "Medical Release Form" [Appendix F].

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging." –Psalm 46:1-3 NIV⁶

Procedures

1. **Reason to believe.** Ohio Law states that a report should be made if you have "reason to believe" that abuse or neglect is occurring – this means if you suspect abuse or neglect for any reason. Physical proof or other validation is not required to make a report.⁵
2. **Professionals reporting of abuse.** Professionals are legally required to report any suspected child abuse including child-care workers, clergy, day-care personnel, any school employees, medical personnel, and attorneys.¹⁰
3. **Protection against claims.** Ohio Law protects the reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect from any decision or award which might be sought through the filing of such a claim. Under Ohio statute, any person participating in making a report of suspected child abuse or neglect is immune from civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred as a result of such action.⁵
4. **Legal and asset representative.** The Property Board is to represent Gloria Dei as legal and asset representatives of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.¹⁴
5. **Reporting.**
 1. Workers who become aware of any injury, abuse, or molestation in any ministry activity will inform one of the following in this order of priority: **Pastor, Director of Christian Education, OR President** of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church. The **Pastor, Director of Christian Education, OR President** will complete the "Incident Report" [Appendix H].
 2. The **Pastor, Director of Christian Education, OR President** of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church will then report this incident to the **legal guardian, church attorney, insurance company, Summit County Children's Services,**

Hudson Police Department, and the Ohio District-Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Mission & Ministry Support Center.

3. The name of the alleged victim and the alleged molester should be kept confidential.
4. A **victim advocate** from *Gloria Dei Lutheran Church* will be available.
6. **Media Communicator.** The **Pastor** initially is to be the only communicator with the media. However, if the **Pastor** is unavailable, the **Director of Christian Education OR President** is authorized to represent Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in this particular instance, unless the **Director of Christian Education OR President** in his/her own purview deems that such representation would be a direct conflict of interest on his/her part to represent the congregation in a truly impartial fashion.
7. **Media Script.** The following suggested script is to be shared with the public by the **Media Communicator** [*Pastor, Director of Christian Education, OR the President*] to represent Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.⁸

“Gloria Dei Lutheran Church takes all accusations of child abuse seriously. To that end Gloria Dei Lutheran Church has notified the appropriate law enforcement agencies concerning this matter and requested a full and complete investigation. As a Christian community, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church believes in protecting the well being of all individuals who attend our programs and we seek to respond in a caring and sensitive manner to everyone at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.”
8. **Training.** Anyone working with minors must attend *Prevention of Abuse of Children* training. The *Prevention of Abuse of Children Committee* will be responsible to ensure training is offered periodically.

“For the Lord gives wisdom, and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds victory in store for the upright, He is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for He guards the course of the just and protects the way of His faithful ones.”

-Proverbs 2:6-8 NIV⁶

Application Form for Children/Youth Workers^s

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church - Hudson, Ohio

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. This is not an employment application. It will be used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____


Street Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone: _____ Business Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Maiden Name or Other Names Used _____

 Do you have any additional E-mail addresses? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, list all additional E-mail addresses: _____

Emergency Contact Name: _____ Phone: _____

List previous churches attended and any work with a church or agency involving children & youth from the past 5 years and any pertinent references:

<u>Church or agency</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Dates</u>
-------------------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------

List all previous home addresses in the last 5 years.

List the name, address, and phone number of two personal references [not related to each other or to you] on the back of this form.

 Signature _____  Date _____

“So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation in which you shine like the stars in the universe.” –Philippians 2:15 NIV⁶

Background Investigation Consent¹³

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church - Hudson, Ohio

I, (Print Name) _____ hereby authorize *Gloria Dei Lutheran Church of Hudson Ohio*, in the area of requested employment or volunteering, to make an independent investigation of my background, references, character, past employment, education, criminal or police records, including those by both public and private organizations and all public records for the purpose of confirming the information contained on my application or volunteer form(s), and/or obtaining other information which may be material to my qualifications for employment or as a volunteer now and, if applicable, during the tenure of my employment or as a volunteer with our church.

I release *Gloria Dei Lutheran Church of Hudson, Ohio* and any person or entity which provides information pursuant to this authorization, from any and all liabilities, claim or lawsuits in regards to the information obtained from any and all of the above referenced sources used.


The following is my true and *complete* legal name and all information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge:


Full Name (Printed) _____


Social Security Number _____ - _____ - _____


 Do you have a current Ohio driver's license? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, list drivers license number _____ Expiration Date _____

 Does Gloria Dei Lutheran Church have your permission to check your records with the Ohio Department of Motor Vehicles? Yes ____ No ____

 Have you ever participated in, or been accused, convicted or plead guilty or no contest to abuse or any sexual misconduct? Yes ____ No ____

 Have you ever been convicted of or plead guilty or no contest to any criminal offense of any kind? Yes ____ No ____

 Are you aware of any traits or tendencies you possess that could pose any threat to children or youth? Yes ____ No ____

 Signature _____  Date _____

This Background Check will be accomplished by LexisNexis, through Church Volunteer Central, Loveland, Colorado.

Reference Response Sheet

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church – Hudson, Ohio

For _____

Completed by _____

How long have you known this individual? _____

In what capacity do you know this person (i.e. friend, co-worker, neighbor, etc.)?

Do you feel that this person is qualified to work with youth ages _____?

_____ YES _____ NO Please explain your answer _____

What concerns, if any, do you have about this person working with youth?

Are you aware of anything in this person's background, personality or behavior that would put any child at risk?

Based on your experience with this individual, please provide your recommendation using the following characteristics:

CHARACTERISTIC	CAN RECOMMEND	CAN NOT RECOMMEND
Honesty		
Trustworthiness		
Dependability		

To your knowledge, is there any civil or criminal allegation against this person involving abuse of any kind? _____ YES _____ NO If YES, please explain

Additional Comments _____

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Thank you for your time. If you have questions or concerns, please call the church office at 330-650-6550. All responses are kept confidential.

Dear ,

You have been listed as a personal reference for _____ as a part of the volunteer screening at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.

To ensure a safe environment for all children, the church's Prevention of Abuse of Children (PAC) Committee screens all adults interested in working with minors in any capacity. You can help us in this effort by completing the enclosed Reference Response Sheet. Please return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope by _____. All information is kept confidential.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at 330-650-6550. Thank you for your support of our mission and ministry.

Sincerely,

Bob Brantsch

Director of Christian Education

Covenant For All Youth Events⁹

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church - Hudson, Ohio

1. I will respect all those from our group, adult leaders, and anyone outside our group.
– *1 Peter 2:17*
2. I agree to respect the property of others. Any damage incurred as a result of my words or actions, is to be paid by me and all those involved. – *Exodus 22:5-6*
3. I agree that as a part of this group, we will pay for any anonymous or unclaimed damage caused by this group, unless those involved confess. – *Leviticus 4:13*
4. I will not use profanity or harsh language. – *Colossians 3:8*
5. I will not possess or take part in under age and illegal use of cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, or any other form of tobacco. – *Romans 13:1-3*
6. I will not possess or take part in under age & illegal consumption of alcohol. – *Titus 3:1*
7. I will not possess or take part in the use of any type of illegal drug or substance. – *Romans 6:13*
8. I will not take part in any sexual activity. – *1 Corinthians 6:18-20*
9. I will not obtain any type of body piercing or tattoo. – *Romans 6:13*
10. Proper clothing for activities is required by adults and youth. No t-shirts with anti-Christian, alcohol, drug, or sexual themes are allowed. No revealing clothing is allowed.
– *Romans 12:1*
11. When an adult leader requests my cooperation or assistance I will be as helpful as possible.
– *Hebrews 13:17*
12. I will be present and on time at all group meetings, devotions, and Bible studies.
– *1 Corinthians 12:25*
13. I will contribute my opinion and information about various matters concerning our group. – *1 Corinthians 12:27*
14. I will put personal preferences aside for the benefit of the entire group. – *Ephesians 4:3*
15. I will be honest, affirming, and positive to others. – *Proverbs 14:25 & 12:25*
16. Failure to comply with any of the above except 5-9, will result in a warning. A second occurrence will result in a phone call warning to my parents/guardians. A third occurrence, or first occurrence of 5-9, will result in a trip home to be paid by my parents/guardians. – *Romans 13:4-5*

Youth signature

Parent/guardian signature

Date

Medical Release Form⁹

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church - Hudson, Ohio

Name_____
Home Address_____
City State Zip Code_____
Health Insurance Company_____
Policy Number Group Number_____
Physician Phone Number

I, _____, the legal parent/guardian of _____ grant my permission to attend *Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, education and youth events*. I hereby release *Gloria Dei Lutheran Church* from any and all liabilities in case of accident or illness. I authorize any medical care deemed necessary by an accredited physician, nurse, medical personnel, or hospital while traveling to, from, and while attending any activity or trip sponsored by *Gloria Dei Lutheran Church*.

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature_____
Date_____
Home Phone Number_____
Work Phone Number_____
Cell Phone Number

I understand an adult may not be assigned to each room. ____ Yes ____ No

I understand two adults may not always be in each room, vehicle, or enclosed space. ____
Yes ____ NoI give my permission for my child's picture to be used in any church related publicity. ____
Yes ____ No

Please list any allergies, medical conditions, or any other considerations regarding the health of your child below.

"But let all who take refuge in You be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread Your protection over them, that those who love Your name may rejoice in You. For surely, O Lord, You bless the righteous; You surround them with your favor as with a shield." –Psalm 5:11-12 NIV⁶

Standards for Adults Working with Youth

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church – Hudson, Ohio

We welcome your involvement with the Youth of Gloria Dei. Every young person needs many adults in their lives to care about them, teach and encourage them so your time spent working with the students is valuable. These standards reflect the policies of the P.A.C. Committee of Gloria Dei to insure these experiences are positive events for everyone. They have been established to protect you, the students and the congregation and are in effect at every activity sponsored by Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.

1. Hugging or putting an arm around a student are gestures that show you care and are appropriate in group settings. Avoid repeated one-on-one contact and show the same genuine affection to all students.
2. Avoid all genital/breast contact.
3. Verbal comments or jokes with sexual innuendo are not appropriate. Profanity and harsh language is prohibited as well as excessive teasing of any one person.
4. A minimum of 2 non-related adults should be present during the entire event.
5. Students and adults should always remain with the group. Never meet with a young person alone in a home.
6. Use of alcohol, drugs and/or illegal substances by adults is forbidden at any youth event. Adults should refrain from smoking in front of children.
7. Proper clothing for activities is required by adults and youth. No t-shirts with anti- Christian, alcohol, drug, or sexual themes are allowed. No revealing clothing is allowed.
8. Any adult who has not fulfilled the requirements for working with youth as established in the P.A.C. Policy (6 month rule, background check, interview) may accompany his/her child to any youth activity as a guest but will not be asked to assume any responsibilities of a chaperone or serve as a driver for the group. On occasion, such adult may assist a P.A.C. trained chaperone/teacher, on a temporary basis.
9. If any adult or youth is behaving in a manner that makes you feel uncomfortable or violates any of the above rules or the P.A.C. policy, it is your responsibility to report it to the *Director of Christian Education* or the *Pastor* as deemed appropriate.

 Signature _____  Date _____

***“You, O Lord, will protect us; You will guard us from this generation forever.”⁷ -
Psalm 12:7-8 NRSV⁷***

Incident Report

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church - Hudson, Ohio

Name of Alleged Victim: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Legal Guardian _____

Name of Alleged Abuser: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Legal Guardian: _____

Date & Time of Incident[s] _____

Relationship between Alleged Victim & Alleged Abuser _____

Describe What Happened: _____

The Following Have Been Contacted: [Indicate Date]

Pastor _____ DCE _____ President _____

Hudson Police _____ Summit County Child Services _____

Ohio District _____ Attorney _____ Insurance Company _____

List any Witnesses: _____

Describe what the Alleged Victim Says: _____

Describe what the Alleged Abuser Says: _____

List any other pertinent information: _____



Signature of Reporter



Date

Victim Advocate Job Description

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church – Hudson, Ohio

Qualifications

1. Is a confirmed member of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church at least 25 years old.
2. Is a frequent participant in worship, communion, Bible study, and stewardship at Gloria Dei.
3. Serves/d in a human care profession such as nursing, ministry, social work, psychology, educational administration, or as a trained Stephen Minister at *Gloria Dei Lutheran Church*.
4. Has completed the *Prevention of Abuse of Children* training at *Gloria Dei Lutheran Church*.
5. Has received a satisfactory rating from a criminal background check.

Responsibilities

1. Maintain all information regarding the case strictly confidential.
2. "Stand with" the victim throughout the process to express Christian care and concern.
3. Pray for and with the victim.
4. The *Victim Advocate* is a lay volunteer and is not a substitute for professional help.
5. The *Victim Advocate* may suggest professional help as appropriate.

Supervisor

1. The *Pastor, Director of Christian Education, or President of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church*.
2. The *Victim Advocate* shall be chosen by the supervisor.

Commitment

1. To serve as needed, throughout the case.
2. Serve on a case-by-case basis as mutually agreed upon with the Supervisor.

Evaluation

Self-evaluation and feedback following each case, is to be shared with the *Supervisor*.

***"You are my hiding place; You will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you."* –Psalm 32:7-8 NIV**

References

- 1 **"Making Churches Safer: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Your Church."** Department of Christian Formation: Evangelical Covenant Church. Chicago, Illinois. Copyright © 2002.
- 2 **"Reducing the Risk II: Making Your Church Safe From Child Sexual Abuse."** Published by Christian Ministry Resources, Matthews, NC. www.reducingtherisk.com Copyright © 2003 by Church Law & Tax Report
- 3 www.co.summit.OH.US/sheriff. Summit County, Ohio Registered Sex Offenders. Click on the "Registered Sex Offenders" item on the left-hand column.
- 4 **Long Lake Lutheran Church: Policy for Protecting Children and Youth in Church Activities.** W3714 Church Road Sarona, Wisconsin, 54870. 1997
- 5 **Child Abuse and Neglect: A Reference for Medical Professionals**, Second Edition. Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Office for Children and Families. Pages 1-127. Copyright June 2003.
- 6 **New International Version of the Bible.** Copyright © 1984. International Bible Society.
- 7 **New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.** Copyright © 1989. Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.
8. **Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.** Prevention of Abuse of Children [PAC] Committee. 2113 Ravenna Street Hudson Ohio. June 2004.
9. **Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.** Youth Board. 2113 Ravenna Street, Hudson, Ohio, 44236. November 2000.
10. **Ohio Revised Code.** Sections 2151.421 and 2151.031
11. **National Catholic Reporter.** Abuse Tracker: A digest of links to media coverage of clergy abuse. www.ncrnews.org/abuse/
12. **Contemporary English Version of the Bible.** Copyright © 1995, American Bible Society. 1865 Broadway, New York, New York 10023
13. **Group Publishing.** Church Volunteer Central. Loveland, Colorado.
14. **Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.** By-Laws of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church. Hudson, Ohio.

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God." - 1 Peter 3:15b-18a
NIV₆

PROJECT CONNECT BOOKLETS:

Has God Abandoned Me? *For Women Facing Domestic Violence*

<http://www.lhm.org/projectconnect/downloadfile.asp?ID=3113>



Introduction

Where is domestic violence found? Only in homes of the poor or the uneducated? Absolutely not! Victims of domestic violence are in the homes of the rich and the poor; the highly educated and high school dropout; the homes of doctors, pastors, even lawyers. Domestic violence has no boundaries, and it does not care about social standing, age, ethnicity or religion. Domestic violence traps its victims in a very lonely and frightening prison. Every day, worldwide, many women are battered by the men in their lives. This includes Christian women.

A woman being battered often feels alone and that she is the only one in this horrible situation. A battered Christian woman can suffer greater pain and isolation. The experience may lead to a spiritual crisis. She asks, "Has God abandoned me?" "Does the church care?" "What if my church family finds out the truth?" Due to the shame, the Christian woman may flee the church. She also may question what the Bible says concerning her desperate situation. "Is this God's will for my life?" "Is there hope?" Yes, there is hope in despair as God repeatedly has promised that He will never leave or forsake His children. God has said, "*Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you*" (Hebrews 13:5). Sometimes Christians imagine that faith prevents all troubles, including domestic violence. They forget that our world is a fallen world, full of sin and darkness (Romans 3:10-12). Because we are living in a fallen world, where humans are not basically good, but evil, domestic violence exists. It exists in "good" Christian homes, even in pastor's

homes. You may be asking yourself this question: “Am I a victim of domestic violence?” How do you know? This booklet is designed to help you understand domestic violence.

Am I a Victim of Domestic Violence?

A common misperception of domestic violence is that it involves only physical abuse. On the contrary, there are many forms of domestic violence, with hitting being only one means of abuse. In reality, domestic violence deals with who controls the relationship—it is an issue of power. One person advances or is “built up” at the expense, physically or emotionally, of another.

Domestic violence occurs in a variety of relationships: husband against wife; boyfriend against girlfriend; girlfriend against boyfriend; parent against child, etc. The pain of domestic violence affects both women and men, yet most often the victim is a woman. Domestic violence occurs in 16 percent of marriages. In this booklet we will address the issue of domestic violence from a woman’s point of view.

So, is abuse a problem in your life?

How would you answer the following questions?

- Do you fear your husband?
- Have you changed yourself, your children and your surroundings in an attempt to please your husband and reduce his anger?
- Are you feeling empty and alone?
- Are you filled with self-doubt?
- Do you think that the terrible things he says about you are really true?
- Do you have to ask your husband for permission to spend money or to go places?
- Can you tell your husband about your feelings without being afraid?
- Are you made to feel as though you cannot do anything right or that no matter what you do, it is not good enough for your husband?
- Are you blamed by your husband for all the money or marital problems?
- Does your husband become jealous when you talk to new people?
- Do you feel like you are married to two completely different people: one a kind and loving husband and the other a tyrant?
- Are you being pressured to have sex in ways that are uncomfortable?
- Have you ever been hit, slapped or choked by your husband?

If you have said to yourself, “I think I’m in an abusive relationship,” you may be right! If you agree with many of the above questions you are probably in an abusive relationship.

Recognizing the nature of the relationship does not mean that you cause your husband to be abusive. Your husband controls what he does and how he behaves. *Not you!* You do not cause your husband's abusive behavior. It is his choice to behave in this manner. He is capable of controlling his anger.

So, now that you recognize the abusive environment you live in, does it mean that you must immediately abandon the relationship? No, but it does mean that you should develop a plan to protect yourself and your children. When determining how to handle your situation you must first consider the safety of yourself and your children.

Answering Questions about Domestic Violence

After answering the questions in the introduction, you may be thinking you are in an abusive relationship. You also may have many questions, such as “Why is this happening to me?” “How did the relationship get this way?” “What do I do now?” “Who can help?” “Whom do I trust?” “If I tell someone, what will they think about me?” “Why did God let this happen to me?” “Will my pastor, family and friends care?” Another thought may be, “I deserve this.”

Fear, loneliness and shame are common. In other words, you are having normal reactions. Maybe you feel even God has abandoned you. Do not condemn yourself but say, “Wow, I made it this far.” Look at what you have survived—loneliness, confusion, pain and suffering. This booklet is designed to serve as a guide to help you through the upcoming tough days and into new days without abuse. Education is the key to protect you and to help you survive. As you become more knowledgeable, you will understand violent relationships and, in the process, will become stronger. Thus, you will be able to ask for help and will be better prepared to protect yourself and your children. As you learn, you will be able to answer the question, “Can I stay in this relationship or must I leave?”

Learning about domestic violence is a start, but also seek God's help. Talk to your pastor, allow your church to be a support, and immerse yourself in God's Word. Without the support of others and the strength, wisdom and comfort of God's Word, it will be harder to make it through the difficult days ahead. Remember God has promised, “*Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you*” (Hebrews 13:5). You are not facing this alone.

Now let's look at some questions and answers to help you learn more about violent relationships and how they work.

How is Domestic Violence Defined?

The term domestic violence has its roots in the Latin words *domus* (home) and *violare* (use of force) or “use of force at home.” Domestic violence happens when someone you love and trust harms you physically or emotionally. The attacks or threats also may be against your children, pets or property. Emotional abuse occurs when you are humiliated, made to fear or threatened with harm. Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior that is coercive, forceful and instills fear. There is no regard for feelings or well-being.

In Genesis 2:18, 21-22, God made Eve so Adam would not be alone. God established the family for our good. He did not intend a man to abuse his wife. God established order in marriage and set the man in authority over the woman, but God gave man a great responsibility for caring for his wife and children. The Bible says this in Ephesians 5:25, 28-29: *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her ... In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church.”* How did Christ love the church? He died on the cross for her. Martin Luther in his Large Catechism says, “Husband and wife above all things must live together in love and harmony, each loving the other with the whole heart and with totally committed faithfulness” (Explanation to the Sixth Commandment). God does not want women to suffer abuse at the hands of their husbands.

How Does Domestic Violence Appear?

Some think that domestic violence means that a woman is being hit by her husband, but it goes much deeper. Domestic violence is a control issue. It is about projecting control and asserting power in a relationship. In an abusive relationship, one person is built up at the expense—physically or emotionally—of the other person. There are various ways abuse is used to gain power and control in a relationship. The following are different types of abuse. You may be suffering from one type or any number of types.

Physical abuse: In physical abuse, control is achieved through various physical acts, such as slapping, hitting, punching, restraining, grabbing, shaking, pushing, shoving, choking or kicking. It may involve denying you access to food, drink, medicines or medical care, or forcing you to use drugs or alcohol.

Emotional abuse: In emotional abuse one controls through a pattern of severe criticism, intense manipulation, extreme humiliation and embarrassment. It may involve name-calling, attacking one’s sense of self-worth, causing self-doubt and ignoring you. Your husband may also attack and destroy your relationships with other people. Emotional abuse often is subtle and difficult to recognize.

Psychological abuse: In psychological abuse, control is gained through fear. The abuser may intimidate; threaten you or threaten to kill either you or him or the children; stalk; harass and isolate you, all in an attempt to make you afraid. He may insist on making all decisions for the family, doubt your judgment and blame you for everything. Often the abuser will justify abuse

by misusing the Bible and may forbid church attendance. In an attempt to frighten, he may damage or destroy property, harm family pets or threaten to kidnap you or the children.

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse involves control by unwelcome sexual behavior, forced, aggressive or intimidating sexual contact. His behavior may involve bizarre sexual activity, pornography, sodomy, rape or forcing you to have sex or watch him have sex with others. He also may falsely accuse you of infidelity.

Economic abuse: In economic abuse, family resources are used to control. Your husband may force you to be financially dependent on him, deny you access to money (including not providing money for groceries), seize your paycheck, make you account for all money spent and prohibit outside activities, including employment, education or socialization.

Legal abuse: In legal abuse, the legal system is used to gain control over you. Your husband may file false reports of child neglect or abuse, accuse you of drug use, seek custody of the children or refuse to pay or contest child support or alimony ordered by a court.

You should not feel guilty if you realize that any of the previously mentioned behaviors are present in your relationship and yet you did not see them earlier. Remember that having knowledge of the situation is power. A problem cannot be solved until it is recognized. Psychological and emotional abuse are powerful ways cults and prisoner-of-war camps have used to control lives. So time is needed to recognize these behaviors and to come up with a healthy response. It is important to be gentle with yourself.

Am I Being Abused?

You might be thinking, I do not fit the picture of an abused woman. I'm not bewildered and poor. It is important to realize that there is no one picture of an abused woman. Each story is different. Doubts and denial are common. It is not easy to admit, "This is happening to me." You may not want to believe it. After all, admitting that you are abused feels shameful and degrading. So, how do you recognize the fact that you are abused? Review and examine the questions in the introduction more closely.

It is very important to be clear about what is abuse, and what is not. We are not talking about the normal, occasional tensions and conflicts that every person experiences in marriage. The occasional argument, disagreement or outburst of angry speech is not what we are talking about when we describe abuse. An abusive marriage is one that involves behaviors that are ongoing, severe and never seem to resolve themselves. Anyone constantly bombarded by psychological and emotional abuse ultimately will have deep, intense feelings of fear, confusion, shame and self-doubt. Let's review and examine the questions in the introduction more closely.

The initial five questions have to do with your perceptions and feelings:

Are you afraid of your husband? Husbands and wives do not fear one another in a healthy marriage. Mutual love and support are important in a marriage relationship. If fear is a constant in a marriage, there is a major problem.

Have you changed yourself, your children and your surroundings in an attempt to please your husband and reduce his anger? It is a bad sign when you must always “walk on eggshells.”

A healthy relationship does not involve changing your life to avoid your husband’s wrath. A healthy marriage is not filled with fear.

Are you constantly feeling empty and alone? Your emptiness is due to constantly neglecting your own feelings in an attempt to avoid the pain and hurt. It is important to be free to have a variety of feelings without being condemned for them. Often loneliness in abusive relationships results from being cut off from friends or family, and/or being isolated from others. Since you feel lonely, you will be less likely to leave your husband. Isolation provides your husband more control and power over you. Physical and emotional isolation promote feelings of loneliness.

Are you plagued by self-doubt? This question concerns emotional abuse resulting from constant humiliation, belittling and manipulation. Your abusive husband wants to keep you confused. In a healthy marriage, each cares about the partner’s feelings and opinions.

Do you think that the terrible things he says about you are really true? Your husband’s constant undermining of your self-worth is one way of controlling you. God does not condone this attitude for marriage. He wants us to love (1 John 3:23) and honor one another (Romans 12:10).

The next four questions address the issue of who has the power and who controls the relationship. Healthy marriages have a balance of control and power with each person giving and taking.

Do you have to ask your husband for permission to spend money or to go places? This suggests a relationship more like parent and child, rather than husband and wife. This is not a healthy marital relationship. Neither partner in a marriage will spend large amounts of money without discussing this with the other person. Neither partner in a marriage will just leave for days at a time without talking with the other spouse.

Similarly, in a healthy marriage, neither a husband nor a wife will be expected to “report” every expenditure of money or get “permission” to go about daily tasks and chores, including time away from the other partner during the day. In the Bible, God established marriage (Genesis 2:23-25) and placed the husband as head of the household (Ephesians 5:23). However, God then stated that the husband should love as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). Does Christ deal with His bride, the church, as a tyrant? No, His approach is of a servant who died for His bride. When a marriage is healthy, each person is free to make decisions and each considers the other’s needs.

Can you tell your husband about your feelings without being afraid? A healthy marriage is not filled with fear. Husbands and wives need to be free to express their feelings and opinions without fearing the consequences, as they will not agree on everything.

Are you made to feel like you cannot do anything right or that no matter what you do it is not good enough for your husband? Your husband is building himself up by tearing you down, in order to make himself feel better. This is not God’s design for marriage. God intended marriage to be filled with love, respect and forgiveness, not animosity (Colossians 3:13).

The next three questions concern your husband's behavior. Always remember that he is responsible for his abusive behavior, not you. He controls how he handles his feelings.

Are you blamed for all the money or marital problems by your husband? Accepting responsibility is extremely difficult for an abusive husband. As a result he blames you for his irresponsible behavior and feelings of insecurity. In his mind, you are accountable for all problems in your marriage.

Does your husband become jealous when you talk to new people? Your husband is unable to trust others. This leads to jealousy and possessiveness, which causes him to restrict your social life. This, in turn, gives him control over the marriage.

Do you feel like you are married to two completely different people, one a kind and loving husband and the other a tyrant? The "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" behavior is a pattern in abusive marriages. Obviously, this creates a lot of stress, as you never know what to expect. Marriage normally does not have this pattern, but the pattern has been identified as part of Lenore Walker's *Cycle of Violence*.

The final questions relate to physical abuse:

Are you being pressured to have sex in ways that are uncomfortable? And have you ever been hit, slapped or choked by your husband? Sexual intercourse in marriage is God's gift. God intended it to be a blessing, not something forced or shameful. In healthy marriages, the couple respects one another. If sex is used as a way of gaining power and control, it loses the blessing God intended for the couple. Also, healthy marriages do not contain physical abuse.

Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians 5:28b-29, "... *husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies ... no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church.*" Healthy marriages do not include physical violence. God's desire for marriage is that each one loves and cherishes the other. Having a clearer understanding of domestic violence may make you think, we have problems, but it hasn't been that bad. After all, he has never hit me or he only hit me once. Domestic violence is progressive. So beware!

Progressive Abuse

Just as an avalanche starts and grows bigger and bigger, domestic violence starts small and grows. There may not be hitting on the first date. Domestic violence usually starts subtly; there may be verbal assaults about the way you look or on your abilities. As it continues, the attacks become more frequent and intense. Then isolation starts. Violence escalates once the abuser knows that you are entrapped. Physical violence is a taboo, but after the first time he hits you, it is much easier for him to hit you again. Therefore, if there is no intervention, the abuse usually will become more frequent and severe.

Reflect on the beginning days of your relationship with your husband. Has the abuse progressed? Do you see a pattern? Be gentle with yourself. Write down any memories you have to help you understand how well or how poorly your marriage is working.

The Cycle of Violence

Battering is not random, nor is it continual. Domestic violence has a definite pattern or cycle. Lenore Walker has studied domestic violence for years. In *The Battered Woman*, Walker defines three phases of the violence cycle: tension-building, acute battering and loving respite. The time and intensity of each phase varies among couples, as each couple has its own distinct cycle.

The cycle begins with the tension-building phase. This period has minor battering episodes, which may include verbal attacks, throwing or slamming objects or shoving. In an attempt to keep your husband's anger from increasing, you may try to anticipate his wishes or stay out of his way. This phase may be maintained at a constant level for long periods of time. Ultimately, minor incidents intensify and become more frequent. As a result, greater tension builds and becomes unbearable.

The acute battering phase, which may involve emotional, physical or sexual assault, starts with the uncontrolled release of tension built during the tension-building phase. Your husband has an overwhelming outburst of anger. This is often triggered by an external incident or his inner feelings, but not by your behavior. This phase, which can last from a few moments to an entire day, is characterized by destructiveness and lack of control. Once over, you may be shocked and not believe what just occurred. Both you and your husband may rationalize the seriousness of the event. For up to 48 hours after the battering, you may suffer emotional collapse.

The third stage is the loving respite phase, which is characterized by unusual calm and loving behavior by your husband. He will try to win your forgiveness and support, as he knows he has "crossed the line." He may be remorseful over his actions and may bring you expensive gifts. He often will promise that his violent behavior will never happen again. He may use family, your pastor or friends to convince you to stay with him, and he may say that he needs you to help him change. During this phase, you often will see the rewarding side of the marriage. You want to believe that he will change. After a while, however, his promises are broken and the cycle starts again.

Why is He Doing This to Me?

Often you ask yourself "Why does he treat me this way?" This is a very good question, but lacks a clear answer since domestic violence is complex. Abusive men share some characteristics: they have a strong need for control and many grew up in abusive homes. Many abusive men have poor self-images and have difficulty accepting responsibility for their behavior. They often are insensitive to the needs of others.

Usually their expectations of intimate relations are unrealistic and they become extremely jealous and possessive. In addition, abusive men often have a strong sense of entitlement. There is a tendency toward alcohol or other drug abuse.

Many abusive men have grown up in an abusive home. They learned that violence is "normal" behavior and therefore see violence as a solution to problems at home. Their public behavior may be very different from their private behavior. Usually abuse happens behind closed doors;

however, some men are not afraid to be subtly or overtly abusive in public. Examples of this include verbal humiliation or physical grabbing in front of others.

Your abusive husband actually is emotionally dependent on you and most of his behavior is an attempt at keeping you from leaving him. He gets a sense of control through his abusive behavior.

Many experts have offered theories on what motivates a batterer; however, the only definite reason is sin. Your husband is a sinner and part of this fallen world. Instead of wondering why he behaves this way, it is more important to ask, "What am I going to do?" You will not be able to change his behavior. That is something he must do himself. Due to the cycle of violence, he will have an extremely difficult time changing his ways as long as you live together. To start the slow process of change, you need to think about separating from your husband for a period of time. A batterer needs professional help, so your husband needs counseling from a therapist specializing in domestic violence, who will hold him accountable for his behavior.

Yes, he may beg you to stay and ask you to help him. Look at the cycle of violence. This is an attempt to manipulate you and to prevent you from leaving. The cycle of violence will continue if you stay to help him. This can place you and the children in a very dangerous situation. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that his battering behavior will change, even with professional help. Ultimately, the only solution to ensure your safety—as painful as it can be—may be permanent separation or divorce.

So Where Is God in All of This?

You may feel that God is punishing you for your sins through the abuse or you may be filled with anger towards God for letting this pain happen to you. You may feel that God has abandoned you or that He lacks understanding of your situation. God does understand what you are experiencing. He knows all about your pain and suffering. He loves you so much that He sent His Son to suffer and die for you (Romans 5:15, 1 John 4:9-10). Abuse is not God's punishment for your sins. Do not think that you deserve to be abused. Jesus already endured any punishment deserved for your sins. He paid in full, once and for all (1 Peter 3:18). Abuse is not the result of your behavior. The abuser is responsible for his sinful behavior, not you. This is not God's will for your life. In Jeremiah 29:11, God says, *"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future."* At this particular time, it may not appear that God is prospering you; however, God promises to be with you always (Matthew 28:20).

You may be angry—angry with God for allowing abuse to happen; angry with your husband for his actions; angry with those around you for not seeing your problem. Your feelings are normal. Yes, Christians will be angry. Anger is a human emotion common to us all. The Bible says, *"In your anger, do not sin ..."* (Ephesians 4:26a). What is important is how you handle your anger. It is wrong to take anger out on others, especially children. It is important to express your feelings of anger to someone you trust—a friend, your pastor, a family member or a counselor. Talking helps healing. Pray about your anger. Write your feelings down on paper. Do not take your frustrations out on your children. They know what is going on and have suffered enough. Your children need your love and support, not your anger.

