

GOD'S TEACHINGS



ON SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

This booklet is a free educational service, provided by the "Church of the Eternal God" in the United States of America, in collaboration with the "Church of God, a Christian Fellowship" in Canada and the "Global Church of God" in the United Kingdom.

Printed in the USA 2018. This booklet is not to be sold.

Scriptures in the booklet are quoted from the New King James version ((c)1988 Thomas-Nelson, Inc. Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

Authors: Brian Gale and Norbert Link

Editorial Review Team: Norbert Link, Dave Harris, Rene Messier, Brian Gale, Michael Link, Phyllis Bourque, Margaret Adair, Johanna Link and Dawn Thompson.

Graphic Design: Shelly Bruno; Cover image: BigStockPhoto.com

Contents

Introduction	1
Relationship Between God and Man	1
Relationship Between True Christians	2
Relationship Between a Man and His Wife.....	2
Relationship Between Parents and Children	2
Relationship Between Church Members and Those Outside the Church.....	3
Chapter 1 Does God Change With the Times?	5
God Can Change His Mind on Temporary Matters.....	6
God Does Not Change His Eternal Truths Nor His Character.....	8
Chapter 2 Molding God in Our Own Image	9
Only One God	9
Did Man Create God?	9
Chapter 3 The Frog in Boiling Water	13
Homosexuality	13
<i>Changes in Legislation</i>	14
UK Abortion Act of 1967	15
Cohabitation	16
Adultery	16
Approval of War.....	17
Chapter 4 Compulsory Celibacy	19
No Supremacy for Either Celibacy or Marriage	20
The Bible Does Not Teach Coerced Celibacy	21
The Fruits of Celibacy Are Not Good	23
Chapter 5 Married or Single?	25
Marriage Instituted by God	25
Marriage Is Not the Only Acceptable State to God.....	28
Chapter 6 Cohabitation or Common Law Marriage ..	31
Cohabitation	31
State Intervention Not Helpful.....	32
Sexual Immorality.....	33
Common Law Marriage.....	34
Consequences of Sexual Sins.....	34
Chapter 7 Unequally Yoked	37
Dangers of Unbiblical Marriage	39
The Fruits of Being Unequally Yoked.....	40
Paul's Instruction Is Binding Today.....	41
Moses' Cushite Wife	42

Joseph's Egyptian Wife	46
One Final Thought	49
Chapter 8 Marriage	51
God's Instruction From the Beginning	52
Marrying Only When Fully Prepared.....	54
Chapter 9 Interracial Marriage	57
Noah Was Perfect in His Generations	59
The Scattering at the Tower of Babel.....	61
Paul Does Not Justify Interracial Marriages.....	64
Chapter 10 Relationships in the Home	67
The Position and Role of a Husband	68
The Position and Role of a Wife	69
The Position and Role of Parents and Children in the Home	72
Chapter 11 What is a Family?	75
Human Definitions	75
Biblical Definition	76
God Is a Family Now!	77
Chapter 12 Marriage Prohibitions	81
Levitical Prohibitions.....	82
<i>Marriage of Cousins</i>	84
Chapter 13 Adultery	87
Chapter 14 Divorce, Separation and Remarriage	89
True Christians Are Today "Betrothed" to Christ.....	90
Most Marriages Are Not Bound By God.....	91
A Believer Who is Married to an Unbeliever.....	93
Separation of Husband and Wife Who Are Believers ...	94
Chapter 15 Homosexuality	95
Definitions of Homophobe and Homophobia	95
The Bible Must Always Be the Last Word on Doctrinal Matters	96
Sodom and Gomorrah	97
New Testament Condemnation.....	97
Does It Really Matter?.....	99
Did Christ Condemn Homosexual Conduct?	100
Did Jesus Address Homosexuality?	103
Pride in Perverted Use of Sex!	104
Chapter 16 The Transgender Issue	107
God Created Male and Female.....	111
Wrong Practices Highlighted	111
Satan is the Author of Confusion	112
Media Attention Increases	114
Chapter 17 Polygamy	119

Polygamy Was Never Approved of by God	121
Christ Will Only Marry One Wife at His Return	121
Chapter 18 Our Personal Relationship With God...	123
The Most Important Relationship of All	124
<i>Prayer Is Vital</i>	124
<i>Bible Study</i>	125
<i>Meditation</i>	125
<i>Fasting</i>	126
Chapter 19 Endangered Species	129
Conclusion	131
Selling True Christianity Short	132

Introduction

We live in a world of ever-changing relationships, be it among nations, peoples, or individuals, and along with these changes, there is no end to personal opinions as to what constitutes right or wrong actions. Yet out of the abundance of opinions, there is little regard for what God calls sin or what His standards are for happiness and health. Mankind, as a whole, is determined to live in ways that “seem right in his own eyes” (Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25).

Although many are not interested in knowing and understanding the Word of God, you, the reader, do not need to be caught up in the prevailing winds of confusion. You can find the answers for right living straight from the Bible—from God Himself—not from personal opinions of those who do not even acknowledge their Creator. Make no mistake, God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). His answers will give you a clear sense of purpose and direction in your conduct and relationships with others, and your life will be blessed accordingly as you apply His instruction.

Yes, the Bible has much to say about human relationships. It is, after all, God’s instruction book to all of mankind for right living. In fact, some of the most compelling, revealing, enduring and important lessons in the Bible are about relationships—between God and man, between true Christians, between a husband and his wife, between parents and children, and between Church members and those outside the Church. In this booklet we will discuss God’s teachings on a variety of relationship issues, and as we will explain, they all have, to an extent, bearing on sexual conduct and relationships.

Relationship Between God and Man

“I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:18).

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and

he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Revelation 3:20–22).

"And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God" (James 2:23).

Relationship Between True Christians

"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

"... with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2–3).

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another" (John 15:16–17).

Relationship Between a Man and His Wife

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them" (Colossians 3:18–19).

"Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Ephesians 5:22–25).

The sexual relationship between husband and wife will be addressed, in detail, in **Chapter 10** of this booklet.

Relationship Between Parents and Children

"Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing

to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (Colossians 3:20–21).

"My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother; For they will be a graceful ornament on your head, And chains about your neck" (Proverbs 1:8–9).

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth'" (Ephesians 6:1–3).

The role of parents and children in regard to the correct understanding of sexual relationships will be addressed, in detail, in **Chapter 10** of this booklet.

Relationship Between Church Members and Those Outside the Church

"... and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:20–22).

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

"Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (1 Corinthians 10:32–33).

Chapter 1

Does God Change With the Times?

Many use the argument that, as cultures change, God will go along with the flow and bend according to the particular dictates of man at any given time. They do not phrase it that way, of course, but that is how they view it.

In an article in April 2015 in the *New York Times*, a columnist wrote:

“And homosexuality and Christianity don’t have to be in conflict in any church anywhere. That many Christians regard them as incompatible is understandable, an example not so much of hatred’s pull as of tradition’s sway. Beliefs ossified over centuries aren’t easily shaken. But in the end, the continued view of gays, lesbians and bisexuals as sinners is a decision. It’s a choice. It prioritizes scattered passages of ancient texts over all that has been learned since—as if time had stood still, as if the advances of science and knowledge meant nothing. It disregards the degree to which all writings reflect the biases and blind spots of their authors, cultures and eras. It ignores the extent to which interpretation is subjective, debatable.”

Can you see how subtle and deceptive this way of thinking is? The article goes on to show how “advances” in understanding have been made in respect to slavery, contraception, gender roles and same sex marriages. This author and the people he quotes, many of whom share his views, obviously think that they know better than God.

For example, take the issue of homosexuality, one of the areas of their “new understanding.” It is very clear to those who have eyes to see that the Bible, in both the Old and the New Testaments, denounces this abominable practice (compare **Chapters 3 and 15** in this booklet), and yet it is presented as something good and acceptable by so many societies around the world. This is an area where Isaiah 5:20 clearly applies: “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil...”

Romans 1:32 states “...that those who practice such things are

deserving of death, not only do the same but also **approve** of those who practice them." From this Scripture, we see that even approving of such behavior is also condemned! So often, the law of man, with regard to homosexuality, takes precedence over the Word of God, but God does not change when it comes to such matters! God has not changed His instruction on this subject just because there are those who come up with arguments to prove that "we have to change with the times."

Nearly 2,000 years ago, there were, no doubt, society's "modernists" who might have felt that the condemnation of this practice in the Old Testament ought to be brought up to date in order to suit their wrong understanding of morality as laid out by the God who created us all. There were the "naysayers" then [a naysayer is one who denies, refuses, opposes, or is skeptical or cynical about something (*Merriam-Webster*)] and we still have them today, so what has changed?

We know from Malachi 3:6 that God does not change: "For I am the LORD, I do not change." Another Scripture that shows the unchanging nature of God is found in Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." In James 1:17 we read: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

God Can Change His Mind on Temporary Matters

There are a number of examples where God DID change His mind, so how do we explain that? Let us look at some of these examples.

In Genesis 6:5–6 we read: "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart."

Genesis 18:26–32 relates Abraham's negotiation with God over how many righteous in Sodom would be needed in order to save the city from destruction. First of all it was 50, then God agreed to 45, then 40, then 30, then 20 and finally 10. We note quite a few changes of mind there because of Abraham's pleading.

Numbers 14 tells the story of Israel refusing to enter Canaan, and instead of entering the land immediately, God changed this by deferring their entry for 40 years.

In 2 Kings 20 we read that King Hezekiah was “sick and near death” (verse 1), and the king prayed about this matter (verse 2–3) and God changed His mind and added another 15 years to his life (verses 5–6).

Jonah was sent out on a mission to Nineveh but Jonah tried to opt out of this task. Eventually he did deliver the message that in “forty days... Nineveh shall be overthrown” (Jonah 3:4). However, the Ninevites repented and “God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it (verse 10).” Again, a change of mind by God.

