

Simplify Your Life!

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Contributors: David Antion, Creation Ministries International, Ray Daly, Institute for Creation Research, Laura Lee, Sunil Poonen, Zac Poonen, John W. Ritenbaugh, Richard T. Ritenbaugh, David Rives, James Steinle

Websites:

<https://darwin-laura.com/>

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Articles

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Isaiah 57:15 proclaims:

For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

This verse—grand, mysterious, and full of import—exceeds our comprehension because it is something beyond human

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experience. What does it mean to inhabit eternity? No human can adequately explain it, and verses like this humble us when we realize how insignificant we are beside the awesome grandeur of our God.

We can say that eternity sums up all of time—past, present, and future. It stretches endlessly in each direction from when we find ourselves living. But God *inhabits*, lives in, all of time! In contrast, we are aware of only a tiny fraction of the past and virtually ignorant of the future.

God knows the beginning *and* end. In fact, since He knows "the end from the beginning" (Isaiah 46:10), He is in control of the entire timeline; otherwise, He could not know how things will end. In comparison, we know by experience that we control so little. Events frequently do not work out as we hoped. What a difference there is between God and us!

Eternity, according to *Webster's Dictionary*, means "time or existence without beginning or end." We have applied this term to endless time so we can "measure" and grasp it to a limited extent. We do this because time, to almost everyone, is vital. To God's elect, of all people, time should be extremely important. We need not be frantic about it, but we should be concerned about its proper use. Why? Because *how we use it* will determine whether we will join God in His eternal Kingdom.

Mastering Time

Because God is Creator, time belongs to Him. As it relates to man, time began with the creation of the heavenly bodies, for we measure it by their movements. God has given each of us a slice of time to use as we choose. In this regard, time is life, and if we master the use of time, we are well along the road toward mastering life.

There are many clichés, aphorisms, and idioms relating to time: "Time marches on." "Time waits for no man." "Time is what we save so we might waste it." We have "time on our hands" and "time to kill." Others try to "make time." All of us try to "find time." The young wish time would go faster, while the old wish to slow it down. Some try to turn back time and others seem suspended in it.

Reminders of the passage of time are everywhere: clocks, watches, and calendars; the movements of the sun, moon, and stars; the passing of seasons and life cycles. We are constantly aware that time moves inexorably forward, and we cannot stop it.

We see wrinkled skin, balding heads, and gray hairs. Aching muscles that used to meet vigorous demands with ease now complain upon even slight exertions. Our eyesight dims and blurs, and our ears no longer hear as sharply. We witness the birth of children and grandchildren and the deaths of friends and relatives. Even seeing a young person after several years and noting how much he has grown can be a shocking experience.

Inevitably, we wonder when our time will end. Time is absolutely irreversible and irreplaceable. All of us are running out of it, and God says to redeem it (Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5).

To accomplish our goals, it is vital to get control of time. But life is full of time robbers, scheduling conflicts, and unexpected events that demand the use of our time. Frequently—in fact, every day—demands on our time force us to make choices among them. When this happens, we wish that we had more time, that things would be scheduled with more consideration, or that we were more efficient and effective in using it. We regret having procrastinated.

Extra time is something God can give. In the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12), He promises, paraphrasing, "Honor your parents, and I will lengthen your life." Extended life equals more time! But if we make the right choices, He will smooth our paths so that we make the most efficient use of the time we now have.

How Much Time Do We Have?

How much time do we have before we flee or Christ returns? One, five, ten, twenty, fifty years? No one knows. At least one well-known church of God evangelist claims we have 500 years left, something I do not believe for a moment.

People who accuse and scoff at us for saying the return of Christ is near are guilty of the very accusation they are making. They, too, are speculating about how much time is left before Christ returns! They have compounded their fault by "[putting] far off the day of doom" (Amos 6:3), diminishing the sense of urgency God intends by keeping His Son's return

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always seeming to be imminent.

In Psalm 90:1-4, Moses compares the timelessness of God with the brief mortality of man:

LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. You turn man to destruction, and say, "Return, O children of men." For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.

Perhaps only Isaiah 40 can compare with this psalm in presenting God's grandeur and eternity in contrast to our frailty and mortality. Moses' point, however, is that *God's eternity is the answer to our problem with time.*

One might think that we hardly need to be reminded of this. But when the misconception that we are already immortal ("You shall not surely die"; Genesis 3:4) is combined with our innate and powerful proclivity toward abusing time, it is urgent that God emphasize this on occasion.

God often underscores the brevity of our lives. Job laments: "Now my days are swifter than a runner; they flee away, they see no good. They pass by like swift ships, like an eagle swooping on its prey" (Job 9:25-26). In Psalm 39:4-5, David prays:

LORD, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am. Indeed, you have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is as nothing before You; certainly every man at his best state is but vapor. Selah.

And Asaph writes, "For He remembered that they were but flesh, a breath that passes away and does not come again" (Psalm 78:39).

The rapid passage of time is something we need to be serious about. We cannot live as though there is no day of reckoning because judgment is now upon the household of God (I Peter 4:17).

Learning to "Number Our Days"

In Psalm 90:12, Moses asks God, "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." The phrase "number our days" expresses the thought of putting in order, arranging the use of, or prioritizing time because the end of one's life is fast approaching. Moses wanted us to remember that our remaining number of days grows smaller daily.