If you feel God has abandoned you, do not give up or cut yourself off from His Word in the Bible or from the church. Attend church regularly. Pray regularly and study the Bible. Find someone who is strong in the faith to support you. Satan wants you to doubt God and to fall from faith. Cling to the cross of Christ and be patient. God's promises are true; He will not forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). You can hope for a better life.

Develop a Plan for Your Future

Now that you realize the abusive nature of your marriage, you may feel confused and have no idea what to do. It may seem hopeless at this time, but you can have hope for a better life, a life free from abuse. However, only you can decide what will be the best way to improve your life. Many people will tell you what you should do. Yet, finally, you are the one who has to live with the consequences of any decisions.

The hardest and definitely the most painful decision you need to make is whether or not to separate from your husband. This will not be an easy decision. When making this important decision on separation, it is crucial to take into account how the abuse has affected you and your children. The goal of this section is to help you prepare to make healthy choices for your future. Remember, you are the one making the decisions, so you are free to change your mind at any point. As you contemplate separation from your husband, you will face many questions: "Where will I live?" "How will I provide for myself and the children?" "What will my husband do?" All these questions need to be answered. Having to make a major change in your life can be positive, but at the same time very scary. Often you are torn—you want to escape the painful relationship. At the same time, you will miss him terribly and desire to stay with him. When making a major decision, you must think everything through carefully and develop a plan for your future.

Start by writing down the pros and cons of staying in this marriage. How will staying affect your life? What are the costs and the benefits of staying? As an example, for some women, one benefit of staying may be financial security. However, for women employed outside the home, financial security may not be an issue. Each woman has a different situation. How will staying with your husband affect you physically, emotionally and spiritually? How will staying affect the children? It is important to assess the severity of your physical abuse when determining how dangerous staying will be. If your husband has broken any of your bones or threatened your life, it is extremely dangerous to continue living with him. Violence only escalates over time.

How long are you thinking of staying? Depending on your situation, you may find it necessary to continue living with your husband temporarily, as you save the money needed to leave, or while you plan your departure. Think of other issues as well. Write things down to help you remember them later. As time passes, what appears to be an advantage today may be a disadvantage later. It is very important to keep your list in a safe place, where no one will find it. Whenever you are feeling confused or unsure of your decision, look back over your list.

Whether you decide to stay or leave the relationship at this time, pray for God's comfort, and ask Him for strength and guidance. If you decide to stay, planning is very important. Use your time to build up the courage and skills you will need to change your life. Try to save money. Keeping a journal of events in your marriage will help increase awareness of the cycle of violence and

this will help you understand what is going on in your marriage. If you stay, it is crucial to remember that you are passively agreeing to live on your abuser's terms.

Plan

If you have decided to stay with your husband, you need to do several things. First, you must create a safety plan to put into effect during an emergency. This plan should include a list of people you can go to for help. In a safe location, that you can access quickly, store items you should take with you (such as a change of clothes, important documents, etc.). Determine where you will go when you leave, such as a relative's home, a friend's house or a shelter. Be sure it is a safe place that your husband is unaware of.

Also, determine what type of transportation is available if you need to leave in a hurry.

Support System

It is important to build a support system for yourself. You must be connected with more than one person. Remember your husband works by isolating you, so the more people you can trust to tell about your situation, the more help you will have. People in your support system could be friends, relatives, neighbors, fellow church members, your pastor, your child's teacher and coworkers—anyone you can trust. Find out what resources are available in your area. The type of resources available will depend on where you live. Available resources are more plentiful if you live in a large city or suburban area, whereas they may be minimal if you live in a small town or rural area. Look under headings such as crisis intervention, counselors, mental health, shelters, support groups, women, etc. If you have access to the Internet, there are many sites with domestic violence information. Also find out if your congregation or another local church provides assistance for battered women.

Communicate with Your Husband

In a calm period, you may want to tell your husband what you think and feel about his abusive behavior. Remember that he may not want to listen. Just as you are not responsible for his behavior, you also cannot make him change. As you stay waiting for him to change or to get the counseling needed, you may be putting yourself and your children in danger. If you are going to give him an ultimatum, do not make threats that cannot be kept. For example, if you say to him that you will leave unless he stops abusing you, and he then abuses you, you must follow through and leave.

Talking to Your Children

One thought you may have is that the children will be better off in a two-parent home. They need your protection and are dependent on you for safety. However, the children need a safe home more than they need a two-parent home. Talk to them and tell them that they do not cause the violence. Stress that it is not their fault. It is very common for children to believe they are responsible for the abuser's behavior. You need to have a safety plan for your children. Teach them what they should do during a battering episode. For example, they can hide in their room or go to a neighbor's house.

Separation

The best chance for your husband to get the help he needs and to save your marriage is to break the cycle of violence by physically separating from him. Choosing separation will require all of your emotional and physical energy, as you will have to pick up the pieces of your life.

Make a list with the pros and cons of leaving, just like you did when considering whether or not to stay. If you decide to leave, you need a plan that includes when you will leave, where you will go, how you will get there and what you will take with you. You need to think this through carefully ahead of time.

Leaving

Deciding when to leave gives you the opportunity to separate on your own terms and thus will not be a reaction to your husband's battering behavior. Often women find that it is easiest to leave during the cycle's tension-building phase. It is possible to implement your plan during this phase, to take the personal belongings you want and to leave while the batterer is not home. Other women decide to leave shortly after a battering episode, as they have the "motivation" to leave. Leaving at this point usually is an emergency situation and often is done without preparation. It is hardest to leave during the loving respite phase, since the batterer is on his best behavior and is attentive to your needs.

Extreme caution must be taken when making separation plans. If your husband suspects you are planning to leave, his fear of losing you may result in escalated violence. If you leave while he is not at home, leave a note stating why you are leaving. *Do not tell him where you are staying.* If he knows where you are, it could endanger your life, your children and those you are staying with. Be on guard, as violence often intensifies after you leave. He will most likely be very angry and will feel the need to regain control of you and the marriage. It is common for him to say that he has changed or that he has become a Christian. Watch from a distance to see if he has indeed changed. You need to see a sustained change of behavior over months to ensure that it is not a ploy to get you to return home. Separating from your husband can be the most dangerous time, as numerous women have been killed by their abusive husbands following a separation.

How to Get Away

After you have decided when to separate, you must decide how you will get away. Can you use your car? What will you do if he grabs the keys from your hand during a heated moment? Is your destination within walking distance? Is there a telephone nearby? Could you call someone to come and get you? Some communities are making cell phones available to women who are in abusive relationships. Find out if your community has this program. Think through as many different scenarios as you can so you can plan a safe departure.

What to Take

Make a list of what you will take with you. What material possessions are you willing to live without? Remember, it is important to plan as if you will have to leave in a hurry and may never return. Preparation ahead of time will help you leave at a moment's notice if necessary. In a place where they can be quickly grabbed during an emergency, place valuables and certain documents. These include your social security card, your birth certificate, your children's birth certificates and social security cards, medical information and insurance cards and your marriage license. Keep a list of any other important information or assets you have, for example, bank account numbers, credit cards, insurance policies, car titles, annuities. Think of items you will need to provide for yourself and your children. All these items need to be kept together in a safe

place or in a container you can quickly take if you have to leave in a hurry. Having a spare set of house keys and a hidden set of car keys may save your life during an emergency.

Where to Go

Once you have decided when and how to leave you must determine where you will go. Contact the resources available in your area (remember the resource list you developed earlier). Look at your options. Keep in mind that your choices may be limited by where you live. There may not be a shelter close to you. Remember that your husband may suspect you will leave and stay with a certain family member or friend. Think about where he would expect to find you—you should consider going to an unexpected location. You are the only one who can decide the best place for you and the children. Investigate your alternatives and make plans ahead of time.

You may not have thought of asking him to move out of the house. Be very careful if he agrees to leave. If he does leave, for your own safety, change the locks on the door. Go to court and get a restraining order to keep him from moving back home or threatening you and the children. Realize that you could have difficulties if you decide to go to a shelter. Your Christian values may not be shared by the staff or other women staying at the shelter. This could increase your stress and confusion. Some shelters for abused women only allow a woman to stay for up to six weeks. So you must see if the benefits outweigh the costs.

Remember, God can use non-Christian means to take care of you. It may be easiest for you to stay temporarily with friends and then find your own place to live. If you have a good rapport with your pastor, he may be able to find a family through church with whom you could stay. If you leave and later decide to return home to get your belongings, for your own safety, take someone with you. If you decide to stay with family or friends, you need to think about what you will do if your husband finds you living there. Always think about your safety when planning living arrangements.

Continued Safety

Even after the separation, safety will continue to be a concern. Your husband's abusive behavior may escalate, becoming more violent, or he may decide to kidnap the children in an attempt to reconcile with you or to punish you. Think about how you will maintain safe contact with your husband. At first you may only want to communicate with him by telephone. Many telephones reveal the telephone number and name of the person calling, so use caller ID blocking to keep your location a secret. Only you can determine how to handle your particular situation.

Determine how to provide safe contact between the children and their father. If your children are school age or in day care, tell their teachers, other school staff or caregivers of any instructions, especially what persons have your permission to pick them up. The safety plan you come up with may require legal consultation in order to provide both physical and financial security for both you and the children (through a protection order or legal separation).

Divorce

Domestic violence has been terribly destructive to your family—to you, to your husband, to your children. God is not pleased with this type of life. Yet you must understand that divorce is not a simple solution to the problem either. Unfortunately in today's society, divorce is common and is taken much too lightly. However, sometimes divorce is inevitable. Your husband may refuse to be reconciled and choose divorce. Likewise, you may come to the decision that divorce is necessary for your own physical and financial protection. If all efforts to address the issue of

abuse in your marriage have proven futile, divorce may be the only way to protect yourself and your children from continuing violence and abuse.

If you have children together there will always be a connection between the two of you, even if the marriage ends in divorce. Your husband may attempt to use the children to regain control of the relationship, even if from a distance. It is important for you to talk to your pastor about divorce and your feelings regarding divorce. Take comfort in the fact that you are still God's child, no matter what your marital status. Being divorced does not make you less of a person. It will be important to take the time needed to heal emotionally if your marriage ends in divorce. Be careful not to rush into another relationship to feel worthwhile or loved. Often this leads to repeated victimization. Remember God will always love you and that He is the source of love. In 1 John 4:10, He says, *"This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."*

Ultimately, you are the one who has to choose how you will handle your abusive marriage. Pray for God's continued guidance and His comfort. The decision may be overwhelming. Think each decision through one at a time. Plan ahead. Do not be surprised if you have feelings of loss, sadness, depression, frustration or anger. You are experiencing normal feelings under the circumstances. An abusive marriage is painful to live in. It is also painful to live through a separation or divorce. God promises to be with you. Remember His words, *"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5).

Words of Help

As an abused woman, you not only face the decision whether or not to separate from your husband, but a variety of other practical issues. These may include finding a job, finding a place to live, how to deal with very mixed and troubling emotions, choosing a counselor, finding resources or handling your children.

Deciding whether or not you should go to your pastor for physical and spiritual help may be difficult. Many abused women feel that either the pastor will not understand or will think poorly of her if she speaks to him about the abuse. A majority of pastors have great concern and compassion for their congregation, and therefore would be eager to be helpful and supportive of abused women. Your pastor will probably see your approaching him about the abuse as an act of courage. However, you still may not be sure what your pastor's reaction will be. Therefore, you need to trust your own instincts and judgment. If you are unsure about talking to your pastor at this time, then you are free not to go to him. If you decide to tell your pastor, it is crucial for you to be honest about the abuse. You do not want him to think that what you are saying about the abuse is only ordinary marital conflict or the everyday tensions that every marriage experiences.

If you do not honestly inform him about the abuse you are experiencing, then his advice will be focused on reconciling the marriage, not on protecting you from further abuse.

After clearly communicating that your husband is abusing you, listen to your pastor's counsel. Be prepared to help him understand just how serious the situation is as he asks questions so that he can better understand your circumstances. Many pastors have not received specific training on how to handle domestic violence. While they may not be able to offer you all the specific advice

you need regarding domestic violence, they are there to bring you the Gospel comfort that will help you through the situation.

Sometimes pastors or other well-meaning friends may give you unwise advice. For example, they may just say, “Don’t worry, God will take care of you,” or “Go home, pray harder, and be a better wife.” “Submit to your husband, no matter what.” In an abusive relationship, this type of advice is counterproductive. Regardless of who will support you, there is help available to break the cycle of violence in your life.

Another support person can be a counselor. A good counselor, secular or Christian, who understands domestic violence can be very helpful.

A counselor can help you look at your particular situation and provide guidance. Be aware that the counselor should not tell you what to do. He or she should help you carefully evaluate your situation, gain insight about your situation, but then allow and encourage you to make the decisions about what you will do.

Deciding which counselor to use may depend on where you live or your financial situation. It is important to consider your practical needs when you choose a counselor. If money is tight, the counselor you choose may depend on whether or not you have insurance coverage. Without insurance, your only choice may be to see a low-cost counselor at a mental health clinic or social service agency. Likewise, if you live in a rural area, you may have to travel a long way to receive counseling, which may be impossible if you lack adequate transportation or childcare. In this situation, the only help available may be a domestic violence telephone hotline or your pastor.

It is important to consider your faith when selecting a counselor. You may decide to use a Christian counselor. Even though the counselor is Christian, she may not share your religious beliefs, which could increase your level of distress and confusion. It is okay to ask questions about the counselor’s religious beliefs or about any other concerns you may have about the counselor.

Sometimes, depending on your situation, only secular counseling is available. *Do not despair.* Some secular counselors are as respectful of your spiritual convictions as Christian counselors. God can use non-Christians to provide for your needs. To alleviate any fears or concerns, feel free to ask the counselor questions. No matter what the counselor’s religious beliefs, he or she must have experience working with domestic violence or be knowledgeable about the cycle of violence. Continue looking for a counselor if he/she does not understand the cycle of violence. Your pastor may be able to recommend a good counselor, and during your counseling, particularly if you choose to use a secular counselor, stay in close contact with your pastor so he can extend to you the ministry of the Gospel.

After choosing a counselor, ask about fees, rules about canceling appointments or any other questions or concerns you have. Also, ask about the counselor’s view of divorce. If you are uncomfortable with the counselor’s viewpoint or if it creates a moral conflict for you, you are free to quit going or to change counselors.

In the previous section, we discussed where to start looking for other resources. Domestic violence hotlines often have useful suggestions or can lead you to other resources.

Find out whether you are eligible for various social services; check with your local welfare office. Your physician is one resource you may have overlooked. If you have been abused physically or sexually, go to your doctor and be checked for internal injuries. Documentation of injuries is important. This information may be very important if you decide to pursue legal action at a later time.

How has abuse affected your feelings? Are you feeling guilty, lonely, angry or bitter? Do you desire revenge? All of these are normal feelings. How you react to your feelings is important. Be aware that feelings are not always reliable. For example, have you ever felt guilty when you did not do anything wrong? In this situation, the guilty feeling did not reflect the real situation.

The most common and disturbing feeling in abused women is guilt. Maybe your husband has repeatedly told you how worthless you are, how everything is your fault and how you deserve to be punished for your failures. He has tried to make you feel guilty and probably has succeeded. Guilt also can arise from the failure at love or the loss of the “perfect” marriage. You may be bombarded with nagging thoughts like, “If only I had” or “Did I do enough?” These thoughts can lead to feeling guilty. It is important not to second-guess your decisions, as this increases guilt. Given the circumstances of your marriage, know that you have done your best. Do not be deceived into thinking that if you had tried harder to make him love you, or if you were prettier, etc., that the marriage would have been better.

Nothing you could have done would have changed his attitude or behavior. He alone is responsible for his violent temper and his abusive personality. Your guilt will diminish over time. Time also brings healing. Ask your pastor for individual confession and absolution if guilt burdens you or if there are actions you regret. Being told privately by a pastor of God’s forgiveness, for Christ’s sake, is a powerful way God works to bring us comfort during these times.

It is extremely common for you as an abused woman to feel lonely; after all, the abuser works to create isolation in your life. Your husband may have prohibited you from seeing friends or perhaps even from attending church. Isolation can make you feel incompetent and alone, and this often inhibits your emotional and spiritual growth. Despite your feelings, you are worthwhile and you have many good qualities.

To fight isolation and loneliness, reach out to other people and start new friendships. Perhaps you have been overly focused on your husband and on trying to save your marriage. You may feel empty and very uncomfortable when you are alone. Instead of panicking about being alone, use this time to pray, to read the Bible and to focus on your own needs.

Another source of loneliness arises from how other people interact with you. Sometimes it seems that some people avoid you, and this may indeed be true. There are people who will avoid you once they find out that you have been abused. Do not take offense. This avoidance reaction is similar to how some people react after a death. Usually these people are acting out of their own discomfort, not a lack of concern. People may be afraid of what to say to you or lack ideas as to what they should do for you. Their coping mechanism is to avoid the whole situation. It is important to know that not everyone you have contact with will be understanding and supportive. Instead, look to those individuals who are helpful and understanding of your situation. Try to find people who can relate to your abusive situation and who can give you encouragement and support.

Even extended families can add to the loneliness. If you lack your family's support, you may feel especially lonely. When a family does not understand domestic violence, they may pressure you into staying with your husband no matter the cost. Your loneliness may increase if you decide to cut yourself off from the extended family for a time.

Being abused also may prevent you from seeing God's hand in your life, and this leads to feeling lonely or abandoned. Even though you may feel that God has abandoned you, it does not mean that He has. Remember, feelings can be deceptive. God promises, "*Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you*" (Hebrews 13:5). Look at the rainbow in the sky following a storm and know that God keeps His promises. Trust God's promises in His Word, not your feelings. God will not change (Psalm 102:27, Hebrews 13:8), but over time your feelings will change.

Bitterness is another feeling that can consume you. Bitter feelings may arise because there seem to be no solutions easily available, or because your church does not seem to help you, or because you see that others have a better life than you have. Sometimes bitterness arises if your husband divorces you and remarries. You see him treating his new wife like a "queen." Do not be fooled by his outward behavior; he has not changed. Remember how he abused you in the privacy of your home. Pray for strength and ask God to help you handle your feelings of bitterness. God desires that we lose all bitterness (Ephesians 4:31). Unchecked bitterness can lead to rage or anger and the need for revenge. God does not want you to act upon your bitter feelings. He does not want you to seek revenge as a means of punishing your husband. That is what the devil wants, and he will try to use your bitterness to drive you to despair. The devil desires that you curse God and fall from faith.

It is God who is to take revenge or punish your abuser. God tells us in Deuteronomy 32:35a, "*It is mine to avenge; I will repay. ...*" and in Romans 12:19a, "*Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath. ...*" God will deal with your abusive husband. You need to protect yourself and hold your abuser responsible for his actions, but do not seek revenge. We live in a fallen world and this often prevents our ability to see God's justice.

Often it appears as if there is no justice at all, since your abuser continues to prosper. The Bible gives examples of how the wicked seem to prosper. In Psalm 73:12 it says, "*This is what the wicked are like—always carefree, they increase in wealth.*" Yet, if you continue reading, it says in verse 27, "*Those who are far from You will perish; You destroy all who are unfaithful to You.*" So do not despair and do not yield to feelings of bitterness and the desire for revenge. Ask God for His help in dealing with your feelings. Talk with your pastor.

Bitter feelings or the desire for revenge may leave you concerned about forgiveness. We pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." God understands better than we do how liberating forgiveness toward others is in our life. Being willing to forgive your abusive husband may take a long time. Or perhaps you feel that you cannot be forgiven for your mistakes. Ask for God's forgiveness and learn from your mistakes. Even though it may be difficult, accept the fact that God has forgiven you, even if you do not feel forgiven. Once again feelings can deceive. Forgiveness is not a feeling—it is a reality. If you are to forgive your abusive husband, it will require a conscious decision on your part. Eventually, you may desire to forgive him. *Your forgiveness does not depend on his repentance.* Your recovery from abuse does not depend on anything he may do or say or feel. Your healing does not depend on anyone else. You can recover and heal. You will with God's abundant grace and strength.

When a Christian forgives another person, even an enemy, it is in response to the forgiveness that God has given them through Christ's death on the cross (Ephesians 4:32). Keep in mind that when you forgive, you may receive more benefits and greater peace of mind than your abuser receives. Forgiveness often will give you peace and allow you to look to your future. Feelings are not constant and will change over time. God can help you sort through your feelings as you study the Bible, pray and ask for the counsel of your pastor or a fellow Christian. *"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor Me"* (Psalm 50:15).

Notes

*Check out LHM's online store
for a variety of ministry resources*

If you would like to get hard-copy booklets
of this item, you can do so by going to
<http://www.lhmgift.org/storefront/products.asp?by=topic&id=7>.

There you will find this and other **Project Connect** booklets,
with many titles in Spanish as well. Subjects like peace,
divorce, forgiveness, cancer, gambling, post-traumatic
stress disorder and loneliness are only a few of the topics
sensitively addressed in these concise, Christ-centered volumes.



© The President's Commission on Women
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
August 2001
Revised 2011

This booklet has been reprinted with
permission granted by the President's Office
of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2008

*Lutheran Hour Ministries is a Christian outreach ministry supporting churches
worldwide in its mission of Bringing Christ to the Nations and the Nations to the Church.*

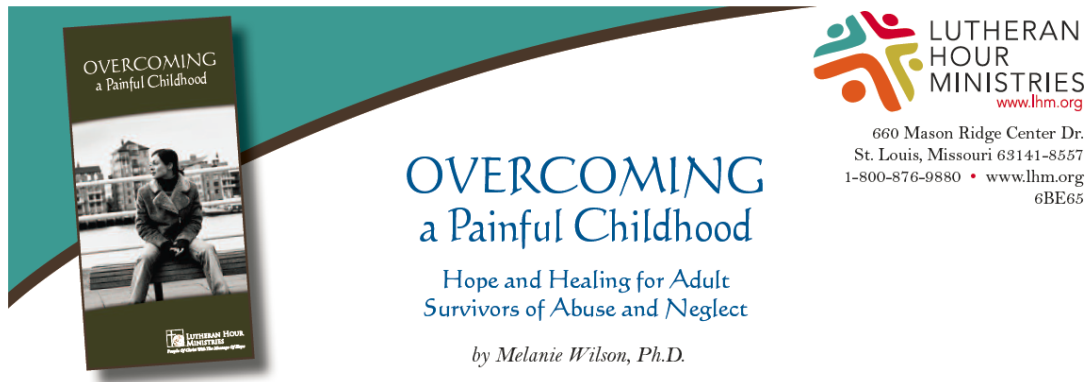
Unless noted otherwise, Scripture is taken from the HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®,
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.
Capitalization of pronouns referring to the Deity has been added and is not part of the original New International Version text.

[Return to menu](#)

PROJECT CONNECT BOOKLETS:

Overcoming a Painful Childhood *Hope and Healing for Adult Survivors of Abuse and Neglect*

<http://www.lhm.org/projectconnect/downloadfile.asp?ID=3082>



Sue woke up feeling the pain of another one of her boyfriend's rages. She rubbed her arm and wondered if it was broken or just sprained. A woman with a bruised face stared back at her from the bathroom mirror. Sue wasn't surprised. She had been waking up like this for as long as she could remember. Her boyfriend, Rick, liked his beer as much as her father had, and they both had hot tempers. Sue never knew when Rick would lose it and start hitting, but there was something about her that made him do it. It must be the same thing that had made her father beat her. "I wish things could be different," she thought, "but I don't know how I'll ever be happy."

This booklet is for the millions of men and women like Sue whose lives are affected by abuse or neglect they suffered as a child. Adult survivors of physical, sexual, emotional and spiritual abuse often wonder

- How does my history of child abuse continue to affect me today?
- What can I do to start feeling better emotionally and physically?
- How can I ensure a better future for myself and the people I love?

The good news is that with help from God and people who care, you can overcome a painful childhood.

Long-Term Effects of Abuse

You are a special person and your childhood experiences were unique. However, many adult survivors of child abuse deal with similar problems, misconceptions or anxieties. You may not

have made the connection between your experience of abuse or neglect and the problems you are having in your life today, but everyone's adult life is heavily influenced by their childhood experiences. Understanding how child abuse has affected you will show you that you are not alone and help you let go of unnecessary guilt and self-blame.

In 2003, child protective services documented almost 2.9 million reported cases of child abuse or neglect in the United States. They estimate that there are millions of adult survivors just like you. While some of those people do not have continuing difficulties in adulthood, many do. Usually, the more severe the abuse or neglect was, the more severe the problems are in adulthood. These problems range from basic misconceptions about yourself and the world around you, to emotional problems and difficulty controlling behavior.

Misconceptions about yourself, others, the world

Sue could still hear her father saying she would never amount to anything. He said she was ugly and no man would want her. She supposed he was right. She was 30 years old, still single, and only making minimum wage. Rick never held a job longer than a month. He only stuck around because the rent was free and because Sue didn't say anything when money disappeared from her purse. But she figured Rick wasn't any worse than any other guy she'd met. They were all looking out for "number one."

Like Sue, many adult survivors have believed lies about themselves, other people and the world in which they live. Maybe your abuser lied to you over and over again, so you don't know what's true and what's false. In his book, *From Victim to Victory*, child abuse survivor Phil Quinn explains that many adult survivors believe lies about themselves, such as

- I'm bad, ugly, no good, worthless, stupid, unlovable or helpless;
- it was all my fault that I was beaten, ignored or molested;
- it is not okay for me to feel angry or sad or to tell the truth about how I feel.

Many adult survivors believe lies about others, such as

- people cannot be trusted;
- other people are cruel and out to get me;
- other people only care about themselves.

Many adult survivors view the world as

- frightening and unpredictable;
- overwhelming;
- doomed.

As you learn the truth, your beliefs about yourself, other people and the world will change.

Emotional problems

Sue found it more difficult to get out of bed in the morning. She didn't feel like going to work anymore. She used to enjoy getting together with her friends, but she hadn't called anyone in months. She also thought about death a lot; it seemed like the world would be better off if she weren't around.

People who have been abused are more likely to suffer from emotional problems such as depression and anxiety. Many survivors struggle every day with

- poor self-esteem;
- lack of interest in fun activities;
- loss of appetite (or weight gain);
- trouble sleeping (or sleeping too much);
- fatigue;
- hopelessness;
- suicidal thoughts.

Other survivors suffer from anxiety disorders. The nervousness may seem unrelated to their abuse, or the fear may be brought on by situations that trigger memories of abuse. If you suffer from anxiety disorders you may experience

- sudden attacks of fear;
- frequent worry;
- restlessness;
- fatigue;
- muscle tension and pain;
- nightmares or other sleep difficulties;
- trouble concentrating;
- being easily startled.

Difficulty relating to others

Like Sue, most victims of abuse and neglect are hurt by the people they want to love and trust the most—their parents. The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect reports that in 2003, 83.9 percent of abusers were the child's parents, and another 15 percent were relatives of the child. Young children learn the most about themselves and how to relate to others from their parents. Children who are abused

by their parents may have no idea what a healthy marriage or parent-child relationship is like, and often continue to have unstable, unhappy and sometimes violent relationships as adults. Judith Herman writes in *Trauma and Recovery* that the risk of rape, sexual harassment or battering is almost doubled for survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

As an adult survivor, you may

- be always searching for someone to love and care for you the way your parents never did;
- not know how to choose a trustworthy partner or friend;
- give in to people who seem to have more authority than you do;
- abuse others;
- be the victim of other abusive relationships.

Difficulty controlling behavior

Adult survivors are more likely than other people to abuse drugs and alcohol. Drinking and taking drugs can dull the painful memories of abuse and help you escape the pain of your current life situation. Because you can drink and use drugs to feel good whenever you choose, they can give you the illusion of being powerful. But addictive substances can quickly control you and cause even more pain than you had before.

Although most adult survivors do not abuse their own children, they are more likely than other people to do so and more likely to commit other violent acts. Adult survivors often were taught by example to solve problems with violence and have deep-seated anger about their abuse.

Victims of child abuse are also more likely to hurt themselves. Some adult survivors say physical pain helps to block out the emotional pain, while others say they feel relief after punishing themselves for being “bad.”

Misconceptions of God and life in general

Sue wondered if she would really end up burning in hell like her father said. Of course, she wasn't sure she cared one way or the other. Her life seemed like hell on earth anyway. If there was a God, Sue was pretty sure He'd never liked her. She remembered praying a couple of times when she was a kid, "Please help daddy be happy. Please help me be good so he won't get mad." But nothing changed.

Child abuse or neglect can interfere with every aspect of a person's life, including the spiritual. Although some survivors learn to depend on God because of the abuse, others are angry at God or are unable to believe in Him at all. Some survivors were spiritually abused; the church was involved in their abuse, or their abuser lied about God or they were prevented from knowing God. Some survivors, like Sue, wonder how there could be a God who would allow an innocent child to endure such pain and suffering, and others see no meaning or purpose in life.

Hopefully, this brief review of the ways that child abuse and neglect may continue to affect you today has helped you to understand yourself better. Remember that some adult survivors do not

experience these kinds of problems. If you do, however, it may be helpful to read more on the subject. Additional resources are listed at the end of this booklet.

Dealing with Childhood Trauma

At work one day, Sue's coworker, Karen, said she'd noticed that Sue seemed down lately. She asked if Sue wanted to talk during their lunch break. Sue didn't feel much like talking, but she said yes anyway. During lunch, she didn't feel comfortable telling Karen about Rick, but she admitted that she had been feeling pretty hopeless lately. Karen was a good listener and soon Sue was explaining that she'd never really been happy—even as a child. She talked about how hard it was having a father who drank and lost his temper a lot. Karen put her arm around Sue and promised that she would help Sue feel better soon.

The fact that you are reading this booklet suggests that you are ready to begin the process of recovery. This journey requires tremendous courage. It is usually a slow (perhaps lifelong) process, and you should not try to do it alone. The first step is to feel safe, then to tell and retell the story of your abuse, and finally, to forgive your abuser.

Establish a support network

Karen told Sue she knew of a Christian counselor who did therapy at a reduced rate. Sue wasn't too sure she wanted to talk to anybody about her life, let alone a Christian, but Karen said she could quit if she didn't like it. Karen even offered to drive her.

The therapist was friendly and seemed genuine. Sue was surprised that she ended up talking to her and even crying a little bit. The therapist said she wanted to help Sue connect with people who could help. Sue decided that she didn't have anything to lose by trying.

The first step in feeling safe is to build a support network of people who can help you, which may mean reaching out and asking for help. A good start would be to find a licensed counselor or psychologist who has training and experience working with adult survivors of childhood abuse. If finances are a concern, look for a therapist whose fees are based on your income. It's important to develop a close working relationship with a counselor, so choose someone you are comfortable with. If necessary, ask a friend to take you to your appointments.

A counselor can help you find a support group for adult survivors if you want one. There are support groups for adult children of alcoholics, victims of sexual abuse, victims of incest and other particular situations. Although your experiences are unique, you can benefit from the support of others. The group members' stories may help you tell and understand your own story, and they will probably have useful suggestions on how to cope.

Your support network may also include trusted friends and family members. Tell these people that you are beginning the recovery process, so they will understand changes in your emotions and behavior. Your therapist may also encourage you to involve them in the counseling process.

You may have a lot of questions about God—Where was He when you were being abused as a child? Does He care about you? If you question the existence of God or wonder about the

meaning and purpose of your life, a Christian counselor or caring pastor can help. Ask people you trust to recommend a pastor or Christian counselor who understands the particular needs of adult survivors of child abuse.

Get treatment for physical and emotional symptoms

Once you have established a support network, your next step will probably be to control any troubling emotional or physical symptoms. A thorough medical exam is a good idea. Your therapist can help you find a psychiatrist who can prescribe medication to control depression, anxiety or sleep difficulties. Your therapist can also help manage symptoms by teaching you new ways to relax and control your thoughts.

Create a safe place to live and work

Sue's therapist helped her find a support group for adult survivors and a pastor with whom she could talk. She still didn't feel completely comfortable talking with the pastor. She worried that he could see how bad she was, but he was nice and tried to make her feel welcome.

The therapist also talked with her about ending her abusive relationship with Rick. Sue was scared about what Rick might do if she tried to kick him out, but she agreed to talk with someone at a domestic violence shelter about her options.

You must feel safe where you live and work. Continuing to live in a crime-ridden area, being repeatedly hit by your partner or working for someone who harasses you is likely to interfere with your recovery. Your support network can help you find the resources you need to move, temporarily live in a domestic violence shelter or change jobs.

Build self-confidence

Sue couldn't believe the changes that had taken place in her life during the past several months. She was feeling less depressed, had made new friends in her support group, and with the help of the counselors at the women's shelter, had moved and ended her relationship with Rick. She was actually starting to feel good about herself. The therapist started teaching Sue how to stand up for herself, and she had just started taking a self-defense class at the YMCA.

Some adult survivors find that participating in confidence-building programs helps them feel safe. Learning how to assert yourself—how to ask for what you need and want without being aggressive—is one way to build your confidence. Taking a self-defense course, practicing Tae-Bo or doing other exercises can help you feel able to protect yourself. A challenging outdoor program such as Outward Bound can also help you believe you can care for yourself. Your support network can help you find the right program for you.

Tell your story of abuse

Sue was afraid to write a letter to her dad. Her therapist said it would help, but Sue didn't see how. She'd never been very good at writing, but she tried. She started with "Dear Dad," and then was stuck for a long time. After a while she started writing about the time her dad broke her nose because she hadn't put her bicycle away. She wrote about the time he'd made her walk miles to school when she'd missed the bus. When she read to her therapist what she'd written, the therapist said she had done well and encouraged Sue to write more about her feelings in the next letter.