We can see from these examples that God did change, but none of these changes involved alterations to His unalterable spiritual Law. God does not change, nor does He compromise with regard to His plan for mankind, a plan which is revealed through the meaning of His Holy Days. (For more insight, please read our free booklets, *The Meaning of God’s Spring Holy Days*, and *The Meaning of God’s Fall Holy Days*, where His plan of salvation for ALL people is revealed, including those who, at this present time, are disobedient to the Truth and Way of Life that God has shown His called-out ones.)

God does not change with regard to keeping His Law—the Ten Commandments. It is interesting that the Roman Catholic Church has defied God and “replaced” His seventh-day-Sabbath with Sunday. They also observe the paganized holidays, such as Christmas and Easter (and other days), while ignoring and rejecting the Holy Days that God says are His. Leviticus 23:1–2 clearly states: “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: “The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.”’” God then gives details about the Sabbath and all of His annual Holy Days.

The Church of God has long understood that if one part or passage in the Bible is contradictory, then God’s Word could not be trusted. If God went back and forth about His spiritual Law for mankind, then how could we trust Him? How could we possibly build a relationship with Him?

We know from God’s Word that He is perfect in all His ways, and we know that the Father and Jesus Christ are one (see John 10:30 and 17:11)—unified and with singleness of purpose.

We are truly blessed that God is constant and that His integrity is

intact so that we can fully trust the great Creator God of the universe. This is confirmed in Proverbs 3:5–6: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding.”

God Does Not Change His Eternal Truths Nor His Character

God does NOT change when it comes to the eternal truths that He has made clear in His Word. God has perfect character, which **cannot** change. So then, we must have the spiritual insight and understanding to comprehend this principal and learn to apply it.

We read in Deuteronomy 32:4: “He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.”

God’s called-out ones can understand that, but the author who was quoted at the beginning of this chapter would have us believe that these glorious words are simply “beliefs ossified over centuries [that] aren’t easily shaken.” Those who currently rail against the Word of God will, one day, have the opportunity to understand, and it is hoped that they will have a complete change of mind at the time of their calling.

God can and has changed His mind with regard to the outcome of certain events, as outlined earlier, but moral absolutes are just that—absolute! God’s teaching on proper and improper sexual conduct cannot be changed!

Knowing the difference... makes all the difference!

Chapter 2

Molding God in Our Own Image

There is a program on Sunday mornings on BBC television in the UK where weekly debates are conducted about moral, ethical and religious issues. In May of 2016, one of the debates was entitled “Did Man Create God?” In every case, except the worship of the true God, man has indeed created the god or gods that he now worships.

Only One God

We know that there is “no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12), and we also know that this applies only to Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we know from the Bible that having the Holy Spirit, which God has given to those who obey Him, is a condition of being a called-out member of the Family of God.

The true Church of God knows and understands that there is only one God, and that there are conditions that apply to being a member of the Church that Jesus founded. We also know that there will be those from other religions who will see our understanding as being “exclusive.” Even within mainstream Christianity, those who hold different beliefs can also take the same view about Church of God “exclusivity.”

But the Church of God is not exclusivist in the way that the world perceives. Jesus made it abundantly clear that there is only one Way; that is the narrow Way, and there are few who find it (Matthew 7:14). It is not exclusivist to make the assertions that we do from the Bible, but rather, it is a reflection of the knowledge that God has given us through a correct understanding of His Word.

Did Man Create God?

Man has created god(s) in his own foolish imaginations. We read in Romans 1:21–23: “...because, although they knew God, they did

not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.” This clearly shows that man has created “gods” and worships them accordingly.

We know that the ancient Egyptians worshipped all manner of created beings as “gods,” having nothing to do with the one and only true God. Of course, many have never even heard of the true God because of the societies in which they live, but they will be given their opportunity to know the true God at a later time.

When we see all of the gods of other religions today, we can gain insight into how Satan counterfeits true religion and makes paganism seem like another way that leads to God. We, however, understand that this is not acceptable to the true God.

In the BBC television program mentioned above, which included a carefully selected audience involving religious people, philosophers, scientists and others, viewers were exposed to false religionists pontificating about their brand of religion, which we know from the Bible is absolutely false. In addition, there was a female rabbi and a female vicar. The latter stated that she knew the New Testament but not so much the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) but, from what she said, she did not even know the New Testament that well; otherwise, she would not be a part of the ministry! A Muslim from a Muslim think tank, as well as someone representing Hinduism, gave their separate insights, not realizing that their religious beliefs were, in fact, tied to the worship of a god or gods that were created by man, a practice that is totally unacceptable to the true God.

The ancient nation of Israel was told to “love the LORD your God, with all your heart, with all your soul [being] and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5), and we know that God is a “jealous God” (Exodus 20:5), which is mentioned as part of the second commandment. A “jealous God” in this context means that God is intolerant of unfaithfulness. Jealousy is a sin when it is a desire for something that does not belong to us. Worship, praise, honor, and adoration belong to God alone, for only He is truly worthy of it. Therefore, God is rightly jealous when we worship, praise, honor, or give our

adoration to idols. This is precisely the jealousy the apostle Paul described in 2 Corinthians 11:2, “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy...”

Did man create God? No, he did not create the true God, of course, but all of the other “gods” have indeed been created by man under the influence and inspiration of Satan.

Man has effectively created gods that fit their ideas, gods that can be molded to suit the prevailing ethos at any given time. When man changes course and the unacceptable becomes acceptable in society—as we can see in many areas of life today, especially with regard to sexual behavior—then a flexible and malleable god can change his mind and fit in with society’s current thinking. That is the principle of the tail wagging the dog, a principle which has become the “accepted” face of mainstream Christianity today.

The true Church of God, however, is obedient to the Word of God, and “flexibility” to do wrong is not permitted. We cannot create or mold God in our image. We who truly understand God’s Word must follow the true path as the Bible clearly reveals. The Bible is under attack today because man insists that there are no moral absolutes; but a proper understanding of the Word of God reveals otherwise.

Chapter 3

The Frog in Boiling Water

The expression “The Frog in Boiling Water,” is an interesting concept, and the following excerpt from one of many definitions found on the Internet makes the point well:

“They say that if you put a frog into a pot of boiling water, it will leap out right away to escape the danger. But, if you put a frog in a kettle that is filled with water that is cool and pleasant, and then you gradually heat the kettle until it starts boiling, the frog will not become aware of the threat until it is too late. The frog’s survival instincts are geared towards detecting sudden changes.

“This is a story that is used to illustrate how people might get themselves into terrible trouble. This parable is often used to illustrate how humans have to be careful to watch *slowly changing trends* in the environment, not just the sudden changes. It’s a warning to keep us paying attention not just to obvious threats but to more slowly developing ones.”

Looking at all the evidence to see whether or not the story is true is not within the compass of this particular chapter. However, this analogy does raise a very interesting concept that society, under the sway of Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2), brings about the change it desires, even if the process is slow. Examples of this will show how true this analogy can be.

Homosexuality

First of all, let us look at homosexuality, a practice which is roundly condemned in the Bible (compare **Chapter 15** of this booklet). Genesis 18 and 19 show that this was one of a number of sins for which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Other passages on the subject include Leviticus 18:22; 20:13. In Scriptures such as Deuteronomy 23:17; 1 Kings 14:24; 1 Kings 15:12; and 2 Kings 23:7, the Hebrew term

qedeshim is used for “perverted” persons, describing those practicing sodomy (it will be explained in **Chapter 15** that the word “sodomy” describes or at least includes “homosexuality”) and prostitution in religious rituals. New Testament passages include Romans 1:25–27, 32 (condemning those who even approve of such acts); 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; 1 Timothy 1:9–10; and Revelation 21:8. We are admonished to live by every Word of God (Matthew 4:4), and so these references must be taken seriously.

Changes in Legislation

In England, Henry VIII introduced the first legislation under English criminal law against sodomy with the Buggery Act of 1533, making buggery (a British English term, which is very close in meaning to the term sodomy or homosexuality), punishable by hanging—a penalty not lifted in England and Wales until 1861.

In the UK, the Sexual Offences Act 1967 was an Act of Parliament which decriminalized homosexual acts in private between two men, both of whom were 21 years of age or older. Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 stated that a local authority “shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality” or “promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.” However, it was repealed on June 21, 2000, in Scotland as one of the first pieces of legislation enacted by the new Scottish Parliament, and on November 18, 2003, in the rest of Great Britain.

The politicians feel that homosexuals should have “equality” in law, which is simply their reasoning for *approving* such behavior that is an abomination in the sight of God! It seems that anyone now citing biblical proof that this practice is wrong could be considered guilty of a “hate” crime, showing how far off-course we have come in such a degenerate society.

We can very briefly see that in the UK it was an offense punishable by hanging until that act was repealed, then it was still illegal until 1967, then promotion of homosexuality was banned in schools, then repealed, and many politicians apologized for this as they saw public opinion moving quite quickly in the direction of approval, and then

civil partnerships and now same-sex “marriages” are actually enabled and protected by law. All of this took many decades, even hundreds of years to get from the death penalty to men “marrying” men and women “marrying” women, and all this time, public opinion was being manipulated and softened toward the acceptance of this ungodly practice. The situation in the UK is not different from the situation in most Western societies.

UK Abortion Act of 1967

Wikipedia states that “The Abortion Act 1967 is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom legalizing abortions by registered practitioners, and regulating the free provision of such medical practices through the National Health Service (NHS). Apparently this was introduced in order to reduce the amount of disease and death associated with illegal abortion.”

Abortions were made legal in the United States in a landmark and controversial 1973 Supreme Court judgment, often referred to as the *Roe vs. Wade* case. On the *Women’s History website* it states that “While many celebrated the decision, others, especially in the Roman Catholic Church and in theologically conservative Christian groups, opposed the change. ‘Pro-life’ and ‘pro-choice’ evolved as the most common self-chosen names of the two movements, one to outlaw most abortions and the other to eliminate most legislative restrictions on abortions.”