He reminds us of this because we rarely see a conscious link between sin and our mortality. We are so busy living for the moment that we fail to see a connection between our conduct and our finite lifespan. Moses appeals for help so that we might be wise and live by faith. Proverbs 4:5-6 urges us, "Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you." Because it bears so profoundly on our accountability to God, using time properly may be the greatest of wisdom.

Romans 13:11-12 carries this thought down to our day, expressing the urgency of our situation:

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

Priorities, Priorities

An impressive illustration about life and time depicts a person's life as an hourglass, but not an ordinary one. In this hourglass, one can see the bottom half into which the sand falls, but the top half is opaque, obscuring how much sand remains. Finally, each person's hourglass holds a different amount of sand.

How much sand remains in our hourglass? Nobody knows—that is the issue! We must make the best use of an amount that is a mystery to us. How can we do this? The first step is also the most obvious: Set your priorities right.

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What was the first of Herbert Armstrong's *Seven Laws of Success*? Set the right goal! Jesus clearly established the highest-priority goal for His disciples in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." He did this because He knows that the main goal, our highest priority, determines the preparations, efforts, and zeal for reaching it.

Suppose someone offered us a tremendous sum of money, perhaps billions of dollars, but the exact amount would be determined by how well we could learn to speak German in two months. We would embark on the most intense crash-course learning program in our life! We would study from morning to night, burn the midnight oil, listen to language tapes, carry flashcards wherever we went, and seek out fluent German speakers to practice with them.

During those two months, no one could drag us near a time-wasting television program. We would probably allow nothing to interfere other than necessary physical activities to sustain life itself. All for money!

Notice what Jesus says earlier in Matthew 6:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (verses 19-21)

Consider these scriptures in the context of what Jesus says in verse 33. Our hearts are in the things to which we devote ourselves, the things we spend our time pursuing. He is helping us prioritize by stating and illustrating principles to help us make the right choices in managing time.

Every day another 24 hours or 1,440 minutes or 86,400 seconds is credited to our account, and we have to spend them. Whether we are a billionaire or a dirt farmer, except for those who die that day, we all have the same amount of time. Jesus says how we spend it shows where our heart is.

Wasted Time

Unfortunately, Satan has devised a world in which, if we are not careful, we can become so engrossed with inconsequential matters that we have no time for matters of true importance. Time oozes away. Some things, such as eating, sleeping, working, rest, and recreation, are necessary and time well spent. Wasted time is another matter altogether!

One of the greatest time wasters is sickness. Most people in our culture seem to believe that sickness "just happens." As if nothing can be done to avoid it, we think we are hapless and helpless victims of invisible "bugs." If we "catch" one, we just go to the doctor, who takes care of it.

While some are undoubtedly afflicted with genetic defects that predispose them to certain illnesses, for most of us, sickness results when we do not diligently follow the laws of health. When we are sick, time that can never be replaced is slipping away. Though it takes time to study the laws of health to understand their right applications, it is spent productively. In the long term, it can extend our lifetime, and in the short term, as our health improves, we make more efficient and effective use of what we already have.

Of course, Bible study and prayer are high-priority activities. But Satan also knows this! He also knows it would be very difficult to change our minds regarding their value if he confronted us directly. So, he uses subtle, indirect approaches, and all too often he succeeds in diverting our attention from these high-priority concerns.

Jesus addresses this within the parable of the Sower and the Seed:

And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. . . . Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. (Matthew 13:7, 22)

He is not saying that the cares of this life and riches are intrinsically evil; they are neutral. However, involvement in or pursuit of them may be easily overdone and cause great spiritual loss. Jesus is giving a warning to people with too many

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interests. The most important interests, the spiritual ones, almost invariably get crowded out.

Even a person heavily involved in charitable works may be misusing time (Luke 10:40-42). Another may be so intent on his business that he is too tired to study or pray effectively, or for that matter, to think of anything else. Such a person—one who should heed Jesus' warning—has allowed other things to control his life.

In many cases, our worst enemies are not the obviously bad things, but the necessary and even the good things that we allow to be overdone. In athletics, is not the second-best athlete always the strongest enemy of the first? So, it is in prioritizing. Much of the time, our chief problem is a lack of commitment to the highest priority; we allow the secondary priorities to steal time from the primary one.

Consider the man in the parable of Luke 12:20-21:

But God said to him, "You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.

He was a fool because he did not have enough understanding and character to know when enough is enough. In his lust for more, he burned up his time on lower-priority concerns and neglected building character.

Focusing Our Attention

When Herbert W. Armstrong told us we needed to simplify our lives, he did not mean we should be any less busy. He meant that we should be busy doing fewer, higher-priority things.

Again, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says:

The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:22-24)

Jesus urges SINGLE-MINDEDNESS! The teaching here involves *simplicity of intention in living one's life*. In light of verse 33, verse 24 shows we must focus our attention on our highest priority. When we do that, it indicates devotion to purpose and undivided loyalty to the object of that purpose.

In geometry, it is impossible to draw more than one straight line between two points. Though other lines may start at the same point, only one will reach the second point. All others end up somewhere else. Likewise, a person who tries to focus on several goals at once has no clear orientation, and he will wind up elsewhere.

Some commentaries note that the ancients believed that light entered a person through the eyes, the "windows" of the body. If the eyes were in good condition, the whole body benefited from the unimpeded light. If the eye were not sound or "single," the whole body's effectiveness was diminished. Thus, a single-minded person who pursues God's Kingdom and His righteousness will have moral healthiness and simple, unaffected goodness.