When Sue read the second letter aloud, she was surprised by her angry words and tears. She never knew that she had so much hurt and anger inside.

Once you have established a sense of personal safety, the truly difficult work of recovery begins. With the help of your support network, you must tell your story of childhood abuse and neglect. This can be very emotionally draining, and it is helpful to eliminate as many other activities as possible so you can focus on this task.

The thought of remembering painful events from your childhood can be very frightening. You may fear that once you begin to express your feelings, you will never stop feeling angry or depressed. It is also normal to fear hurting yourself or someone else once the feelings come to the surface. However, the emotions you feel at this point in recovery will not always be so intense. Your support network can also reassure you that they will not let you hurt yourself or others.

In light of how difficult discussing your abuse will be, you may wonder if the past isn't better left in the past. But feelings that are not expressed can disable you. Unexpressed anger can lead to depression and anxiety. When you decide to feel your feelings, you take away their power to control your life.

Writing letters and keeping a journal are usually the first and best means of helping you recall painful memories. Your therapist may ask you to write a letter to your abuser or to any adults who did not protect you from the abuse. These are for your healing; they will not be sent or shared with anyone who is not part of your recovery.

Storytelling often begins with a brief, unemotional description of events. As you gain courage, though, your storytelling will become detailed and filled with emotion. You may write several letters and read them aloud to your therapist or support group. After a particularly emotional letter writing or reading session, you may feel relief, as though a huge weight has been lifted from you. But the painful feelings may return temporarily during other emotional experiences, such as the death of a loved one, losing a job, the death of your abuser or having a child reach the age at which you were abused.

Keeping a journal of your thoughts, feelings and dreams as you go through recovery is an excellent way to let go of negative feelings and understand yourself better. It will also help you see how much progress you are making.

Find safe ways to express feelings

Sue also read her letter to her support group. Afterward, the support group leader encouraged her to beat on a pillow with a plastic bat to express her anger. Sue felt silly at first, but soon the anger and hurt came pouring out as she yelled at her father for what he'd done. When she stopped, everyone hugged her. She was exhausted, but she felt better than she had in years.

Your counselor may give you other suggestions for managing your feelings. Punch a punching bag, pound on clay, scream by yourself in the car or shower, run, walk briskly—do whatever you can to express anger safely. It may also help to talk to a friend, practice deep breathing and relaxation or just do something you enjoy. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.

Grieve losses

At first, you may be overwhelmed by feelings of anger toward your abuser and any other adults who didn't protect you. You may also feel sad because

- your parents didn't love you unconditionally;
- other people you cared about—your mother, brothers, sisters—were also victims of the abuser;
- you lost your innocence at an early age;
- you wasted years of your life feeling guilty or bitter about what happened to you;
- you didn't get help sooner;
- you have hurt or disappointed others, too.

Don't be afraid to cry. Grieving your losses is an important part of the healing process. If, however, you feel hopeless or consider hurting yourself, tell someone you trust immediately. It's okay to feel sad sometimes, but life is *not* hopeless.

Make New Choices

As a child you did not have the power to stop your abuse. But today you have the power to choose whether you will live as a victim or will make new choices and live victoriously.

New choices about yourself

In therapy, Sue learned that her father had lied when he said she would never amount to anything. Her therapist, pastor and support group had helped her to see that she was a bright, attractive and lovable woman. Sue had always wanted to be a nurse, but never thought she was smart enough. Now she is enrolling in nursing school.

One of the most destructive things about child abuse is that it can make you believe lies about yourself. You are not responsible for what happened to you. No matter what you did or didn't do,

you did not deserve to be abused or neglected. God created you. You are His child—a special person with unique talents and gifts. What happened to you cannot change that. It will take time to silence the voice in your head that says you're dirty, no good, worthless. But it can be done. Try writing positive reminders to yourself such as "God loves me" or "I am a good friend." Put these reminders on the bathroom mirror or over the kitchen sink, anywhere that you can see them each day. Before you go to bed each night, make a list of the good things that you did during the day.

Start caring for yourself the way you would care for a good friend. Begin by getting help to stop smoking, drinking too much, using drugs, injuring yourself or abusing others. Care for your body by eating delicious and nutritious food. Exercise regularly in a way you enjoy. Do something that makes you feel attractive. Listen to uplifting music. Make time to relax. Take baths, read, work in a garden. Do something you really enjoy. Loving yourself is good defense against self-doubts.

The pain and disappointment of an abusive childhood can rob you of hope. But God says that He has a plan for you. He has plans for you to have a fruitful life full of hope. God has a plan for your job, your relationships and your life. But the only way you can experience His plan is to trust Him and begin setting new goals. Your abuser may have told you that you couldn't do the things you wanted to. Now is the time for you to discover that with God, you can. Don't let fear stop you. You have already overcome so much! Set small, specific goals in all areas of your life. For example, Sue's first goal in becoming a nurse was to go to the library and find out what education and experience is required. Begin acting as if you've already achieved your goals. Before you know it, those long-forgotten dreams will become reality.

New choices about relationships

Sue decided not to visit her mom and dad for the time being. She was sad about not seeing her mom, but felt she needed time before she could stand up to her dad. Sue had already ended friendships with people who thought nothing good would ever happen to her, and she was making new friends from the support group who encouraged her.

As you begin to make new choices about yourself, you will realize how important it is to make new choices about your relationships as well. It is difficult to cope with fear of making major life changes if you are surrounded by negative people. Spend time with people who believe that you can achieve your goals. Let them get to know you, and seek to love and encourage them as well.

You may have to make some difficult decisions, including whether to confront your abuser. If you do, it will require lots of encouragement from your support network and preparation to know exactly what you want to say. Most importantly, you should know why you are choosing to confront. You could be very disappointed if your primary motivation is to cause your abuser to change. The goal of confrontation should be to help you feel stronger and more peaceful.

If the abuser currently has contact with children who may also be victimized, you must report your abuse to authorities in order to protect those children.

If your abuser is still a part of your life and continues to abuse, you may have to limit or end contact. This can be very difficult if your abuser is a parent or other close relative. You may

decide, like Sue, that you only know you don't want see that person right now. You can always change your mind later, but only you can make that decision.

New choices about God

Sue couldn't believe that just a year ago she was considering suicide. At the time, she didn't think she could ever be happy. But now most days she actually felt peaceful. She knew God's peace and joy in her heart. With help from her therapist and pastor, she had decided to forgive her father and Rick for hurting her. She also made the most important decision of her life—she decided to set aside the negative messages she had been told about God and to seek comfort in Him. There were still difficult days, but now Sue knew that she never had to face them alone.

You may feel angry at God and that's okay. Tell Him about how you feel; He can handle it. You may also have some questions to ask Him—Does He care about you? Where was He during your abuse? Why didn't He protect you?

The answer to that first question is absolutely yes! God created you. He knew you before you were born and He cares about your thoughts and feelings. He has a purpose for your life and wants you to have the joy that comes from knowing Him.

Where was God during your abuse? He was with you, grieving each hurt you experienced. He wants to comfort you and promises to be with you always. God does not cause evil to happen, but it is hard for us not to hold Him responsible because He didn't step in and stop the evil from happening. It only makes it worse when we see or hear of situations where it does seem that a miraculous intervention took place to break the cycle and end the abuse. Why are some spared and others not? You may never know the answer to that question. But what you do have is His continuing promise of love.

The final step in the recovery process is to forgive your abuser and others who have hurt you. Forgiving your abuser may seem impossible—you probably feel anger, hatred and even a desire for revenge. These feelings are reasonable and justified, but they can interfere with your ability to love yourself, others and God. God asks you to forgive others because He forgives you.

“What is forgiveness? It's not just a response to an apology. It's not just a feeling. Forgiveness is a choice, an action. Forgiveness is a gift from God in which He removes our sins and does not remember them anymore. It is a freeing gift. Forgiveness is the gift of peace with God through His Son, Jesus Christ” (from *Forgiveness Is for Giving*).

When you choose to forgive, you are not excusing the evil that was done to you. You are releasing the rage that can destroy you. You are deciding not to dwell on the abuse and not to mention it in anger. When memories of abuse come to mind, you can distract yourself, talk to a friend and let go of the memory, or pray for others who are right now suffering the same kind of abuse. Eventually, God will give you the spirit of forgiveness.

God will give you the power to live victoriously with your past, to forgive, to make new choices. Pray this prayer, or one like it:

God, thank You for being my Comforter. Forgive me for making choices that were not the best for me and that were not pleasing to You. Live in my heart and make me a new person. Help me

make new choices for my life that are pleasing to You, and give me the power to forgive the people who have hurt me, just as You have forgiven me. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

New choices for life

One of God's most reassuring promises about suffering is that, in all things, He works for the good of those who love Him.

Helping other people who have suffered abuse is one way to see good come out of your experience. Phil Quinn, a survivor of severe physical abuse, was motivated by his anger to help other abuse victims. Oprah Winfrey has also devoted herself to protecting children as a way of healing the pain of her own abuse. You, too, can find healing for yourself in helping others.

- Volunteer in or financially support an agency that helps victims of child abuse and works for helpful new laws.
- Teach and provide support for parents to prevent abuse.
- Pray for peace for others who have suffered abuse.

You can make a difference in other people's lives. Share the comfort God has given you with others who are suffering.

Additional Resources

From Victim to Victory by Phil E. Quinn, Abingdon Press, 1994, 163 pages,
ISBN: 0687136555

The Healing Path by Dan B. Allender, Waterbrook Press, 1999, 259 pages,
ISBN: 1578561094

Trauma and Recovery by Judith Herman,
Basic Books, 1997, 290 pages,
ISBN: 0465087302

Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE (799-7233)

Outward Bound
1-888-88-BOUND (882-6863)

OVoiceDC@AOL.COM

One Voice - The National Alliance
for Abuse Awareness

[http://www.suite101.com/welcome.cfm/
child_abuse_and_recovery](http://www.suite101.com/welcome.cfm/child_abuse_and_recovery)

<http://abuse.mentalhelp.net>

FREE PDF Booklets from Lutheran Hour Ministries:

Forgiveness Is for Giving (#6BE101)

Has God Abandoned Me? For Women Facing Domestic Violence (#6BE85)

Go to <http://www.lhm.org/projectconnect/booklets.asp>.

Melanie Wilson, Ph.D., is a psychologist, speaker, writer and mother.

[Return to menu](#)

Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Domestic Violence Resources:

<http://www.lcms.org/socialissues/domesticviolence?srtid=1&erid=7019104&trid=870e96b0-13c6-4412-b59c-d6e802a154a5>

Domestic Violence



Domestic violence corrupts intimate relationships. These relationships may include a spouse or intimate partner including dating relationships. It involves behavior on the part of one person to control and intimidate another. This behavior, typically characterized as harassing, intimidating or threatening, may include actual or threatened physical assault, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or economic abuse.

Domestic violence can include actual violence, such as physical assault (pushing, choking, hitting, pinching, etc.). It also includes acts of sexual abuse (forcing or coercing someone into unwanted sexual activity). These types of behaviors are criminal in most jurisdictions, and the person who engages in them can be arrested and charged, with or without the consent of the victim of the violence or abuse.

Domestic violence also includes harassing, intimidating and threatening behavior. This could include stalking, wherein one person repeatedly follows, watches or contacts another person. Domestic violence also includes verbal abuse, psychological abuse and emotional abuse. This may involve name calling and putdowns. It might include isolating a person from his or her family and friends or refusing to allow him or her to get a job. It might entail financial abuse, such as withholding money or demanding that the other person account for every dollar spent. Threatening loved ones is a common form of abuse, including threatening to harm or kill the victim, their children, their parents, their friends or even pets. Threats can sometimes include a threat to commit suicide.

The effects of domestic violence

Domestic violence is about control and power and typically is perpetrated by men against women, though the frequency with which men are reporting abuse is on the rise. A recent study commissioned by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men in the United States have experienced a form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Victims of abuse suffer intensely and experience emotional problems that will endure long past the end of the violence. Children in homes

where domestic violence is present are more likely to be abused, and even if not physically harmed, they may have emotional and behavioral problems.

Identify, understand and intervene

It is important to identify the warning signs that domestic violence is occurring in a relationship or marriage. It is also helpful to understand the causes and consequences of domestic violence, including its effects on the perpetrator, on the victim, on the children in the family, and on schools and churches. It is necessary to intervene when you confront domestic violence as it is happening or when you learn that it has occurred in the past.

Resources

Articles

- Commentary: ‘Fifty Shades of Grey’ has many seeing 50 shades of red (<http://blogs.lcms.org/2015/commentary-fifty-shades-of-grey>)
- Domestic Violence and Abuse is Everyone’s Concern (<https://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=3288>)
- When Homes Are Heartless — An LCMS Perspective on Domestic Violence (<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=3120>)
- Pastoral care rites and prayers (<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=3119>)
- Helpful resources on domestic violence (<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=3118>)
- Has God Abandoned Me? — For Women Facing Domestic Violence (<http://www.lhm.org/booklets/internetdownload.asp?promo=PLHM&prod=6BE85>)

Information for Distribution

Please use these resources in areas such as community bulletin boards, restrooms, resource centers, etc.

- Domestic Abuse Hotline Information (<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=3166>)
- Poster: Domestic Violence and Abuse is Everyone’s Concern (<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=3299>)
- Flier: Violence is Real (<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=3167>)
- Bulletin Insert: Violence is Real (color) (<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=3270>)
- Bulletin Insert: Violence is Real (B&W) (<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=3271>)

Additional resources and training materials are being developed.

[Return to menu](#)

MAKING YOUR CHURCH MORE USER FRIENDLY

Strangers in the Pews

<http://blogs.lcms.org/2007/strangers-in-the-pews-3-2007>

Strangers in the Pews

on March 1, 2007 in FEATURE, LUTHERAN WITNESS

by Anita Stohs



It was Sunday morning and my family and I were visiting a church in a community away from home. It had taken us longer to find the church than we had expected, so we arrived a few minutes late. The parking lot was full, and there were no parking spots reserved for visitors. My husband dropped the family off at the door and drove off in search of a parking place.

Not wanting to end up in the front row at a church whose worship style might be different from that of our home church, we were happy to find room in the back pew. We scooted in just in time to sing the first hymn. Except we couldn't figure out what it was. Neither the hymn text nor number was printed in the worship folder. I fumbled through several of the inserts and handouts that came with the worship folder, but couldn't find any reference to any of the hymns to be sung that day.

"What do we sing?" my son whispered as he held his hymnbook out to me.

"I don't know," I whispered back.

I looked around for a hymn board, but saw none. A woman was sitting at one end of the pew in front of us, and I was able to get her to turn around and show me the number of the hymn the congregation was singing.

By the second hymn, we still had not figured out where to find the hymn numbers, and the woman I had just asked for help showed no interest in assisting us a second time. I used the index at the back of the hymnbook and was able to join in the last stanza. But we never figured out what the third hymn of the day was.

Before the closing hymn, I finally found a hymn board tucked into a spot on the wall that was nearly impossible to see from the back pew.

I quickly told the rest of the family, and we joined the congregation in the last hymn of the day.

As we left the church, the pastor was friendly, but the church members gathered in their tight groups, showing no interest in us as first-time visitors. Finally, as we got into our van to leave, someone did speak to us. An elderly couple parked beside us shared their optimistic predictions of victory later that day for the local football team.

As we drove away, we reflected on the morning's experience. What if, instead of being one-time visitors, we had been new neighbors of that congregation searching for a church home? Would we have come back to that church, or would we have looked elsewhere for a more "visitor friendly" church?

We are all called by our Lord to be "Great Commission" people. The mission of a congregation is not to center on itself but to look for ways to share the Good News with others. Welcoming visitors to our church is one way to reach out to our community neighbors who want to know more about Jesus' saving love for them.

This Sunday, as you worship the Lord at your congregation, try to view the experience through the eyes of a first-time visitor. Is there visitor parking near your church building? Will someone be there to help pick up worship aids and hymnbooks, and does the worship folder provide clear instructions to lead the visitor through the worship service? What more can your congregation do to make the "stranger in a strange pew" welcome in your congregation?

With the idea of writing an article for The Lutheran Witness, I asked my family to visit several area churches to find out how their members welcomed strangers in their pews. Here are some of the people we encountered and the things they did to make us first-time visitors feel welcome:

- Several pastors noticed that our daughter has a developmental disability and made a special effort to talk with her.

- An elderly usher showed he cared by scurrying across the narthex to help us the minute we walked in through the church door.

- A young man stepped across the aisle to make sure we were at the right place in the hymnbook, and then checked later in the service to see that we were still following along.

- A man sat down in the pew next to my husband when the service was over and struck up a friendly conversation.
- Another woman looked at the registration book when it came back to her so that she could welcome us by name at the end of the service.
- At one church, several people stopped me as I got a cup of coffee after services, asking who we were and inviting us to come again.
- A couple stopped my husband and me as we passed by the visitor's table, eager to find out more about us and establish a relationship that would encourage us to come again.
- Some members not only introduced themselves, they also invited us to stay for Sunday school and adult Bible class, pointing out the rooms where they met and what topics were being discussed that morning.
- Several churches contacted us by mail later that same week.
- Most pastors wrote personal letters, not form letters, thanking us for coming and asking us to come again.
- A layman at one congregation wrote a personal letter.
- Our 15-year-old son received a youth-group newsletter from a church where he had entered his name and age in the registration book.
- A vicar at one church phoned us, as did a retired gentleman from another church. Both thanked us for coming and asked if we would like more information about their church.
- Once when we didn't include our phone number on the pew register sheet at another church, someone from the evangelism group took the time to look up the number and was calling our home at the moment we walked in the front door, thanking us for coming and asking if there was any way his church could help us.

While none of these is a great revelation or a new idea, perhaps you will find some helpful reminders as to what you can do at your church, whether you serve as an usher, volunteer in the office, sit on a church board, teach Sunday school, or simply sit next to someone who is struggling to follow the worship service.

The effect that these simple efforts to reach out to visitors can have at your congregation is illustrated by the answer a friend of mine gave when I asked her why she and her husband had joined one of the churches we visited: “Because they seemed to care so much about us, we really felt they wanted to show us Christ’s love,” she explained.

“Someone from this congregation visited us during the week that followed our first visit, and each month someone from this church phoned to find out if we had any prayer requests.”

Pray that God will fill your heart, as well as the hearts of your fellow congregation members, with the desire and wisdom to show true Christian hospitality to those who come to join you in your worship. Let’s all do what we can individually and collectively to help the “strangers in our pews” feel welcome as brothers or sisters in Christ.

The Lutheran Witness — Providing Missouri Synod laypeople with stories and information that complement congregational life, foster personal growth in faith, and help interpret the contemporary world from a Lutheran Christian perspective.

[Return to menu](#)

LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD MINISTRIES TO JEWS:

The Apple of His Eye Mission Society

<http://aohe-mo.org/>

THE APPLE OF HIS EYE MISSION SOCIETY

Boldly declaring Y'shua as Messiah, Urgently equipping believers in Jesus to do the same!

- **SHALOM!**

The THE APPLE OF HIS EYE MISSION SOCIETY grew from a 1990's outreach to Jewish people in New York (The Big Apple). Today we are a Recognized Service Organization (RSO) of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod that is "Boldly Declaring Y'shua as Messiah and Urgently Equipping others to do the same".

Our International Headquarters is here in St. Louis Missouri, and we currently have outposts in Washington DC, USA and in Moscow, Russia. We carry the Gospel of the Living Torah, Y'shua, outward to the unbelieving Jewish and Gentile population, as well as the message of the Jewish roots of Christianity inward to Believers in the Churches.

- **APPLE OF HIS EYE ISRAEL TRIP 2015**

You are invited to join us for our very first tour of Israel, "Seeing the Holy Land through Jewish Eyes" led by Steve & Nancy Cohen. The dates are **August 2-11, 2015**. Please share this information with your church and interested friends.

Please click these two links to download the information flyer and reservation form. See you in Jerusalem!"

- Brochure (http://aohe-mo.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Cohen15_10_Day_Israel_Aug_2015_Brochure-4.pdf)
- Registration Form (http://aohe-mo.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Cohen15_10_Day_Israel_Aug_2015_Reg_Form-3.pdf)

- **WHAT'S NEW?**

Be sure to see the latest reports from all of our outposts in the What's New blog (<http://aohe-mo.org/news/>). You can also get there by selecting the "What's New" tab at the top of any page.

- **PEW RESEARCH CENTER — PORTRAIT OF JEWISH AMERICANS**

Follow this link to the October 1 Pew Research Center Portrait of Jews in America (<http://aohe-mo.org/believer/for-your-consideration/>) for a snapshot of statistics and opinions from the Jewish community in America, including "Who Is A Jew" and "Can One be Jewish and Believe Y'shua is the Messiah", along with many other topics

[Return to menu](#)

LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD MINISTRIES TO JEWS:

Chai v'Shalom

<http://blogs.lcms.org/2014/ministry-seeks-to-convert-jews>

Lutheran ministry seeks to convert Jews

on March 12, 2014 in PERISCOPE, REPORTER

ST. LOUIS (RNS) — In a small storefront in Dogtown, a neighborhood known for its celebration of the Christian missionary St. Patrick, sits a congregation dedicated to converting Jews.

Congregation Chai v' Shalom is tiny by most standards, with a weekly attendance of 30 to 40 people. But it has the backing of the 2 million-member Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

And its mission fits squarely with the Synod's controversial effort to preach the message that Jesus was the Messiah to Jews, in hopes they will convert to Christianity.

On a recent Sunday morning, a couple dozen people gathered at Congregation Chai v' Shalom, a makeshift space where stars of David, one with a cross in the middle, hang prominently on the walls, alongside what looks like a random collection of paintings.

The vast majority of those who attend Chai v' Shalom are not Jewish, but they are interested in reaching out to Jews. The service itself includes the Shema, a central Jewish prayer and lively singing in Hebrew.

But then a distinctly Christian message is delivered: "If you believe in Jesus Christ and trust in Him, He takes your sins away."

To the Rev. Kevin Parviz of Chai v' Shalom, the contrasts are intentional.

"I wanted to identify what was Lutheran about the service and express that in Jewish ways," said Parviz, 57, who was reared in an observant Jewish family but converted to Christianity more than 20 years ago after marrying a Lutheran.

Some in the Jewish community find this kind of worship service offensive.

Among them is Ruth Guggenheim, executive director of Jews for Judaism, an organization dedicated to preserving Jewish identity. She says melding Jewish and Christian practices can be misleading and confusing to those targeted for conversion.

“It’s offensive to have spiritual predators out to get our people,” she said.

That kind of criticism doesn’t dampen Parviz’s enthusiasm.

“The most anti-Semitic thing we can do is withhold the love of Jesus to our Jewish people,” Parviz said.

“The bottom line for me is, if I truly believe what the Scriptures teach, and I do, then the worst thing I could do for my Jewish parents, my Jewish friends, my Jewish people, is say ‘Oh just go to hell, and I’ll be quiet.’”

The work of Congregation Chai v’ Shalom falls under the umbrella of Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism Inc. The organization is one of the Missouri Synod’s roughly 300 Recognized Service Organizations, and nonprofits independent of the church. While several denominations have long since quit targeting Jews in particular, the Missouri Synod continues the mission, as does the Southern Baptist Convention.

Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism, established in 1980, is now commonly known as Burning Bush Ministries. In 1996, The Apple of His Eye Mission Society was established, a complementary ministry. Both are based in St. Louis.

The Missouri Synod said it agrees with the ministries’ missions.

“Christians do have a calling ... it’s about proclaiming the Gospel to all people,” said Vicki Biggs, public relations director for the Synod. “That is part of what we do.”

Although there are other messianic congregations in St. Louis, such as the nondenominational Beit Tefilah, only Chai v’ Shalom is under The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Efforts are under way to set up other churches like Chai v’ Shalom in places such as Florida, Georgia and Detroit. Parviz said the long-term goal is to have a congregation in every city with a significant Jewish population.

While Chai v’ Shalom concentrates on church building, Steve Cohen of The Apple of His Eye Mission Society says he travels to various congregations (about 1,800 so far, most of them members of the Missouri Synod) to inspire members to take the message of Jesus Christ to Jews.

Missionaries from Apple of His Eye also reach out directly by handing out religious tracts in cities such as Washington, Cleveland and Chicago.

Cohen, previously a member of Jews for Jesus, one of the more prominent organizations focusing on Jewish conversion to Christianity, says he was shunned by his family when he converted to Christianity after learning that Jesus and his first followers were Jewish.

It's unclear how successful Christian evangelizing efforts among Jews has been, but a study released last year by the Pew Research Center estimated that there are about 1.6 million Christians of Jewish heritage in the U.S.

An additional 100,000 consider themselves both Jewish and Christian, though the majority of Jews polled said a person cannot be Jewish if he or she believes Jesus was the Messiah.

Parviz can see why evangelizing to Jews, a population with a long history of persecution, is controversial.

"The Jews have been hurt at the hands of human beings who purport to be acting in the name of God," Parviz said.

He said he himself was teased during childhood for being Jewish and nicknamed a "Christ killer."

But Parviz stands by his work.

"I think what we go through right now in this place is far less painful than what we have to look forward to without Christ in the end," he said. "That's the thin line that Jewish missionaries have to walk."

There are, however, some lines Parviz won't cross when evangelizing to Jews, such as preaching to children and handing out tracts in front of a synagogue during High Holy Day services.

But to many in the Jewish community, such as Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz, founder of Jews for Judaism, the problem isn't conversion but the methods used to reach that end.

Kravitz argues that those evangelizing to Jews are missing a major historical development: Christianity spread in earnest during the Roman Empire, mainly among Gentiles.

— Lilly Fowler

[Return to menu](#)

JEWISH THOUGHTS ON “DEAD IS DEAD”

How to Help Children of Different Ages Cope with a Death

<http://www.jewishfederations.org/page.aspx?id=939>



Some people believe that children are just too young to understand the meaning of death, that they shouldn't be burdened with thoughts they cannot possibly grasp, and that they should be spared adult grief.

But children growing up today are well aware of the reality of death. They seem to have built-in lie detectors and know something ominous is occurring in their small world. We cannot protect them from the tragedies of life, but we can exercise considerable influence by modeling healthy attitudes.

There are many variables that affect children's understanding of death, such as who died, where, when, and how, and how the death will affect the child, as well as the child's prior experiences with loss. And of course, there is the developmental age. It is important to remember that children of the same age may differ widely in their comprehension and behavior. It is impossible to fit perceptions into a fixed-age category. For all of us, the meaning of death changes as our life changes. The following are but general guidelines that might prove helpful.

Preschool Age Children

Although an infant may not have an understanding of the word death, babies and toddlers do react to loss. Changes in the emotional atmosphere of the home and in the responses of significant others may upset the child and result in variations in crying and eating patterns and in bowel or bladder disturbances.

Small children have a pervasive fear of being abandoned. After a death in the family, children with separation anxiety may be afraid to go to school, camp, or even to sleep over at a friend's home. They frequently demand excessive attention from parents, cling to them, follow them around, climb into their bed at night. They fear that if they become separated either they or their parents will come to harm. Some children are not able to concentrate on their activities, become withdrawn from their friends, and are in general apathetic and depressed.

Even children without separation anxiety may experience an intensification of normal anxieties when a loved one dies. For example, they may exhibit fear of the dark, of going to sleep, of going to a new place, or of a parent going on a business trip. Youngsters often regress to a behavior that had been given up prior to the death, with a return to thumb-sucking or bed-wetting.

A preschool child may not believe that death is final. She may think that death is like sleep: you are asleep, then you wake up. Or that it is like taking a journey: you go away, and then you come back. A child experiences some aspects of what he or she considers "death" when her father or mother goes to work. It is like playing "peek-a-boo" (an expression that comes from the Old English, meaning "alive or dead"). One moment you are here, then you are not. The understanding of time for preschoolers is limited. Even after the funeral, parents may be shocked by the question, "When is Aunt Rachael coming back?" Although the child may not fully understand the answer, your explanation should be, "Aunt Rachael cannot come back because she is dead." Try to emphasize again and again in words that the youngster can understand that death is not just a temporary phenomenon.

Many younger children think of death as accidental: One dies when run over by a car or attacked by robbers. Death is often associated with violence, particularly dismemberment. In their understanding, death is not inevitable, people may live forever if they are fortunate and careful.

What you can do:

Some children may understand death as being less alive. For those three- to four-year-olds who seem to believe in the interchangeability of life and death, or believe that the dead are "waiting to live in another place," parents must listen to the children's thoughts, concerns, images, and experiences. Hear their questions: "Do dead people eat the same kinds of food we do?" "Can they watch television?" "Can they talk to each other?" Repeat again and again that the person is not coming back to life and is not living in the cemetery. Explain that the death is not a punishment for bad behavior. Youngsters are rightly curious and anxious about death, with its separation from familiar people and the anxiety, terror, and fear which that separation brings. When words fail, touch them, hold them, show them your affection and love.

Ages Five to Nine

Because of their life experiences, youngsters this age are better able to understand the meaning of physical death. Death is final. Living things must die. But they may not think of it as happening to *them*. At this stage, they may neither deny death nor accept its inevitability. A compromise is made. Death is "real" – but only for others, the aged.

Some tend to consider death comes in the form of a person or spirit. Those who watch horror shows may believe death is a bogeyman, a skeleton, or a ghost that makes the rounds late at night and selectively carries away helpless victims.

They want to know about the physical aspects of the death, "How did the person die?" "Was she killed?" "Was there a lot of pain?" "How does she look now?" "What happens to the body?"

What you can do:

Children this age range cope best when they receive simple, honest, and accurate information. If they desire, let them attend the funeral for that which is more visible and mentionable is clearly more manageable. Don't be afraid to show your grief. Adults' controlled behavior is more difficult for them to handle than expressed sorrow.

Ages Ten and Older

Now children can formulate realistic concepts based on observation. Death is not a person but a perceptible end of bodily life. A dog runs into the street and is hit by a car. The animal can no longer get up and play. Dead is dead. It is final and universal. It is brought about by natural as well as accidental causes. Death is that inevitable experience which happens to all, including the child.

Death as the end of life is especially frightening and painful for young people ten years of age and older. Death is now a biological failure of organs to function. The magical, life-renewing conception of death is replaced by one that is terminal and fearsome. This perspective carries with it feelings of fragility as young people search for their own identity and philosophy of life and death.

When a loved one dies, children of this age may have difficulty in concentrating, exhibit a decline in the quality of their schoolwork, become withdrawn and isolated from family and friends, and seem persistently angry and sad. There could be frequent physical complaints with constant fatigue and frequent drowsiness. For older children, unresolved grief may be reflected in drug or alcohol abuse, impulsive behavior, and increased risk-taking. Instead of controlling their moods, their moods control them.

What you can do:

The way in which youngsters work through their grief depends a great deal on how family members and friends reach out to them. The more they are encouraged to share their grief, the more likely they will be better able to cope with the loss in their life. Grieving may help to bring direction to their lives as they become more open to others. "After this, I know I can handle anything," one youth said. "I now know that our family will stick together and who my real friends are. I'm able to remember the person who died without always crying by thinking of some of the great times we had together."

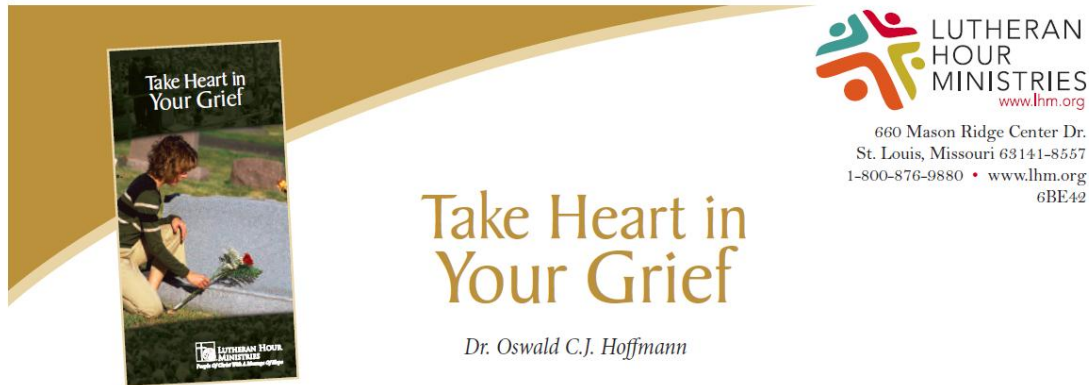
Make sense of death at an age-appropriate level in a safe physical and psychological environment. The goal is to understand that death is irreversible and permanent, involving the cessation of all physiological functioning. The ways of helping children cope are as limitless as adults' patience, caring, and love.

[Return to menu](#)

PROJECT CONNECT BOOKLETS ABOUT GRIEF:

Take Heart in Your Grief

<http://www.lhm.org/projectconnect/downloadfile.asp?ID=3088>



Chapter 1

Even Though You Are Upset By It

In this world of ours, people are hit by grief. Usually it is some loss or other that makes them grieve, sometimes the loss of a loved one or the loss of something that is very dear to them.

I have seen people grieve because they had to move from one town to another, and had to leave all of their friends and associations behind them. Though they may not always show it, parents often grieve when their children leave home for school, or when they get married. That's a real loss to them.

When a marriage goes wrong, people grieve. They really lost something and it takes a long time to get over it.

Grief has many forms.

It is caused by life with its disappointments and sometimes its despair. Grief is hooked up to death and the sorrow it brings.