The BBC reported in 2009 that “The Church of England encourages people to think through the issue of abortion very carefully and recognises that each individual will have differing views on the subject. However, the Church’s governing body, The General Synod, has passed resolutions on the matter which provide a coherent Church of England position. The Church of England combines strong opposition to abortion with a recognition that there can be—strictly limited—conditions under which it may be morally preferable to any available alternative. The Church of England shares the Roman Catholic view that abortion is ‘gravely contrary to the moral law.’”

Figures in a UK newspaper report on May 25, 2010, stated that there were 189,100 abortions in 2009 for women living in England and Wales. A total of 48 women were found to have had seven or more abortions. Most of these were funded by the National Health Service

(NHS) which paid for 94 per cent of all terminations. The report said that the figures could reignite the debate into whether some women use abortion *as a form of contraception* rather than a last resort to unplanned pregnancy.

Over the years, little by little, attitudes have changed regarding abortion, and it is now commonplace in many countries around the world. What was once seen as a shocking thing is now considered part of everyday life in many countries. Over time, with the influence of publicity and exposure, most people have now accepted that this is the right thing to do in some or many circumstances. The Bible tells us that it is always wrong. (Please read our free booklet, *Are You Already Born Again?*)

Cohabitation

Another area where the frog in boiling water analogy is applicable is the concept of “living together or cohabiting” (compare **Chapter 6** in this booklet). In the chapter on “Living Together,” a report in *Psychology Today*, dated June 24, 2005, found that men who had lived with their spouse pre-maritally were on average less committed to their marriages than those who hadn’t.

Since this report some years ago, cohabitation has continued unrestricted and is now an unquestioned part of society. Fifty years ago it would have been completely unacceptable, seen as “living in sin,” but over the years, opposition has gradually dwindled and very few seem to question it any longer. However, the Bible has much to say about living together without being married; a practice which is defined as fornication.

Adultery

Another prime example of the truism of the frog in boiling water analogy, is that after Princess Diana died in 1998, much was made of Prince Charles’s extra-marital affair with Camilla Parker-Bowles. (We discuss the issue of adultery in detail in **Chapter 13** of this booklet.) A plan was put in place to have her become accepted, as there was much hostility toward her at that time.

After several years of the “marketing” of Camilla, she and Prince Charles married in 2005. At the time, one report stated that “The couple

have had to make some controversial adjustments in the hope of gaining public acceptance for the marriage, most notably the pledge that if Charles becomes King, Camilla won't be named Queen, instead she'll carry the title of Her Royal Highness, the Princess Consort." Another report stated that "If you go back five years ago, the memory of Diana was still very fresh. And it's still reasonably fresh with a lot of people, seven and a half years after her death. And it would've been wrong five years ago to go through it."

The propaganda machine has been continually active, so that now, contrary to public opinion in 1998 and 2005, polls show that Camilla is fully accepted in her position as the Duchess of Cornwall.

In a report in 2012 about the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, these comments were made: "Only 10 years ago she attended the Golden Jubilee Party at the palace and sat in the background behind the Royal Family trying not to ignite controversy over her relationship with the heir to the throne. For years she was the 'other woman', but yesterday Camilla's increased prominence demonstrated she has been truly accepted as part of the Windsors' future in the Queen's new slimmed-down version of the Royal Family. Her Majesty's decision to have Camilla sitting in the Landau's seat in the absence of Prince Philip, who was suddenly taken ill, emphatically told the country her daughter-in-law is now an important part of 'The Firm'. This was reaffirmed by Camilla's appearance on the Buckingham Palace balcony with the Queen, Charles, William, Kate and Harry just a few moments later, as well as her seat just one along from the Queen in the royal box during Monday's rock extravaganza."

The spin-doctors were tasked with getting her to be accepted by those who were initially opposed to her place in the Royal Family, and over time, they have certainly succeeded.

The "developments" in many other Western societies are no different. For instance, Germany's former President was still married to his wife, while openly living together with his female "partner." Also, Austria's new Chancellor has been living together with his girlfriend for many years, without being married.

Approval of War

Please note this excerpt taken from page 5 of our free booklet,

Should You Fight in War?: “Notice that NOT seeking peace and pursuing it is labeled as ‘evil.’ Refraining our tongues from evil means to refrain from speaking evil about our enemy. Each war begins with words, with propaganda, with hateful comments about others, until a government’s decision to attack and fight against a foreign country—the enemy—seems to be justified in the eyes of the citizens. As a prime example, Adolph Hitler could never have convinced many Germans to approve of ‘total war,’ if his propaganda machine, under Joseph Goebbels, had not carefully prepared them, far in advance, for such a viewpoint.”

These examples show how public opinion can be manipulated, given enough time. It appears that almost anything can be addressed, changed or manipulated, and with Satan in charge of our society at this time, we should not be surprised.

Unfortunately, man always seems to think that he knows best when God’s Word says differently. The old saying that it is “a cinch by the inch but hard by the yard” is an excellent way of getting acceptance of an unpopular matter, usually over a protracted period of time. Let us never forget that the frog in boiling water analogy can be very effective in getting this point across. Also, let us never forget that it is a tool that Satan uses successfully, even in the true Church of God, as we saw in the 1990’s when destructive heresies were subtly introduced, and as we have seen subsequently when many in the Church of God forsook most, if not all, of the Truth that they had once seemingly understood. (For a full explanation of these horrible events, please read our free booklet, *Are You Already Born Again?*)

We in the Church of God have to be very careful that we are not taken in, slowly but surely, like “the frog in boiling water.”

Chapter 4

Compulsory Celibacy

When the disciples heard that a marriage bound by God was for life, and that it can only be dissolved under very limited circumstances, they responded, “If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry” (Matthew 19:10). Jesus answered that “all cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given” (verse 11). He continued, in verse 12:

“For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.”

Most commentaries are in agreement that Christ was not teaching “compulsory celibacy” for anyone. The *Nelson Study Bible* explains the meaning of the passage as follows:

“Jesus indicates [in verse 11] that remaining unmarried is only for a few people... Some people do not marry because they were born with no sex drive. Others do not marry because they are castrated. Still others forgo marriage for the sake of serving God. Some have been given the spiritual gift of celibacy in order to do this (see 1 Corinthians 7:7).”

The *Life Application Bible* points out:

“Couples should decide against divorce from the start and build their marriage on mutual commitment. There are also... reasons for not marrying, one being to have more time to work for God’s kingdom... Some have physical limitations that prevent their marrying, while others choose not to marry because, in their particular situation, they can serve God better as single people. Jesus was not teaching us to avoid marriage because it is inconvenient or takes away our freedom. That would be selfishness.”

The *Broadman Bible Commentary* adds the following observations:

“The alternative to marriage is celibacy. Jesus made room for both

as honorable and proper to discipleship. He warned, however, that the demands upon celibacy are high, just as they are upon marriage. Some are incapacitated for marriage because of physical impotence or impairment. They are those who are ‘eunuchs who have been so from birth,’ or those ‘who have been made eunuchs by men.’ In royal courts, especially, there were slaves who were made eunuchs through surgery so that they would not be a threat to their masters’ household. Those who ‘made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven’ are those who forego marriage with a view of life given more fully to the service of Christ.”

To interject, some have taken this statement literally [“there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake”]; apparently, Origen castrated himself in obeying this “supposed obligation.” This is, however, NOT what Christ meant. He had already mentioned the category of literal eunuchs who had become such “by men.” The third category of “eunuchs” for the sake of the Kingdom of God deals with those who VOLUNTARILY forego marriage. Christ did not imply that they ought to literally castrate themselves.

The *Broadman Bible Commentary* continues:

“As Jesus spoke of marriage and celibacy he did not say that one was morally higher than the other... Each is an honorable choice to be made on an individual basis...”

No Supremacy for Either Celibacy or Marriage

Jesus did not teach supremacy of celibacy over marriage. At least some of the apostles were married, including Cephas, or Peter, as well as the believing brothers of Jesus (compare 1 Corinthians 9:5). Paul adds in Hebrews 13:4 that “marriage is honorable among all.”

It is correct that Paul seems to be giving celibacy a preferred state over marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:1, 6–8, 32–33, 40. But we must realize that the context is in the light of “the present distress” (verse 26), prompting Paul to say that even those who have wives should be as though they had none (verse 29). He said this because of the ensuing persecution, which would cause married couples “to have trouble in the flesh” (verse 28). Christ said, in Matthew 24:19: “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days”—immediately preceding the Great Tribulation. He also stated in Luke 23:29: “For indeed the days

are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!'"

On the other hand, Paul did not teach that it was ever sinful to marry, even in times of great physical distress, and he added that for some, it was necessary to marry even then. He stated in 1 Corinthians 7:9, 28: "... if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion... if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned."

To clarify, the *Church of the Eternal God* in the USA and its affiliates in Canada, Great Britain and Europe do NOT advise forgoing marriage because of the soon-coming return of Jesus Christ! We simply do not know the exact time of Christ's return. At one time, many felt that Christ might return in the early 1970s. Now, after more than 40 years, He still has not returned. If people had forgone marriage in the 1970s because of their anticipation of Christ's return (which will be preceded by the Great Tribulation), just imagine what they would have missed—including seeing their children and grandchildren growing up.

Proverbs 18:22 tells us: "He who finds a wife finds a GOOD thing, And obtains FAVOR from the LORD," and God said at the beginning, after He had created man, that it was NOT GOOD for the man to be alone. He then made the woman to be the man's companion and helpmate (Genesis 2:18). It is true that those who will, in the future, enter the Kingdom of God as immortal spirit beings, will not marry nor are given in marriage at that time (Matthew 22:30), but this is not to be applied today to mortal human beings on a physical level.