What Are Your Dreams?

Ecclesiastes 5:1-3 adds interesting instruction regarding the use of time:

Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. Do not be rash with your mouth and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes through much activity, and a fool's voice is known by his many words.

At first glance, verse 3 appears to say that dreams echo our daytime activities, that anxious days cause troubled sleep. While that is certainly true, the verse appears in the context of how to worship God. Thus, Solomon's advice can be summarized as, "Prioritize and keep your life simple!"

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"Walk prudently" means "watch your moral conduct." Frequently, "hear" is used synonymously with "obey," and the "sacrifice of fools" is allowing fellowship to degenerate into mere socializing without serious regard toward walking prudently and hearing God.

Hastiness in prayer is speaking ill-considered words before God. Though we pour out a prayer to Him in anguish, we may not think about the possible effects of our words. We can also do this by praying carelessly, ignorant of the seriousness of our communication with God.

What causes hastiness in prayer? A multitude of business. The busy fool pours out a flood of useless words because his mind is crammed with all the details of his business. This evil excess misuses important time with God and obscures the effectiveness of simple, heartfelt, and thoughtful prayer. When our minds are so full of our own activities rather than the purposes of God, we often pray to Him like fools who talk incessantly about things of no consequence, or we endlessly repeat ourselves.

"Redeeming the Time"

Paul writes of "redeeming the time" in Ephesians 5:16. *Redeem* means "to buy back for oneself" or "buy up an opportunity." When connected to "time," it means "to buy or take advantage of an opportunity." Since we are dealing with time, and it inexorably passes on, we must make the most of each opportunity. If an opportunity is missed, it cannot be recalled.

Paul might as well be saying, "God's way is not just for a few hours on a Sabbath, but the will of the Lord applies in every situation in life." He is urging us to take advantage of every situation to imitate God. Every second of our lives is precious in the building of godly character.

This redeeming of time has nothing to do with literally gaining time. It may be illustrated, though, with the example of the savvy merchant who takes advantage of every opportunity to make a profit. Businessmen often say, "Strike while the iron is hot." Or, in our consumer culture, we watch advertisements to take advantage of a sale.

How can we determine how to take advantage of time? In much the same way we take advantage of a sale. We decide what we want and then we watch carefully. If we want to buy a product, we will generally survey the market and then decide which particular brand and model we want to buy. Then we keep a careful watch until the sale of our choice occurs.

Likewise, we must survey what is controlling our time and decide what is important to us. Is it our relationship with God, family, job, socializing, recreation, or entertainment? In what order of priority would we put these and other interests? Next, we must survey each major category more specifically and insert particular activities into them—a very important step because the "small" activities drain most of our time away almost unnoticed.

The Bible's View of Time

The ancient Greeks looked upon time differently than we do, thinking of it as being circular, like a wheel revolving with constant and endless repetition. Their idea of immortality was more akin to reincarnation. Life had little or no meaning except for what they could gain from it in the present, so they fashioned their religions with that in mind. There was no way for them to break out of this endless repetition.

Ecclesiastes 1 shows a similar repetition, but the Bible's view of time is more linear. Though the cycles of life continue with each generation, time is moving to a purposeful conclusion: toward the Day of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, the birth of God's children into His Family, and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. Are our lives also moving toward the same purposeful conclusion?

Because of principles like "whatever we sow, we shall also reap," the future is purchased by how we spend time in the present. Time management expert Arnold Bennett writes, "A sense of the value of time, that is, the best way to divide one's time into one's various activities, is an essential preliminary to efficient work. It is the only method of avoiding hurry." Benjamin Franklin aphorizes, "Great haste makes great waste." The object is not merely to work fast but to work effectively.

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We must evaluate how we use our time to determine whether our current practices reflect the Kingdom of God as our highest priority. We must perceive the use of our time from this perspective, or godly things will surely be pushed to the background by other "more pressing and immediate" concerns. The cares of this world will surely dominate our lives.

Merely knowing does not guarantee that the proper use of time will simply fall into place. It will take mental effort to survey honestly what is really important—and a great amount of discipline to carry it out. Do not offer the sacrifice of fools to God.

Remember what the apostle Paul writes in II Corinthians 6:1-2:

We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you."

Always consider this in conjunction with I Peter 4:17, that judgment must begin at the household of God. Our time is now.

We must concentrate our efforts on getting control of our time and life with this thought in the foreground. We need to restrict the activities we intend to focus on to a few and be, with God, the master of our awesome destiny! Never forget that, to a very great extent, eternity is purchased by how we spend our time in the present. Time is priceless—do not waste it!

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The Sound of a Christian Home

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If a “fly on the wall” or a “digital assistant” reported back on conversations in our home, what would the report find? What if a listening device recorded our thoughts and attitudes of our heart, what would it say? Would it be the sound of complaining and grumbling? The sound of arguments and disputes? The sound of gossip? The sound of anger or bitterness? Or perhaps the sound of quiet nothing and just going about the day?