Some people seem to think that they ought not show their grief. They try to hide it because somewhere they got the idea that people who grieve prove they are weak. The Bible says that Jesus, who was true God, didn't mind showing His grief when His good friend Lazarus had died. He was not ashamed of His tears. Loss is tough enough to take without making it worse by trying to dam up the tears.

Grief is normal. It is natural. It is sometimes necessary, to be truly human, to take the loss — to feel real pain. Being overcome with grief is a lot different from cracking up altogether.

Don't feel guilty about grief.

If you are grieving don't feel guilty about it. It is natural to grieve. I would like to say to you: Take heart in your grief. Feel your loss, and have faith that God knows what He is doing. There is good reason to take heart in your grief. You are feeling what you are supposed to feel. You have lost a great deal, and maybe you haven't felt all of it even now.

You have met people at the funeral home and talked to them, almost as if nothing had happened. You wonder whether something is wrong with you. You know your loved one is dead but it's still hard to believe. You're almost in a state of shock. You wonder why you didn't feel what you thought you ought to be feeling. Maybe you said to somebody during those difficult first days, "God has given me strength to bear what I have to bear." And you were probably right. The shock you felt and the strength you showed are God's natural way of helping people over the very first difficult days.

Then it happens. There is such a big letdown. The funeral is over. The hectic hours you spent in making funeral arrangements are ended. You no longer have to spend those long hours at the hospital holding the hand of someone you love. People stop coming to see you. All of a sudden a kind of emptiness overcomes you. A sort of boredom sets in. You begin to wonder about life, and then the grief comes.

That is when you realize how dreadful the loss is that you have sustained. That death was real. It really happened. You have lost so much, almost more than you can bear.

Go ahead and cry.

After having held together for so long, you feel the urge to cry. And then you wonder if something is wrong with you. If that is the way you feel, go ahead and cry. Whether you are a man or a woman, crying is not just for the weak. Strong men cry, and strong women cry too.

Grieving is not unhealthy, not unless you try and keep it in and nurse it along until it gets to be a regular part of your life. Crying does not mean that you are falling apart. Bottling up your feelings can do a lot more harm than good. You may have been telling yourself that this is no way to feel or to act. Actually it is quite natural, living as you are at the moment under a cloud cover of loss and sorrow. Above those clouds the sun is still shining. The clouds will clear. The sun will come through. Right now it may be raining, but that's all right.

Maybe you have a little feeling of guilt.

Maybe you even have a little feeling of guilt. If it isn't guilt about grief it may be about something else. I have known people who feel guilty because they were not at the hospital the moment their loved one died. Some feel guilty because they feel that they should have done more when their loved one was alive. Everyone experiences these regrets. It is the stuff of which life is made. Anyone who has no regrets hasn't lived at all.

Some things you don't need to feel guilty about. If you had been at home instead of at work it might not have happened. If you had been near when your loved one died you might have been able to say something you always wanted to say and didn't. If you feel guilty about things like that you've got good company. Other people do, too. Some of them even feel angry. First at themselves, and then even at the one who died. He or she is responsible for the misery being caused you. People even feel angry against the doctors, and the nurses, and sometimes even at God. Your loss is unfair. Why me and not others? You have to blame someone — yourself, someone else, God.

For all of this there is grace —the real and generous grace of a forgiving God.

He sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for our harsh words, missed opportunities, and regrets. He died for you. There was a lot of guilt there that day, and He took it all. This is practical and real, maybe more practical and real to you now than it was before. Forgiveness is for the things that are past.

The guilt is real, but God is real too. And He really forgives. You don't need to look around for things to be guilty of. You are human, and you need forgiveness for the things you should have done and failed to do and for things you did that you wish you hadn't done.

You will never again be the person that you once were.

I don't know exactly how you feel at the moment. And you may not know exactly yourself. That is grief, and it is necessary. You have had a loss, a real loss. And in your grief, you are coming to realize that this is true. The more real it becomes to you, the nearer you are to accepting your loss, accepting the grace of God in your loss, and accepting the grace of life He has to give for the future. Perhaps you may have noticed that as time has gone on you talk about him or her, adding a few more details as they occur to you. The more you recall about the one who is no longer with you, the more you remember the circumstances of that death. The more real it all becomes. Once it has become very real to you, you know it happened. That's the beginning of a new road. The acceptance of a fact of life, as well as the acceptance of God's grace for life that is yet to be.

There is one more step. You have to get used to the idea that you will never ever really get over the feeling of loss that you have. You will never again be the person that you once were. You can't make it stop raining by forgetting your umbrella, but you can take that umbrella and begin to stay dry. Neither you nor anyone else will replace the one you lost. By allowing yourself to grieve, and accepting that grief as normal, natural, and necessary, even though it is painful, you will begin to live with that loss, and to go out again into a world that for a while at least may seem sunless, cheerless, and maybe even heartless.

Take heart in your grief.

Grief is normal, and faith can withstand grief. Faith remains when it is faith in God, who knows what He is doing. There is no substitute for faith in God. You may not know what He is doing, but He knows what He is doing.

You may need a lot of courage at first to take the bull by the horns, so to speak, and to talk about your loss, about the way you feel. You don't have to talk about it all the time, but it's good to talk about it to someone you know and trust. It will be hard to talk about, and sometimes it will be hard to find someone to whom you can talk. As you talk about it, you will find yourself facing the fact a little better each time. And eventually coming to live with that fact in the faith that God knows what He is doing.

On the cross the Lord Jesus Christ had confidence in His Father, that He knew what He was doing. Jesus said, with complete confidence in His Father, "Father into your hands I place My spirit." Jesus

died. His Father did not forget Him, and He won't forget you. He raised Jesus from the dead. Faith in Jesus Christ gives hope that is alive.

But now you grieve. Jesus Christ took that, too. He carried our griefs and our sorrows. He understands how alone you feel, and how alone people can be. He was alone, too, on that cross of His. He died there, and He lives. He is alive and well. He is Lord. It is good to have Him with you at this time, in your hour of grief. Now, more than ever, you can get what He was talking about. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." The living Son of God is with you. He feels for you and He will stay with you.

Chapter 2

Even Though You Don't Want To

It may very well seem cruel and kindless to tell you to take heart while you are in your grief. You may not want to. And even if you do, you may have doubts about being able to take heart. It may seem like an impossible task right now. The encouragement to take heart may come across to you as a cold and pious command. You have lost someone special. Someone whose life and presence had a way of flavoring almost everything for you. You might feel somewhat like a recent widow whose well-meaning neighbor tried to encourage her by saying, "You'll need lots of courage now that he's gone." To this she sharply replied, "I don't want courage, I want my husband!"

Perhaps you're at that point in your grief where it's hard to put your heart into anything. Possibly you're busy doing things but you feel that your heart is not in it because you don't have a heart to put into anything and that's the way you want it to be for the moment. What you really want is that person who made your heart throb, whose closeness and kindness warmed your heart, so that you couldn't help but get excited about the things you did together, or even separately.

Although you can remember times in your life that your heart ached, it was never anything like this. You recall the times you cried and laughed, but the person who made you laugh or cry is not here. And even if it was more crying than laughing, you might feel like a widow who said, "He caused me so much trouble, but I miss him just the same."

Get started again.

Whether or not your life together was completely rosy is not the point for you right now. The thought that returns again and again is that life together was your first choice, but taking heart in your grief means settling for second best. That means getting started again. And to do that requires so much oomph and energy that you're just not sure you want to, or that you have what it takes, because this death has taken so much from you.

Even if you are ready to get going again you might doubt if you can. You knew it was going to be different, but you didn't know just how different it would really be. You look around wondering where you're going to get the help and strength you need. A long time ago the poet suggested an answer to that in Psalm 121: *"I lift up my eyes to the hills,"* he said. *"Where does my help come from? My help comes from the lord, the Maker of heaven and earth ... the lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."*

It's the Lord who helps.

He's there. He's helping you up, shouldering both you and your load. He's holding you, though your knees may be about to give way. He's holding you though you may be struggling with a backbreaking burden of sorrow and grief that nearly has you down.

Somehow this grief has not destroyed you. It could have. Though it may have destroyed all your dreams and plans and joys, you have not been destroyed by the grief because your Helper and Protector is acquainted with grief Himself. He's the man Jesus Christ. As the prophet Isaiah says, "He has borne our griefs, He carried our sorrows." He is God's Son, raised from the dead Himself, and He's been with you all the way. He's been with you even though you may not have been aware of it. In all of your weakness, there beside you is the everlasting God who neither grows weary nor faint, who gives vigor and strength to the exhausted. *"But those who hope in the lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint"* (Isaiah 40:31).

Take heart in your grief.

God will wait for you. He is not going to rush you. He can wait as long as you need to wait, and He will hold you all the while and will be ready to help you move on when you are ready to move on. He knows you need time to sit and cry. There is nothing unhealthy about that. He also will know when you are ready to get up and try to pick up the pieces of a broken life.

Jesus stands by you, alive, and ready to help.

He lives and grants you daily breath,
He lives and you shall conquer death,
He lives to silence all your fears,
He lives to wipe away your tears,
He lives to calm your troubled heart,
He lives all blessings to impart.

Jesus died to forgive and heal. He came alive again, and He gives you new life. He will help you take heart in your grief — to face up to and live through — with hope — the new things you now experience. By now you know very well that nothing could possibly be the same again. In this new life, Jesus Christ stands beside you to help you in a way that will support you as you explore new possibilities, gain new perspectives, and enjoy new experiences. He stands by you to help you accept and overcome your loss.

Your faith in Him will help you embrace and accept this painful experience and live through it a day at a time. There will be many times when your heart will be fearful, rather than cheerful. In those times, take heart in all of your grief. Jesus Christ, the one who knows both grief and victory is by your side, ready to help you take heart.

Chapter 3

Even Though It's As if Life Has Folded

A few years ago it was announced that one of America's most popular magazines was coming to an end. It was *Life* magazine. Through the years *Life* had been coming into millions of homes regularly, capturing in pictures the panorama of life. For a while *Life* had stopped coming. For those who had looked forward to it in the past there was a certain emptiness, a feeling that something was missing each month.

What had happened to *Life* magazine might be a parable of what happens to people in their grief. For them, too, it seems as though life has folded. It is not only the end of life with a loved one, but also one's own life that seems to have folded and come to an end.

Life has folded but time continues. This makes for confusion if not anxiety. It's hard, because you must continue to live. Even if your relationship with the one you lost was less than you desired, what relationship doesn't leave something to be desired? You still miss that familiar face and your familiar ways together. Whether that familiarity was always pleasant or not, it provided a kind of security. With that gone it seems as if life has folded and you wonder how you can continue.

A kind of paralysis may have set in. If you have regrets for the past, if you feel somewhat guilty, of having caused unhappiness for the one you lost, if you feel you should have done more during that person's life that is quite understandable. But there is no need to be your own worst enemy and to bring your own life to a standstill.

One key person remains.

He can move you along the way. He is the one who came to bring an abundant life, Jesus Christ. He is the one who picked up that paralyzed young man who had his own feelings of depression and guilt. It was to him Jesus said, "Take heart, your sins are forgiven. Now walk."

Jesus Christ forgives you. He accepts you as you are. You need His acceptance to accept yourself as you are. He helps you take the present and gives you faith and courage to look to the future. That's what it takes. It takes Jesus Christ to forgive you the faults of your past, and to give you new hope for the future.

Time does not stand still. It keeps on moving. Jesus Christ is in every bit of it. Maybe there was a time when you just could not look to the future. Maybe that time is still with you. Jesus Christ died in the past, but He is alive in the present. In Him there is brand new forgiveness and brand new hope every day, to help you in your grief.

In Him life begins all over again — every day.

For tomorrow, help comes from Jesus Christ. Help from Jesus puts grief in a new perspective. Because of Him it is now unnecessary to grieve as those who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so it will be for those who die as His followers. God will bring them to life with Jesus. It's not just me who is saying that! It was one of God's great men who said that, the apostle Paul. He wants you to know two things: Anyone who has a trusting faith in his Savior is eternally safe, and your eternal safety is ensured through your trust in your Savior. That's what makes grief different and bearable. This hope makes pain more bearable even now.

The hopefulness that Jesus brings to men and women today is no different than the message of hope that He gave to His followers then, who saw Him die. They were sad at the time, of course, just as you are sad today. When Jesus rose from the dead, He reminded them that the important reason for His dying was to bring victory over sin and death for all people. Though they were sad again when Jesus left them to return to heaven, His message of victory over death allowed them to carry on with courage and vigor in the work Christ had left them to do.

He can give you the start you need.

I am sure that you and your loved one believed and depended on each other. Now it is up to you to embrace the values that you shared together, even though you must do so now alone. Your capacity to rely on your own resources and your own strength — those God has given you — may surprise and startle you even though you may find it hard to believe now that He can do this for you.

Life does not have to fold for you. It can start moving again. Just as your loved one had faith in you, Jesus had faith in His disciples. Jesus has faith in you, too.

As time goes on, God's strength will empower you to do for yourself things that seem impossible now. Even if life seems to have folded for you now, take heart in your grief. Take heart, because your grief is different from those who grieve without hope. With hope and trust in God, life will not fold for you.

It will only unfold in ways that you can hardly believe.

Chapter 4

Even Though Your Loss Makes You Feel Lost

No one else is feeling your loss in the same way that you are. Your grief is your own. Others, of course, may miss the same person you miss, but you miss that person in a very special way.

Your loss is painful.

I was talking to a woman just the other day — 80 years old — who lost her husband about two years ago. She was composed, cheerful, and very willing to talk. I asked her, “How long did you feel the pain?” “Oh,” she said, “about six months.” And she said, “Do you want to know something? That was real pain!”

There is loneliness, and a sense of separation even from the people around you. The grief is yours, and you are in it. You may not even be able to say how deep your grief is. Maybe all that you know is that you feel lost in a loneliness that you may never have expected. The loss may have left you bewildered and up in the air. Your despair may be so deep that in your grief you fear that you may never see your way clear, never find your way out.

I don't know exactly how you feel. Perhaps you feel like a man showing up for work and finding that he had been fired and suddenly had nothing to do. That is a lost feeling all right; except that your loss is much more severe because yours is a final separation and you may be feeling cut off totally and finally. It is understandable that this is hard to take. It is understandable that you may be wondering if you will ever be able to see your way again.

It is understandable that this loss is hard to take.

A friend of mine told me about losing his appointment book halfway through the course of a year. The book itself was not that valuable. It was only a couple of pieces of vinyl with paper pages in between full of pencil scribbling. Yet my friend was lost. He didn't know what appointments were coming up. He couldn't schedule anything else without that uneasy feeling that his date might not be clear. He could never be sure that he was going to the right place at the right time. A new book just couldn't replace the old one. He depended on that old book with all its dates and places and times to give him direction.

Now, if a few pages of paper that could be replaced for less than \$10 can be that important to someone, it is quite understandable how lost you feel when you have lost a person on whom you depended for direction, or affection, or purpose in your life.

There are a lot of people in the world but no one can replace the one you lost. In that kind of a loss you may have lost heart. You may be having a hard time finding your way. But there is help — help from God who makes it possible to take heart again, help from Jesus Christ, God's Son who has a heart for you.

At times you may not even feel up to reaching for the hand of that Lord and Savior, whose heart has a great big place for you. But the one you have come to know is the Good Shepherd, that great Shepherd of the sheep. He is seeking out lost people, also people lost in their grief, so that He can hold them close to His heart and bring them back with the others who are milling around in the wilderness of our world. He wants to help you find your way, to help bring you back to others so that you won't be left alone. That is why He enters into the lostness that you are in.

He takes the grief with you.

That's why He takes the grief with you, so that you are not totally alone. Like the Good Shepherd He really is, He knows you. He knows you well enough to know that your loved one is absent from you and that no group or gathering will ever be quite the same for you again. Jesus knows how alone you feel even in a crowd, and He wants to help you overcome that. He wants to help you find your way back to life, the full and abundant life that He came to give. He wants to help you take heart. He wants to help you find your way clear, to go on living and functioning — not as though nothing had happened, but because something has happened to you. Perhaps you have wanted to pray, as you have never prayed before, but nothing seems to come. You don't know where to begin, you don't know what to say, and you don't even know what you really need. That depresses you and disheartens you even more, as if you were not already discouraged enough.

His good heart can help you take heart when you have lost heart.

The Apostle Paul talked about the problem that we often don't know how to pray. Then, he says, "The Spirit Himself pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express. And God who sees in the hearts of men knows what the thought of the Spirit is." God can see into your broken heart, my friend. He hears the groaning from the depth of your grief. He can understand what you are experiencing and thinking and feeling. He knows what you want to say or need to say, but find impossible to say. He accepts that helpless feeling as your prayer, and He unites Himself with you. Through that oneness with you, He strengthens your heart and helps you find your way back into the fellowship and community of others who can also help to sustain you. They can help give you love and kindness you need at this time.

You may feel so lost at times that you even wonder if other people care. It's true; some don't care and couldn't care less. But there are others who do care. You need once again to be with them, in order to keep on going. Your heart may not be in it now, but our Lord wants you to be with the rest of His people both for His sake and for yours.

It's possible that at some point you have given up attending church because you don't feel that it helps or because you feel so lost and alone. Maybe you have attended worship services regularly in the past, but now find that nothing seems to register. You have just lost heart for a while. The great thing about the Good Shepherd is that He is by your side anyway, trying to help you take heart so that you can find your way through the life that is still before you. Even when you don't, or can't, seek Him out. He is constantly seeking you, anxious to hold you close, to comfort and console. You need Him with you, and you need to stay close to Him. Though a key person is missing, there is life that God doesn't want you to miss out on. Take heart even though you feel lost in your grief. God has a heart for you. He will help you find your way.

Chapter 5

Even Though the Heart Is Heavy

People in grief feel a deep and heavy hurt in their hearts. You may feel it, too. You may feel like bursting at any moment from the pain inside you. If only once again your heart would be light and beat with joy.

As the shock of your loss begins to wear off, there may be times when the stabbing hurt of your loss seems to get sharper and sharper. How do you get over this kind of pain? Some people I know feel sorry for themselves at this point and become extremely hard on themselves, intentionally avoiding any kind of enjoyment, thinking that maybe in this way the pain will go away. This doesn't really help.

Others have tried to enjoy themselves by doing things or traveling to places that they never had the chance to travel to before. What they usually find is that they really have no choice but to take the hurt and the heavy heart with them.

Someone has pointed out that a change of scenery doesn't really change you. Only a changed you can change the scenery. The only change that really helps is the change in you that accepts the changes that have occurred, and will continue to occur, because of your loss. This is really the goal isn't it, to accept the change?

It may not be easy to accept the changes that have occurred.

Once you have reached that point there will be less need to either deprive or drive yourself — you will have learned to live with what has changed.

It may not be easy to accept the changes that have occurred. It may take outside help. It certainly takes faith — faith in Jesus Christ, who was claimed by death Himself, and overcame death. Many others have found comfort and strength in Him. He is the one who can help you get things in perspective again. He is the one who said, "Be assured that I am with you always to the end of time." He is the One! He stands by you in your grief. He takes your hand in your loneliness and in your heartache. He is the One! He suffered and went through the valley of the shadow of death. He feels for you and tells you that He will be with you in all of your coming and going in every way and in

every day. In His hand are the powers of heaven and earth. He will help you find and keep your balance. He lifts the heavy heart. He will keep you from falling all over yourself.

It may sound strange, but sometimes in trying to run away people keep running into themselves. The prophet Amos said, “It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him.” He knew life —that Amos.

Sometimes in trying to solve problems, we create even bigger problems because we ourselves are part of the problem. Perhaps you have already found that your heart, hurting and heavy as it is, keeps getting in the way just as you think the hurt is being healed.

God’s goal for you is to help you live with yourself. You have been experiencing various kinds of separation all of your life, but none quite like this one. Other separations you have experienced may have saddened you momentarily or even given you a happy, light heart. It may have been your children who went off to school for the first time. You watched them leave. In one way it was with a heavy heart: You were sad to watch them go — no longer needing you as much, no longer there to fill the house all day with all kinds of noise and sniffles and muddy feet. At the same time, it did you good to see those children reaching a new stage of growth and maturity. You were probably glad that for a while you could have some freedom for yourself and do some of the things that they kept you from doing before they went to school.

But now you look at the separation you have sustained, and it doesn’t do your heart any good at all. You may feel that it has done you so much harm that you cannot stand yourself and you would like to leave but you can’t. The feelings of hopelessness and helplessness nearly overwhelm you.

These are hard obstacles for you. The obstacles are high, high as a mountain, and deep, deep as a valley. The going is rough, as rough as the roughest of roads. You cry, when you are able to cry. Sometimes your cries are confusing and bewildering. Your life seems to be in a wilderness now. But there is an echo. You cry and the echo seems to come back like the words from Isaiah, “There is a voice that cries, prepare a way for the Lord through the wilderness. Clear a highway across the desert for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, every mountain and hill brought down, rugged places shall be made smooth and mountain ranges shall become like a plain.” Of course I know that God has no giant road construction crew or land leveling operation in a literal way but I’ve seen it happen in people who belong to Jesus Christ.

He comes into the wilderness with you to strengthen you to face what needs to be done and what needs to be faced. He lifts you physically and spiritually.

God can do His work in you.

If there was ever a man who was down in the dumps and heavy with a burden of his own, it was the Psalmist who cried to God: “When I did not confess my sins I was worn out from crying all day long. My strength was completely drained as moisture is dried up by the summer heat.” Here was a man who was in no shape to climb a mountain or descend into a valley or walk a rough road. Through the good and generous grace of God, that man could stand up once again and jump for joy as a forgiven child of God.

The going may be rough as the roughest of roads when you lose a loved one. Somehow God is going to pick you up, heavy heart and all, and help you get that burden off your shoulders. He’s the one who offers the invitation: “Come to Me all you who are tired from carrying your heavy loads, and I will give you rest.” He takes it on His shoulders. That’s the greatest thing about faith in Christ! You

don't have to go it alone because Jesus Christ, who was dead and is alive again, is standing beside you calling you by name, encouraging you, guiding you, and giving you strength for the future as He forgives your mistakes in the past. His mercy is new to you every morning. In His love and tenderness, He prepares you for that final morning when you will wake up in His arms and see Him face to face. Your heart may be heavy now, but the Son of God is there to lighten the weight. He carries the load. Surely He bears our griefs and carries our sorrows.

Chapter 6

Even Though the Hole Is Big

A friend of mine described a comic wall plaque that he saw hanging in a gift shop a while back. It was intended for boating enthusiasts. On the plaque was this definition of a boat: "A hole in the water covered with wood into which you pour money." This really has nothing to do with grief. But some time later a lady told him something that reminded him of that boat. She had been a widow for three years, but she still remembered her husband, and said about him, "I never knew one person, short as he was, that could leave such a big hole in the world." She went on to say that they had lived for each other, and now she seems to have no one for whom she can live.

Once there was fullness and now there is only emptiness. Her husband, like the boat, was someone she could fill with care and love. She could fill the empty spots in his life with things only she could give, and now he was gone. Only a big hole was left. That hole created by his death broke up her world, her life, and her heart. In fact she said she had been sick for the last three years, all, she thought, as a result of her husband's sudden death. And she was only now starting to talk about it. For the longest time she said she was like a hunk of stone, and yet she was not like stone. She said it felt like her heart was coming apart.

Indeed maybe her heart was coming apart. She had a broken heart that put a real hole there. Perhaps the idea of a broken heart is more fact than fancy. All her life she had a hole to fill. The person who created that hole is now gone, like a boat that disappears, washing away all the money and love and labor poured into it.

Maybe you feel somewhat as she did. Maybe you found a hole that now needs filling. And maybe you found that nothing can really do the job, that no one can fill that hole or satisfy you the way your loved one did, because no one understands you the way that person did. Your heart is broken because you can no longer care for that person's need.

There is someone who stands by you to take care of your needs. He stands by you to take your broken heart into His hand. He stands by you to take hold again and to help you take hold of yourself. He stands by you to help you take heart. He helps you to fill up the hole in your life, to talk about it and to work at it. That someone is Jesus Christ.

There is a beautiful section in the book of Isaiah, parts of which our Lord many years later quoted and applied to Himself. That section of Isaiah reads: *"The Spirit of the Sovereign lord is on me, because the lord has anointed me ... to bind up the broken hearted ... to proclaim the year of the lord's favor ... to comfort all who mourn, to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning ... a garment of praise instead of spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the lord for the display of His splendor. They will rebuild*

ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations” (Isaiah 61:1-4).

You will begin to rebuild.

These words of comfort were first spoken to people grieving over the destruction of their city, Jerusalem. Yet these words are appropriate for you whose heart and life feel broken and desolate and ruined. I hope that you will take heart from this promise, so that you begin to rebuild. You can find yourself saying with the prophet, “Let me rejoice in the Lord with all my heart. Let me exalt in my God.”

When Jesus said, “Happy are those who mourn, for God will comfort them,” He did not expect that the loss would make you happy. He did not for one minute pretend to think that mourning would be a happy process. But the happiness, the blessing, the relief, is that there is one with you to share this experience with you. He is Jesus Christ. He is open to you when you seek to share your quiet, even secret, hurts with Him.

Perhaps this prayer will be helpful to you as you share your feelings with Jesus Christ:

Jesus, You are the Resurrection and the Life. You have given me hope, but I still have sorrow. I remember joy that was shared, and I cannot believe that it is all over. Help me to understand, and to fix my eyes where true joys are found. I remember the opportunities we had to share our love, but which we neglected. I remember the times when we were irritated or impatient or insensitive. I feel ashamed and guilty now. Forgive me. Forgive me as only You can. I remember the Easters we celebrated and how the thought of Easter and the promise of victory over death always seemed to be for someone else. But now I know that it was meant for me.

As You wept at the grave of Your friend, Lazarus, Lord, open my eyes to express my grief. I am lonely and restless and heartsick. As you rescued those who mourned when Jairus’ daughter died, rescue me from despair by Your power. I don’t want to give up or run away, but I want to be able to face tomorrow with hope and confidence.

As You consoled Your mother in the hour of Your own death, comfort me with the joyful hope of resurrection and life everlasting. “O death where is your sting. O, grave where is your victory?” Oh, God, thank You for the victory You have given me through Jesus Christ. And thank You for the people who encourage me by their hope and faith and love, and by their willingness to share my burden in these hours when I need help so much. I know they speak for You as well as for themselves, and this makes their concern and comfort doubly helpful. Let Your peace and hope fill me and start me again on my way to abundant joy in Jesus Christ. Amen.

My friend, you have prayed. Now take heart in your grief, even though the hole is big.

Take heart — with Jesus Christ!

Helpful Web sites

www.aarp.org/griefandloss

www.griefnet.org

www.widownet.org

www.parentswithoutpartners.org

www.elderhope.com

www.growthhouse.org

www.compassionatefriends.org
(for parents who have lost a child)

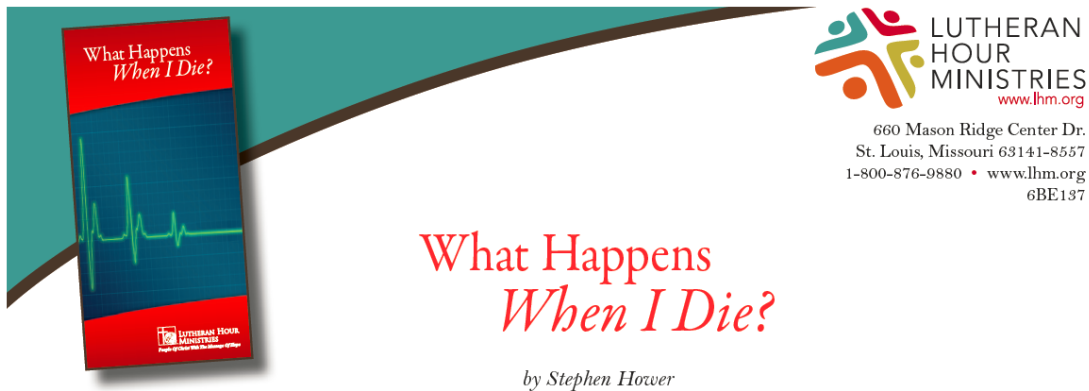
www.cgcmaine.org
(Center for Grieving Children)

[Return to menu](#)

PROJECT CONNECT BOOKLETS ABOUT GRIEF:

What Happens When I Die?

<http://www.lhm.org/projectconnect/downloadfile.asp?ID=3261>



Can anyone know for certain what happens at the moment of death? What do you believe about death and the afterlife? *Why* do you believe *what* you believe? Is one opinion just as good as another?

I've conducted hundreds of funerals for families of every background and belief. Prior to the funeral, I typically gather the immediate family together for comfort, to share their memories and to plan the memorial. Almost always there are differences of opinion about what should or should not be said, sung or allowed during the service. The disagreements never really surprise me. Our families are just a reflection of the diversity of beliefs we have in America on the subject of death. Some hold Christian beliefs rooted in the Scripture and many do not. Still others believe it's useless to speculate about things no one can know for sure.

I have also stood by the bedside of terminally ill patients, sometimes at the moment of death. It is not unusual for patients and their families in those situations to ask lots of questions about the inevitable.

"What's going to happen, you know . . . when *I* die? What's that going to be like? What can I expect to feel, see or hear? Will I see angels? Will Jesus suddenly appear and personally take me to heaven? What will heaven be like? *How can I be sure I will go to heaven?* Will I be greeted by members of my family that have already died? Will I know others in heaven? Will others know me?" These are some of the questions I hear.

The Other Side

There is no end to the confusion people have about "the hereafter." One question leads to several more. Where do we turn for our answers? Are there trustworthy books, teachers or sacred writings that address our questions, or are we left to merely speculate about these things?

Yes, of course there are answers. There are all sorts of answers to our questions. In fact, entire books, many of them best-sellers, have been written to give very specific answers to these all-important questions. I'm never surprised to see several of these books in the room of a dying patient. Many terminally ill friends and their families have shared copies of their favorite resources to help educate me

on what they have come to believe happens when a person dies. I have personally read a half dozen of these best-selling books, each one leaving me more confused than the last. The answers to the *hereafter* question are as varied as the greeting card selection in your local drug store. Depending on what you're looking for, there is a perfect answer—just for you.

As of 2010 over 10 million copies of *The Shack* have been sold. It is a clever novel about a man's search for the truth after the abduction and death of his daughter. In the story, the main character Mackenzie Philips, called "Mac" by his family and friends, meets God at a remote shack where his daughter was killed by a pedophile. Over the course of a weekend, Mac has extensive conversations with the three persons of the Trinity to discover the truth about life, death and life after death. The conversation helps Mac overcome "The Great Sadness," the phrase he uses to describe the devastation of his tragic loss. The book has apparently helped a lot of readers form conclusions and come to terms with the purpose of life, death and life after death.

If a novel like *The Shack* is not to your liking, perhaps you should read, *90 Minutes In Heaven*, the self-professed, true story of Don Piper, a Baptist pastor whose Ford Escort was struck head on by a tractor trailer while returning from a pastor's conference in East Texas. Paramedics who responded to the accident pronounced Piper dead at the scene, that is, until another pastor returning from the same conference came upon the accident an hour later and "prayed Don back to life." Piper's published recollection of what he experienced during the 90 minutes from impact to recovery is now in its 41st printing and has sold more than four million copies. If those books fail to answer your questions, no worries! There are hundreds of other titles, some of them *New York Times* best-sellers that relate even more near-death experiences. If you look long enough you should be able to find one that agrees with your preferred view on the subject.

If you are not the book-reading type, no problem. Movies like *Ghost*, starring Patrick Swayze and Demi Moore, have been watched by millions. The film revolves around a young banker, Sam Wheat, who was ambushed and killed by a jealous rival. It relates the events of Wheat's death and the effects of death using creative imagery and special effects to show what happened from the moment he died until justice was achieved and the main character was *freed* to move peacefully on into the afterlife. Or maybe *The Sixth Sense* was more to your liking in understanding the world of those who've died. Starring Bruce Willis, *The Sixth Sense* was filmed in 1999, at a cost \$40 million but generating more than \$300 million in box office sales. Only *Star Wars: Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace* was seen by more people that year. Or maybe you prefer Brad Pitt in the movie, *Meet Joe Black*, a 1998 remake of the 1934 movie, *Death Takes A Holiday*. As you can see, death is a popular subject.

Let me be candid on the subject of near-death experiences. I do not deny that people have experienced near-death experiences. Too many people have described those events to dismiss them completely. But neither am I willing to declare all personal experiences as merely "imagined" or "inaccurate." At the same time, I am unwilling to accept personal experiences as the absolute truth about the afterlife without the verification of Holy Scripture.

Experience-based "experts" do not agree with each other and much of what they describe is in direct conflict with the clear teaching of Scripture.

The Bible tells believers, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). A person's experience may or may not be accurate. It may be generated by the effect of heavy medications, a vivid imagination or an encounter with a deceiving spirit (a fallen angel) whose goal in life is to lead people away from saving faith in Jesus and the truth of God's Word. For these reasons this booklet will discuss the question of "What Happens When I Die?" solely from a biblical perspective.

How Can I Be Sure The Bible Is Accurate?