As can easily be seen from the very wording of Christ's sayings in Matthew 19:12, He was not teaching that anyone MUST forgo marriage to enter the Kingdom of heaven. He was clearly talking about a VOLUNTARY individual decision, without coercion from anyone. Biblical examples of those who decided for themselves, not to get married for the sake of the Kingdom of God, were Jesus Christ Himself, as well as John the Baptist. As a former Pharisee, Paul would have been married, but his wife apparently died, and he decided not to re-marry, but to remain a widower.

The Bible Does Not Teach Coerced Celibacy

Since the Bible does not teach coerced celibacy, why is it, then, that

the Catholic Church teaches compulsory celibacy for their priests—prohibiting them to get married?

An interesting explanation is given by James Hastings, in his *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 3, pages 272–273:

“Two influences contributed especially to the rise of sacerdotal celibacy... To the Gnostic..., ‘marriage [is] from Satan... marriage [was pronounced] to be corruption and fornication.’... To these we must add the influence of the religion of Isis and the worship of Mithra... both of which were wide-spread throughout the Roman Empire and had a powerful following in the 1st and 2nd century. The former had its... tonsured men and women—emblematic of a higher purity. The latter had its grades of initiation and its companies of ascetics and virgins...

“Catholic Christians were not to be outdone by heretics and heathens in self-renunciation... the outcome was inevitable. The highest type of Christian was the celibate... Christian teachers praised virginity, and marriage came to be in their eyes only a secondary good for those who were unable to preserve continence... [Ultimately,] superiority of virginity or celibacy to the marital state [had become Catholic Church doctrine]. Anathemas [being accursed from Christ] were pronounced on all who held to the contrary. This remains the law of the Roman Catholic Church...”

As we can see, the Catholic Church came to teach mandatory celibacy for their priests in direct or indirect consequence of Gnostic teachings and the worship of Isis and Mithra. This teaching was not derived from Scripture. On the other hand, Protestants have mostly rejected the concept of compulsory celibacy. Hastings continues to explain, on page 275:

“The Protestants vigorously denounced clerical celibacy... Luther, as early as 1520, advocated allowing pastors their freedom in the matter, and denounced compulsory celibacy as the work of the devil... he said that the celibacy of the clergy was ‘a popish innovation against the eternal word of God’... Calvin... denounced the ‘vile celibacy’ of the priests and the interdiction of marriage to priests as contrary to the word of God and to all justice... Ulrich Zwingli... condemn[ed] vows of chastity... [The] Anglican Church... asserts that ‘Bishops, Priests, and Deacons are not commanded by God’s Law either to vow the state of single life or to abstain from marriage: therefore it is

lawful for them, as for all other Christian men, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge...'

"The attitude of Protestants and Catholics has remained practically unchanged to the present time, and the subject is unlikely to be touched UNLESS A PROPOSAL FOR UNION BE MADE" (emphasis added).

The Fruits of Celibacy Are Not Good

As the fruits have shown over the centuries, *coerced* celibacy is a very bad concept. Some who wanted to become Catholic priests and were forced, as a consequence, to take the vow of celibacy, have either been having "affairs" with unmarried women, including nuns or their "housekeepers," or they have been having homosexual relationships, sometimes even with minors and altar boys. Human regulations and man-made restrictions that go beyond or contradict the Word of God, bring forth unnecessary and avoidable pain and suffering. Compulsory mandatory celibacy is one of those wrong concepts which is clearly not taught in the Bible.

Chapter 5

Married or Single?

In searching the Scriptures, we find that, depending on the circumstances, God endorses being married as well as being single.

Marriage Instituted by God

In Genesis 2:18 we read: “And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’” In verses 21–24 we further read: “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: ‘This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

And so we see that marriage was instituted between a man and a woman, by God Himself. *There is no other combination for marriage that is approved by God’s Word in spite of modern-day secular legislation!*

In *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, under the heading “Marriage—Origin” (page 817), we read the following: “Marriage is a divine institution designed to form a permanent union between man and woman that they might be helpful to one another (Genesis 2:18). Moses presents it as the deepest corporeal and spiritual unity of man and woman, and monogamy as the form of marriage ordained by God (Genesis 2:24; cf Matthew 19:5). Without the marital tie, the inhabitants of this world would have been a mixed multitude. The family circle, family instruction, and parental love and care would have been altogether unknown.”

There are many instructions to “go forth and multiply,” and this was within the institution of marriage (see for example Genesis 9:1 to

Noah and his sons after the flood; 9:7; 35:11; 47:27, etc.). Population was needed after the Flood, and the nation of Israel would be raised up through whom the Savior, Jesus Christ, would be born from the tribe of Judah (see Genesis 49:10).

We should also note the references to Christ and the Church. In Ephesians 5:22–33, instruction is given to both husbands and wives, and in verse 32 we read: “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” Revelation 19:7 sheds more light on this relationship: “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife (the Church) has made herself ready.”

In our free booklet, *Is That in the Bible?—The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation!*, a number of comments are made about this relationship, as follows:

“As we can see from Ephesians 5:31–32, Paul is addressing here the mystery of the relationship between Christ and His Church. He emphasizes that those who are called must come out of the ways of this world in order to be joined with Christ. Christ must be continuously living within them (1 John 2:15–17; Romans 12:2; Galatians 2:20). Paul also shows that the physical institution of marriage is pointing at a spiritual union between God and man. It is pointing at a spiritual marriage between Christ and His Church (page 115)...

“Jesus spoke of Himself as the ‘bridegroom’ (Luke 5:34–35). When Jesus was on this earth, He taught that He would be taken away and that no ‘marriage’ would be consummated at that time.

“Note, as well, that Jesus gave a parable indicating that He, as the bridegroom, would return (compare Matthew 25:1–13). In this story, Jesus began His teaching with these very important words: ‘The kingdom of heaven shall be LIKENED to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom’ (Matthew 25:1).

“Jesus presented this example of bridegroom and virgins (that is, the bride) as a means of instructing His Church to be ready for His return. Most importantly, the Church was to remain vigilant and not let God’s Holy Spirit (the ‘oil’ for their lamps) fade out of their lives! He would only marry those who were ready.

“John the Baptist also referred to Jesus as the bridegroom (compare John 3:29). In his statement, John attested to the fact that Jesus

was the Christ, and that he (John) was in a position of service, as if he were the friend in a marriage ceremony. This is, of course, just an analogy, because John will be in the first resurrection and therefore part of the bride.

“In a deeply symbolic series of statements, Paul instructs married members of the Church to love their mates (compare Ephesians 5:22–33). He draws on the selfless example of Christ’s love for His Church to make his point. Then, he mentions a profound truth about marriage, calling it ‘a great mystery’ (verse 32).

“Why is it a mystery? Because it is a truth hidden in the plan of God—hidden to those not called by God! Yet, God’s Church understands this mystery: Jesus Christ will marry His Church (compare, especially, verses 25–27)! Note what Paul also stated in this regard: ‘For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ’ (2 Corinthians 11:2) (pages 119–120)...

“The fact remains that Jesus Christ will marry His Church! We find this specifically promised in Revelation 19. Verse 7 states: ‘Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.’ Understand that the wife spoken of here is comprised of ALL of the saints—ALL of those counted WORTHY for the first resurrection. Christians who live just before Christ’s return, also must be prepared—just as the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25 so clearly teaches.

“Carefully consider what is stated in Revelation 19:8: ‘And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is THE RIGHTEOUS ACTS of the saints.’ The focus for who will be in this wedding ceremony centers on those who are righteous—that is, those who obey God! Here we gain insight to the fact that Christ will marry those who live righteous lives—something only possible through having the help of God’s Holy Spirit! (page 121)...

“Speaking to Israel of a future time—a time when God will establish His Kingdom on the earth: “‘And it shall be, IN THAT DAY,” Says the LORD, “That you will call Me ‘My Husband...’” (Hosea 2:16). Then, in verses 19–20, we find that God promises to join Israel to Himself in an unending marriage: ‘I WILL BETROTH YOU TO ME FOREVER; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice,

In lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the LORD.' It is important to realize that God will 'betroth' Israel in the future—AFTER Christ's return and the FIRST resurrection. This shows that the 'bride' cannot only include those in the first resurrection" (pages 121–122).

Marriage Is Not the Only Acceptable State to God

As we saw in the last chapter, marriage is not the only acceptable state to God. God's command from ancient times "to go forth and multiply" does not apply today for *every* human being. Not *every* Christian is obligated today to follow through on this ancient instruction. Many men and women today prefer to stay single for all sorts of reasons. While many of those reasons might be based on selfishness and improper motives, you will recall that Paul addresses some valid concerns regarding being single, starting in 1 Corinthians 7:25. This was written at a time of persecution of the Church, but the principles still apply today. In verse 32, Paul writes: "He who is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord – how he may please the Lord."

Paul was unmarried in his later life (1 Corinthians 7:8). He did not have the extra responsibilities, problems and stresses that can come with marriage and a family. He was able to devote his life to doing the Work of God. Had he been married, perhaps he might not have been so prolific in his writings and in his work of preaching the gospel. This does not mean that the apostles Peter and James—just to give a couple of examples—were in any way less productive because they were married. We read that Peter's wife accompanied him on his travels and was undoubtedly a great help to him. However, Paul judged that in *his own* case, it was better for him not to get re-married (he was probably married before his conversion, but his wife might have died), while also emphasizing that it is not a sin to marry.

We recall Jesus' explanation that some will not marry for several valid reasons, one of which is for the Kingdom of God's sake (Matthew 19:10–12). It is not a sin to remain single, even for our entire life. We can conclude then that marrying and having children is not the most important thing in life, but rather it is serving God, whether married or single.

Interestingly enough, it would be physically *impossible* for everyone

to be married anyway. Quoting from the *“United Nations Statistics Division (in 2010)”*, they state the following: “In today’s world, there are 57 million more men than women. This surplus of men is concentrated in the youngest age groups and steadily diminishes until it disappears at about age 50, thereafter becoming a surplus of women owing to their longer life expectancy. A surplus of men characterizes the world’s most populous countries—China and India—hence the large surplus of men worldwide. In most other countries, there are more women than men.”