If I am a true disciple of Christ, there is one prescribed sound that the Bible says should be evident in the homes of the righteous. Psalms 118:15 - “The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the homes of the righteous”. It’s abundantly clear that the sound of joy and praise must be in my home at all times and this will result in salvation in every circumstance or trial that comes my way. Psalms 50:23 (KJV) says “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.” The salvation that the Lord has for me today is promised if I offer Him praise and if I “order” or “discipline” my conversation to be one of praise and gratitude. Not just that, this is a word given for my “tents” or my “home” - meaning it is a responsibility for not just ordering my words and the attitudes of my heart but also for those of my family.

The amazing thing about “joy” is that it cannot be achieved by self-determination or by striving or contriving it. Seemingly positive events in my life can bring temporary feelings of happiness that are an emotional response but not a fullness of joy that persists throughout all circumstances. Psalms 16:11- In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever. Joy comes from staying in the presence of the Lord, by denying my own will and disciplining myself to always return to His presence when I am tempted to be distracted by the worries and desires of the world. The best pleasures are indeed promised from His right hand and not from this world. We recently suffered a very lengthy power outage that was quite uncomfortable and disruptive to our daily lives. But during this outage, I was convicted about whether I took a “spiritual outage” or separation from the presence of the Lord as a million times more disruptive and uncomfortable and yearned much more earnestly for “spiritual power” to be restored than I did for electricity. Praise God, that when we are convicted of this, we can repent and run back and surrender ourselves back to Him with no condemnation for past “outages”.

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As I seek to discipline myself and my home to praise God in everything by remaining in His presence at all times, here are four truths from scripture that help me:

1. Praise must not be dependent on the outcome of circumstances or pursuits in my life

The only significant outcome in my life that matters was already decided 2000 years ago on Calvary when Christ died for me so I may no longer live for myself but for Him (2 Cor 5:15), rose again, and then freely sent His Holy Spirit to the humble and needy that cry out for His help and grace. Luke 10:20 says that I must not even rejoice in amazing and supernatural ministries here on earth, but that I rejoice that my name is recorded in heaven.

2. Praise flows when I discipline myself not to yield to feelings or emotions of the moment

Psalms 149:5,6 - Let the godly ones exult in glory; Let them sing for joy on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand. I believe the double-edged sword mentioned here is the living Word of God that Heb 4:12 talks about, that is meant to divide the soulish feelings and emotional responses to circumstances and trials from my spiritual response of praise and joy. Through every event in my life (good or bad), I must be violent with the double-edged sword of the Word of God to cling to God's promises and not let my heart be dictated or distracted by my feelings of happiness or sadness, feelings driven by mood, feelings of laziness, feelings of boredom or complacency, feelings of fear or anxiety, or feelings of craving and desire.

3. Praise flows when I am not a victim of my circumstance

Psalms 63 is an amazing example of this. David was in the wilderness being pursued by Saul and was physically exhausted, hungry, and thirsty. Yet he chose not to yearn and pray for physical needs, but rather yearned for the Lord. Psalms 63:1 - My soul thirsts for you, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Without having his physical need of hunger or thirst met, he goes on to say, “Your lovingkindness is better than life itself; my lips will praise you” (vs 3); “my soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth offers praises with joyful lips” (vs5). What an encouragement to me when I go through much smaller trials to trust the Lord's lovingkindness and choose to praise Him during the trial and not just after the trial.

4. Praise is Strength

I was recently reading in Matthew where Jesus referred to the Old Testament and said, “Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes you have prepared praise for yourself”. So, I looked back to see which verse this referred to. It was Psalms 8:2 - “From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength”. I was amazed to see that Jesus, who knew the scriptures better than anyone, used the word “praise” synonymously with “strength”. It was clear that praising God itself was indeed strength in Jesus' dictionary. It led me to consider changing my prayers from “Lord, give me the strength to endure this” to “Lord, give me the praise in my mouth and heart to endure this”.

Revelation 14 describes the scene in heaven where a new song of praise is sung that cannot be learned once we get to heaven. It's a song of praise that I must learn on earth through the circumstances God allows in my life. Heaven is a place of joy and solely praising God. If I do not get used to praising Him here on earth, I might get to heaven but be surprised to find that it's too late to learn to praise Him. May we seek to return and remain in the presence of the Lord where the sound of our home will be one of continuous joy and praise and one that is truly a glimpse of heaven on earth.

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Proving God's Perfect Will
(Copyright 2022) by Zac Poonen (Bangalore, India)

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

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“Who among you fears the Lord and obeys His servant (the Lord Jesus)? If such men walk in darkness, without one ray of light, let them trust the Lord and let them rely upon their God (Isaiah 50:10 – Living Bible).

“The Lord’s promise is, As you go, step by step, I will open up the way before you.”

Under the old covenant, God often made His will known to His servants by a voice from heaven. But in the new covenant, God seeks to guide us by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit within our hearts. This is the *way of faith* and is superior to the old covenant way of walking by sight.

And so, when seeking to know God's will in a matter, we may at times be perplexed. God permits this in order to strengthen our faith. He wants us to press closer to Him and thus know Him better. Such times of uncertainty are also used by God to sift our motives.

We should not be surprised or discouraged therefore when we encounter perplexity. Even the apostle Paul was often perplexed, but he never despaired or gave up (See *2 Corinthians 4:8*). God may sometimes show us His will only *just* before we have to make a decision – and may keep us waiting a long time prior to that.