What makes the Bible more trustworthy than other books, personal experiences, movies and the reasonable opinions of highly educated people? That's a fair question and it deserves an honest answer. There are at least seven reasons why I put sole confidence in God's Word as the standard by which all other opinions can be weighed:

1. **The Bible is a book of verifiable facts.** Though the events, places and people cited in the Bible represent ancient history, their existence can be confirmed to a significant degree. It is not a theological book only; nor is it merely a book of wise sayings, like many other so-called "holy" books. You can investigate the Bible, and when you examine its history, archaeology and geography, you will find the facts of the Scriptures are verifiable.
2. **The Bible is a book of prophecy and fulfillment.** Someone has said there are no fewer than 8,000 prophecies made in the Bible. Some of them were fulfilled almost immediately. Some of them took years or even centuries to be fulfilled. Some have not yet been fulfilled. Not one of God's prophecies has ever been proven inaccurate. If the promises of God have been proven truthful, then the teaching contained in God's Word can also be trusted.
3. **The Bible is an historic book that has recorded events corroborated by other historic texts outside its pages.** The events of Scripture have been verified by the writings and records of other ancient civilizations like Egypt, Babylon, Greece and Rome.
4. **Archaeological finds frequently verify the reliability of the biblical record.** For centuries archaeologists have used Scripture to locate specific sites and learn more about cultural practices and people not documented or rarely documented elsewhere. Biblical records once doubted have been verified by evidence unearthed in ongoing excavations and discoveries.
5. **There is a case to be made for textual agreement.** You won't find something in one book of the Bible disputed or contradicted by another book of the Bible written by an author in some other century. Written by more than 40 different authors over a period spanning more than a thousand years, Scripture tells an amazingly unified story of God's love and His plan to redeem the whole earth from the destruction of sin, death and the devil.
6. **The Bible has survived the test of time.** There is no other book that has borne the test of time that Scripture has endured without the need to change the message, the facts or the truth of its pages in order to accommodate new discoveries.
7. **For all these reasons—and the Bible's own claim to be divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit—believers accept the Scripture as God's Word.** For believers the Bible is not merely the isolated opinion or first-hand experience of a person who may be well intentioned, but self-deluded. It is, quite simply, God's eternal and inerrant message for mankind. "No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

What Happens To Us Physically When We Die?

The congregation I serve is more than 160 years old. We still maintain an active cemetery on our premises. I have stood by many a grave pronouncing a blessing upon the physical remains of a Christian loved one by saying, "May God the Father, who has created this body; may Jesus, God's only Son our Lord, who has redeemed this body together with the soul; may the Holy Spirit, who through the means of

grace has sanctified this body to be God's holy temple; May God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit keep these remains until the resurrection of all flesh." Other Scriptures, prayers and words are also shared before the family and friends of the deceased leave the grave, and the body is lowered into a concrete vault which is sealed and buried in the earth.

The Bible teaches that the soul at the time of death separates from a person's body. The body returns to the earth and disintegrates over time. The soul returns to God in heaven or is sent to hell. In heaven or hell the soul now waits for the Lord's return when the body will be resurrected, renewed and rejoined to the soul. In Ecclesiastes 12:7 Solomon declared, "The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." This is in total agreement with the first discussion of death by God in the Garden of Eden when He said, "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return" (Genesis 3:19).

Some think of death as a punishment God visited upon man because of sin. True, death is a consequence of sin, but it is also a gracious act of God to keep those He loves from living forever in a world irrevocably transformed by the troubling effects of sin. Life is hard even in the best of times, and most of life is not lived in the best of times. To keep mankind from experiencing the ongoing pain of living forever in a sinful world, God barred Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, thus eliminating their access to the Tree of life. Then God removed the Tree of Life from the earth to limit the longevity of mankind, as the Bible describes: "The length of our days is seventy, or eighty if we have the strength. ..." (Psalm 90:10a). This life-giving tree will be found again in heaven where the Bible says it provides 12 kinds of fruit that provide eternal life to those who reside there. In the new heaven and new earth that God has prepared for those who accept the free gift of eternal life, God has created a place devoid of sin and all its heartaches (see Genesis 3:24, and Revelation 22:2). Because Solomon knew death was merely the doorway to this gracious opportunity for a new life in heaven, he once expressed this opinion: "... the day of our death is better than the day of our birth" (Ecclesiastes 7:1b).

The Body And Soul Will Be Rejoined

God still has plans for our body in the afterlife. The soul's separation from the body is only temporary. No matter how long our body must wait for the Second Coming of Jesus, when He returns with all the angels our graves will be opened and our bodies will be restored and reformed. After our mortal body puts on immortality, our new body will be rejoined with our soul for all eternity. The Bible says, "I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). This is the same picture Paul paints for those in mourning when he writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, "The Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

No matter if our believing loved ones were buried at sea, lost in the tragic collapse of the World Trade Center or cremated and the ashes spread over the ocean or some distant mountain, at the coming of Jesus, their bodies will be restored and changed to be like Jesus' resurrected body—fit for existence in heaven for eternal life.

What Happens To Us Spiritually When We Die?

I have always loved the way Jesus described earthly death to Martha when her brother Lazarus died in John 11:21-27. This passage has been a source of confusion for many because, at first, it seems contradictory:

“Martha said to Jesus, ‘If You had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give You whatever You ask.’

Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’

Martha answered, ‘I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.’

Jesus said to her, ‘I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?’

‘Yes, Lord,’ she told him, ‘I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.’”

Bible students everywhere are raising their hands. “Teacher, teacher, which is it? Do we live even if we die? Or, do we never die?” Those two outcomes are not the same. You can’t have it both ways! We either die but live, or we never die! It seems contradictory.

Jesus’ words are not in disagreement with each other. Jesus was discussing death from two different perspectives. The first is the perspective of those who remain behind after the death of their loved one. To the survivors Jesus in effect said, “Please don’t mourn too greatly the obvious physical death of your loved one. Even though they have died, they shall live to enjoy heaven’s eternity.” The second reference is the experience of death from the perspective of those who die; Jesus is pointing out that for those who die, there is no such thing as a period of “non-existence.” In a seamless transition, our life passes immediately from this life into life eternal.

The Moment Of Our Death

In almost all accounts of near-death experiences there is a critical moment when a person’s soul leaves his or her body, rising over that person’s physical remains. The soul of the dead continues to exist in a conscious but bodiless dimension in the afterlife. Consider, for example, the lessons we can draw from the moment Jesus died. He told the thief being crucified next to Him on His right, “... Today you will be with Me in paradise” (Luke 23:43b). Obviously, the physical remains of Jesus and the body of the thief were placed in earthly graves. Nevertheless, the words of Jesus were fulfilled when at the moment of death the believing thief and Jesus were immediately with God in heaven.

Greater insight can be found in a simple reading of Peter’s description in 1 Peter 3:18-20a: “Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. ...”

This passage is one of several passages that confirm Christ’s descent into hell, a historic point of faith mentioned in the Apostles Creed. At the moment of Jesus’ death by crucifixion on Good Friday, His body died. He cried out with a loud voice, “... It is finished and He breathed his last” (John 19:30b).

“Father,” Jesus said, “into Your hands I commend My spirit. ...” (Luke 23:46a). The Scriptures teach that after His physical death Jesus traveled to proclaim His victory to “the spirits” who had been kept “in prison” going back to “the days of Noah.” Obviously, Jesus did not go to a prison in Rome, Ephesus or Philippi. He went to visit people who died at the time of the flood, the spirits kept in the spiritual prison of hell. Peter could have said, “Jesus went to preach to the spirits in prison who were being kept there from the time of creation” (see 1 Peter 3:19-22). Observe that Peter refers only to those who died at the time of the flood because he wants to make a reference to baptism, namely, that eight people were saved in the ark by “passing through the water,” (see 2 Peter 2:5). Also, note how “baptism saves us ... not by the washing of the body with water, but by acting on the promise of God connected to baptismal water” (see 1 Peter 3:21). (Please review Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3-5, Colossians 2:11-13, Titus 3:5

in this regard.) Jesus descended into hell immediately upon His death and prior to His resurrection to proclaim His victory over sin, death and the power of the devil. He did not go to hell to suffer. His work was finished on the cross. Those who rejected salvation during the days of Noah were already in hell. These are the “spirits” to whom Jesus appeared and proclaimed His victory.

The concept of an immediate and conscious existence in the afterlife is confirmed by other Scriptures as well. When the rich man and Lazarus died, the rich man was immediately in hell and Lazarus was immediately in heaven. By examining the dialogue between the rich man and Abraham, who was in heaven, it is apparent the rich man was conscious of his surroundings in the afterlife and aware of Lazarus’ presence in heaven as well (see Luke 16:19-31). John’s later description of heaven as recorded in Revelation also describes the conscious state of the martyrs in heaven awaiting their vindication on judgment day (see Revelation 6:9-11).

Jesus Is The First Of Many

Just as Jesus commended His spirit to His Father in heaven at the moment of His death, so too our bodies are laid to rest in the grave, but our spirit lives on and is immediately transferred to heaven or hell on the basis of faith or lack of faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection. When Paul described what happened to Jesus at the time of the Lord’s death and resurrection, he added, “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when He comes, those who belong to Him” (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

In Jesus’ story of the rich man and Lazarus, the Lord described what happened to their souls after their death but before the physical resurrection of their bodies (see Luke 16:19-31). We also learn from this story that it is impossible for our souls to move back and forth between heaven and hell. The rich man asked “Father Abraham” to send Lazarus to cool his tongue with a touch of water. From heaven, Abraham replied, “... between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us” (Luke 16:26b). He also refused the rich man’s request to send Lazarus to earth to warn his brothers so they would believe and not end up in hell. Abraham told him, “... They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them” (Luke 16:29b) and then, “... If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead” (Luke 16:31b). We can surmise that as it is impossible to go from heaven to hell, it is likewise impossible to go from heaven or hell back to earth.

We Do Not Acquire Miraculous Powers At Death

When people die they do not become angels nor assume the divine attributes of God. Angels are unique and specific creations of God; they are heavenly beings created at the beginning of the world to serve man (see Hebrews 1:14). Neither should Christians expect to share God’s miraculous powers in the afterlife. Those who die do not become omnipresent (able to exist in more than one place at a time) or omniscient (all-knowing). When David said he was eager to awake with the likeness of God, he was describing life without sin, not appearance or authority (see Psalm 17:15). In the afterlife, a person exists in only one place at a time. The souls of those who die are not able to move about as a ghost on earth while living in heaven at the same time. That is a quality possessed only by God.

The Bible teaches that Jesus will return to earth for a final judgment of both the living and the dead. At that time He will bring with Him all the souls of those who have died, and on that day (and not before), the bodies of the dead will be raised from the earth, transformed for immortality and reunited with their spirits for eternity.

This is how Paul described that day in a letter to Christians in Thessalonica: "... God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him. According to the Lord's own Word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thessalonians 4:14b-17).

This important factual information has practical implications to help us discern what is true and false in popular movies and books on the subject of death and life after death. For all the reasons stated previously, the Bible can be trusted for true insights into God and the world He has made here and hereafter. When we hear, see or read other intriguing theories about life after death we must examine those statements against what we know to be true from the Scripture, accepting or rejecting them in light of the Bible's insight (see 1 Corinthians 14:37 and 1 John 4:6). Because of the stories and teaching of the Bible, we know the dead do not wander the earth, haunting buildings or watching over loved ones as ever-present, but unseen ghosts.

Because of what we learn from the Bible, we also know it is impossible to talk to those who have died or to communicate with them through a person who claims the power to "channel" the voice of the dead, or conducts séances to invite the dead to a meeting of the living. There is only one reference in the entire Bible where such a thing ever happened. It was during the reign of the Old Testament King Saul. When first appointed king, Saul was humble and obedient to God as the Lord spoke through the prophet Samuel. By the end of his reign, Saul had become prideful and disobedient, building statues of himself throughout the country to remind the people of his victories. Because of unfaithfulness, the Lord ultimately rejected Saul and told the prophet Samuel to go to Bethlehem to choose Israel's next king. Through divine direction, the prophet anointed the young shepherd boy David to replace Saul. David did not immediately become king. He would wait more than 20 years until the Lord provided the opportunity for him to assume the throne. Samuel told Saul that God had rejected him and chosen another to reign in his place.

After Samuel's death, Saul worried about his own pending demise. Without the prophet's help the king was forced to engage the Philistines in a major battle. In an attempt to know the battle's outcome, Saul sought the help of a witch to communicate with the spirit of the dead prophet Samuel. Unable to recognize Saul because of the disguise he wore, the witch agreed to the king's request and attempted to conjure the spirit of Samuel. When Samuel actually appeared during the séance, the witch screamed in surprise and fear (see 1 Samuel 28:12-15). Obviously, despite her claims, the witch was not accustomed to speaking with dead people or she would not have been so surprised at Samuel's appearance. It was God's decision that allowed Saul to see Samuel after his death, not the result of a witch's black magic.

There is one other instance in the Bible of the dead making an appearance on earth among the living. It happened prior to Jesus' last trip to Jerusalem, before He was arrested and crucified at the hands of the chief priests and Pontius Pilate. To prepare for what Jesus knew awaited Him, the Bible tells us He retreated to a distant mountain to pray (see Luke 9:29-35). During this intense prayer Jesus was joined by the spirits of Moses and Elijah who "... talked with Him about His exodus that would be accomplished in Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31b). (This passage in Luke, by the way, is the only time the word "exodus" is used in the New Testament.) By special permission, Moses and Elijah were sent to earth by God for the purpose of providing encouragement to Jesus before His death. The significance of the Hebrew term "exodus" implies a release from bondage similar to the exodus of the children of Israel from the slavery of Egypt. Through His death on the cross, Jesus would be released from the bondage of life on earth to return to the glory that is rightfully His in heaven.

What About Those Who See Ghosts?

What about people who legitimately claim to have seen the ghosts of the dead on earth? If that is not possible what did they see? What possible explanation does the Bible provide to explain those encounters? It is my opinion some who practice the occult have actually heard and seen unearthly forms they believe are ghosts in the midst of their séances and rituals. But, based on the Scriptures we have examined, I must conclude in those instances they are *not* talking to the spirits of the dead, but rather to Satan's emissaries posing as the dead to confuse people, who are emotionally vulnerable on earth. The Bible warns that fallen angels behave in this fashion when it says that "... Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve" (2 Corinthians 11:14b-15). And also, consider this passage: "... Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1b).

For the sake of comfort, there is another possible explanation that would parallel the story of Jesus, Peter, James and John seeing and talking with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. I have been told stories of people—including a fellow pastor—who saw a loved one walking away with a stranger at the moment he/she died. It is possible that God permits a surviving loved one to see the spirit of the deceased leaving their body.

On another occasion, a trusted woman told a similar story when her son died in combat in the Battle of Iwo Jima. She said in the middle of the night on February 21, 1945, he appeared in dress uniform at the foot of her bed in Marysville, Ohio, and said, "Goodbye, Mom." Several weeks later they got word he had died on a hospital ship that same day.

It is possible God might occasionally permit the spirit of a dead individual to make *one last stop* on the way from earth to heaven to comfort someone and prepare that person for the shock of receiving an otherwise unexpected word that a loved one had died. But let me make this point absolutely clear: these instances were not made possible by the power of those who practice the occult. The Bible says, "... God cannot be tempted by evil and He Himself tempts no one to do evil" (James 1:13b). It also says, "... What can righteousness and wickedness have in common, or what fellowship does light have with darkness" (2 Corinthians 6:14b). Believers should never consult those who practice the occult in the hope of communicating with loved ones who've died. The dead are not able to communicate with us, or we with them, but the Lord is Lord of the living and the dead. Through prayer the believer can ask the Lord to share their thoughts with those who have died and, in turn, through prayer, the living may be comforted by the Lord's assurance that all is well with their loved ones.

What Happens In Eternity After We Die?

In geometric terms life is neither a line nor a segment. Lines are depicted as a segment with arrows on both ends, signifying no beginning and no end: <—> Our life did not pre-exist in heaven as taught by some. We had a beginning when God formed us in our mother's womb, according to Psalm 139:13 and Ecclesiastes 11:5. Neither is life a segment. Segments are finite. They have a beginning and an end:| | The Bible makes it clear that death is not the end of our existence. Where you stand with God in life determines where you stand with God in your afterlife: —> Like a ray, the direction you are on now will determine your eternal future.

Our eternity begins the moment we are conceived. Life begins with conception. In the book of Judges, Samson's mother was not permitted to eat anything unclean during her pregnancy because her child was dedicated to the Lord from the time of his conception (see Judges 13). When Elizabeth greeted Mary before the birth of their sons, she asked, "Why has the mother of my Lord come to visit me" (Luke 1:43). We are conceived. We are born. We die. We continue life after death in heaven or hell. When David was

informed of the death of his infant son he said, "... I will go to him but he will not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23b).

At the moment of our death our soul enters heaven or hell. At the Second Coming of Jesus, our bodies will be raised from the grave, joined to our soul, and we will stand with the whole world before the judgment throne of God. Those who believed in Jesus as the long-promised Messiah will then enter—soul and body—into heaven. Those who reject the grace of God in Jesus will then be consigned—soul and body—into hell. There are no exceptions. The Bible plainly states there are no valid excuses for unbelief because God has made Himself known through man's inner voice and through the evidence of the things He created (see Romans 1:18-23, Romans 2:1-16 and Acts 14:16-17).

Neither will there be a second chance to acquire eternal salvation after death. The Bible is perfectly clear. "Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Life, as we know it, is not a trial run with future opportunities for reconsideration to follow. Reincarnation is not taught in the Bible. It is an invention of man's imagination. Nor does the afterlife provide an opportunity to reassess and realign oneself with the Lord after death. It is now or never. "The Lord declares, 'In the time of My favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you. ...'" (Isaiah 49:8a). I tell you, *now* is the time of God's favor; *now* is the day of salvation. Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus is offered to everyone. God does not play favorites. God "desires all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

It is tragic so many neglect God's gift of salvation to their ultimate condemnation. The most haunting question of the Bible is found in the book of Hebrews; "How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard Him" (Hebrews 2:3). There is only one right path, one means of salvation. As the sacred text declares, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other Name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Heaven Is

The Bible has a curious way of describing heaven. Lengthy books have been written on the subject, but for the most part they are speculation, often based on symbolic descriptions of gold-paved streets and gates made of pearl. It has always fascinated me how the Bible describes heaven mostly in negative terms. Heaven is almost always described in the Bible as a place completely free of all that makes life on earth so difficult.

"I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away'" (Revelation 21:3-4).

In similar words John was also told that "... He who sits on the throne will spread His tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their Shepherd; He will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:15b-17).

It makes sense. The world God made was good. In fact "... it was very good" (Genesis 1:31b). Sin corrupted God's plan and brought heartache and pain into our lives and His paradise. The Bible says the first Adam brought sin into the world. The second Adam, Jesus, will remove sin and its consequences from God's creation. Paul used that language when he wrote, "I consider our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the

will of the One who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Romans 8:18-21).

To be in heaven is to return to the original plan of God. *Heaven is God’s return ticket to Eden.* To gain heaven is to live in paradise and enjoy all that God originally planned before sin ruined everything. And God will again walk in the garden, and we will experience complete fellowship with our Heavenly Father as Adam and Eve knew it. David looked forward to that moment. He described it when he wrote, “You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand” (Psalm 16:11).

Hell Is

Hell is the opposite of heaven. If to live in heaven is to enjoy the constant and gracious presence of God, then hell is eternal separation from the gracious presence of the Heavenly Father.

On the day of their death, the wicked will get exactly what they by their actions and the exercise of their will have demanded: life apart from God. He will not force Himself on anyone. If people insist on a life without God, He will grant their request. If God is love, life apart from God is hatred. If God is light, hell is darkness. If God is living water, hell is constant thirst.

It is not God’s will for anyone to suffer eternal separation in hell. “... As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live” (Ezekiel 33:11a). Through the apostle Paul the Lord declares, “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God who desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4). Jesus told a story to illustrate God’s desire to extend salvation and heaven’s reward to all people on earth. It is the story of a king who first graciously invited his guests and then later invited complete strangers to a celebration of his wedding.

“The king said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’” (Matthew 22:8-13).

Our only hope of attending the Lord’s banquet in heaven is to accept His robe of righteousness—in other words—to be covered in His mercy. To stand in the king’s presence dressed in our own best effort will never be good enough. Anyone who thinks he is qualified to attend that gathering without the forgiveness that comes by grace through faith in Jesus will be thrown out.

The Bible describes hell as a place of eternal, conscious suffering. It is referred to as a place of darkness, of tears and regrets, of fire and thirst and of eternal punishment. Jesus stands between believers and the justice we all deserve. If we neglect the protection of the cross we expose ourselves to the wrath of God who opposes sin and all those who practice it. There will be no sin in heaven. Neither will anyone be there who dies and is still stained by their sin without God’s gracious washing of forgiveness, freely given to any and all who accept it.

As the author of the book of Hebrews described it, “How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ and again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:29-31). Everyone needs shelter from the

absolute justice of God. No one has lived the perfect life necessary to escape conviction. We all need a Savior. We all need forgiveness. We all need Jesus.

Some Follow-Up Questions:

After listening to teaching on the subject of life after death, people were given the opportunity to ask questions. Here are twelve of the most frequently asked questions. Obviously, these short answers cannot contain the “whole counsel” of God on any subject, but I hope they provide some direction.

1. **Will we remember people from earth that didn't make it to heaven and mourn? What about hurtful memories? Will we be aware of those who are not in heaven?** There is not sorrow in heaven, so your memories will not create sadness. I expect your heart to be grateful for people and experiences that contributed to your life and growth on earth. We will rejoice with those that join us in heaven but not be troubled by those who don't. (See Psalm 16:11 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.)
2. **While sitting at the side of someone who is dying, is it possible to witness his or her soul leave the body?** You cannot see the soul, but I have witnessed dying Christians suddenly describe with a strong voice and great clarity the angels they saw the moment of their death. I have seen people reach up towards something they saw that I could not see. I have seen them smile, and then listened as they took their final breath and knew that life had left their body.
3. **Are ghosts just a myth? After my grandmother died I feel like she has sent signs that she is still here. Can she communicate with us?** No. I do not deny that you saw or felt those things, but I don't believe it was your grandmother. It could be an angel (good or evil) who is giving you comfort or tempting you to believe in error that your grandmother is communicating with you. The moment we die we go to heaven or hell. We don't linger. Even when the witch of Endor brought Samuel back from the grave she was shocked. Obviously, that instance was something God allowed as an exception, not something she believed was possible even though she convinced Saul she could do it. (See 1 Samuel 28:12 and Luke 16:22-23.)
4. **What about purgatory? If my life has not been completely faithful, do I have to wait to enter heaven?** The concept of purgatory is not taught in the inspired Scriptures. It is contrary to the clear truth that *we are saved by the perfection God gives us by grace through faith in Jesus*. (See Philippians 3:7-11.) The very idea of purgatory and the doctrines often attached to it (prayer for the dead, indulgences, meritorious works on behalf of the dead, etc.) all fail to recognize that Jesus' death was sufficient to pay the penalty for every one of our sins.
5. **Will my dog be in heaven with me? Will there be animals in heaven?** I don't know if your specific dog will be with you in heaven. (Nowhere does the Bible say that animals have souls like people.) But I do believe there will be animals in the new heaven and on the new earth God has prepared for us. Just as there were animals in the Garden of Eden I expect animals to be a part of God's future paradise. The Bible also describes life in paradise by saying the lamb will lie down with the lion and the lion will graze like the ox. In other words, there will be animals present but no violence or carnivorous activity in heaven. (See Isaiah 11:6; 65:25.) The 16th-century reformer, Martin Luther, once told his favorite dog not to worry, that in heaven even *he* would be given a golden tail.
6. **Should Christians be organ donors?** Yes, by all means. While not exactly on the point, the following Scriptures reflect on that spirit. (See John 15:13 and Romans 5:7.)
7. **Can people in heaven see us?** No. This is a good thing too. I can't imagine how we might frustrate and aggravate them by our poor value judgments and unkindnesses. (See Luke 16:26-31). Also, see question number one above.

8. **I've heard about different levels in heaven and perhaps different levels of suffering in hell. Where is that taught?** The apostle Paul said he was caught up into the "third level of heaven" in 2 Corinthians 12:2b. We aren't sure exactly what he meant by that however. We do know Jesus appeared to confirm that there are different levels of honor in heaven based on a conversation He had with James and John. (See Matthew 20:22-23.) It appears to be related to the amount of sacrifice one did for the Gospel. The Bible also teaches our good works are acknowledged and rewarded in heaven. (See Matthew 10:42, Luke 14:14, 1 Corinthians 3:14 and Revelation 14:13.) Please note this though: your salvation has nothing to do with your good deeds, but your good deeds on earth are duly noted and will be rewarded in heaven. In Luke 10:14, Jesus also taught about levels of suffering in hell: "It will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you." In Luke 12:47-48a, Jesus said, "That servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. ..." The key truth about hell is found in Jesus' words when He says, "Depart from Me. ..." (Matthew 7:23b). Hell is to live in a place and circumstance eternally removed from the presence of God. Heaven is to live in close and abiding communion with God forever. Suffice it to say the consequences of living in proximity or living apart from God and His blessings are of unending importance.
9. **Will we know each other in heaven?** Yes. I believe you will even immediately know people in heaven you have not met or known on earth. Peter, James and John immediately recognized Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. (See Matthew 17:3-4 and 1 Corinthians 13:12.)
10. **What if I am scared to die?** Death is the ultimate enemy of life. It was not part of God's design for His creation to experience death, which is an unwanted intruder and an unwelcomed consequence of sin. Most people are apprehensive about the unknown. Being afraid of death is to be expected. As Jesus said, "No one has ever gone into heaven except the One who came from heaven—the Son of Man" (John 3:13). Fear of death and dying is to be expected. It is our created nature to fight against death with every ounce of resistance we can muster. Not to worry. You won't be alone when the time of your death comes. No one is. It may be a surprise to you, but not to God who knows the number of your days even before you were born (see Psalm 139:16). When that moment comes you will hear Jesus say, "Fear not." As David said, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).
11. **What age will I be in heaven?** No one knows for sure. According to some who have had near-death experiences, a few interesting details emerge. From their observation the young are made older and the older are made younger. One person saw her grandmother and said she looked to be about 45, not as old as she was when she died. Adam and Eve were created mature and ready to bear children. If sin hadn't intruded they would not have aged physically, and their children would have grown to maturity and lived in their same un-aging physical bodies for eternity. Of course, all of this is only informed speculation on matters where the Bible offers no clear answers.
12. **Is there life on other planets?** No one can know for sure. It would not surprise me nor shake my faith to know that God established life elsewhere in His vast universe. If all the stars in the universe are suns and they all have planetary systems of their own, it is reasonable to assume there may be other life forms too. It doesn't change the truth of God's Word about life and death on this earth—nor deny that God created all the stars and planets—for believers to accept the possibility of life in other universes.

THE CRUCIFIX

Lutheran Hour Questions and Answers:

What is the Difference between a Cross and a Crucifix?

<http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7517PD.mp3>

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR: 75-17

AIRS: *January 6, 2007*

TOPIC: A Cross or a Crucifix?

Mark: Hello, I'm Mark Eischer and with me answering your questions is Pastor Klaus.

Ken: Good morning, Mark.

Mark: Pastor, I have a question which you might be interested in since it concerns you.

Ken: That's ominous.

Mark: I don't think it has to be. At any rate, one of the people said, "Recently, I saw a picture of Pastor Klaus and he was wearing a crucifix. If I remember back to my confirmation days, the pastor said that Lutherans don't wear a crucifix. They also don't put a crucifix on their altar. To use a crucifix is telling people that Jesus is still on the cross; or is still suffering for our sins. I wasn't offended, but I thought I would ask."

Ken: Wow, I like that. A person actually came to me and asked a question I can really answer.

Mark: I'm glad you approve.

Ken: I do. First, let me assure everyone that I am a Lutheran.

Mark: That's good.

Ken: The second thing we ought to do is explain the differences between a cross and a crucifix.

Mark: A crucifix has the body of Jesus hanging on a cross, while a cross is plain and has no body.

Ken: I am a Lutheran and I do occasionally wear a crucifix.

Mark: Had you ever heard that rule before?

Ken: Actually I had. That's what the pastor taught me way back in ancient days when I was in Confirmation. He said that we were letting everyone know that Jesus only had to die once. That is, of course, true. Scripture very clearly teaches about this one-time offering of Jesus in the book of Hebrews, I think it's chapter 9. It says, "Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people" (NIV)

Mark: And it is true, many, certainly not all, but many Lutheran Churches have just the simple cross. It's a beautiful witness.

But let me ask, Pastor, why do you, or why would any person wear a crucifix?

Ken: I can give any number of reasons for that, Mark. First, a cross is not necessarily a Christian witness. By that I mean there are a whole lot of people, people who have no faith at all, who are wearing crosses.

Mark: I see a lot of crosses being worn exclusively as jewelry by people in the acting and music fields.

Ken: So much so, that it has lost some of its impact and witness power.

Mark: Is that why you wear a crucifix?

Ken: Partly. Sometimes I wear a crucifix when I fly.

Mark: Some kind of superstition or good luck charm.

Ken: No. The crucifix I wear was made by a master wood carver in Germany. It used to be when I flew, I forgot to take off my cross and I would set off about six or seven metal detectors. With my wood cross it goes right through security without any problem.

Mark: Is that the only reason?

Ken: No, if that was the whole story, I probably wouldn't wear the crucifix. There is more. This crucifix is a beautiful work of art. As such, every time I put it on somebody comments about it. And that gives me a chance to share about the artist, where I got it, and the Person Who is depicted on that cross.

Mark: It gives you a chance to share what you believe.

Ken: It gives me a chance to tell about the Savior's passion, His suffering and His sacrifice. It's usually not long witness, but it is a witness that I probably wouldn't be making if I was wearing just a piece of jewelry.

Mark: So, are you saying that all Christians ought to switch to wearing a crucifix?

Ken: No, no, no. I would never make up any kind of rule for other people. When the Bible speaks I have to say so... but when the Bible is silent, I can't make up any extra rules.

Mark: So, what are we saying here?

Ken: I'm saying that the empty cross makes a wonderful witness. It says Jesus Christ is not dead, He is risen from the dead. Now, all who believe on Him as Savior will have their sins forgiven and they are saved.

Mark: OK, but please keep on going....

Ken: A crucifix also makes a wonderful witness. It says Jesus Christ suffered and died for me. He could have gotten off that cross, but He stayed and by His death we are redeemed.

Mark: So both crucifix and cross can teach a story.

Ken: Exactly. They are tools for witnessing a particular part of what the Savior has done for us. Both parts of that story are necessary and need to be shared with the lost of this world.

Mark: Thank you Pastor Klaus. This is Mark Eischer....

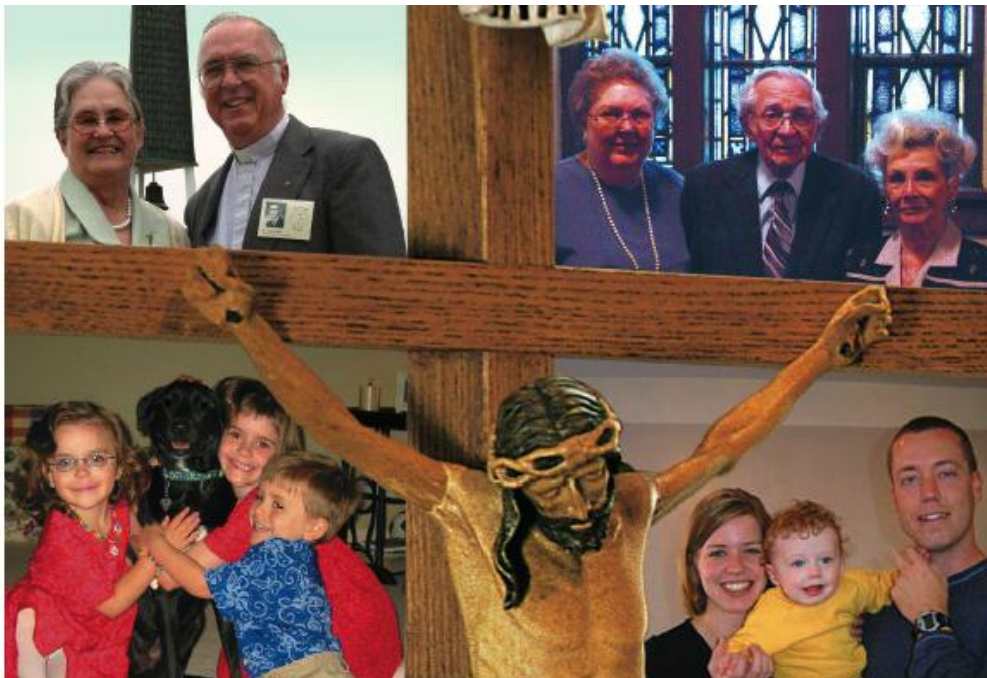
[Return to menu](#)

Cross and Church

<http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/CrossandChurchMurray.pdf>

For the LIFE of the WORLD

July 2003. Volume Seven, Number Three



**The Cross
and Personal Piety - p.4**

Cross and Church - p.7

**The Cross
in the Christian Life - p.10**

Called to Serve - p.14

Cross and Church

By the Rev. Dr. Scott R.

Murray

8 For the Life of the World

One of our sister Lutheran congregations in Germany worships in a sanctuary called the *Kreuzkirche*. A huge crucifix, standing behind the altar, dominates the whole building. Christ on the cross stretching out his arms in death entirely embraces the worshippers. It is truly a “cross church.” The Lord’s cross must dominate the Church, for the cross shapes the entire life of God’s people by marking the presence of the Gospel. Cross and Church are inseparable.

Despite trendy revisions to traditional church architecture and art and new age attempts to hide the cross, the presence of the Church is still marked by a cross—on maps, on signs, and on steeples. Many churches are cross-shaped. The cross must dominate the Church because it is still the Lord’s sign. It must not merely be an ornament but the bride’s most treasured gift from her bridegroom, Christ. Martin Luther, in his “On the Councils and the Church,” identifies the cross as one of the marks of the Church (AE 41:164-165). God has connected the means of grace, Word and Sacraments, to the cross, which arises out of these crystal-clear conveyors of God’s grace.