God wants all of His people to be happy, service-orientated and fulfilled, and He offers plenty of opportunities to be so, whether they are married or single.

Chapter 6

Cohabitation or Common Law Marriage

As we will discuss in this chapter, living together and being sexually active without being legally married is defined by the Bible as fornication. But before we look at the biblical understanding on this matter, let us very briefly review how common cohabitation is in society today, and what the motivation is for engaging in such a practice.

Cohabitation

Wikipedia states that “Cohabitation is an arrangement where two people who are not married live together. Such arrangements have become increasingly common in Western countries during the past few decades, being led by changing social views, especially regarding marriage, gender roles and religion. They often involve a romantic relationship and/or sexually intimate relationship on a long-term or permanent basis.”

According to the *Office for National Statistics* in the UK as of November 2015, “cohabiting couple families are the fastest growing family type in the UK. There were 3.1 million opposite sex cohabiting couple families and 90,000 same sex cohabiting couple families in the UK in 2015. Together, cohabiting couple families account for 17% of all families in the UK.” These statistics will be reflected in many other countries around the world. Another concerning statistic is that, as of 2012, 41% of all births in the USA were to unmarried women.

Surveys show that there is a negative “cohabitation effect”—couples who live together before marriage “tend to be less satisfied with their marriages—and more likely to divorce—than couples who do not” (Meg Jay, *New York Times*, “The Downside of Cohabiting Before Marriage,” April 14, 2012).

The Website, “lifehopeandtruth” wrote:

“In spite of this, the majority of people who responded to this

article declared they would still choose to live together before marriage. Many expressed the belief that living together before marriage could help them better determine whether they would be happily married. They believe their experiences will be different—they will be the exceptions to the rule.

“Some felt there must be something wrong with the statistics because it would only stand to reason that living together before marriage makes sense. After all, you want to be sure your love is strong enough to eventually marry, and the only way to find out is to live together, or so many believe.

“Whatever the justification, it seems that living-together relationships do not often work out. Various surveys tell us that at least 50 percent, and up to 70 percent of those who eventually marry, have lived with someone else before marriage. The overwhelming reason given for cohabiting before marriage is to test the relationship before making the commitment of marriage.”

In an article entitled “The Hidden Risk of Cohabitation” in *Psychology Today* in July of 2014, Scott Stanley, Ph.D., wrote the following:

“For decades, people have believed that living together would increase their odds of doing well in marriage. The core of this idea is that cohabiting would provide a ‘test’ of a relationship. This seems logical but, mysteriously, decades of research do not show this benefit. In fact, until recently, the overwhelming majority of studies showed that cohabitation before marriage was associated with poorer odds of stability and happiness in marriage.”

He then goes on to ask the question: “How could the widely held belief that cohabiting before marriage actually improves one’s odds have virtually no evidence to support it? I have predicted and found (over and over again) that couples who wait to cohabit until marriage—or until they have clear, mutual plans to marry—report, on average, more marital happiness, less conflict, more compatibility, and so forth.”

There are certainly ample statistics showing that individuals who live together before marriage have a greater rate of divorce than those who do not. Yet many simply choose not to believe what statistics clearly show.

State Intervention Not Helpful

In the UK and in most countries around the Western world, the

governments have not helped to strengthen marriages and families. Apart from legislating to protect wrong behavior, the system itself for which they are responsible does not encourage godly behavior. A few years ago, a senior counsellor at *Relate*, a UK relationship charity, said that “many people cannot see the point of marriage since the loss of tax breaks and better rights for unmarried fathers make cohabitation ‘more appealing.’”

However, the lure of tax breaks should not be the criteria on which relationships are based; rather, “is it right?” should be the measuring stick!

In the UK, Lady Justice Hale said in 1982: “*Family law now makes no attempt to buttress the stability of marriage or any other union,*” adding “*the piecemeal erosion of the distinction between marriage and non-marital cohabitation may be expected to continue.*” And recent history has certainly shown the validity of these comments.

Sexual Immorality

Let us look now at God’s teaching in the Bible on this subject, which is what should concern us the most.

1 Corinthians 6:18 (in the *Authorized Version*), we read “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.”

The *New King James Bible* renders “sexual immorality” correctly as “fornication.” This word clearly includes sexual activities before and outside the confines of marriage.

The instruction is to “flee fornication and wrong sexual activity,” but so many ignore or do not even know about this instruction. This is the problem when God’s Word is ignored or not considered relevant today, and where there is antipathy toward doing what God commands us to do, which is for our benefit and is always in our best interests. However, man thinks that he knows better than God and makes up his own rules (or lack of them) to facilitate a “just do it” attitude.

There was obviously a problem in the Corinthian Church with wrong sexual activity, including fornication (compare 1 Corinthians 6:9; 2 Corinthians 12:21). Here the Bible warns us that fornicators and other sexually immoral individuals will not inherit the Kingdom of God, and so it is an activity that must be avoided by those who

are called and chosen by God. God defines His standards and what He requires of His people, which is very different than the liberal, promiscuous approach that today's societies adopt.

Common Law Marriage

In a January 1988 answer by the (now defunct) *Worldwide Church of God* to the question about *common law marriage*, the following was stated:

"The Bible clearly shows that this type of relationship is not right in God's sight. Please notice some of the things the Bible says about marriage...

"Jesus also spoke of a great, formal wedding to take place at His return when, symbolically, He will marry the Church (see Matthew 22:1-13, 25:1-10, and Revelation 19:7-9). Notice that this will not be a secret or a common-law type arrangement! The Holy Scriptures thus clearly reveal that it is God's will that a marriage be formalized by a legal ceremony to officially inform the community of the marriage.

"A marriage ceremony serves to protect the rights of each mate and to minimize [the dangers of] fornication, adultery, bigamy and kindred evils in the society at large. When there has been no formal ceremony, it can be a temptation to treat a union casually. If we treat with contempt or flippancy that which God has established for our good, we can be sure He is not pleased!"

Persons who are living together without being married, or just by "common law" marriage, should either marry formally and legally, or they need to separate.

Consequences of Sexual Sins

In our free booklet, *Old Testament Laws—Still Valid Today?*, the subject of fornication between two unmarried partners is covered on pages 8 and 9 as follows:

"We read in Exodus 22:16-17: 'If a man entices a virgin who is NOT betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride-price for her to be his wife. If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the bride-price of virgins.'"

To interject, the biblical concept of "betrothal" was more than just an engagement in the modern sense. Rather, it was a legally binding

contract between a man and a woman who were already viewed as husband and wife, but the marriage had not been consummated. However, betrothal could only end through divorce.

To continue:

“Deuteronomy 22:28–29 adds: ‘If a man finds a young woman who is a virgin, who is NOT betrothed, and he seizes her [this goes beyond mere enticement] and lies with her, and they are found out, then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman’s father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife because he had humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days.’

“The fine of the bride-price was steep, which was ‘meant to discourage young men from reckless behavior... This law warned young men that they would be made responsible for their actions’ (*Nelson Study Bible*, comments to Exodus 22:16–17 and Deuteronomy 22:28–29).

“These principles still apply today in God’s Church. There should not be ANY premarital sex between two unmarried partners. The Bible calls this fornication, and we are told to flee from it. But if two young unmarried people in the Church of God commit fornication (even though they should not do so and are sinning if they do), they should be aware that, excluding extraordinary circumstances (see, for instance in ancient times, the exception mentioned in Exodus 22:17), they have a responsibility, before God, to complete their marriage responsibilities which they, in effect, already began through their conduct. If one party is not in the Church [that is, unbaptized, while the other unmarried person is baptized], then the situation is different, as 1 Corinthians 7:39 requires that a marriage in the Church should only occur “in the Lord”; that is, between two believers...”

Matthew Henry’s Commentary states that this is “a law that he who debauched a young woman should be obliged to marry her... This law puts an honour upon marriage...”

Even in the case of a somewhat forceful conduct by the man [which should, of course, never happen; see the terrible “Dinah incident” and its consequences in Genesis 34], he had the responsibility, if so required by the young woman’s father, to marry her, thereby restoring her honor and providing for her until death—without any right to divorce her.

But we must understand that pre-marital sex is a sin. We read in 1 Corinthians 6:18 that we are to “flee sexual immorality. Every sin

that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.”

Members of God’s Church are also told not to “make provisions for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Romans 13:14). Further, they are commanded to “abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God” (1 Thessalonians 4:3–5).

Regarding this last passage, the *Ryrie Study Bible* comments that this “means either mastery over one’s own body, keeping it pure (1 Corinthians 9:24–27),” or that it “refers to an honorable marriage (vessel = wife, as in 1 Peter 3:7).” A third possibility is a warning for a man not to try to “obtain” for himself a vessel—a future wife—“in passion of lust.” The *Nelson Study Bible* explains: “Paul strongly urged the Thessalonians not to participate in any sexual activity outside of marriage... Sexual involvement outside of marriage dishonors God, one’s marriage partner or future spouse, and even one’s own body.”

In regard to 1 Corinthians 7:39 (marry “only in the Lord”), it is important to consider our comments in this regard in the **next chapter** of this booklet, in a case when the two partners, who are not legally married, have been living together for an extended period of time, as if being married.

Living together and being sexually active without being legally married is plainly a sin, and this condition must be changed as soon as possible.

Chapter 7

Unequally Yoked.

In the context of marriage relationships, what does it mean to be “unequally yoked,” and why does the Bible prohibit it?

The term is derived from the following concept:

A yoke was a wooden beam across the shoulders of two animals, usually oxen or horses, which harnessed them to do some task better together than they could have attempted singly. The success of the operation, however, depended on the compatibility or suitability of the two animals to each other. As it says in Deuteronomy 22:10: “You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.”