In any case, He will show us only the next step at each stage. He leads us *step by step* because He wants us to depend on Him day by day, and to walk by faith and not by sight. When He shows us only one step at a time, we are compelled to lean on Him. To find God's will for our life, therefore, all we need to do at any time is to take the *next step* that God shows us. As we do so, we will find God's plan unfolding gradually.

The Lord's promise is, “*As you go, step by step, I will open up the way before you*” (*Proverbs 4:12 – Paraphrase*).

When unsure about God's will in a matter, it is good for us to ask ourselves **twelve** questions. As we answer these questions honestly, it will become increasingly clear to us what the will of God is.

- Is it contrary to any of the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, or to the spirit of the New Testament, as far as I know?
- Is it something I can do with a clear conscience?
- Is it something I can do for the glory of God?
- Is it something I can do in fellowship with Jesus?
- Can I ask God to bless me as I do it?
- Will my doing it blunt my spiritual edge in any way?
- Will it be spiritually profitable and edifying, to the best of my knowledge?
- Would I be happy if I were found doing it at the moment when Jesus returns to earth?
- What do wiser and more mature brothers think about it?
- Will my doing it bring dishonour to God's Name or ruin my testimony, if others know about it?
- Will my doing it cause others to stumble if they know about it?
- Do I feel free in my spirit to do it?

On many occasions, we will have to take a step forward, even though we are not *perfectly* sure about God's will. This too is a part of the discipline of walking by faith - because *certainty* can sometimes be the equivalent of “*walking by sight*”. God sometimes gives us a clear assurance of His will. But at other times, He expects us to move forward *without* a clear knowledge of His will. Once we have waited on the Lord in prayer and ascertained the mind of the Holy Spirit, to the best of our knowledge, *we should move forward without waiting indefinitely*.

The Bible says, “*We should make plans - counting on God to direct us*” (*Proverbs 16:9 - TLB*). Looking back over such decisions later, we will find that in spite of the dimness of our vision, God did not let us go astray. In other words, although there may have been much uncertainty *in the beginning*, there will be much certainty and rejoicing at the end.

And if, when taking a step *in sincerity, but in uncertainty*, we miss the path of God's perfect will, we can trust God to bring us back to the right path. The promise in *Isaiah 30:21 (Living Bible)* is, “*If you leave God's paths and go astray, you will hear a Voice behind you say, ‘No, this is the way; walk here’*”.

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God will order circumstances to alter our course when we miss His will. But we should not remain in perpetual inaction waiting for spectacular guidance for every move. A ship can be turned around much quicker when moving than when it is stationary. So can we.

In *Acts 16:6-10*, we read that Paul and Silas tried to go into Asia – not as a result of any clear leading from the Lord but yet desiring to do His will. They were hindered – perhaps by God-ordered circumstances. Next, when they attempted to enter Bithynia, their way was blocked once again. But because they were actively seeking God's will, and not passively waiting for guidance, He led them finally to the place of His choice - Macedonia.

In the smaller details of daily life, guidance is not necessarily a question of constant conscious enquiry. It is a matter of walking in the Spirit. *Right relationship with the Lord will lead to right action.* In such small details, the guidance of God is not something that we should be acutely aware of all the time. We may be unconscious of it. It is only our basic relationship with the Lord that is the important factor, *for guidance is a spiritual matter and not a mechanical technique.*

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New Fractures in the ‘Special Relationship’
(Copyright 2021) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (Charlotte, North Carolina)



For many decades, the United States and Britain have enjoyed what has been called the Special Relationship. While the two countries have quarreled in the past, particularly over the matter of independence, they settled into a mostly cordial association, recognizing their shared language, history, and political principles. True, some presidents and prime ministers have felt the brotherly love less than others. Even so, the two English-speaking nations have usually found themselves on the same side of international efforts and disputes.

The church of God has long understood that the Special Relationship goes deeper than mere political agreement or speaking a common tongue. It has taught that America and Britain are the modern descendants of the Israelite tribe of Joseph, which Jacob split by divine inspiration into the half-tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, which became his heirs (Genesis 48:1-22). He prophetically describes Ephraim as “a multitude of nations” and Manasseh as a “great [nation]”

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(Genesis 48:19), which aptly portrays the British Commonwealth, once an empire, and the United States of America, respectively. In this way, their Special Relationship is the modern iteration of a brotherhood that reaches back almost four millennia to Joseph’s rise to power in Egypt.

Modern fractures in the Special Relationship have most often occurred because of divergent political ideologies between the American president and the British prime minister. Conversely, the closest ties have come when the two nations’ leaders have had common political philosophies (for instance, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher). With the election of President Joseph Biden at the head of the most liberal administration in American history, the distinctive bond between the two nations will be tested as he squares off with the Conservative government of Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

The word many journalists use to describe the Biden administration is “woke.” It has pushed a slew of left-wing political and cultural programs, including the teaching of **Critical Race Theory**, increased funding and access to abortion, radical climate change regulations, and over-the-top backing of all things LGBTQ. Conversely, for all of Britain’s recent cultural liberalism, the Johnson government has taken a strong stance against the “woke” agenda, putting the two nations at odds on that front.