The Church is cross-shaped in ways not open to mere human sight. Human reason scoffs at the Church’s weakness and humility. The cross is itself a weak and humble sign. However, Christ mounted the tree and suffered death there precisely to be the glory of God and to bring that same glory to the Church. The glorified Lord explained to the Emmaus disciples, “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:26 NKJ). If the Savior must enter into glory through suffering, the Church should not expect anything else. Suffering becomes one of the marks of the divine treasures of God’s grace. The Church glories in the weakness of the cross, that the excellence of the Church

may be God's alone (2 Cor. 4:7). The Church may not always be ablaze in visible glory, but often languishes under the cross with its attendant suffering. Human reason will never recognize this glory because under the shadow of the cross the Church's glory of sharing in the suffering of Christ is hidden.

In the *Large Catechism*, Martin Luther put the word and cross together, "For where God's Word is preached, accepted or believed, and bears fruit, there the blessed holy cross will not be far away" (*Large Catechism* 3, 65-66). The Church comes into being with the cross impressed into the flesh of the bride. At Baptism the sign of the cross is set upon heart and forehead marking those redeemed by Christ the crucified. Baptism initiates into the Church by pressing the cross into the flesh of the baptized. Christ shares the cross and its death and suffering with those whom He draws down into the watery tomb of Baptism (Rom. 6:3).

At the altar of Memorial Lutheran Church in Houston, where I am the pastor, the wine in the communion chalice reflects the cross standing over the altar. When Christians drink the blood of Christ it brings the cross to the communicants. The Christian suffers the reception of the cross and all its blessings in the Sacrament. The Christian suffers in the hand of God by just "letting be." Patience means to suffer by permitting God to work His salvation in our lives. He works. We receive.

Christ's cross always brings suffering (John 17:14). The Church patiently receives the suffering God sends. In faith the children of the Church receive from God only what He sends, but He sends the cross. We interpret suffering as evil and even the work of the devil. However, God Himself sends us the cross we bear and because He sends it, it must be for our good. So as we look for the Church by the signs that mark its presence among us, we must be aware that membership in Christ and His Church also brings the cross and with the cross its suffering and weakness. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), the French apologist, identified the apparent contradiction implied by the cross and its suffering: "All those contradictions which seemed to take me furthest from the knowledge of any religion are what led me most directly to the true religion," (*Pensees*, rev. ed., trans. A. J. Krailsheimer [NY: Penguin Books, 1995], 119). According to the mysterious contraries of the Gospel, genuine joy only exists where the cross is borne in faith. Only faith can receive the contraries of suffering and joy in a single heart.

The cross the Church bears is not merely earthly suffering, such as illness, death, unemployment, bad weather, etc., but it is the cost of facing the holy and righteous God who destroys our self-justifications and pretensions to our own righteousness. He takes our earthly props out from under us. When we think we have the future in our own hands and do not need God, He takes our health. When we think we have made it financially, He sends economic downturns. When we think our wisdom is sufficient for following Christ, He makes us fools. When we think we are going to cheat death and live forever, He sends cancer. The cross shows our need of God. King David, in contrition for his sin, says that the bones broken by God should rejoice (Ps. 51:8)! He kills only to make alive, but kill He does (Job 13:15). The most difficult cross to bear is the one when we, like Job, feel that God is our enemy. Such crosses are the lot of the Church and her children. The Word alone must overrule how we feel. The hymn by Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676), "When I Suffer Pains and Losses," glories in high Christian confidence because God sends the cross.

Under burdens of cross-bearing, Though the weight May be great, Yet I'm not despairing. You designed the cross you gave me; Thus you know All my woe And how best to save me. (*LW* 423, st. 2)

The Lord instructs with the cross and forces us to abandon ourselves to the mercy of our Lord Christ in the face of contrary evidence. Luther calls this the "Christian law." "Suffering! suffering! Cross! cross! This and nothing else is the Christian law!" (*AE* 46: 29). Faith's challenge is not to believe what we feel, but rather to believe what God has said. Luther warns, "For this is what happens: when a person wants to be a Christian and acts according to his feelings, he soon loses Christ," (*AE* 51:203-204). The resounding Word of God overpowers the weakness and timidity of the heart, assuring us of God's favor for Christ's sake. To seek Christ in our easily deceived heart is to risk the loss of Christ and His cross.

God will despise our plans and set them ablaze just to show us the more glorious way through suffering: the way of facing the divine wrath, and so receiving only His mercy. We always pray this in the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done." Luther sums this up so simply, "The cross alone is our theology," (*WA* 5:176, 32). The cross means that we do not get our own way. We cannot. Our own way is the happy and broad road to damnation. For the Church's only way is Christ Himself with His holy cross and suffering.

The cross “too is a holy possession whereby the Holy Spirit not only sanctifies His people, but also blesses them,” (AE 41:165).Where this cross is there is the Church. The Church must be a *Kreuzkirche*.

The Rev. Dr. Scott R. Murray is Pastor of Memorial Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas.

[Return to menu](#)

Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: Is the use of crucifixes a Roman Catholic practice? Doesn't the empty cross provide a better symbol for Lutherans? How does the LCMS feel about using a crucifix in church?

<http://www.lcms.org/faqs/worship#crucifixes>

[Note: A crucifix is a cross with a statue of the crucified Christ on it.]

A: A common misunderstanding among some Lutherans is the opinion that a crucifix, or the use of a crucifix, is a “Roman Catholic” practice. The history of Lutheranism demonstrates that the crucifix was a regular and routine feature of Lutheran worship and devotional life during Luther’s lifetime and during the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy. It was also the case among the founding fathers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. If you were to visit most of the original congregations of the LCMS here in the United States you would find lovely crucifixes adorning their altars, and, in addition, beautiful statues on the altar of Christ and the four evangelists or other such scenes. There is nothing uniquely Roman Catholic about this. Many Lutherans and Lutheran congregations use crucifixes. Crucifixes are used in the chapels of both of our seminaries and our International Center.

Lutheranism has always considered the crucifix to be a powerful reminder of the sacrifice our Lord Jesus made for us and our salvation, on the cross. A crucifix vividly brings to mind the Apostle Paul’s divinely inspired words, “We preach Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 1:23).

Interestingly enough, while there is certainly nothing “wrong” with an “empty” cross, the practice of using an “empty cross” on a Lutheran congregation’s altar comes more from non-Lutheran sources. At the time of the Reformation there was conflict between Lutherans and Reformed Christians over the proper place of pictures, images, statues and the like in the church. Lutherans stood with historic Christendom in realizing that such art in the church was not wrong, and it was a great aid for helping to focus devotional thoughts on the truths of the Word of God. No greater truth can be found than the death of Jesus Christ our Lord for the world’s salvation.

The “empty cross” is not a symbol of Christ’s resurrection, as some say, for the fact is that the cross would have been empty regardless of whether or not Christ had risen from the grave. The point to be kept clear here is that both an “empty cross” and a crucifix symbolize the same thing: the death of Christ our Lord for the salvation of the world. Many feel the crucifix symbolizes this truth more clearly and strikingly. That has been the traditional opinion of historic Lutheranism, until the last 50 years ago, due to the influence we will now mention.

Some Lutherans began to move away from crucifixes during the age of Lutheran Pietism, which rejected much of Lutheran doctrine and consequently many Lutheran worship practices. At the time, Lutheran Pietists, contrary to the clear position of Luther and the earlier Lutherans, held that symbols such as the crucifix were wrong. This was never the view of historic Lutheranism. Here in America, Lutherans have always felt a certain pressure to “fit in” with the Reformed Christianity that predominates much of the Protestant church here. Thus, for some Lutherans this meant doing away with things such as crucifixes and vestments, and other traditional forms of Lutheran worship and piety. It is sad when some Lutherans are made to feel embarrassed about their Lutheranism by members of churches that teach the Word of God in error and who do not share Lutheranism’s clear confession and practice of the full truth of the Word of God.

Lutheranism has always recognized that the use of any symbol (even the empty cross) can become an idolatrous practice, if in any way people are led to believe there is “power in the cross” or that a picture or representation of a cross has some sort of ability, in itself, to bring us into relationship with Christ and His Gospel. Any of God’s good gifts can be turned against Him in this life and become an end in themselves.

Lutherans have never believed that banning or limiting proper artwork in the church is the way to prevent its improper use. Rather, we believe proper teaching and right use is the best way, and the way that is in keeping with the gift of freedom we have in Christ to use all things to the glory and honor of God. Thus, many Lutherans use and enjoy the crucifix as a meaningful reminder of our Lord’s suffering and death. It might interest you to know that our Synod’s president has a beautiful crucifix adorning the wall of his office, constantly reminding him and visitors to his office of the great love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In short, and this is the most important point of all: there is nothing contrary to God’s Holy Word, or our Lutheran Confessions, about the proper use of the crucifix, just as there is nothing wrong with the proper use of an empty cross, or any other church symbol by which we are reminded of the great things God has done for us. We need to guard against quickly dismissing out of hand practices that we believe are “too Roman Catholic” before we more adequately explore their use and history in our own church.

In Christian freedom, we use either the crucifix or an empty cross and should not judge or condemn one another for using either nor not using either symbol of our Lord’s sacrifice for our sins.

[Return to menu](#)

WHAT HAPPENS TO CHRISTIANS WHO LEAVE CHURCH?

‘Ex-Christians’: Gone for Good?

<http://blogs.lcms.org/2011/ex-christians-gone-for-good>.

'Ex-Christians': gone for good?

on February 4, 2011 in NEWS, REPORTER

(RNS) — Drew Dyck didn't lose the Christian faith of his childhood when he became an adult, but he noticed that lots of others did.

Dyck, an editor of online publications for *Christianity Today*, talked to some of those who've left the faith for his recent book, *Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults Are Leaving the Faith ... and How to Bring Them Back*.

(Some answers have been edited for length and clarity.)

Q: What prompted you to write about ex-Christians?

A: My friends began leaving the faith. The first was a friend from high school. We had grown up in the church; both of our fathers were pastors. A few years after high school he informed me that he was no longer a Christian. That got my attention. As I moved through my 20s, I witnessed other friends “de-convert.” I realized that these experiences were not unique.

Q: Are a lot of young people really leaving the faith? Won't they just come back when they're older?

A: The answer to the first question is “yes.” In the 2009 American Religious Identification Survey, 18- to 29-year-olds were found to be the least religious age group: 22 percent claimed “no religion.” That was up 11 percent from 1990.

Whether or not they will return is where the scholarly consensus breaks down. Some view the exodus from the church as a hiatus, a matter of young Americans “slapping the snooze” on Sunday mornings. They see the trend as a reversible life-phase phenomenon. I'm not so sure.

Q: What's the main reason they give for leaving?

A: Most cited intellectual doubts, but there's often more to the story. One young woman had attended a prominent Christian college, where she'd suffered a mental breakdown after feeling ostracized by the community and betrayed by Christian friends. But it was only in subsequent years that she constructed her elaborate system of doubt. Her intellectual doubts may have prevented her from returning to Christianity, but they were almost certainly not the reason she left in the first place.

My challenge was to watch for those underlying experiences that often push people from the faith. It sounds more credible to say you left on intellectual grounds. But more often, the head follows the heart.

Q: What interesting things did you learn during the interviews?

A: I encountered some surprising signs of spiritual life. In the interviews, I asked the ex-Christians whether they ever still prayed. Most still did pray. They were angry, conflicted prayers, but beautiful in their honesty and desperation: "God, where are you? Can you hear me? Do you exist? Do you even care about me? I miss you."

Q: You have some interesting categories of unbelievers in your book: Can you explain what these terms mean?

A: No two "leavers" are exactly the same, but some patterns did emerge.

Postmodern leavers reject Christianity because of its exclusive truth claims and moral absolutes. For them, Christian faith is just too narrow.

"Recoilers" leave because they were hurt in the church. They suffered some form of abuse at the hands of someone they saw as a spiritual authority. God was guilty by association.

"Modernists" completely reject supernatural claims. God is a delusion. Any truth beyond science is dismissed as superstition.

"Neo-pagans" refers to those who left for earth-based religions such as Wicca. Not all actually cast spells or participate in pagan rituals, but they deny a transcendent God, and see earth as the locus of true spirituality.

"Spiritual Rebels" flee the faith to indulge in behavior that conflicted with their faith. They also value autonomy and don't want anyone — especially a superintending deity — telling them what to do.

“Drifters” do not suffer intellectual crises or consciously leave the faith; they simply drift away. Over time God becomes less and less important until one day He’s no longer part of their lives.

Q: Has the church played a role in causing this trend? If so, how can it stem the tide?

A: Over the past couple of decades, business thinking has affected the way many churches minister to youth. The goal has become attracting large numbers of kids and keeping them entertained. Church researcher Ed Stetzer describes most youth groups as “holding tanks with pizza.”

There’s nothing wrong with video games and pizza, but they’re tragic replacements for discipleship and catechism. Many young people have been exposed to a superficial form of Christianity that effectively inoculates them against authentic faith.

Q: What role does contemporary American culture play?

A: A lot of Christians fear the corrupting influence of “the world,” but when it comes to the spiritual plights of young people, what happens inside the church matters most. Even for those lured away by alternative spiritualities such as Wicca, their “de-conversions” were precipitated by what happened inside rather than outside the church. In other words, it was more push than pull.

Q: You’re a part of the generation you’re writing about. What is different about those such as yourself who didn’t leave?

A: Young people who have meaningful relationships with older Christians are much more likely to retain their faith into adulthood. I had those connections, and have no doubt they were instrumental in my life. I also sought out the intellectual resources to understand and defend my faith. But I don’t give myself too much credit.

The difference between me and my friends who I now describe as “ex-Christians” may be a matter of degree, rather than kind. We all have the tendency to stray. But God, in His mercy, keeps drawing me back.

– *Greg Richter, The Birmingham News, Birmingham, Ala.*

[Return to menu](#)

ASTROLOGY AND THE BIBLE

The New Quest For The Sacred: The Witchcraft Craze And The Lure Of The Occult

Ralph L. Moellering

<http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/moelleringthenewquestforthesacred.pdf>

The Leuenberg Concord
Translation by JOHN DRICKAMER

Science, The Bible, Evolution,
Creation, And The Flood
RAYMOND F. SURBURG

The Outside Limits Of Lutheran
Confessionalism In Contemporary
Biblical Interpretation
HORACE D. HUMMEL

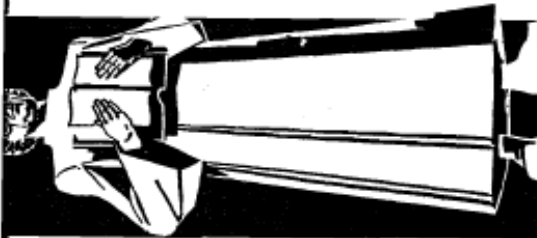
The New Quest For The Sacred:
The Witchcraft Craze And The
Lure Of The Occult
RALPH L. MOELLERING

Ritschl And Pieper On Subjective
Justification: A Comparison
OTTO C. HINTZE

The "Cry Of Dereliction"—
Another Point Of View
ROBERT HOLST

Book Reviews

Index, Volume 35



the springfielder

VOL. XXXV • NO. 4
MARCH, 1972



The New Quest For The Sacred: The Witchcraft Craze And The Lure Of The Occult

RALPH L. MOELLERING

Visiting Professor at the University of
Frankfurt, Germany

WHAT HAS HAPPENED to the alleged triumph of secularity in American life? Only a few years ago religion was presumably in eclipse. In a scientific era what was once attributed to supernatural causes could be readily explained as "natural." Mature, self-sufficient men and women, we were told, had thrown away their crutches of prayer and faith, and were making their own decisions independent of any projected deity. Rebellious youth, it was said, had repudiated the church. "Irrelevant piety" was renounced by avant-garde seminaries and the public press heralded the "death of God."

At the beginning of the Seventies, however, religion seems to have made a surprising comeback. Or could it be that journalists and other commentators were misreading the signs of the times? Undeniably the "recovery of transcendence" is now a major theme. "God talk" is fashionable again. Evidence multiplies that there is a new quest for the sacred.

Perhaps nothing illustrates more clearly how drastic this reversal in thinking has become than the shift of emphasis in the writings of the popular theologian Harvey Cox. In 1965 Cox went into verbal ecstasies over the marvels of technology and celebrated the joys of *The Secular City*. Religion was dismissed as a passing episode in the upbringing of humanity. Man's profane and pragmatic attempt to build a better urban life in this present world was the all-absorbing and totally valid concern. In a remarkable about face Cox has dropped his optimistic appraisal of the whole secularization process and his glorification of modernity to propose a "theology of juxtaposition" which reflects on the tension dimensions in the collisions and contradictions of past, present, and future. What was once peripheral in his evaluation has now become festive delight. In his latest book, *The Feast of Fools*, Cox deplores the loss of Western man's earlier capacity for jubilation and fantasy. What is needed, he argues, is a rejuvenation of the faded faculty for mystical experience and imaginative expression.

On every hand there are abundant indications that man is incurably susceptible to religious feelings and motivations. The recovery of the category of transcendence among the intelligentsia is only the "high-brow" aspect of a new mood which is most acutely discernible in anti-intellectual gropings among alienated youth. Jacob Needleman, professor of philosophy at San Francisco State College, has felt compelled to explore the wide spectrum of Oriental religions which have appealed to so many young rebels on the West Coast. Repudiating the "tough minded" analytical appraisal of the external world as utterly devoid of purpose, these enthusiasts for change, Needleman finds, embrace all sorts of Indian gurus and Eastern sages. In multifaceted ways strange to the Western mind these imported faiths seem to captivate the imagination of people who have never understood or appreciated their own Judeo-Christian heritage. The "lovers" of Meher Baba, for instance, cultivate a sense of self-surrender to intuitive feelings in order to experience internal harmony. Practitioners of Subud join in a remarkable spiritual exercise known as the *latihan* with the intention of subduing one's "lower nature"—patiently seeking a state of receptivity for divine illumination. The adherents of Krishnamurti propose instantaneous self-observation to acquire a new and more profound comprehension of individual freedom. Even Tibetan Buddhism has made some inroads in America, and the Zen

Buddhism once associated with the beatniks of the 1950s has displayed an amazing vitality in continuing to gain converts.

Amid all of the unrest and ferment of our troubled era, with our moral bankruptcy and spiritual emptiness, it should not perhaps be too surprising that ancient religions are moving in to fill the deserted spaces. What is deplorable is that so much of this animated quest for sacred meaning bypasses Biblical truth and ignores or scorns reconciliation through an encounter with the Crucified and Resurrected Christ. Whenever people are tempted to love or trust in some human construct or resource more than in the Covenant God of Abraham and the Father of Jesus of Nazareth, they become immediately prone to violating the First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." In accord with its own subjective yearnings the human mind has always been profusely productive in fabricating false ideologies and half-truths. Sometimes, in a desperate attempt to evade a reckoning with the God of judgement and grace revealed in Holy Scripture, it will become susceptible to the most irrational absurdities and far-fetched superstitions.

As an integral part of the current revival of interest in the sacred, we witness not only a return to metaphysical speculation and a resurgence of Islam and Buddhism, but also an absorption in transmundane mystery or anything which contradicts the presuppositions of our arrogant technological age. An example may be found in the way some college students have been enchanted by the *I Ching* or *Book of Changes*, a common source for both Confucianist and Taoist philosophy. In this approach, so incompatible with the rationalizations of Americans and Europeans, ethical values are attached to oracular pronouncements. Zealots give credence to such methods of attaining wisdom because they know that long-accepted axioms of causality have been shaken to their foundations by the theories of modern physics, and they are now inclined to dismiss what we have hitherto termed "natural laws" as mere statistical truths and not ultimate knowledge. With such a disavowal of "scientific evidence" it seems plausible to turn to the ancient Chinese preoccupation with the fortuitous character of everything which happens. What has been called "synchronicity" assumes a peculiar interdependence of objective events even among themselves as well as with the psychic states of the observer or observers. Contingency, not predestination or divine governance, determines our fate. Thus something like the *I Ching* version of reality has an intense appeal for our unstable youth who are out of step with the emphases of our own society.

The most bizarre and inexplicable elements in the contemporary urge to fathom the supernatural are to be found in devil worship, the witchcraft craze, and the lure of the occult. Most popular, and presumably quite "respectable," are the flirtations with astrology and moderate forms of spiritualism. Wide publicity was given to the tragic (some would say pathetic) developments in the erratic career of Bishop James Pike (especially the suicide of his son) which induced him to seek consolation and contact with the departed through the ministrations of professional spiritualists. Even more astounding are news reports of worried American parents who have crossed the Mexican border to confer with wizards and charlatans concerning the fate of servicemen in Vietnam.

Anyone sensitive to the vibrations moving through our youth sub-culture might have predicted this surge of interest in superstition and the Satanic arts. The language of the hippies in San Francisco has been loaded with magic phrases, and Ouija boards have sold briskly in Manhattan's Greenwich Village. The musical play "Hair" celebrated the dawn of the Age of Aquarius. "Rosemary's Baby," a novel and movie about witchcraft in a "quality" neighborhood of New York, enjoyed considerable box office success only a few years ago. Most publicized

and most disturbing has been the trial of Charles Manson, where ritual murder, drug usage, sexual orgies, and all sorts of mumbo jumbo have combined to form an incredible phantasmagoria which jolts all normal sensibilities.

Early in 1971 underground newspapers reported that seeress Sybil Leek was making sensational predictions about public figures ("Richard Nixon [will be] involved in a major scandal that will eliminate him from the 1972 presidential race . . . Jackie Onassis will make eyebrows arch with flamboyant behavior . . ."). Recently the Berkeley Repertory Theatre featured John Whiting's play, "The Devils," an episodic dramatization of alleged demon possession involving Ursuline nuns in France in the 1630s.

With all of this contemporary furor over Satanism, it is not surprising that church historians have been stimulated to search for precedents and sources in the past record of Western Christendom. In the March, 1971 issue of *Church History*, Donald Nugent, associate professor of history at the University of Kentucky, purports to perceive striking similarities between outcroppings of superstition during the Renaissance and the psychic aberrations which have become almost characteristic of our emerging sub-culture. In both periods, Nugent reminds us, there is an abrupt break with the existing value system and a profound sense of discontinuity. Violence, apocalypticism, and severe *Angst* permeated the age of the Renaissance just as they agitate our world today. Side by side in both situations one finds the coarsest hedonism and the most ethereal mysticism. In extreme instances, both then and now, irrational propensities have spawned manifestations of the occult.

As Nugent elaborates on his thesis he amasses evidence which indicates that certain common denominators are found almost universally in witchcraft-medieval or modern. Usually the practice of various types of diabolism involves a fusion of sexuality and power. Anton LaVey, the notorious leader of a devil-worshipping "church" in San Francisco, reflects a common perspective when he writes that "no one ever pursued occult studies . . . without ego gratification and personal power as a goal." Self-acclaimed witches have generally relished the opportunity to manipulate and dominate their devotees. Concurrently, sexual licentiousness and excessive sensuality have often accompanied the celebration of the Black Mass or other nocturnal rites conducted during clandestine gatherings in secluded caves. In the demonolatry of LaVey, a naked woman is placed on the altar as an object of veneration. Blasphemy, egomania, and lasciviousness seem to be molded together as an internal totality which hurls defiance at everything which has been treated as inviolable or considered holy in Christian usage.

Some observers are convinced that witchcraft is more prevalent in the 1970s than it has been at any time since the Middle Ages. Nugent offers estimates of 60,000 sorcerers in France, 30,000 witches in England, and 20,000 Satanists in the United States as unreliable but possible figures. The new wave of witches cuts across all of the strata of society. Not only gullible illiterates, but also the sophisticated wealthy, and occasionally the educated elite, are entranced by encounters with demonic supernaturalism. There are intimations that extremists in the women's liberation movement find diabolical symbolism apropos for their assault on male chauvinism (e.g., W.I.T.C.H., Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell, and S.C.U.M., Society for Cutting Up Men). Facetiously perhaps, yet significantly, members of W.I.T.C.H. appeared on Halloween, 1968, to lead hexes against the Stock Exchange with the declaration: "you have a fiend at Chase Manhattan."

Another aspect of the current revival of the occult is the way in which it is interwoven with the conspiracy theories emanating from religious and political factions on the Far Right. The John Birch Society professes to detect sinister Communists lurking in the background as

devil-extolling cults are organized. Rock music, hallucinogenic formulas, and all kinds of weird perversions are associated with Red-inspired plots which are presumably designed to demoralize America. *American Opinions* for September, 1970 includes extensive commentary on diabolism with a photograph of "Satanist organizer -Aleister Crowley, a sadist and homosexual, [who] corresponded with key Communist Leon Trotsky to whom he offered his services." From New Haven, Connecticut comes *The Yale Standard* for the spring of 1971 with an excerpt from the book, *The Bible, the Supernatural and the Jews* by McCandlish Phillips. According to this expose of the occult underworld, invisible forces are presently at work seeking to undermine our morale and cause degenerative changes in our society. Jews, in particular, are warned against experimentation with demonic spirits which can beguile them into chaotic misperceptions.

For evangelical Christians who have never ceased to believe in the deadly potency of Lucifer there may be less astonishment at the present obsession with magic and the black arts than among "emancipated" moderns who long ago relegated such absurdities to the ash heap of discarded anachronisms. The dimension of the demonic remains a grim reality because sin and decadence abound. Sadly enough we are prone to the most abhorrent practices imaginable when Christian faith is undercut and a vacuum of despair and disillusionment ensue. People in rebellion against God are susceptible to the blandishments of the Old Evil Foe. The Biblical imagery which portrays the devil as a "roaring lion" stalking across the earth in search of vulnerable prey is still all too appropriate.

Even the Old Testament castigations of conjuration and thaumaturgy take on renewed and incisive meaning in a twentieth century setting where authentic faith in a God of redemptive love has often been repudiated or disregarded, and pseudo-religions have once again arisen which appeal to the urge to penetrate esoteric secrets and appease carnal ambitions. "Do not turn to mediums or wizards" is the admonition from the statutes of Leviticus, "do not seek them out to be defiled by them." With a stern caveat the Deuteronomic Code forbids the "abominable practices" which the Lord God punished among the pagan nations. Fidelity to the covenant requires that "there shall not be found among the Israelites] anyone who . . . practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer." The proscribed list of vices which dishonor the name of the Sovereign God is exhaustive. No compromise with the machinations of the Prince of Darkness is to be tolerated. In our reputedly enlightened, but nevertheless benighted, "scientific" area such exhortations against "spiritual wickedness" need to be repeated and reemphasized.


For a positive antidote to the "wiles of the devil" —subtle maneuvers and overt temptations—we can turn to the apostolic counsel addressed to the Ephesians and "put on the whole armor of God." Equipped with defensive and offensive weapons (the breastplate of righteousness, the Gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit), we can cope effectively with every exigency, including the lure of the occult which has deceived the unwary in so many recent happenings. Above all, the person who confides in Jesus Christ knows that the final victory against the power of hell has already been won. Christ partook of our flesh and blood so that "through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil." (Hebrews 2:14.)

[Return to menu](#)

ASTROLOGY AND THE BIBLE

The Religious Movements Page

<http://web.archive.org/web/20060902232910/http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/profiles/listalpha.htm>




WELCOME & MISSION STATEMENT
GROUP PROFILES, LINKS & INFO
CULT GROUP CONTROVERSIES
REL. MOV. COURSE MATERIALS

[The Religious Movements Page] SR@UVA

◀ HOME
◀ SITEMAP
◀ GLOSSARY
◀ FEEDBACK
◀ SEARCH
◀ ABOUT US


The Religious Freedom Page


Religious Broadcasting

Group Profiles, Links & Info

Alphabetic Listing of Group Profile Pages

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S
T U V W X Y Z

The religious movement profiles that follow were developed with the assistance of students enrolled in my sociology of religion classes at the University of Virginia. Each student who has created a religious movement profile for this site has made a unique and valuable contribution. I sincerely extend my gratitude to them for their conscientious work. The name of the student who created each page appears at the end of that page. If they are still a student at the University, you can communicate with them directly by clicking on their name.

Each profile consists of a minimum of three sections: (1) a profile providing basic information to help orient the reader to the group, (2) links to web sites containing further useful information, and a (3) bibliography of print resources. Many of the pages

Profile Page Orientation
Recently-added Group Profiles
Current Featured Profile Page
Alphabetic Listing of All Group Profiles
Profiles Grouped by Faith Tradition
Profiles & Links Org'd by Melton's Family Groupings
Search for a Specific Religious Group on this site
Search the Internet
What we mean by "cults" and "sects"

go well beyond their minimum criteria. Groups are listed alphabetically. If a group is known by multiple names, it will have multiple listings for your convenience in locating. Comments and suggestions for improving the content of individual pages are welcome. You can send a

message by visiting our feedback page or you can email me by clicking on my name below.

Jeffrey K. Hadden
Department of Sociology
University of Virginia

Also available in this site section:

- [Profile Page Orientation](#)
- [Group Profiles Organized by Faith Traditions](#)
- [Group Profiles & Off-site Links Organized by J. Gordon Melton's Religious Family Groupings](#)
- [Search For a Specific Group's Profile Page](#)
- [Search the Internet for a Group of Interest](#)

A

- [Adidam The Way of the Heart](#)
- [African Methodist Episcopal Church](#)
- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#)
- [AME Church](#)
- [Amish](#)
- [Ananda Church of Self Realization](#)
- [Ananda Marga Yoga Society](#)
- [Anglo-Israelism](#)
- [Assemblies of God](#)
- [Atheism](#)
- [Atherius Society](#)
- [Association for Research and Enlightenment](#)
- [Aum Shinrikyo](#)

B

- [Baha'i Faith](#)
- [Baptists, Primitive](#)
- [Baptists, Southern](#)
- [Boston Church of Christ](#)
- [Branch Davidians](#)
- [Branhamism](#)

- the Brethren
- British-Israelism
- Brownsville Revival
- Bruderhof
- Buddhism

C

- Call to Renewal: Christians for a New Political Vision
- Calvary Chapel
- Campus Crusade for Christ*

• Cao Daism

- Channeling
- Charismatic Movement
- Chen Tao [The Right Way]
- Children of God
- Chopra, Deepak
- Christadelphians
- Christian Coalition
- Christian Identity Movement
- Christian and Missionary Alliance
- Christian Reconstructionism
- Christian Reformed Church in America
- Christian Science
- Christianity in Japan
- Church in Island Pond
- Church of God (Cleveland)
- The Church of God (7th Day)
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
- Church of God International*
- Church of the Nazarene
- Church of the New Jerusalem

- Church of Satan
- Church of Set
- Church Universal and Triumphant
- Concerned Christians
- Course in Miracles

D

- Deepak Chopra
- Discordianism
- Divine Light Mission
- Druids

E

- Eckankar
- Elan Vital
- est

F

- Falun Gong
 - Religious Freedom in China: Falun Gong
- The Family
- Father Divine
- Feng Shui
- The Forum
- First Church of Christ, Scientist
- Foundation of Human Understanding
- Foursquare Gospel Church
- Freemasonry
- Fundamentalism

G

- Garvey, Marcus
- Gnosticism

• Gurdjieff*

H

- Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization (3HO)
- Hare Krishnas
- Hasidism
- Heaven's Gate

Heaven's Gate Profile

Extended Coverage of Heaven's Gate

- Hinduism
- Holy Order of MANS
- Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity
- Huguenots
- Hutterian Brethern of New York, Inc.

I

- I Am
- Institute of Noetic Sciences
- Integral Yoga
- International Churches Of Christ
- International Church of the Foursquare Gospel
- International Church of Scientology
- International Peace Mission Movement
- International Raelian Religion
- International Society for Krishna Consciousness
- Islam
- ISKCON

J

- Jainism
- Jehovah's Witnesses
- Jesus Army

- Jesus Fellowship Church
- Jesus People USA
- Jonestown

K

- Kabbalah
- Konkokyo
- Knights of Columbus

L

- Landmark Education
- Latter Day Saints
- Latter Rain Movement
- Lifespring
- Local Church

M

- Macumba/Condomble
- Maitreya
- Masada
- Masons
- Meher Baba Groups
- Mennonites
- Messianic Jewish Alliance of America
- Methodist Church
- Millennium Prophecies
- Moody Bible Institute
- Moody Church
- Moonies
- Moral Rearmament
- Moravian Church
- Mormons (LDS).