Why? The differences in the internal temperaments and energies of the animals, and their external structures and sizes, as well as the fact that an ox does not tolerate the smell and breath of a donkey, would mean that the work would not be done very well, if it was done at all. The animals could easily pull in different ways as well as in different directions. The yoke would become an irritation and a pain, a hindrance to each one instead of a help to both of them. Unnatural combinations lead to confusion and discord, as does compromise with the world by one who is called by God. Apply these principles spiritually and we can clearly see the problems.

There are many examples in both the Old Testament and the New Testament about this principle. Let us review some of these as they relate to marriage relationships.

In Deuteronomy 7:3–6, we read: “Nor shall you make marriages with them [the Gentiles who occupied the Promised Land]. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down

their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire. For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.”

It is abundantly clear that God did not want them to become involved with paganism. They were a holy people, and to intermarry with them was therefore unlawful. Today, converted Christians are holy to God and completely different from the society around them. They are, as well, completely different from the many denominations of mainstream Christianity who have absorbed so many pagan customs. We must not try to work our way around this principle.

Matthew Henry's Commentary states the following:

“This very thing – talking about mixed marriages had proved of fatal consequence to the old world and thousands in the world that now is[,] have been undone by irreligious ungodly marriages; for there is more ground of fear in mixed marriages that the good will be perverted than of hope that the bad will be converted.”

Further examples can be reviewed in Joshua 23:13 and 1 Kings 11:1–10 where Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, apart from Christ, fell into the same trap. The marriages could well have been mostly political unions, which meant that Solomon tolerated and provided for the religions of his foreign wives. Those of us with much less wisdom have to be even more careful. Also, please note Ezra 9:1–2; 10:10; Nehemiah 13:23–27.

Invariably, the bad superimposes itself over the good. For example, many Church members in the past have had a problem attending the Feast of Tabernacles because of an unconverted and difficult spouse. Over the years, there have been so many difficult situations because God’s instructions have either been ignored or circumvented.

If we have been called and chosen, we should not let such things stand in the way of serving the living God who has called us. Either God comes first or He doesn’t. Of course, many Church members were called after they were married, but the issue that we are addressing here is about God’s converted and baptized people who are *intending* to marry outside the faith.

Dangers of Unbiblical Marriage

There are enough Old Testament examples to clearly show the dangers of marriage which do not conform to biblical instruction. In Proverbs 3:5 we read: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding," and in 1 Corinthians 10:11, the apostle Paul wrote: "Now all of these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition..."

Amos 3:3 gives us sound advice: "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" This applies in any walk of life, but surely none more so than in marriage.

The instruction in 2 Corinthians 6:14–18 is very clear: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.' Therefore 'Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.' 'I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.'"

The *New Bible Commentary* states: "The apostle strongly exhorts Christians not to mix with unbelievers in the sense of sharing their lives. Marriage is, of course, the supreme way of sharing in the life of another. God dwells in the hearts and lives of believers, and God has no fellowship with Satan. Therefore, believers cannot tolerate companionship with unbelievers in their distinctive activities."

To be separate is to be different, and to live in this world means that a true Christian must have different standards of behavior. The reasons for not becoming unequally yoked has to do with differences that exist between believers and unbelievers. Many who have become unequally yoked have eventually and tragically found out how opposite they are. Many have found out, too late, that the wrong end of a yoke had distorted the right end, and whatever compromise had been reached is well below the standard of what would have been anticipated at the start.

It is always easier to be dragged down than to pull up! For those

Christians who are not too strong in the faith, it can be a serious trial to be married to a strong-willed non-baptized spouse. It can lead to spiritual shipwreck if the member is not careful. But why would anyone want to put themselves in that position anyway? Isn't our calling the most important thing in the world to us? If it is not, then it should be, and nothing should divert us from the true path to which we have been called.

In 1 Corinthians 7:12–13 we read about an existing marriage: “But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.”

However, what we are primarily addressing here in this chapter, are those who are already baptized and are *contemplating* marriage, not those who are already married (nor necessarily those who are not baptized).

But those who are looking for a loophole can debate the definition of a believer, which, biblically, is quite clear cut. This can be a good opt-out clause. If the definition of a believer can be re-constituted according to personal requirements, then the Scriptures can be made to fit in with those who may have a vested interest in this matter. We have to live by every Word of God!

True Christians are those who have repented of their sins, accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, have been baptized and received the Holy Spirit, and who live an obedient Godly life, growing and overcoming as they strive to qualify for God's Kingdom. We can surely see that the Way of Life that true Christians are to follow is a narrow and difficult way, a way that needs faith. God is only calling a few now, and true Christians should only marry those of the faith so that they do not become unequally yoked. Let us be honest with Scripture about who is and who is not a believer, a definition that must always be based on biblical evidence, irrespective of vested personal interests or circumstances.

The Fruits of Being Unequally Yoked

Marriage is something that takes work to make it a success, even between two baptized members who have committed themselves to

true Christianity. But consider that where there are “differing minds”—a converted one and an unconverted one—further problems are bound to ensue, making it harder to make the marriage a success.

In 1 Corinthians 7:39 we read: “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.”

A marriage “in the Lord” means a marriage between two believers. This is the universally accepted understanding by virtually all biblical scholars. The *New Bible Commentary* observes that “The command to marry only within God’s redeemed community was to be maintained throughout the Old and New Testaments.”

From this it follows that the ministry of the *Church of the Eternal God* in the USA, the *Global Church of God* in the UK, the *Church of God, a Christian Fellowship* in Canada, and the *Kirche des Ewigen Gottes* in Germany will only officiate over a marriage between a man and woman, if both are baptized in the faith and have received God’s Spirit.

Marriage should only be to other believers. Of course, the lack of availability of a suitable mate in the true Church of God today can be seen as a problem. Those who are single, male or female, and who may want to get married (not every single person wants to marry) must ask themselves if they would make a good husband or wife if the situation arose. Would they be a good “catch,” or are they too set in their ways to make the necessary adjustments to have a successful marriage.

Paul’s Instruction Is Binding Today

We must be very, very careful that we do not fall into the trap of arguing that what Paul said was just an instruction for that time period—some 2,000 years ago—and was fine for then but not for us today. That is the way of the world where people “pick and mix” those bits that seem convenient while ignoring the inconvenient bits. *Such an approach allows the culture of the day to become more important than God’s clear instructions!* As we read, ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

It has been said that some marriages with a baptized member and someone who is not interested in the Church can be as good, and in some cases better, than a marriage between two baptized Church

members. In a small number of cases that may be true, and if it is, it is not a good testimony for a marriage of two converted mates. However, just because we can come up with an exception here or there does not negate clear biblical teaching on this matter. It is, in fact, faulty reasoning to justify a wrong and inappropriate action.

It is not what we think that is important; it is God's instructions that are always for our benefit and ultimate good. We are to judge by the fruits, and a marriage between a member and a non-member can cause considerable problems, not only for themselves, but also for their children who can be pulled in two conflicting directions. Any baptized Church member who wants to marry an unbaptized person cannot expect that God will convert their spouse. Of course, it might happen on occasion, due to God's unmerited grace and mercy, as the unconverted mate is "sanctified" by God through the believing mate, making it possible for the unbeliever to have access to God, but invariably, he or she does not take advantage of the privilege, and there is absolutely no biblical evidence and no biblical promise to say that it will happen.

We must always believe what the Bible instructs. We cannot take the approach that we will agree with everything in the Bible, with the exception of the thing that "adversely" impacts our lives—that one thing that we wished was not there! Whatever the Scripture says, let us be obedient to it and not use human reasoning to try and get around that which is clearly revealed: A baptized Church member should only marry another baptized Church member.

Moses' Cushite Wife

In this context, let us review the record of Moses' marriage to a "Cushite woman." Didn't Moses violate God's command not to marry a pagan Gentile woman?

Numbers 12:1 reports about Miriam's and Aaron's rebellion against Moses "because of the Cushite woman whom he had married." Is it known who this Cushite woman was, and when Moses married her?

The Bible does not indicate here whether this was a marriage that had taken place some time previously or whether this was a recent event. The Hebrew commentary, *Soncino*, offers one possible explanation that the Cushite woman was "a woman of Ethiopian origin." It

continues: “Legend tells that Moses married the queen of Ethiopia...”

The Hebrew writer Josephus gives the following narrative in his work, *Antiquities of the Jews*, p. 58, addressing one of Moses’ campaigns as an officer in Pharaoh’s army, prior to his flight from Egypt (compare Acts 7:22–29; Hebrews 11:24–27):

“Tharbis was the daughter of the king of the Ethiopians: she happened to see Moses as he led the army near the walls, and fought with great courage; and admiring the subtlety of his undertakings, and believing him to be the author of the Egyptians’ success, when they had before despaired of recovering their liberty, and to be the occasion of the great danger of [which] the Ethiopians were in, whence they had before boasted of their great achievements, she fell deeply in love with him; and upon the prevalency of that passion, sent to him the most beautiful of all her servants to discourse with him about their marriage. He thereupon accepted the offer, on condition she would produce the delivering up of the city; and gave her the assurance of an oath to take her to his wife; and that when he had once taken possession of the city, he would not break his oath to her. No sooner was the agreement made, but it took effect immediately; and when Moses had cut off the Ethiopians, he gave thanks to God, and consummated his marriage, and led the Egyptians back to their own land.”

If this narrative is based on truth, and if Miriam and Aaron brought up Moses’ alleged marriage with Tharbis in Numbers 12:1, then it would be very clear why the “anger of the LORD was kindled against them” (verse 9)—after all, Moses would have married the princess before his flight to Midian, that is, long before his conversion.

There is, however, another possibility as to who the “Ethiopian woman” might have been. *Soncino* continues to explain: “[A commentary] identifies the Cushite woman with Zipporah [whom Moses married while in Midian, after he had escaped from Egypt, compare Exodus 2:21] who was a native of Midian. The Midianites, who were tent-dwellers and *dark-skinned*, were also known as ‘Kushim.’”