This antagonism has leaked into other matters. On June 3, 2021, the Biden administration’s senior diplomat in London, Chargé d’Affaires Yael Lempert, issued a *demarche* (a diplomatic rebuke) to Britain’s government, vehemently disagreeing with London’s stance on and handling of its dispute on the Northern Ireland border. This “crisis” concerns an impending European Union ban on sausages and other chilled meats being exported from the United Kingdom, now a non-EU country after Brexit, to Northern Ireland, which is part of the UK but still under EU rules. The Biden administration argued that the British government’s position jeopardized the ongoing peace process in Northern Ireland, a matter the president, a staunch Irish nationalist with Irish-Catholic roots, takes personally.

Worse, Lempert included a not-so-subtle warning that, if Britain failed to follow the EU’s mandates on agro-food standards, the likelihood of a US/UK free-trade agreement might disappear. The British took it as an arrogant lecture from a self-styled superior—and an anti-British one at that. The president has made no secret that he is an anti-Brexit Euro-federalist who values ties with Brussels, and thus with Berlin and Paris, more than with London, especially after it broke with the EU. Both Northern Ireland and the EU have encouraged Biden to pressure the prime minister on the issue. The *demarche* was his obvious response, occurring just before the G7 Summit in Cornwall.

The official British response to Biden’s finger-wagging has been the typical stiff upper lip most observers expect from the UK government. However, there are signs that it has not been taken well behind the impassive façade. Pundits like Nile Gardiner, writing in *The Telegraph*, are calling the president’s abrasive denunciation “the kind of treatment that is normally dished out to enemies of the United States, such as Russia, and hardly ever issued against a close ally.”

While otherwise playing down the controversy, Prime Minister Johnson took time at the G7 Summit-closing press conference to mention the divisive issue and gently dig in his heels, saying, “[W]e will do whatever it takes to protect the territorial integrity of the UK.” He had earlier threatened to suspend the Northern Ireland agro-food protocol by triggering its Article 16, which can be enacted for reasons of “serious economic, societal or environmental difficulties that are liable to persist, or to diversion of trade.” The British government believes the protocol undermines its national sovereignty, and at present, it seems willing to go to the mat, as it were, on the issue.

Though this “Sausage War” appears to be a minor matter, President Biden’s haughty interference has ratcheted tensions between the two governments higher than it has been for many years. It will probably not cause a substantial break in relations between the brother nations, but it exposes cracks that may need more than just minor plastering to cover over. The left-wing American administration will find it more challenging to persuade the right-wing British government to back its plays on the world stage, just when China, Russia, Iran, and other volatile nations are beginning to test American resolve.

For more than two centuries, Great Britain and the United States have held a firm line against aggressors and tyrants worldwide. They work best in concert, leading the free world toward relative peace and prosperity while enforcing international treaties and laws with sometimes overwhelming military power. A strained Special Relationship, like the one seen at the G7 Summit, may be all it takes to inspire less savory characters to exploit the discord and move the world toward increased conflict.

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Are We Blind to Design

(Copyright 2022) by David Rives (Lewisburg, Tennessee)



When we look into the night sky, we see a vast expanse too large to fathom. Through the use of telescopes and advanced optics, we have discovered magnificent galaxies and nebula, showing that the heavens declare the glory of God.

As we look around on Earth below, we find that it is special, teeming with life in the midst of an inhospitable universe. The plants and animals are diverse and unique, created, in the beginning, as fully functioning creatures.

A glimpse into the microscopic world reveals a system of complex patterns, structure, and design—impossible to recreate using even the most advanced technology.

Are we blind to design?

This world truly is a beautiful place, and we as humans have the ability to comprehend and admire that beauty.

A comprehension that goes beyond evolutionary possibilities, and a hunger for understanding that surpasses mere "survival of the fittest".

Scripture informs us that in the beginning, God saw everything that He had made, and it was very good. It is no wonder that everywhere we look, we see the remarkable power of God's creation.

Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

I'm David Rives...

Truly, The Heavens Declare the Glory of God.

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To learn more, visit: <https://davidrivesministries.org/>

Iron Sharpening Iron

New American Standard Bible (Proverbs 27:17)
As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

In regard to: The Sound of a Christian Home

Article by Sunil Poonen

Comments by Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

This is a great article about a Christian home and how we should praise God even through our worst trials. I only want to comment about the last paragraph of your article.

I am assuming you are referring to Rev. 14:3 which says:

Rev 14:3 And they sang a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one was able to learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth.

If you read the verse carefully you will see these hundred and forty-four thousand are redeemed from the earth and they are singing the song before the throne. In verse 1 it says the following:

Rev 14:1 And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father having been written on their foreheads.

What is happening here is that the first fruits resurrection has already taken place. We believe this first fruits resurrection will take place on Pentecost at the same time the two witnesses are resurrected or shortly thereafter but before the bowls of wrath are poured out on the earth.

This first fruits resurrection is for God's elect, the ones who will rule with Christ in the Kingdom of God on Earth. So, notice again that first they are in heaven singing a new song before the throne, which is more likely they learned once they were in heaven. Notice also that in verse 1 these elect are returning back to earth with Christ and are with Christ on Mount Zion.

I know sometimes the Bible is confusing but there are other scriptures which when put together give a timeline. These two Rev. 14:1 and Rev. 14:3 appear to be backwards to most unless you have knowledge of the rest of the scriptures that go with them.

The timeline here is the resurrection of the first fruits on Pentecost (we don't know what year). The first fruits will go to heaven for the marriage supper of the lamb and to train for their duties in the Kingdom of God on Earth. Then on the Feast of Trumpets that same year, they will return to Earth with Christ to help establish the Kingdom of God on Earth. Between Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets is when the bowls of wrath will be poured out on Earth.