- MOVE
- Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God
- Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness
- MSIA

N

- National Baptist Convention, USA
- Nation of Islam
- Nation of Yahweh
- Native American Religions
- Nazarene
- Neo-Paganism
- New Age
- New Creation Christian Community
- New Thought
- Nichiren Shoshu of America; Soka Gakkai
- Nichiren Shoshu
- Northeast Kingdom Community Church

O

- Old Catholicism
- Oneida Movement
- Opus Dei*
- Order of the Solar Temple*
- Osho

P

- Para-Religious Movements
 - Amway
 - A Virtual Tour of Direct Sale Organizations (DSOs)
 - DSO Links
- Paramahansa Yogananda
- Pentacostalism

- Primitive Baptists
- The Process
- Peoples Temple
- Philadelphia Church of God
- Process Church of the Final Judgment
- Promise Keepers

Q

- Quakers

R

- Ramtha's School of Enlightenment
- Raelians
- Rajnesshism
- Ramakrishna Order of the Vendanta Society
- Rastafarianism
- Rebirthing
- Religious Science (United Church of)
- Reorganized Church Of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
- Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God
- Restoration Movement

Churches of Christ

Disciples of Christ and churches of Christ

- Roman Catholicism
- Rosicrucian Order, AMORC

S

- Sahaja Yoga
- Salem Witch Trials
- Salvation Army*
- Santeria

- Satanism, Introductory Index
 - The Church Of Satan
 - The Temple of Set
 - Satanism in Popular Culture
- Scientific Pantheism
- Scientology
- Secular Humanism
- Seicho No Ie
- Self-Realization Fellowship
- Seventh-Day Adventists
- Shakers
- Shamanism
- Shambhala International
- Shirdi Sai Baba
- Shinreikyo
- Shinto
- Sikh Dharma; Healthy
- Sikhs
- Silva Mind Control; Silva Method
- Snake Handlers
- Society of Friends
- Soka Gakkai
- Solar Temple*
- Southern Baptists
- Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)
- Spiritual Discovery (Suma Ching Hai)
- Spiritualism
- Sri Chinmoy
- Sukyo Mahikari
- Suma Ching Hai
- Swedenborgianism

- Synanon
- Synchronicity Contemporary Meditation

T

- Taoism
- The Temple of Set
- Tenrikyo
- Theosophy
- Toronto Blessing
- Transcendental Meditation
- Twelve Tribes
- Two X Twos

U

- UFO Cults
 - Atherius Society
 - Chen Tao [The Right Way]
 - Heaven's Gate
 - Raelians
 - Unarius Academy of Science
- Unarius Academy of Science
- Unification Church
- Unitarian Universalist
- United Church of Religious Science
- United Methodist Church
- United Pentacostal Church International
- United Society of Believers
- Unity School of Christianity
- Universal Negro Improvement Association
- Universal Life Church
- Universal Peace Mission Movement
- Urantia Brotherhood

V

- Vendanta Society
- Vineyard Churches

W

- Watchtower and Bible Tract Society
- The Way International (the way)
- Wicca
- Willow Creek Community Church
- Woman's Christian Temperance Union
- Worldwide Church of God

Z

- Zen Buddhism
- Zoroastrianism
 - Zoroastrianism Main Page
 - The Zarathushtrian Assembly

Conservative Zoroastrianism

[Return to menu](#)

ASTROLOGY AND THE BIBLE

Christ and the Challenge of Neo-Paganism

<http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/ChristandtheChallengeofNeoPaganismNichols.pdf>



I Am a Christian - p. 4

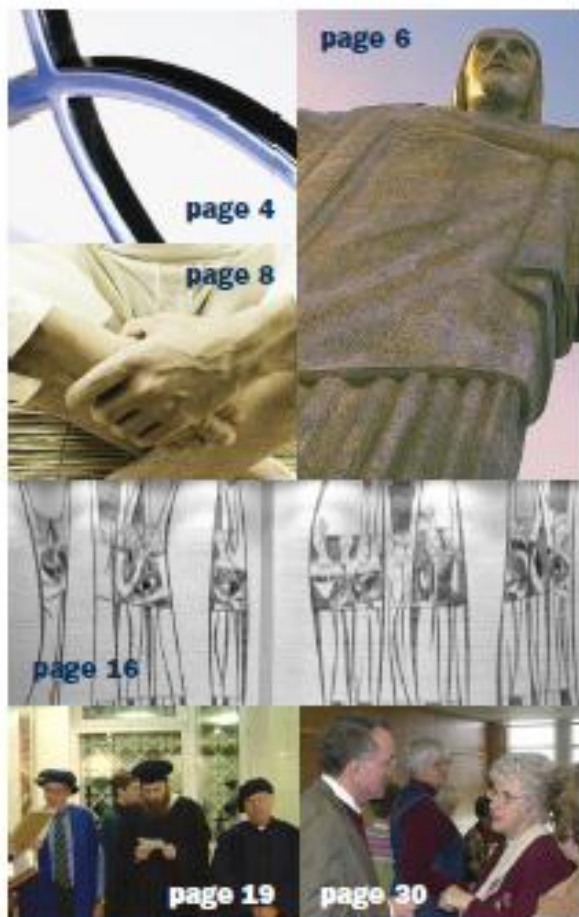
Christ and the Challenge of Neo-Paganism - p. 6

**The Quest for Experiencing the Divine:
The Rise and Effect of Eastern Religions - p. 8**

What Does This Mean? - p. 11


CONCORDIA
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY
PRESS

CONTENTS



For the LIFE of the WORLD

PRESIDENT
Rev. Dr. Dean G. Wunthe

PUBLISHER
Rev. Scott Klemm

EDITOR
Rev. John Floss

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Jayne Shearer

COPY EDITOR
Trudy Behning

ART DIRECTOR
Steve Blakely

For the Life of the World is published quarterly by Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 6600 North Clinton Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825. No portion of this publication may be reproduced without the written consent of the publisher of *For the Life of the World*. Copyright 2007. Printed in the United States. Postage paid at Washington, Indiana. To be added to our mailing list please call 260-435-2150 or e-mail Rev. Scott Klemm at sklemm@cltse.edu. *For the Life of the World* is mailed to all pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the United States and Canada and to anyone interested in the work of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

FEATURES

4 I Am a Christian

By Professor James G. Bushur, Assistant Professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

In communion with Christ our identity is fundamentally altered. Here we are Christians—not because we merely act, speak, or think like Jesus—but because Christ Himself lives within us. At Christ's altar our families and ethnicities are forgotten; our career, economic status, as well as every other earthly association, must be left behind.

6 Christ and the Challenge of Neo-Paganism

By the Rev. Larry A. Nichols, Pastor of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Smithfield, Rhode Island

Christ in a pagan world is not about the past. It is about a very real present. This is true because our culture is filled with cults, the occult, neo-paganism, Wicca, the New Age Movement, etc.

8 The Quest for Experiencing the Divine: The Rise and Effect of Eastern Religions

By Dr. Naomichi Masaki, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology and Supervisor of the Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) Program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

While the joy in the forgiveness of our sins remains firm because of the Lord's gifts in baptism, the world into which we are placed each day is ever changing. As the "mainline" churches continue to decline in membership "spirituality," the impulse to seek communion with the Divine is thriving.

11 What Does This Mean?

Called to SERVE

Reaching Across Cultures

p. 12

Faithfully Teaching

p. 14

An Enduring Legacy

p. 16

Professors Participate in Graduation Ceremony in Russia

p. 19

Seminary Guild Events for 2007

p. 30

CHRIST and the Challenge of Neo-Paganism

Mark's Gospel starts with the words, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). While Matthew and Luke tell of the birth narratives of Jesus, and John begins with the divine account of Jesus as the Word made flesh, Mark's Gospel alone introduces Jesus to a Gentile and a pagan world. Mark tells these Gentiles at the outset that Jesus is the beginning of the *evangelicon*- "good news." This word eventually came to be translated into English as "Gospel."

When I was asked to write this article on the theme of "Christ in a Pagan World," I thought immediately of Christianity's beginnings. "Paganism, after all, addresses the ancient world," as I used to think. "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," as Mark writes, presents to us divinely inspired words addressed to a world that knew no ultimate truth and was most certainly a world filled with much less than good news. The message of Mark was directed to unbelieving pagans, a world populated with mystery religions, fertility cults, emperor worship, numerous forms of idolatry, and various forms of occult practice.

Christianity went on to transform society in the Middle Ages and a Christian ethos would emerge and flourish. Dr. Alving Schmidt, in his outstanding book *How Christianity Changed the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), outlines in chapter after chapter how Christianity transformed society. He speaks of how Christianity introduced a moral code to sex and marriage; elevated the status of women; advanced the cause of charity and compassion; introduced hospitals and took leading roles in human care; assumed a leading role in founding educational institutions, private schools, colleges, and universities; led in the advance of scientific knowledge; was foundational in law and jurisprudence, led the way to the abolition of slavery in America; and contributed great advances in music, art, and literature. Christianity indeed transformed a pagan world.

That was then! What of today? We are now living in the early 21st century. Up through the mid 1960's one could argue plausibly that Christianity and its influence was still the dominant religious paradigm in popular American culture. Even among non-churchgoers Christian themes were dominant cultural motifs. For example, while in no way did Hollywood present the Gospel of Christ, during this time it did not go out of its way to challenge, deny, or declare an all out culture war against it as is the case today. The pervasive moralism of popular shows like *Leave it to Beaver* presented a world where Dad and Mom were married for life, slept in separate beds (at least on television), and in the end the viewer generally related to and agreed with whatever discipline they meted out to Wally and Beaver and thought this was the way that life ought to be lived.

Speaking of the 1960's, I remember before I was ten years old having to leave early on Sunday mornings in order to find a seat as churches were packed back then. Christianity certainly was still the dominant motif of the culture. The countercultural revolution of the middle part of the 60's, the Viet Nam War, assassinations of two Kennedys, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, the Kent State slayings, the Woodstock era, the death of Hendrix and Joplin, the hippies, Jesus freaks, flower children, and communal living introduced rapid changes that would leave the world reeling. I can still remember the words of John Lennon, "We are going to steal your children." It didn't mean anything to me back then. But now as I think back, these words represent the introduction of a major paradigm shift, not to something wholly new, but a reversion to the major themes of paganism so prevalent in the early Christian church. Christ in a pagan world is not about the past. It is about a very real present. This is true because our culture is filled with cults, the occult, neo-paganism, Wicca, the New Age Movement, etc. and I have written extensively on these themes. But the reality of Christ in a pagan world today became painfully obvious to me in my early years as a pastor. I was on my way to a hospital visit in the early morning hours. I stopped at a restaurant for breakfast. My waitress was in her early twenties. She

immediately asked me about “the white thing” I was wearing around my neck. The following represents the conversation as I best remember it:

“I am a Christian minister,” I responded.

“What is a minister?”

“Have you ever heard of Jesus?” I asked.

“No, who is Jesus?”

[I was incredulous!] “You have never heard of Jesus Christ?”

“No, I really have not!”

“Really?” Now my mind was rushing for some common reference. “Have you ever seen a building with a cross on it?” I asked.

“Come to think of it, I have,” she said.

“Ok, have you ever seen a cross on a building with a body on it?”

“Yes, and I always thought that this was something horrible and cruel.”

“Well the person on that cross is Jesus,” I told her. “I want to tell you something about who Jesus is and what He did for you.” I pulled out my pocket New Testament and turned to John 3:16. Now most Christians know this passage by heart, but I wanted to read it to her with her looking at the very words on the page. I started to read, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...*” As I read these words I heard a noise. I looked up. She was sobbing.

“Does this Jesus really love me and did God do that for me?”

I’m not making this up. This conversation really took place. My point for relating it is that this is not as anecdotal as it seems. Many young people are no longer tuned in to Christianity. I spend a good deal of time on Luther’s explanation to the Second Commandment in Catechism: “We should not use witchcraft...” along with other parts of the Lutheran Confessions as an opportunity to teach extensively about the world of the occult and how we as Christians are to assess it.

In my latest book, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Cults, Sects, and World Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2006), I note the difference between spirituality and religion. Almost without exception, you people today distinguish between the two. Spirituality is a good thing while religion, especially organized forms of it, are out. Whether it be the Kabbalah, an Ouija Board, or personal meditation with New Age crystals, this constitutes a multi-cultural spirituality. But the corporate gathering around the liturgy of Word and Sacrament, which clearly presents the Gospel of Christ, constitutes a chokehold on the “liberation” one can experience with personal tailor-made homespun spiritualities. This thought process creates a challenge to the church today to continue to proclaim to the neo-pagan culture around us the words of Mark 1:1, “The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” For many, Jesus Christ can indeed be a new beginning.

The Rev. Larry A. Nichols serves as Pastor of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Smithfield, Rhode Island.

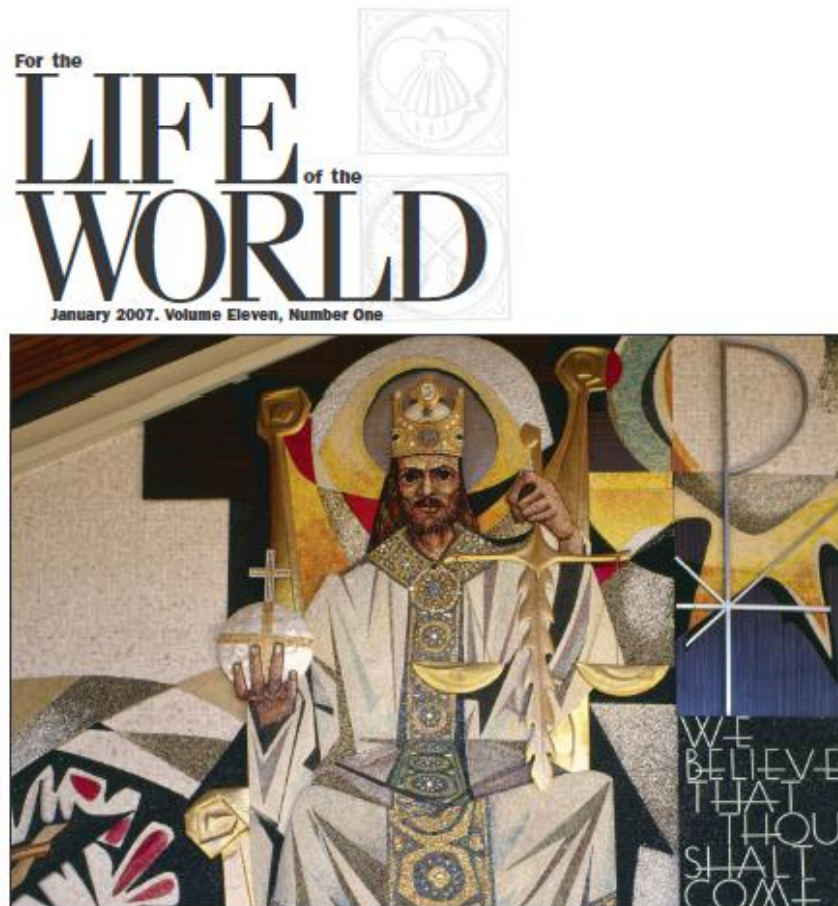
[Return to menu](#)

ASTROLOGY AND THE BIBLE

The Quest for Experiencing the Divine: The Rise and Effect of Eastern Religions

Dr. Naomichi Masaki

<http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/TheQuestforExperiencingtheDivingMasaki.pdf>



I Am a Christian - p. 4

Christ and the Challenge of Neo-Paganism - p. 6

The Quest for Experiencing the Divine:
The Rise and Effect of Eastern Religions - p. 8

What Does This Mean? - p. 11


CONCORDIA
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY
PRESS

CONTENTS



For the LIFE of the WORLD

PRESIDENT
Rev. Dr. Dean O. Wenthe

PUBLISHER
Rev. Scott Klemm

EDITOR
Rev. John Pless

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Jayne Sheaffer

COPY EDITOR
Trudy Bohning

ART DIRECTOR
Steve Blakely

For the Life of the World is published quarterly by Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 6600 North Clinton Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825. No portion of this publication may be reproduced without the written consent of the publisher of *For the Life of the World*. Copyright 2007. Printed in the United States. Postage paid at Huntington, Indiana. To be added to our mailing list please call 260-452-2150 or e-mail Rev. Scott Klemm at sklemm@lwf.org. *For the Life of the World* is mailed to all pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the United States and Canada and to anyone interested in the work of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

JANUARY 2007

FEATURES

4 I Am a Christian

By Professor James G. Bushur, Assistant Professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

In communion with Christ our identity is fundamentally altered. Here we are Christians—not because we merely act, speak, or think like Jesus—but because Christ Himself lives within us. At Christ's altar our families and ethnicities are forgotten; our careers, economic status, as well as every other earthly association, must be left behind.

6 Christ and the Challenge of Neo-Paganism

By the Rev. Larry A. Nichols, Pastor of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Smithfield, Rhode Island

Christ in a pagan world is not about the past. It is about a very real present. This is true because our culture is filled with cults, the occult, neo-paganism, Wicca, the New Age Movement, etc.

8 The Quest for Experiencing the Divine: The Rise and Effect of Eastern Religions

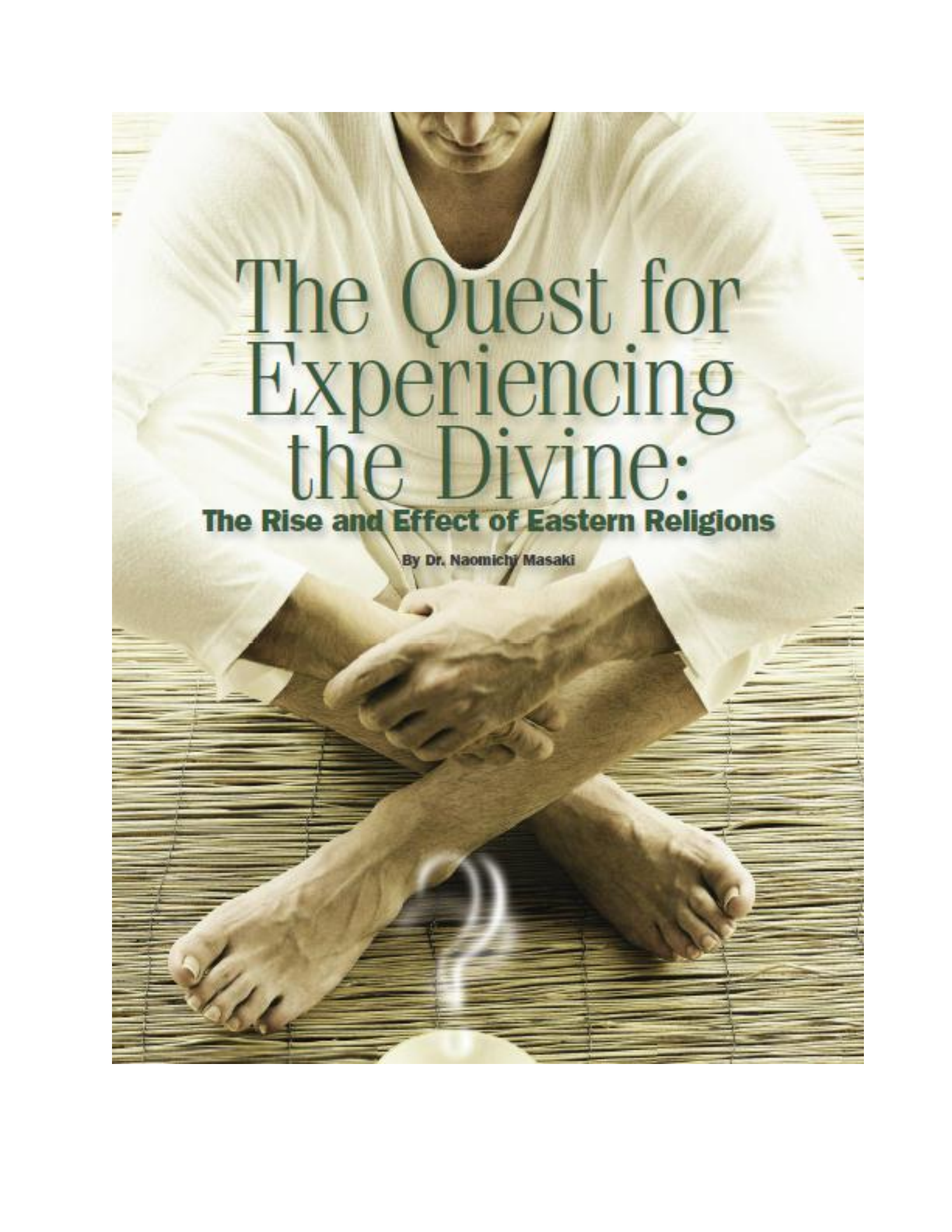
By Dr. Naomichi Masaki, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology and Supervisor of the Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) Program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

While the joy in the forgiveness of our sins remains firm because of the Lord's gifts in baptism, the world into which we are placed each day is ever changing. As the "mainline" churches continue to decline in membership "spirituality," the impulse to seek communion with the Divine is thriving.

11 What Does This Mean?

Called to SERVE

Reaching Across Cultures	p. 12
Faithfully Teaching	p. 14
An Enduring Legacy	p. 16
Professors Participate in Graduation Ceremony in Russia	p. 19
Seminary Guild Events for 2007	p. 30

The background image shows a person from the chest down, wearing a white, loose-fitting robe. They are sitting in a meditative pose on a light-colored bamboo mat. Their hands are resting on their knees, and their feet are visible at the bottom of the frame. In the foreground, a small, round, light-colored incense burner is lit, with a wisp of white smoke rising from it. The overall lighting is soft and warm, creating a peaceful and contemplative atmosphere.

The Quest for Experiencing the Divine:

The Rise and Effect of Eastern Religions

By Dr. Naomichi Masaki

“Then go joyfully to your work, singing a hymn . . .” “Joyfully” rings a bell of the Gospel; with vitality we are moved into the places of our daily calling as the Morning Prayer in the *Small Catechism* suggests. A hymn that comes out of our lips may be one of Paul Gerhardt’s hymns in *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006):

All Christians who have been baptized,
Who know the God of heaven,
And in whose daily life is prized
The name of Christ once given:
Consider now what God has done,
The gifts He gives to ev’ryone
Baptized into Christ Jesus!
Lutheran Service Book, 596, v. 1

The rhythm of Christian living always starts with our Lord Jesus. The Lord’s initiative and bestowing of His gifts prompt creating and enlivening of faith which ushers the faithful into living the life of service. With the Lord’s giving and our receiving, the richer our life of service.

While the joy in the forgiveness of our sins remains firm because of the Lord’s gifts in baptism, the world into which we are placed each day is ever changing. As the “mainline” churches continue to decline in membership “spirituality,” the impulse to seek communion with the Divine is thriving. Our friends and neighbors may say: “I’m a spiritual person, but I’m not religious.” More people now ask how they may *experience* God in their own lives rather than how much they should know about God. A recent article in *Newsweek*, “In Search of the Spiritual,” confirms such an observation when the writer of the article comments that according to the latest poll Americans are looking for a deeper and immediate personal experience of God (Aug 19–Sep 5, 2005). In other words, “if you *feel* God *within* you, then the important question is settled; the rest are details.” People are seeking “a religion that *empowers* them” rather than “a God who commands them.”

Some scholars remind us that since the time of Constantine in the fourth century, Christians have by and large enjoyed a sense of superiority over the religions of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The main challenges to Christian faith, especially in the West, did not come from those non-European religions but from the inroads of the enlightenment religions and secularized society, in addition to numerous heresies and controversies within the church. But today, Christians in North America encounter not only particular accents in the so-called post-modernism such as ambiguity, healing, taste, progress, and choice, but also non-Christian religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, each with its specific teachings and worship practices.

Zen Buddhism is discussed in the aforementioned article of *Newsweek* as to how it has affected the worldwide meditation practice known as *centering prayer* popularized by Father Thomas Keating. This fact may illustrate that the blending of eastern religions and modern day spirituality in America has already taken place.

Zen Buddhism is often considered as the final form of Buddhism developed in Japan. Unlike the original teaching of Buddhism, it does not require followers to forsake the world to live in seclusion. Nor does it teach that one needs to train oneself rigorously in order to *become* a Buddha. Rather, it teaches followers to live as if they were *already* a Buddha. As in Buddhism, the main teaching of Zen is still how one may be rescued from this world of suffering. But the attention is now drawn not only to the rigorous exercises of self-discipline, but also to the *empowerment* of one’s heart. To *feel* a god *within you* is common in both Zen Buddhism and post-modern spirituality.

Surprisingly, the same *Newsweek* article reports that some Americans talk to their ancestors on a regular basis. Although such a practice derives not from Zen Buddhism but from Confucianism, it is what most Japanese have practiced for centuries. When we consider what is generally acknowledged as three characteristics of Japanese culture and religion, our observation of the similarity between current spirituality here in America and the traditional Japanese religiosity may be further underlined. Those three characteristics are *aestheticism*, *ambiguity*, and *amalgamation*. *Aestheticism* has to do with the traditional Japanese culture which values a sense of delicacy, precision, and aesthetics, developed out of the

demands to live in harmony with the four seasons. *Ambiguity* is seen most clearly in Japanese language which causes harm at times in business contexts because it is more fitting to communicate feelings rather than subject matters. In terms of *amalgamations*, over the course of Japanese history at least four such experiences may be identified: amalgamations of primordial religion and Shinto; Shinto and Buddhism; Buddhism and Confucianism; and Shinto and modernization.

The effect of eastern religions on our post-modern culture may continue among us. This prompts us to ask what implications there are for our life of service. First, we observe that spirituality today is polytheistic and that all polytheism is projections of *our* thinking of God. Idolatry is usually symptomized by having more than one idol. When I am sad, I want a Jesus to make me happy. If I have just lost my job, I want a Jesus who will help me get another one. If my son or daughter is going astray, I want a Jesus who will bring him or her back. When I am sick, I want a Jesus to help make me healthy. Facing death, I want a Jesus who will get me through that. In each of these situations Jesus seems to come in second; first is what I want Him to do. To fit Him to that, I may choose the appropriate piece of Jesus I want. Luther's profound insight in his *Large Catechism* is that it is *our faith* that creates false gods. Beside the fact that false gods can never give good gifts, they don't forgive our sins. They only require our efforts, making us work and be useful.

Secondly, even if our heart may be able to *feel* the Divine, the point of departure is what *I* think of God and how I end up finding "the hidden God." We wind up remaining in darkness because there is no certainty in the hidden god or gods of which we can take control.

Thirdly, we confess that the only God who finally holds is the One who bestows forgiveness of sins *extra nos* (from outside). The initiative is the Lord's and His ways of Law and Gospel. We are *under* the Word at the receiving end of His gifts. We don't discover the Gospel, the Gospel discovers us. God *in Christ* (2 Cor. 5:17–21) is the opposite of what people expect God to be. His glory is seen not in His majesty or in His almighty power, but in His suffering and dying. Jesus is the Son of God not because He did miracles but because He died on the cross (Mark 1:1, 15:39). We can speak of God only when God reveals Himself *in Christ* to whom the Holy Spirit bears witness in the means of grace.

Fourthly, we should joyfully consider doctrine as important even when it is despised at the expense of *experiencing God within you*. Doctrine is important not only because we confess it as a norm of our faith and life, but because doctrine belongs to Jesus, not to us. As such, the doctrine *lives* as Christ lives. The doctrine has to do with our Lord's dynamic giving of His gifts which are received from outside. We should keep in mind that Satan attacks the means of grace point so that the sinners may not be comforted (Eph. 4:14). Nevertheless, the tremendously good news is ours; that in our Baptism the devil has already been renounced with all his works and all his ways. Moreover, our Lord continues to sustain us by the life-giving body and the life-giving blood that we are given to eat and to drink.

"You who worship ancestors!" Dr. David Scaer teased me one day when he had just heard me speak something very nice about Dr. William Weinrich as I introduced him as a speaker at our annual theological symposia. To this I replied, jokingly, "You worship ancestors only when they are *dead*. Don't make Dr. Weinrich *dead*!" Who knows when America will "catch up" more fully with the attraction from the East to embrace such a practice. But no matter what happens around us, we remain profoundly joyful and confident because we are in the Lord. Now is the time of the church, the time when our Lord Jesus is distributing the fruits of His cross to the whole world through the means of grace. We don't have to force ourselves to rejoice in the Gospel. In fact, as the *Small Catechism* confesses, we can't.

There are many challenging moments in the life of a Christian. But when the Gospel from outside touches our hearts, we no longer serve our neighbor with the Gospel because we "have to"; rather we "get to" do it on account of an inability to keep silent about such a wonderful Savior (Acts 4:31). Paul Gerhardt concludes the wonderful hymn of baptism in this way:

So use it well! You are made new—
In Christ a new creation!
As faithful Christians, live and do
Within your own vocation,
Until that day when you possess

His glorious robe of righteousness
Bestowed on you forever!
Lutheran Service Book, 596, v. 6

So singing a hymn we go *joyfully* to our work serving our neighbor today and every day for His mercy is new every morning!

Dr. Naomichi Masaki serves as an Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology and Supervisor of the Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) Program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

[Return to menu](#)

ASTROLOGY AND THE BIBLE

The Visit of the Magi: Fact or Fiction?

Dr. Paul L. Maier

<http://blogs.lcms.org/2010/the-visit-of-the-magi-fact-or-fiction-12-2010>

The Visit of the Magi: Fact or Fiction?

on December 1, 2010 in CLASSIC WITNESS, LUTHERAN WITNESS

by Dr. Paul L. Maier

For years, biblical critics have questioned many details in the Christmas Gospels, such as the Annunciation, the Roman census, the Virgin Birth, the angelic announcement to the shepherds, and the infant massacre at Bethlehem. While secular evidence from the ancient world actually supports many aspects of the Nativity, one objection is quite formidable.

It involves the Magi of Epiphany and runs like this: “How could the (presumably) wise men, who were never in touch with Hebrew prophecies regarding the star as a Messianic symbol, traipse across the desert following a ‘star’ and then arrive in Jerusalem asking that too-perfect question in Matt. 2:2: ‘Where is he who has been born king of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him?’ It sounds as if they were in a Christmas pageant, being coached by a Sunday-school teacher behind the curtain!” Ouch!

Was the visit of the Magi just a pious tale after all, a device used by Matthew to make of the Nativity a cosmic event, using a great star as the prime prop—a first-century version of Hollywood arc lights? This needling challenge used to bother me—until I found that the entire argument is based on a false premise. To see if we are dealing with fact or fiction here, we should set Matthew’s claims into their historical context.

WHO WERE THE MAGI?

“We Three Kings of Orient are. . . .” So the familiar Christmas carol begins. But already it has made three mistakes in the first line! We don’t know that the Magi were three in number, they were not kings, and they did not come from as far away as the Orient, that is, the Far East. The Greek of the New Testament calls them simply *magoi apo anatolon*, “magi from the East,” and the term *magoi* is usually translated as magicians (hence the derivation of that term), wise men, or astrologers.

And “the East” has variously been identified as any country from Arabia and Babylonia to Media and Persia (both in modern Iran), but no farther east. The magi were an ancient priestly caste among the Babylonians and Medo-Persians. These priest-sages, extremely well educated for their day, were experts in religion, history, medicine, astronomy, astrology, divination, and magic. Their caste eventually spread across much of the East.

As in any other profession, there were both good and bad magi, depending on whether they did research in the sciences or practiced augury, magic, and necromancy (reading the future, or changing the course of events, by conjuring up and consulting with the spirits of the dead). The safest conclusion is that the Magi of the Nativity were either Persian or Babylonian, perhaps both, since Persia controlled Babylon for many years. And if the astronomical aspects of the Nativity are emphasized—the great star and its significance—a case could be made that the Magi were late Babylonians, since astronomy reached its highest development in ancient Mesopotamia.

Whatever the origin of these eastern sages, their visit was of great significance for later Christianity: The Wise Men were pagans, not Hebrews, and the fact that Gentile magi performed the same adoration as Jewish shepherds symbolized the universal outreach for future Christianity. “Nations [Gentiles] shall come to your light,” the prophet Isaiah had foretold, “and kings to the brightness of your dawn” (60:3). And so they have. Since Gentiles comprise the overwhelming majority of Christians today, the Magi were our representatives at the Nativity, and the light they saw in the baby at Bethlehem pierced the darkness of their paganism, just as the Light of the World can illuminate the darkness of sin, ignorance, fanaticism, and terrorism surrounding us today.

RUNNING WITH THE WRONG ASSUMPTION

The Wise Men could never have been in touch with Hebrew prophecies regarding the star as a Messianic symbol, the skeptics argue. But this premise, which is the foundation of most challenges to Matthew’s reliability, happens to be false! The critics seem to have forgotten Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon who conquered Jerusalem in 586 B.C., destroying the city and burning the temple. Many assume that in the notorious “Babylonian Captivity of the Jews” that followed, all Jews were deported to Babylon until most of them returned to their homeland under Ezra.

Wrong on both counts! Nebuchadnezzar took as Jewish captives not the common people, laborers, or farmers, but the professional leaders in the land, including priests and rabbinical scholars. Nor did they all return with Ezra. Many of the Jews fared so well during their captivity that a large Jewish colony remained in Babylon for at least the next 1,000 years.

What is the greatest collection of Jewish writings? The Babylonian Talmud, of course, which was edited at Babylon in A.D. 400. Here, then, is the point: Four centuries earlier, magi scholars—especially the religious historians among them—would certainly have had regular contact with their Jewish counterparts in the scholarly community at Babylon. Accordingly, they, too, would have had access to Hebrew Scriptures involving Messianic prophecies and the star, including rabbinical traditions explaining Balaam's oracle that "a star shall come forth out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel" (Num. 24:17), Isaiah's prophecies cited earlier, and others. The Magi's question to Herod in Jerusalem, then, was not asked out of a vacuum.

TOO FAR-FETCHED?

In responding to this evidence, critics sometimes object, "You're really reaching here, Maier! The surrounding Gentile cultures of the time wouldn't have been interested in the Hebrew Scriptures or Jewish traditions." Oh, but they would indeed! One familiar example should suffice. Ptolemy II "*Philadelphus*"), the Hellenistic king of neighboring Egypt, was establishing the greatest collection of scrolls in the world: the great library at Alexandria. In 283 B.C., he wrote the high priest in Jerusalem, asking him to send Jewish scholars to Alexandria in order to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek.

Eleazar, the high priest at the time, gladly complied, sending 70 scholars, who were accorded a warm and colorful reception in Alexandria. They were given a beautiful island retreat in the harbor of Alexandria in which to do their translation. The result was the famous Septuagint that rendered Hebrew Scriptures into Greek—the very version of the Old Testament used so often by the earliest church. Yes, pagans were interested in Hebrew writings and Jewish culture.

AN INVENTED STAR?