Before continuing, we must correct a blatant mistake in the above-quoted comments by *Soncino*. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham and Keturah (Genesis 25:1). Abraham took Keturah as his wife (same reference) or concubine (1 Chronicles 1:32) after the death of Sarah. The Midianites were NOT dark-skinned.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* informs us that the “Midianite was a member of a group of nomadic tribes related to the Israelites...”

We are also told on the Internet that “the Midianites were racially akin to the Israelites as descendants of Abraham, and Moses’ own wife Zipporah was Midianite.”

The following comments must be viewed in this light, as Abraham’s wife Keturah was not black and therefore, the Midianites (and Zipporah) were NOT dark-skinned.

The *Broadman Bible Commentary* has this to say about the “Cushite woman”:

“The identity of the Cushite woman has been widely debated. The only known name of a wife of Moses was Zipporah (Exodus 2:16–22; 4:25; 18:2). However, there are times here and elsewhere at which Moses’ wife is referred to without specific name. It may be that the writer is referring to Zipporah here...”

“For a long time, Zipporah had been left with her father (along with Moses’ two sons) but Jethro brought them to Moses. While Zipporah and the sons were absent, Miriam and Aaron had no challenger for second place; but when they were present there was a constant reminder of the several suggestions which had come through the Midianites upsetting the status quo arrangement. Zipporah was a Midianite (Exodus 2:16) or Kenite (Judges 1:16; 4:11).”

This explanation would also shed light on the fact that God’s anger was kindled against them, and mainly Miriam, the apparent “spokesperson” in the incident. Numbers 12:2 reports that they murmured against Moses, saying, “Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses [“and”—following the comments of the *Broadman Bible Commentary*—“Zipporah, that Cushite woman, who is influencing Moses”]? Has He not spoken through US ALSO?”

God, however, was not pleased with this criticism. He told Miriam and Aaron: “I speak with him [Moses] face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?” (Numbers 12:8).

Although we don’t hear anything further about Zipporah (if she was indeed the Cushite woman in Numbers 12:1), the Bible may contain a later possible reference to Moses’ first-born son, Gershom, in the book of Judges. We read that the Danites engaged in idolatry, setting

up for themselves a carved image, and "Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh [in the Margin, an alternate rendering is given as "Moses"], and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan" (Judges 18:30).

The Hebrew *Tanakh* points out that in "an earlier reading," "Moses" instead of Manasseh, is "indicated." The *Ryrie Study Bible* comments that the better rendering is "son of Moses. The Danite priests traced their lineage to Moses." Most German translations, including *Luther*, *Zuercher*, *Menge* and *Elberfelder*, consistently render this phrase as, "son of Moses." If the reference in Judges 18:30 to Gershom is indeed a reference to the son of Moses, then Moses' and Zipporah's grandson Jonathan had begun to be deeply involved in idolatry.

We find an additional reference to Gershom, the son of Moses, in 1 Chronicles 23:14–16; 26:24. These passages mention Shebuel, a son of Gershom, the son of Moses, who had become overseer of the treasuries. This grandson of Moses seemed to have stayed loyal to God's Way of Life. We also learn, in 1 Chronicles 23:15, 17, that Moses' second son, Eliezer, had a son, named Rehabiah, and that "the sons of Rehabiah were very many."

But why would Zipporah be called a "Cushite woman" or an "Ethiopian woman," if it is believed that this is a reference to her color as a black woman, since Zipporah, as a Midianite, was clearly not black?

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* gives the following interesting explanation:

"Zipporah is mentioned... in Numbers xii. 1, where she is referred to as 'the Ethiopian woman,' for having married whom Moses is upbraided by Miriam and Aaron... Her name [means] 'bird'... The name 'Cushite' was given to her, it is said, because she was distinguished from other women by her beauty, even as the Ethiopians differed from other people in their complexions. The circumstance that she is twice referred to in one verse as 'the Ethiopian' (Num. xii. 1) is explained as indicating that her actions were as distinctive as her beauty, and that she conducted herself no less royally while in her father's house than when she became the wife of Moses..."

An article from the Internet contains further enlightening comments:

"The idea that Moses had a black wife apparently comes from Numbers 12:1 which says Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of his Cushite wife. Some say this identifies her as a descendant of Noah's grandson *Cush*. The Hebrew word *Cush* means *black*,

and Cush is said to be the father of the black African people. (Cush is identified as *Ethiopia* in some versions of the Bible.) This would make the wife of Moses a black woman.

“But others point out that Moses married Zipporah, the daughter of a priest of Midian named Reuel, also called Jethro (Exodus 2:18–22; 3:1). Midian was a son of Abraham and his... wife Keturah... They also claim there were *two lands named Cush* in the time of Moses. The other one was in Eastern Mesopotamia in what would later become Babylon. If so, this would make the reference to a Cushite wife ... inconclusive as to race. [Since] Jethro was a descendant of Abraham’s through Midian, then Zipporah would have been Abraham’s descendant, not Cush’s, and *therefore not a black woman.*”

In any event, whether the “Cushite woman” in Numbers 12:1 was a princess of Ethiopia or Zipporah, the fact remains that Miriam and Aaron should have never used Moses’ marriage as justification to develop feelings of self importance and envy, resulting in their murmuring against Moses. They later acknowledged and repented of their sin, so that God could continue to use them in His great plan (verse 11).

Joseph’s Egyptian Wife

Another record to be considered in this context is Joseph’s marriage to the Egyptian daughter of a priest. Did Joseph violate God’s command against marrying a Gentile and pagan non-believer?

Why did Joseph marry Asenath, the daughter of an Egyptian priest? Genesis 41:44–46 reads as follows:

“Pharaoh also said to Joseph, ‘I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.’ And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-Paaneah [the Margin of the *New King James Bible* states here: “Probably Egyptian for ‘God Speaks and He Lives.’”]. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt. Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

We also read, in Genesis 46:20: “And to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him.”

In Genesis 48, we read the stirring account of Jacob’s adoption of

Joseph's two sons (Genesis 48:5); his blessing of the two sons; his placing his name (that of "Israel") on them (verse 16); and his "setting Ephraim before Manasseh," Joseph's firstborn son (verse 20). Jacob prophesied that Manasseh would become a great people, but that Ephraim would be "greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations" (verse 19). We know from history that Manasseh became the United States of America, while Ephraim became Great Britain and the Commonwealth of nations—quite literally "a multitude" of nations.

With this background, let us begin to answer why Joseph submitted to Pharaoh and accepted from him, in marriage, Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah, the priest of On.

Some propose that Poti-Pherah and Asenath were not pagan worshippers.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, states:

"[Joseph's] naturalization was completed by this alliance with a family of high distinction. On being founded by an Arab colony, Poti-pherah, like Jethro [father-in-law of Moses], priest of Midian, might be a worshipper of the true God; and thus Joseph, a pious man, will be freed from the charge of marrying an idolatress for worldly ends."

This conclusion is not necessarily negated by the fact that Poti-Pherah and Asenath were called with pagan names. The *Ryrie Study Bible* comments: "In order to 'Egyptianize' Joseph, Pharaoh gave him an Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife. The meaning of his Egyptian name is uncertain. Asenath means 'she belongs to Neith' (a goddess of the Egyptians). On is the city of Heliopolis, a center for the worship of the sun god, Ra."

Still, the fact that Joseph's wife and his father-in-law were called by such names does not prove that they were pagan worshippers. Pharaoh gave Joseph an Egyptian name which could, in some contexts, refer to an Egyptian god (compare the *Nelson Study Bible*). However, it is interesting that the Bible, apart from this passage in Genesis 41, never uses this name to refer to Joseph.

The *New Student Bible* comments: "Proud Egyptians did not care for Hebrews. In order that Joseph's ethnic past be erased as quickly as possible, Pharaoh gave Joseph an Egyptian name and married him into a prominent Egyptian family. Joseph gave his own sons Hebrew names,

however, a practice that suggests he maintained his own identity."

In addition, *Soncino* points out that the Hebrew word for "priest" in "priest of On," i.e., *kohen*, can also be translated as "ruler," as is the case in 2 Samuel 8:18. In that passage, the *Authorized Version* says, "chief rulers," while the *New King James Bible* says, "chief ministers." In any event, the meaning in 2 Samuel 8:18 is clearly not one of a religious function. Accordingly, *Soncino* suggests as a possibility that in Genesis 41:45, Poti-Pherah was not a "priest" of On, but a "ruler" of On.

Others feel strongly that Joseph's wife and father-in-law were pagan worshippers at the time of Joseph's marriage. If so, such a marriage would have been against God's Law. Abraham insisted that his son Isaac would not marry a wife "from the daughters of the Canaanites," but from his own family and country (Genesis 24:3-4). Later, God specifically prohibited the Israelites to "make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land [of Canaan] where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst" (Exodus 34:12). He warned them not to "take of [an idolater's] daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods" (Exodus 34:16).

In this light, the following statements by the *Broadman Bible Commentary* are quite interesting:

"The name given Joseph is an Egyptian one probably meaning, 'the God speaks and he hears'...., a pagan testimony to the reality of God in Joseph's life. Potiphara is pure Egyptian, meaning 'he whom Re gave,' and is essentially the same name as Potiphar. Asenath means 'belonging to (goddess) Neith.' Potiphara was priest of On, one of the most influential offices in Egypt. Joseph married into one of the most prominent priestly families in Egypt, but they were nevertheless pagan. Isaac and Jacob had secured wives from their own cultural background.

"Joseph did the very thing which the others sought to avoid. Could this deed possibly have met with God's approval? The writer of the Joseph story is silent, but that silence does not necessarily mean assent... It does not appear to be coincidence that the descendants of Joseph and Asenath, the principal northern tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, were always addicted to idolatry. The golden calves of Jeroboam I in North Israel were based upon experiences during the flight from Egypt (cf. Exodus 32:4 with 1 Kings 12:28). Thus the silence of this section

of Genesis is followed by the judgment of history.”