Other Items

Who Started the War in Iraq?

(Copyright 2023) by Ray Daly (Lincoln, North Dakota)
and Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

Ray Daly writes:

I think your "warning" may be accurate. But is your assessment of the US going into Iraq and starting the war?

For if you go back further, before the US entered, the Russians had been at war against the "terrorists" that were forcing the Iraqi's to follow "their religion". The same religion of "Haman the Agagite". (See the book of Esther) Agag having

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been the Amalakite king that Saul was supposed to have put to death and did not.

It was because of the Russian withdrawal that America actually entered into the conflict. People do not realize that Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and three other countries to the NE are directly related to the Israelites. They are the descendants of Abraham, via his having children via his "maids".

As a sidelight. When Abraham is said to have sent his children, through his second wife Keturah (today's Soviet Union nations) "eastward", it was into east central Arabia. But his children of his maids were sent "east/EASTWARD", meaning across the Euphrates. Again, constituting the seven countries of the Persian peoples.

But you have given a genuine "possible" warning. If only it could go out.....?????

Laura Lee writes:

My warning was not meant to go back thousands of years into history, which may or may not even be true. I only referenced the US starting a war in Iraq over "Weapons of Mass Destruction" because there were no weapons to be found and the US Government likes to instigate things among not just the people in this country but also the people in other countries.

From: [Iraq and weapons of mass destruction - Wikipedia](#)

In the early 2000s, U.S. President [George W. Bush](#) and UK Prime Minister [Tony Blair](#) both asserted that Saddam Hussein's weapons programs were still actively building weapons and that large stockpiles of WMDs were hidden in Iraq. Inspections by the UN to resolve the status of unresolved disarmament questions restarted between November 2002 and March 2003,^[3] under [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1441](#), which demanded Hussein give "immediate, unconditional and active cooperation" with UN and [IAEA](#) inspections.^[4] The United States asserted that Hussein's frequent lack of cooperation was a breach of Resolution 1441, but failed to convince the United Nations Security Council to pass a new resolution authorizing the use of force due to lack of evidence.^{[5][6][7]} Despite this, Bush asserted peaceful measures could not disarm Iraq of the weapons that he alleged it possessed and he launched a [second Gulf War](#) instead. A year later, the [United States Senate](#) officially released the [Senate Report of Pre-war Intelligence on Iraq](#) which concluded that many of the Bush Administration's pre-war statements about Iraqi WMD were misleading and not supported by the underlying intelligence. United States–led inspections later found that Iraq had earlier ceased active WMD production and stockpiling; the war was called by many, including 2008 Republican presidential nominee [John McCain](#), a "mistake".^[1] (End Quote)

And the warning was meant to go out to everyone on this newsletter list, and it did do that. The warning that was sent out can be found in this issue #127 under Announcements and it would be both of the June 23, 2023, Announcements by James Steinkle and Laura Lee.

Feast Sites

Feast Site David Antion and Guardian Ministries (June 22, 2023)

Ask anyone who has attended a Guardian Ministries' sponsored Feast of Tabernacles and they will tell you that the services were filled with spiritual worship -- the sermons, the prayers, the music, the love of the Brethren, and the reverence for God the Father and for His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We invite you to join us and see for yourself as we worship and praise God and edify His people with love and fellowship. No place is more beautiful than Lake Tahoe. We will be two miles from the Nevada border where some things are less expensive -- gasoline.

All our services will be held at the Beach Retreat and Lodge. If you would like to room on-site, here is how to make reservations at this hotel:

You are now able to make reservations using our unique code. To do this: Go to the hotel website and click on 'Book Your Stay' and a second window will open up. <https://www.tahoebeachretreat.com/>

Enter your check-in and check-out dates.

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Under ‘Promo Code’ type in the group code ‘FOT23’ then click Check Availability.

A new window will open up with the room options for the check-in and check-out dates selected. Select ‘Book’ next to the preferred room type and continue with making the reservation by entering your information.

Or you can call the front desk: (530) 541-6722. Tell them you are attending the Feast of Tabernacles with Guardian Ministries and you will get our special discount.

Note: Please remember you must book your room before the cutoff date of August 29, 2023.

Of course, there are other places to stay in the area and houses are available for rent, but I prefer to stay where I can simply get up and walk to our meeting hall.

Announcements

Announcement from Creation Ministries International (June 22, 2023) **Survey – We need your help.**

Dear friends,

We are looking for ways to improve [Creation.com](https://www.creation.com), as it is a valuable resource for so many of you—with **over two million unique visitors each year!**

Can you help us?

We would value your opinion on what would make [Creation.com](https://www.creation.com) the best source of creation information—*for you!*

Please share your thoughts in the following short survey (5–15 minutes). Your input will help make the website easier to use, more engaging, and more powerful. At the end of the survey, there’s a place for you to pop any ideas or flashes of inspiration you may have.

TAKE THE SURVEY

We appreciate your time and feedback! Thank you for helping us make [Creation.com](https://www.creation.com) the best it can be! 😊

Announcement from Zac Poonen (June 22, 2023)

Messages

Knowing the Father by Revelation

<https://www.cfcindia.com/sermon/knowing-the-father-by-revelation>

Repentance, Baptism and the Holy Spirit

<https://www.cfcindia.com/sermon/repentance-baptism-and-the-holy-spirit>

CFC Bangalore

<https://cfcindia.com>

Announcement from James Steinle (June 23, 2023)

EMERGENCY UPDATE: DRASTIC ESCALATION IMMINENT?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhjVq0Nipls> 15 min.