Finally, skeptics argue that Matthew "created" the Star of Bethlehem for literary purposes. Of all the Gospel writers, so they claim, Matthew is the one who loves the sensational effect: the earthquake on Good Friday, the tearing of the temple curtain, saints walking out of opened tombs (27:51 ff.), another earthquake at the Resurrection (28:2), and, earlier, the Nativity star. Matthew, then, goes for the extraordinary, the supernatural, the cosmic.

The star motif, however, twinkles throughout Hebrew history and makes no sudden debut at Bethlehem. The six-pointed Star of David has symbolized the Chosen People from Old Testament times to today's Israeli flag. The five-pointed Star of Solomon shows up in stone at the archaeological excavations at Capernaum, as does its six-pointed counterpart.

Finally, 130 years after the first Christmas, Rabbi Akiba, the greatest sage of his day, put a Jewish rebel on the back of a white horse and led him through the streets of Jerusalem, crying, “Bow down! The Messiah has come! The Messiah has come!” And the people did.

The name of the rebel? *Simeon Bar-Cosiba*. Yet the rabbi, on the basis of Num. 24:17, had changed his name to *Bar-Kokhbah*, which means “Son of the Star.” (The rebel, however, proved to be a falling star, since the *Bar-Kokhbah* revolt of A.D. 132 was put down by the Romans with utter devastation, after which Jews were excluded from Jerusalem, which was renamed for the emperor Hadrian’s family, *Aelia Capitolina*.)

Here again, the star symbol was linked directly to the Messiah in Jewish tradition. No, Matthew did not invent the star of Bethlehem. Whether or not the star was a supernatural phenomenon or a natural astral event is discussed in the side-bar story. So often, skeptical critics are prone to shoot from the hip rather than evaluate all the surviving evidence.

And there may have been more evidence. If he had had the time, incentive, and opportunity, Matthew might have written an entire book on how the Magi were alerted to the Nativity. But he had a far more important story to tell: the great good news of how God revealed His Son not just to Jewish people, but to all of humanity everywhere. What began as the light from a single star has now illuminated the entire globe through the One who said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

—

About the Author: *Dr. Paul L. Maier is professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University and fourth vice president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.*
Reprinted from the January 2006 *Lutheran Witness*.

[Return to menu](#)

CHRISTIAN GAMING SITE:

Gaming By Grace

<http://www.gamingbygrace.com/>

Gaming By Grace



Bringing the Gospel of Grace to the Gaming community

[Want to Join?](#)

[Gaming By Grace Forums](#)

[What is Grace?](#)

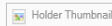
[Good Gaming Network](#)



Community

Community is what GBG is all about! Please bear with us as we work to update our main website and provide a consolidated area for discussion. So as we work please feel free to jump in and see what is ...

[See more](#)



Vision, Mission, and Statement of Faith

Vision, Mission and Statement of Faith Clan
Mission Statement: Gaming By Grace is a dynamic and excited group of online gamers who desire to have a good time playing the games we play! We look for other ...

[See more](#)



Gaming News

See our latest Reviews, new releases, and what games GBG is playing.

[See more](#)

Guest 6740557
Anybody there?

7 days ago

Live Group Chat 1 ● ✕

Welcome to Gaming By Grace!

The GBG forums are back up! Please come on and register! Our email activation is not fully active at this time, so please either wait 1–2 days or post on our Facebook page for immediate activation: <https://www.facebook.com/GamingByGrace> Red Baron

Gaming By Grace began in October of 2008. At it's inception the community was focused around a couple of things. Our love for Christ and or enjoyment of playing games on Xbox live. Since that time many games have come out but our mission and goals stay the same.

Bringing the gospel of grace to the gaming community.

The Gaming By Grace community is very diverse. We enjoy playing games together and encouraging one another.

We welcome anyone and everyone who is a gamer that is mature and respectful. We also invite those that are not, to game with us (not join GBG, but get to know us). This may seem strange to some, but there is an old proverb that says,

"No one cares about what you know, until they know how much you care."

We take that to heart and reach out to those who sometimes just need a friend, someone to listen, someone who cares. The VAST majority of the time people just move on, but sometimes a true diamond in the rough is found and that gamer feels acceptance and appreciation for the first time. Enough to change their ways and become a better gamer.

The initials in our gamertags "GBG" help to identify clan members of Gaming By Grace, however it also reminds us that we are "Saved By Grace". This term comes from the Bible, in the Book of Ephesians, Chapter 2 verses 8 & 9:

"8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast."

Whether you are a Christian or not, you are welcome to visit, game, or even join Gaming By Grace.

Feel free to browse our site and our forums. If you have a prayer need go to the prayer section and let us know. Feel free to read and comment on our blog posts also.

[Return to menu](#)

HOBBIES AND PASSIONS

The Gospel on Their Shoulders

<http://blogs.lcms.org/2008/the-gospel-on-their-shoulders-8-2008>

The Gospel On Their Shoulders

on August 1, 2008 in Feature, Lutheran Witness

by Diane Strzelecki

The appeal of miniature donkeys—not least the legend of how a cross came to adorn their backs—has provided an entree for an Indiana couple to share the faith and support the Synod's *Ablaze!*-related ministries.

Photo by Mark Rogers



Jerry and Susie Patterson

You might say that Jerry and Susie Patterson have lived a predictable midwestern life. Indiana born, these high school sweethearts are now in their 44th year of marriage. Jerry's love of farming led to a lifetime of agricultural-related jobs, from ranch hand to sales manager for a seed company. Susie realized her early ambition to be a wife, mother of four children, and a nurse. Their faith in their Savior has been a constant as well. But they never expected that a hobby would help them share the Good News of the Gospel across the United States. And it all began with one small donkey.

The Pattersons bought 18-acre Ravenwood Farm

(www.ravenwoodfarm.com) about 16 years ago when they settled in

Hartsville, Ind., after living in Illinois and Tennessee. Raised on an 80-acre farm herself, Susie felt right at home. There was also plenty of room for Jerry's hobbies: woodworking and harness-making. Then the Pattersons decided it would be nice to buy a miniature donkey to keep their pygmy goats company and to provide entertainment for their grandchildren.

"We've always had a special place in our hearts for donkeys," says Jerry, noting that Susie's father had purchased a donkey at an auction when their own children were small. "Our kids had such a good time with her that we thought we should get a donkey for the grandkids."

The Pattersons soon had more than one donkey, and they discovered an entire subculture of "donkey people": farms, shows, and events across the United States. Soon Jerry took a donkey to a show—and he was hooked.

"I met a lot of nice people and thought showing would be fun," Jerry says. A breeder shared her knowledge of "conformation" in miniature donkeys: their ideal structure, bones, and movement. The Pattersons were on their way, and they have made it a hobby to raise, show, sell, and, most of all, enjoy the creatures.

Marked for the Master

The Pattersons explain that one consistent trait of all donkeys, miniature and otherwise, is the "cross" that runs down the animal's back and across its shoulders, a cross that, in folklore, has its own story. As she has done many times before, Susie is eager to share the legend of the donkey's cross.

"All donkeys carry a cross because a donkey carried Christ," she says about the legend. As the story goes, Jesus requested a donkey to take Him into Jerusalem, and the donkey and Jesus became good friends. When Christ was crucified, the donkey followed Him to the cross. After Christ had died, the grieving donkey stayed long after everyone had left. When the donkey finally turned away to leave, the shadow of the cross fell upon him and made an impression; so to this day, all donkeys have a cross.

"People always ask about the cross, whether we're showing the donkeys at a state fair or entertaining visitors at the farm," Susie says. "They are always in awe of the story—fascinated by it, really. That's our little way of sharing our faith with the general public."

Although legend, the story of the cross is a great icebreaker, the Pattersons say, a way to open the door for a more serious discussion of the Christian faith.

"I have never had a negative reaction to the story," Jerry says.

The Hobby and the Mission

After 16 years in the business, the Pattersons note that their hobby turns a profit in some years. A donkey solid in "conformation" can fetch \$3,000 to \$5,000, and buyers are everywhere—especially on the Internet. Serious breeders have Web sites that tout their donkeys, tell about their farm, and, in the Pattersons' case, tell the legend of the donkey's cross.



Photo by
Mark Rogers

Early on, the Pattersons, who are members of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ind., decided they would set aside 10 percent of the proceeds from their donkey sales to contribute to missions or charity.

"When our church was raising money to expand its building, we tithed to the campaign," Susie says. "We just kept that up and were able to contribute to paying off the debt, as well as the debt from building an addition to the school." When the Pattersons heard about *Fan into Flame*, the fiscal arm of *Ablaze!* that helps to fund *Ablaze!*-related ministries, they decided their tithe could help people come to faith in Jesus.

"The *Fan into Flame* program gives many choices for where your contribution will go, providing a whole list of expenses and mission costs so you can see the very real need," Jerry notes. "We decided to allocate our tithe to a Native American mission in Wyoming, as we feel Native Americans have gotten a rather bad deal in this country."

"With all the other causes out there, no one ever thinks of them, so we decided that this mission would be a good place for our tithe," Susie says. "The money we gave last year provided for a vacation Bible school at the mission."

Through their many conversations with a Native American friend, the Pattersons know firsthand the slow, intentional process of spreading the Gospel.

"Although she does believe in God, she has an entirely different outlook," Susie says. "As we were trying to get through to her, we realized we really wanted to help other Native Americans learn about Christ."

Attracting Attention

Anyone seeing a miniature donkey for the first time can't help but be intrigued. Standing less than 36 inches tall, they retain the proportions of a standard donkey. Their fur comes in a variety of colors and is irresistibly soft. Children especially are drawn to the diminutive animals.

Photo by Mark Rogers



Jerry and Susie Patterson's success in raising miniature donkeys has also given them the opportunity to share their faith with others.

The Pattersons take their "show" on the road at least five times a year. Jerry has even trained his donkeys to pull a cart, winning a "driving" class at the Indiana State Fair. Still, he measures the success of a trip by the opportunities he has to share the Gospel and the love of Jesus through the donkeys.

The donkeys are also local celebrities, the Pattersons add. Area churches request their presence during Passion plays and Christmas pageants.

"We have paraded around churches in Joseph's coats under palms to the delight of 200 Sunday school children," Jerry says. "At Christmastime, churches will call to see if they can use our donkeys on a walk to Bethlehem."

Susie says she can't imagine life without the creatures. "As you can tell, I love my donkeys," she says. "They are really neat animals, and the longer we have them the more we learn about them, the herd dynamics, and their personalities."

And the longer they have them, the more opportunities they have to share their faith in Jesus, the Pattersons say.

"I've always felt if there's one thing I'd like to do in life, it's to bring one person to faith in Jesus who didn't have it before he met me. That's my goal," Jerry says. "If someone comes to Christ because of what we're doing, then we've accomplished our reason for being here."

[Return to menu](#)

HOBBIES AND PASSIONS

What I Learned Helping my Daughter Find a Passion

http://allprodad.com/what-i-learned-helping-my-daughter-find-a-passion/?utm_term=playoftheday&utm_campaign=Play+of+the+Day+Daily+Email&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=16834631&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-96mBUhkytZ5WXn5NG-80CJJ1Y7vOK3m4gT3Yb65orMFtEkkfRp6nFKwxpoIr3asbqPIYsgT48R_XfOIuoRvnFguLlJTw&_hsmi=16834631



What I Learned Helping My Daughter Find a Passion

I recently confessed to feeling that **my child was failing to meet my expectations**. As I now look back on it all, I'm happy she didn't meet the expectations I had for her. Finding your passion in life is a great gift. And for her, it would have been good, but she may have missed out on the great.

For those of you who happened to miss my post about my unmet expectations, I'll summarize. Our daughter is a really fast runner, and last spring, she joined a track club and had a lot of success. She won medals at national meets and qualified for the Junior Olympics, then she decided she wasn't going to run during the winter season. I was a little disappointed.

After the disappointment, we wanted to find out what she was passionate about. We discovered it, and now she is thriving. She loves the arts, specifically the performing arts. She's heavily involved with a production company that has put on the same passion play for over 30 years. In addition, she recently signed with a prominent talent agency in our area. I don't see her quitting either anytime soon. Ironically, she's shown interest in both of these areas for years, but we didn't pay too much attention to it. There were more opportunities to play sports and other things, so we went with what was easy. Learn to pay attention and make decisions accordingly.

My experience has taught me the following when it comes to helping my daughter find and thrive in her passions:

1. **Show a lot of interest in their interests.** I don't know much about the arts. You may say I know nothing about the arts. So our conversations about the arts were kind of one-sided. But as I've slowly realized how much she's interested, I've begun to pay attention, and we've been able to have better conversations. Communication is the cornerstone of every relationship, and these conversations enhance the communication between us.
2. **Appreciate the fact that they have something they are passionate about.** There are many kids today who have little to no passion about doing anything. When your kids show an interest in something positive, get behind it 100%. Developing those passions and learning the lessons from those experiences are invaluable. The Search Institute did research that shows kids who thrive have adults who know their passion and support their development.
3. **Enjoy the new experiences with them.** I'm excited about seeing her photos after a photoshoot and taking her to practice to watch her behind-the-scenes as she rehearses for her part. It's one more memorable experience with my daughter during this "short" season of her growing up in our house.

Watching your kids do something they love is one of the best experiences you can have. And, as you can see, there are also lessons involved.

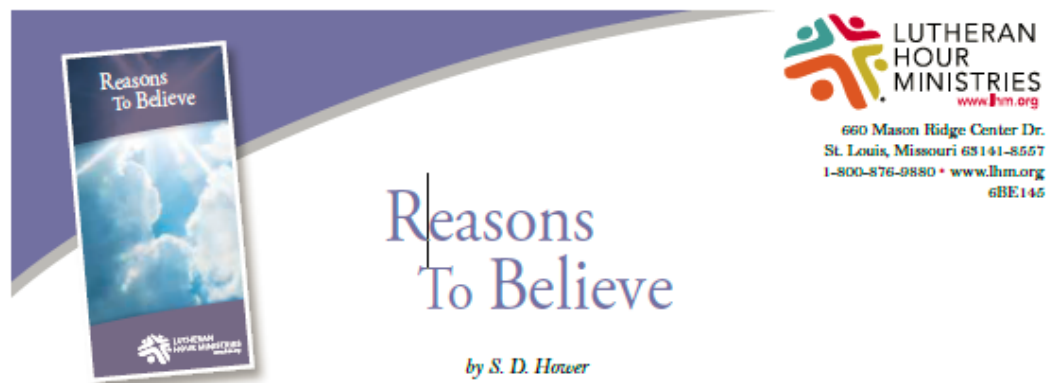
[Return to menu](#)

ANSWERS to BIBLICAL ARGUMENTS from ATHEISTS:

PROJECT CONNECT BOOKLET:

Reasons to Believe

<http://www.lhm.org/projectconnect/downloadfile.asp?ID=3845>



Truth or Fiction?

Their young son had spent the morning in Sunday school and was being debriefed by his parents over lunch. The boy's parents hung on his every word.

"You would not believe the story we heard today. It was about an Israeli general named Moses who led some Israeli POWs out of prison in Egypt," the boy began.

"That sounds really interesting," replied his father, curious to hear how his son would remember the story. "So what happened?"

"This guy named Moses tricked the president of Egypt to release the prisoners by threatening to blow up his family. So the president had no choice but to agree. But as soon as the president's family was safe, he sent troops to capture Moses and the POWs, before they could get out of Egypt. And his army might have succeeded, but Moses was pretty smart. He set the Egyptian oil wells on fire to slow down the army, until he could get the prisoners to safety. It took a long time for the army to get through the smoke and fire, and by then it was too late.

"Moses led the POWs across a pontoon bridge the Israelis built to cross the Red Sea. They no more got to the other side, when the Egyptians showed up and began crossing right behind them. It looked real bad. The Egyptians had tanks and rocket launchers and lots and lots of weapons. The POWs didn't have any weapons and were running for their lives. Moses radioed ahead and some fighter jets came swooping in to the rescue. They caught the Egyptian army right in the middle of the bridge and blew them out of the water. Their tanks and all their weapons sunk to the bottom of the sea, and the army drowned. It was really cool!"

The boy's father, who had more knowledge of the Bible than his son suspected, listened politely until his boy finished the story. "Son, I'm glad you enjoyed your class, but I don't think that's exactly how your teacher told the story, now is it?"

His son replied, "No. But if I told you the whopper he laid on us, you'd never believe it!"

The boy's observation hits the nail on the head. "If I told you the whoppers Christians tell non-Christians, you'd never believe it." Believers and nonbelievers are not connecting, and it's confusing to them both. What seems perfectly logical to Christians, by all objective standards, seems ridiculous to nonbelievers. Christians are frustrated by their inability to convince their friends of the Bible's veracity, and non-Christians can't fathom how otherwise intelligent, reasonable people could be sucked in by such unrealistic notions of God, good, evil and a faith which Christians believe "... is the beginning of wisdom." (See Proverbs 9:10.)

Must We Choose between Faith and Facts?

Is faith make-believe? Must those who accept Christianity and its claims check their brain at the door? Is it possible to be an educated, scientifically minded and historically well-educated Christian? Or is faith and fact by definition mutually exclusive?

I propose it is not only possible to be all those things and still be a Christian, it is to the benefit of a Christian's faith and their credibility to be well-informed in the facts and the evidence for faith. Christians who sheepishly default to the weak response, "I know it doesn't make a lot of sense, but it's what I believe" are shortchanging themselves as well as those with serious questions who deserve serious answers—answers that can and should be provided.

I'm not suggesting Christians can "argue" anyone into accepting the Christian faith or should attempt to do so. In fact, the Bible warns Christians *not to be argumentative*. (See 2 Timothy 2:14, 14-27; Titus 3:10-11.) But at the same time the Bible also urges Christians to, "... Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15b).

The creation of faith is the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, who alone can overcome skeptical human nature that causes intelligent people to question the existence of God. (See 1 Corinthians 12:3; 1 Corinthians 2:4-5; Romans 10:16-17.) Even so, there are OBJECTIVE REASONS and HISTORIC EVIDENCE that can be examined to verify the beliefs of Christians. This booklet will examine seven reasons why it is logical to believe the claims Christians make about the Bible, about Jesus, and the truth that Christians base their lives upon.

Reason 1: Christianity is a faith based in history. If the history of the Bible can be trusted, the message it contains is likewise worthy of consideration.

Unlike most religions, Christianity is an historic faith and not merely a collection of wise sayings and philosophical axioms designed to make people morally better. It has been said there are really only two distinctive spiritual beliefs in the world. There are those religions that tell you *what you must do to please god*, and the Christian faith, which describes what God has done throughout history to *make you pleasing*.

The events of Christianity took place in a context that can be examined by investigating the events described in the accepted histories of other people.

Ancient written histories are rare in any form, yet there are monuments and pictographs that record the historic triumphs of ancient peoples; some of these verify the existence of Israel in the historical record of other nations. New Testament evidence is more readily available by virtue of cultural advancements, a greater number of surviving written documents, and the Roman Empire's dominance. But even before the advent of widespread written languages, evidence has been recovered that substantiates ancient biblical history.

The Rosetta Stone, discovered in 1799 in Egypt, was written in three languages: Egyptian hieroglyphics, Demotic and Greek. It unlocked the mystery of the hieroglyphics, which has helped confirm the authenticity of the Bible.

The Merneptah Stele, or the so-called Israel Stele, was discovered at Thebes in northern Egypt in 1896. It contains a song marking a military victory of Merneptah, a son of Ramses II. The text includes the phrase, "Israel is devastated, having no seed." It is dated to about 1224 B.C. and is the earliest reference to "Israel" outside the Bible.

The Mesha Stele, also called the Moabite Stone, was discovered in 1868 in Jordan; it confirmed Moabite attacks on Israel as recorded in 2 Kings, chapters 1 and 3.

The Lachish Letters, discovered in 1935, 24 miles north of Beersheba, described the attack of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar on Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

The Cyrus Cylinder, discovered in Babylon in 1879, records the Persian King Cyrus' overthrow of Babylon and his subsequent deliverance of the Jewish captives.

An archaeological team working in northern Israel in 1993 discovered a piece of basalt at Tel Dan with 13 lines of Aramaic text. It included a mention of "Bet David," referencing the "House of David."

Other historic references verifying the events of the New Testament are numerous enough to fill a sizeable book. The writings of Josephus, a non-Christian, Jewish captive charged with recording Israel's history for Rome are especially important. His mention of Jesus is particularly significant in his work, *Antiquities of the Jews*:

"Now, there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day."

The existence of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor who sentenced Jesus to death, had long been questioned, until an excavation in 1961 of the Roman amphitheatre at Caesarea Maritima on the Mediterranean coast uncovered a dedicatory stone erected by "Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea" to honor Tiberius Caesar. And so it goes

Reason 2: Archaeological discoveries corroborate the people, places and stories of the Bible.

The archaeological evidence far surpasses the historic mention of biblical events in ancient histories. Many cities, rivers and landmarks mentioned in the Bible have been discovered in connection with physical locations where the Bible places them. The wars and destruction of various cities is also demonstrable.

Another noteworthy example is the city of Jericho and the discovery its walls had been destroyed as the Bible describes in the miraculous account of Joshua. Excavations have shown the bricks from its collapsed walls fell outward in such a way as to form a ramp against the retaining wall. The Israelites could merely climb up the pile of rubble and enter the city.

A German excavation near modern Baghdad in 1899 unearthed evidence of King Nebuchadnezzar, including a notation of a food allotment he made for the king of Judah. This discovery corroborated the biblical account of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., according to 2 Kings 24.

Other archaeological discoveries have corroborated (among other things):

- the enslavement of Semitic people in Egypt during the age of the Pharaohs;
- the existence of the Hebrew people in Mesopotamia before Abraham's sojourn to Palestine;
- the existence of the Hittites, during the time of Abraham, a now extinct civilization;
- the existence of the name "Abraham" as common among people during the patriarchal period;
- the seal of Baruch, a scribe of Jeremiah;
- the census of Rome at the time of Jesus' birth;
- evidence that Quirinius was governor of Syria around 7 B.C.;
- several cities of the New Testament, including those visited during Paul's missionary journeys;
- the judgment court of Pontius Pilate;
- the pool of Bethesda where Jesus healed the paralytic man;
- and that crucifixion was a means of execution by Roman forces during the time of Christ.

Reason 3: The existence of complex prophecies made centuries before their fulfillment helps guard against fraudulent claims of charlatans, who otherwise could make claims no one could test.

Joshua prophesied that Jericho would be rebuilt by one man. He also said that man's eldest son would die when the reconstruction began and that his youngest son would die when the work reached completion (see Joshua 6:26). About five centuries later this prophecy found its fulfillment in the life and family of a man named Hiel. (See 1 Kings 16:33-34.)

Jahaziel prophesied that King Jehoshaphat and a tiny band of men would defeat an enormous, well-equipped, well-trained army, without even having to fight. Just as predicted, the king and his troops stood looking on as their foes were supernaturally destroyed to the last man. (See 2 Chronicles 20.)

One unnamed prophet of God (perhaps Shemiah) said that a future king of Judah, named Josiah, would take the bones of all the false priests of Israel's King Jeroboam and burn them on Jeroboam's altar (see 1 Kings 13:2 and 2 Kings 23:15-18). This event occurred approximately 300 years after it was foretold.

More than 150 years before it occurred, Isaiah foretold the captivity of Israel by the nation of Babylon. Isaiah also predicted *by name*, that King Cyrus of Persia would conquer Babylon and grant Israel permission to return and rebuild their beloved Jerusalem. Critics called the prophecy bogus, claiming it was written after the facts, but the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed the historic reliability of Isaiah and other ancient texts.

Jeremiah, who predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of her people, would later write Lamentations, in which he described how his heartbreaking predictions come to pass. Before his words were proven true, Jeremiah suffered for his honesty and was abused by those who didn't like the predictions he made. But God allowed Jeremiah to also foretell the rescue He planned for His people. In chapters 25 and 29 of the book bearing his name, Jeremiah foretold Israel's rescue after 70 years of enslavement. Seventy proved accurate. Seventy was the number of years Israel endured the Babylonian captivity.

Reason 4: Specific prophecies concerning Jesus validate His role as the Lord's Messiah.

Prophecies surrounding the birth, life and death of Jesus are even more amazing than the historic prophecies over other biblical predictions. Predictions surrounding the facts of His birth are so complex they appear almost contradictory. It was predicted by Isaiah the Messiah would be born of a virgin, from the region of northern Israel, but Micah foretold His birth would take place in the City of David (Bethlehem), while Hosea said, "... out of Egypt I have called My son" (Hosea 11:1b). How could all of those predictions come true? But now we know they did—every one of them. Jesus' parents came out of Nazareth, a city in northern Israel, to fulfill the requirements of a Roman census. He was born in Bethlehem. And to protect their newborn Son, Jesus' parents fled to Egypt until the death of Herod, when they returned to their hometown of Nazareth.

Anyone who reads the prophetic words of David in Psalm 22 or Isaiah's description of Jesus' suffering and death in Isaiah 53 stands amazed at the accuracy. They are vivid and specific descriptions of Jesus' death centuries before execution by crucifixion was known to the Jewish people, or to anyone in the world.

In the fifth century B.C. a prophet named Zechariah declared the Messiah would be betrayed for the price of a slave—30 pieces of silver, according to Jewish law, and also that this money would be used to buy a burial ground for Jerusalem's poor foreigners. (See Zechariah 11:12-13.)

Prophecies are God's ways of protecting His Word against false claims made by pretenders to the truth. Skeptics and uninformed believers need to reexamine claims that there is no solid evidence to justify the faith Christians put in the Word of God.

Reason 5: Consider the miraculous nature of God's creation.

I stand amazed that any educated person would believe the complexities of our universe are the result of mere chance.

The Earth is positioned perfectly for life to exist. The size of the Earth is perfect. The Earth's size and corresponding gravity hold a thin layer of mostly nitrogen and oxygen gases, extending about 50 miles above the Earth's surface. If the Earth were smaller, an atmosphere would be impossible, like the planet Mercury. The Earth is the only known planet equipped with an atmosphere of the right mixture of gases to sustain plant, animal and human life.

The Earth is located the exact right distance from the Sun. Consider the temperature swings we encounter, from roughly 30 degrees below zero to more than 120 degrees. If the Earth were any farther from the Sun, we would all freeze—any closer and we would burn up. Even a fractional variance in the Earth's position to the Sun would make life on Earth impossible. The Earth remains this perfect distance from the Sun while it rotates around the sun at a speed of nearly 67,000 miles per hour. It's also rotating on its axis, allowing the entire surface of the Earth to be properly warmed and cooled every day.

And our Moon is the perfect size and distance from the Earth for its gravitational pull. The Moon creates important ocean tides and movement, so ocean waters do not stagnate, and yet our massive oceans are restrained from spilling over across the continents. (See *The Wonders of God's Creation*, Moody Institute of Science, Chicago, Illinois, 2004.)

The Bible says, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Hebrews 11:3). To believe otherwise is to accept as truth something that has never happened. With all man's technological advancements, computer-assisted analysis, and advanced scientific processes, no one has ever combined inorganic materials in such a way to create organic matter. In other words, no one has ever created life from anything that is not living. Yet evolutionists expect educated people to accept this unproven, unscientific explanation for the origins of life on Earth. It absolutely begs the question, "Who has greater faith in the impossible—Christians or nonbelievers?"

It stands to reason (since we are discussing the reasonable nature of life), those who accept the evolutionary model must accept the fact that "something" can miraculously self-create out of "nothing," which, by the way, sounds a lot like creation. Even if you believe inert gases combined in such a way to create life, it is reasonable to ask for an explanation for the origin of inert gases.

There is also a surprising absence in our world of any evidence of morphing life forms. The evolutionary theory requires educated, scientifically minded people to believe in a process that does not exist today and cannot be examined, which by definition is unscientific. If one accepts evolutionary speculation as fact, biological transitions from one species to another not only occurred in the historic record, they were common and occurred repeatedly. Evolutionary theory suggests the simplest amebic life forms transitioned from species to species multitudinous times until the process "miraculously" and suddenly stopped, never to occur again. If evolutionary theory is the way life began, and it occurred repeatedly to create the most complex life forms, we must believe it no longer works. There simply is no evidence of transitional life forms found anywhere on Earth today. It is reasonable to assume such examples would be commonplace, but alas they are not. Even in the fictional movie series, *Planet of the Apes*, there were lower and more advanced examples of primates from the most rudimentary to the most advanced. Their speculation was logical and a scientifically minded expression of the evolutionary concept.

At least Christians are honest in their acceptance of miracles. Christians accept God's explanation on the basis of faith.

"By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of His mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; He puts the deep into storehouses. Let all the Earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere Him. For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm" (Psalm 33:6-9).

Reason 6: What about the universal belief in right and wrong?

No nation or her people are amoral. Every human instinctively knows it is wrong to steal, to lie, or hurt an innocent person. Every human being has an internal moral compass “hard-wired” into their social conscience. There are exceptions—when due to emotional trauma, early abuse, or psychological dysfunction a person becomes a sociopath—but, thankfully, they are few and far between.

That is not to say people always listen to their inner voice. They don’t. God made mankind with freewill, which they can exercise in disobedience to God and their conscience. To have made humans incapable of error would have eliminated the bond of love between each other and between God and His creation. A child who has no option except to please his parents would make his obedience no better than a cyborg imitation of human life, preprogrammed to do its master’s bidding. God, however, prefers a relationship based on love.

Theologians called this internal compass, “the second use of the law.” This purpose of God’s law is to *alert* mankind to their flawed nature and drive them in search of a solution for their sin. Theologians describe that use of the law as a *mirror*. God’s truth reveals the truth of our sinful nature. The apostle Paul said, “... I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet” (Romans 7:7b).

If that is the second use of the law, you might wonder about the first. The first use of the law is described as a moral *curb* established by God to help maintain social order in the world. Because the law of God is indelibly written on each human heart, even those with no formal instruction in the Bible or any other Christian training instinctively know right from wrong. The Bible describes this condition as proof that God exists and cares about all people—those who believe and those who do not yet believe. In the book of Romans Paul describes this quality. “When Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them” (Romans 2:14-15).

The part of God’s Word called the “third use of the law” are the *expectations* of God, which reveal His preferences in life’s decisions. Such guidance is sought out by believers who, in gratitude for the love and grace of God as shown in the life, death and resurrection of their Savior Jesus, desire to live a life that pleases their Creator. To discover those behaviors that please God, believers consult His Word and, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, offer their lives as a witness to others and as a living expression of gratitude to God their Redeemer. They soon discover that not only does their obedience please God the Creator, it is also the path to a life of satisfaction and meaning. In other words, God is not selfishly motivated to be honored in a way that demands Christians “walk the line” to avoid being whacked, as if God behaved like a misguided school teacher. No, the obedience that brings God joy also serves as a blessing to those who obey. The forgiveness provided by grace through faith in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is all the acceptance needed for believers to find favor with God. He has done it all. Obedience is a Christian’s response to God’s love, not an attempt to earn it.

The Bible describes it this way. “I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:1-2). By this God makes Himself known to those outside the Christian faith in order to bring them back into a saving relationship with Himself, as existed before sin came into the world. The Bible describes this

behavior of obedience by believers as a “light” to those who sit in darkness, or as “salt” to those who need to be preserved from decay (see Matthew 5:13-14).

Reason 7: Note the willingness of Jesus’ disciples to endure torture and martyrdom rather than deny the Christian faith.

There is only one logical reason that explains how ordinary men from nondescript towns and villages were willing to suffer extreme torture and even death rather than deny their faith in Jesus and live. They believed the benefit was worth the sacrifice. One expressed it in his own words when he wrote, “I’m convinced that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

The disciples were fishermen, farmers and shepherds. They were not hardened military types filled with pride and hatred towards their enemies, willing to die as an ultimate expression of ego. They were given the opportunity to desert the faith and live; yet they refused. They accepted the calling of Jesus who said, “Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?” (Matthew 16:24-26).

After Jesus’ crucifixion His followers fled the scene. They, like everyone else, were confused by the turn of events. No one attacked the soldiers on the day of His crucifixion, willing to die in defense of their Master. As they watched Jesus die, they heard (and perhaps agreed with) the voices in the crowd that shouted, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save Yourself!” In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked Him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but He can’t save Himself! Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe” (Mark 15:30-32).

So what changed?

After Jesus’ death, His closest followers went into hiding, plotting exit strategies behind closed doors. Then came Jesus’ resurrection on Easter Sunday. Easter changed everything. Jesus spoke to their confusion:

“This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in His Name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:44-48).

Jesus connected the dots for them. He helped His disciples understand that His death was not a tragic and unexpected turn of events. His death was the culmination of His Father’s ultimate plan of restoration. “Just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).

The disciples believed and went to their death rather than deny what they knew to be true. No one would die for a lie, but for the truth these previously timid men found extreme courage. They suffered the cruelest deaths a person could inflict upon another. Their deaths prove the certainty of their faith.

Summation: There are sound reasons to believe what many find untenable.

The Christian faith at first glance appears foolish. Who ever witnessed a virgin birth or a dead man rise from the grave? It is not within our human experience. If we are to accept any religious tenets, those that teach a philosophical approach to life would seem more reasonable than a faith requiring acceptance of events that defy human experience. But as we have seen, faith in God—and in the miracles of God—is not without sound reason.

If the history, the archaeology, the prophecies, and the claims of Scripture prove true, perhaps the message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus should also be considered valid.

Christian belief will always be a matter of faith, but it is a faith based on evidence that is trustworthy. The stakes are high. As the prophet said,

“This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him. ...” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20a).

Paul said it best when, in a moment of absolute candor, he described the difference between the Christian faith and all other belief systems:

“We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength” (1 Corinthians 1:23-25).

[Return to menu](#)