This is besides 5-600,000 people coming to the Minneapolis Pride Day tomorrow including Mrs. Biden.

Announcement from Laura Lee (June 23, 2023)

Government as Instigator of disasters

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[FBI make-work entrapment schemes: Creating criminals in order to arrest them \(wnd.com\)](#)

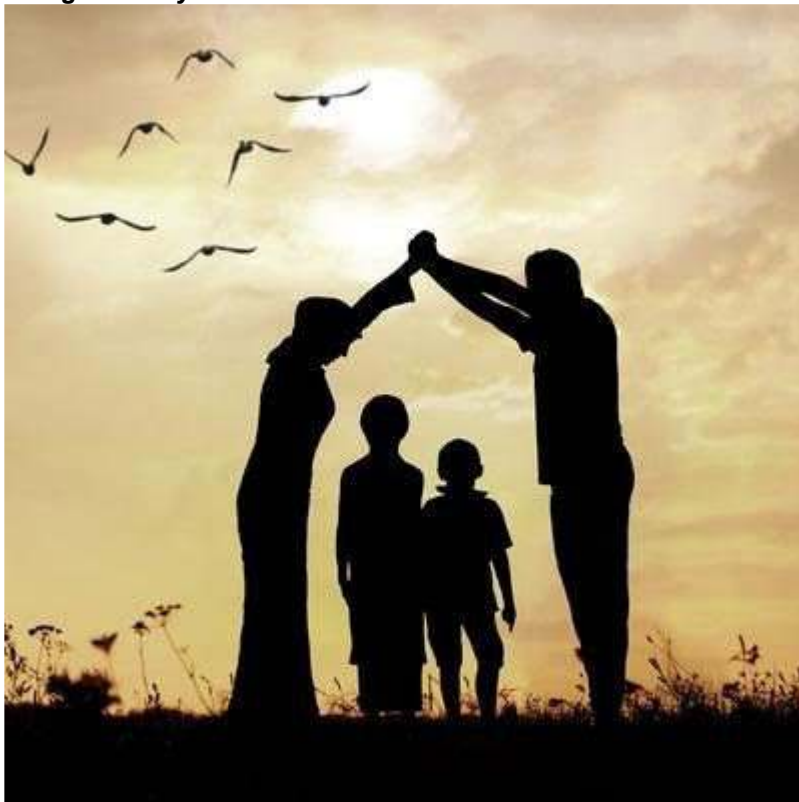
I include the above link to an article I read this morning. Please everyone, be aware that our own government is the instigator of many crimes and wars. Remember there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq yet the US started a war there. The whole January 6 thing was instigated by our government. So be careful if you travel and be careful if you absolutely have to be in a large crowd. Be prepared for anything.

Announcement from Zac Poonen (June 24, 2023)

Dear friends,

We invite you to join us for the RLCF Family Conference 2023 with brother [Zac Poonen](#). This is a free in-person conference intended to exhort and encourage men, women and children to live a life of discipleship that is pleasing to God.

Being a Family that Glorifies Christ



Date: Friday 22nd - Sunday 24th September, 2023

If you are able to join us in person, please register via the link below. This page also includes the detailed schedule and additional details such as area hotel discounts. If you are unable to attend in person, please join us online via the Live Broadcast.

[Conference Schedule, Registration and Q&A Form](#)

[Watch via Live Broadcast](#)

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Christian Fellowship Church
Paradise Enclave, Bellahalli,
Kannur - Kogilu Road (Airport Link),

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Bangalore – 560064, India.
Website: www.cfcindia.com

Announcement from Zac Poonen (June 29, 2023)

MESSAGES

Purifying the Church

<https://cfcindia.com/sermon/purifying-the-church>

Building on an Unshakable Foundation

<https://cfcindia.com/sermon/building-on-an-unshakable-foundation>

God’s Presence Is the Mark of a True Church

<https://cfcindia.com/sermon/god’s-presence-is-the-mark-of-a-true-church>

CFC Bangalore

<https://cfcindia.com>

Ads

Ad from Institute for Creation Research (June 21, 2023)



BOOK: *GOD CREATED BIRDS* | AVAILABLE NOW!

"In the beginning God created..." (Genesis 1:1)

The book of Genesis says that God created birds on Day 5 of the creation week. He made all different kinds of these winged wonders. Some soar over seas, some nest in trees, and some like the penguin are super swimmers. They're all part of God's amazing design for our planet!

In *God Created Birds*, explore the funky feathers, wacky wings, and brilliant beaks of these colorful creatures. What's the world's fastest bird? Can ravens do gymnastics? And are bluebirds actually...blue?

Discover a bird's-eye view of these animals' fascinating features and delightful details that point to the expert handiwork of our Creator and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[PURCHASE NOW](#)

Holy Days 2023

Passover – April 6, 2023 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)
Passover/Unleavened Bread – April 6-12, 2023
Pentecost – May 26, 2023
Trumpets - September 16, 2023
Atonement – September 25, 2023
Tabernacles –September 30, 2023 to October 6, 2023
Last Great Day – October 7, 2023

Notes

Notes