It is noteworthy that the modern descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh are likewise steeped in paganism and idolatry. Religious feasts such as Christmas or Easter are being celebrated, which have nothing to do with true Christianity, but which are clearly derived from pagan worship. For more information, please read our free booklet, *Don't Keep Christmas*.

Whether Asenath was a pagan idolatress or not, it is clear that God never allowed His followers to marry unbelievers. This is true today for Christians, as it was always true in God's eyes, since God does not change. We read in 1 Corinthians 7:39 that a marriage should be conducted “only in the Lord.”

However, we are also told that a believing mate is not to divorce from his or her unbelieving mate, if the “unbelieving” mate is pleased to dwell with the believer, and that their children are “holy,” having access to God (1 Corinthians 7:12–14). Ephraim and Manasseh's descendants did not have to become idolaters. They could have continued to follow God. The same can be said about the modern descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh. God warns them today, through His Church, of impending disaster. They COULD listen and repent of their evil deeds, as the ancient Ninevites did (compare the book of Jonah). The question is, Will *they*?

One Final Thought

We need to add here the following clarifying comments to shed light on some, perhaps unusual, situations in this present day. When a couple has been living together without being legally married, and they are both called to the Truth and want to go God's Way of Life, they must either marry or separate themselves. If only one of the partners is called, then he or she could not normally marry an “unbeliever,” but in case of a “common law” marriage, especially when there are children, then the Church would recommend to legalize the relationship which has been in existence for a long time, if both partners want to get legally married. Counsel with a true minister of God would be highly advisable in such a case, but this would constitute an “exception” to the general rule that a believer cannot marry an unbeliever, and if both partners are willing to get married legally, they should do

so immediately, prior to the baptism of the partner who is being called. This same principle would apply in situations which are discussed in **Chapter 9** in this booklet.

Chapter 8

Marriage

Marriage is an area that was clear-cut until more recent times when there have been great changes. In a comprehensive review on British social attitudes regarding personal relationships (bsa.natcen.ac.uk), the following was written:

“The British public’s thinking about these issues, its sense of moral right and wrong, has been strongly shaped by a Christian tradition, especially since the rise of Victorian morality in the second half of the nineteenth century. Marriage, as the officially sanctioned institution within which a man and woman can live together, be intimate and have children, has played a key role in governing how people are expected to live. Behaviour falling outside these boundaries – be it homosexuality, sex outside marriage, [adultery], divorce, cohabitation or illegitimacy – was at best frowned upon, and at worst the subject of official or unofficial sanctions, depending on the historical period in question.

“Discussion of the social significance of marriage rarely leaves the headlines. This is particularly true when the topic concerns children, as shown by the long-running debates about whether or not parents’ choice to cohabit rather than marry has a negative impact on their children’s social and developmental outcomes (*Goodman and Greaves, 2010*). Most recently, the passage of the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Bill through the House of Commons and subsequently through the House of Lords in 2013 attracted ferocious debates among both Conservative MPs and the party faithful more generally. Many opponents couched their opposition to the Bill by reference to the ‘sanctity’ of heterosexual marriage, the union between a man and woman that has long been the social, legal and religious norm—and for many the ideal—when it comes to sex and parenthood.

“Despite these debates, the last 30 years have seen huge changes in

Britain's marital behaviour, with an increasing proportion of people either delaying getting married or not marrying at all."

There is an erroneous automatic assumption that all change is good. In the case of marriage, the current view is in direct contradiction to the Word of God. God created us all and knows what is good for us. Man makes up his own rules and laws according to what society wants and will allow. The difference is that one way leads to happiness when implemented correctly and the other way often ends in tears.

Our free booklet, *The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families*, gives a comprehensive analysis of the Christian marriage as well as family life. We encourage the reader to check out this booklet for much more information on this subject. In spite of society trying to redefine marriage to include *same sex marriage*, the Bible is clear that marriage is between a man and a woman.

One female psychologist wrote: "What Marriage Would Look Like If We Actually Followed the Bible?" It was yet another attack on the Bible and promoted alternative and sinful lifestyles. Those who stay with biblical injunctions are considered "change-averse," and this writer asserted that "Freedom to marry will expand, as will other rights related to sexuality, reproduction, and family formation; and some conservative Bible believers will adapt to these changes as they have others: reluctantly and with angry protests, but in the end accepting the new normal, and perhaps even insisting that it was God's will all along."

That is the sort of nonsense propounded by the liberals in society who are intent on doing as they please and disparaging the Bible at every opportunity. That is what the people of God are up against but we should not be surprised as this was foretold in the pages of the Word of God.

Yes, marriage is between a man and a woman, and any other variation is not recognized by God in His Word. Same-sex marriage and any other variation is man-made and is in direct contravention of biblical injunction.

God's Instruction From the Beginning

One Christian commentator opined correctly that "early in Genesis, the book of beginnings, we find God's design for marriage. This text describing the original marriage is the basis for almost everything else

the Bible says about marriage. It explains God's reason for designing marriage and also gives us many principles which, if applied, will enable us to build solid, satisfying marriages which honour God. The text teaches us that God designed marriage to meet our need for companionship and to provide an illustration of our relationship with Him."

While it may be unfashionable, we take the Word of God seriously and unashamedly in spite of the mainly secular society in which we live. We read in Genesis 2:18, 20–23 that God provided a wife, Eve, for Adam. Verse 24 is critical: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh," and this is the biblical example at the dawn of civilization. One man and one woman and no other variation is mentioned nor acceptable, and in Genesis 1:28 they were told to "Be fruitful and multiply," and that is supposed to happen only when two people of the opposite sex are united in marriage.

There is one aspect of marriage that seems to be rarely, if ever, discussed.

In Genesis 2:24 we read: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." We might ask why the Bible teaches that a man is to leave his parents in order to cleave to his wife? What is meant by this? Does this also mean, by extension, that the wife is to leave her parents as well, in order to cleave to her husband?

The Bible is very explicit, for important reasons, to enjoin the newly married couple to live separately from their parents. In addition to this instruction in Genesis 2:24, we read later, in Matthew 19:5, that Jesus Christ quotes this very Scripture with approval, to explain and to uphold the sanctity of the marriage relationship.

Commentaries agree that this command is meant to be taken and obeyed quite literally. A reason for this command is given in the *Ryrie Study Bible*, as follows, "Jesus cites the purpose of God in creation that husband and wife should be one flesh—the oneness of kinship or fellowship with the body as a medium, causing marriage to be the deepest physical and spiritual unity."

The *Nelson Study Bible* elaborates, "The implication is that the Creator is Lord and is the One who determines what is the ideal in marriage... God ordained marriage as the strongest bond in all

human relationships. A man leaves his parents and is joined to his wife.

“The language is very strong here. *Leave* means ‘to abandon’; *joined to* means ‘to be glued to.’ The most permanent relationship in society is not between parent and child, but between husband and wife.”

The biblical injunction to “leave their parents” is given to a newly-wed couple, as they need to spend much time together—apart from everyone else—to become a “physical and spiritual unity.” They cannot, and will not, achieve this goal, by staying with the husband’s or the wife’s parents in the same household, and under the same roof. This is not to say, of course, that the newly-wed couple is not to visit their parents often, continuing to show them respect and honor, as commanded in Scripture (Exodus 20:12). But, the couple are to live separately from the parents. Of course, later on in life, the couple may have to take into their home a lonely parent who might otherwise not be able to take care of himself or herself.

A *spiritual analogy* of leaving the parents and clinging to his or her mate could also be seen in the fact that Jesus is the Husband of His wife, the Church, to whom He is betrothed at this point (Ephesians 5:30–32; 2 Corinthians 11:2) and with whom He will consummate the marriage when He returns. The wife (the Church) has to leave behind the world to cleave to Her Husband (Revelation 19:7).

Marrying Only When Fully Prepared

If a young couple cannot afford, financially, to start a new home away from their parents, they should not get married until they are able to do so. It is the duty of the husband to provide for his family. He should be financially able to do so before getting married. Proverbs 24:27 instructs, “Prepare your outside work, Make it fit for yourself in the field; And afterward build your house.”

In his book, *The Missing Dimension in Sex*, Herbert W. Armstrong wrote, on page 228 of the hard-cover version, “The best age for a man to marry is around twenty-four to twenty-six, after he has devoted those top aptitude years between sixteen and twenty-five for mature education, experience and preparation—after he has acquired the knowledge, preparation and preliminary experience to assume adult responsibilities—after he is able to assume the responsibility of supporting a wife—and family.”

God wants us to have a happy and fulfilled marriage. One of the

keys for success in marriage is to follow God's instruction to a newly-wed couple to leave their parents, and to cleave to each other. In other words, the newly-wed couple needs to be looking to one another for support in the shared responsibilities of the marriage. If they are staying with either set of parents at the outset of their marriage, they are effectively asking the parents to share in this responsibility, thus illustrating the inability of the newly-wed couple to support themselves.

How sad that humans (seemingly) think that they know better than the One who created them. As a consequence, they have to endure all of the misery and suffering that is the legacy of ignoring the wise advice freely available in the Bible. Irrespective of changes in society and the development of new cultural norms and attitudes, the institution of marriage between a man and a woman is holy and was created by God. Everything else is just an ungodly counterfeit.

On the website of *thinkinganglicans.org.uk*, this communiqué from the GAFCON primates, meeting in Lagos, Nigeria, was issued on 30th April 2017:

"During our meeting, we considered how best to respond to the voice of faithful Anglicans in some parts of the Global North who are in need of biblically faithful episcopal leadership. Of immediate concern is the reality that on 8th June 2017 the Scottish Episcopal Church is likely to formalize their rejection of Jesus' teaching on marriage. (Our comment: This did take place as anticipated). If this were to happen, faithful Anglicans in Scotland will need appropriate pastoral care.

"In addition, within England there are churches that have, for reasons of conscience, been planted outside of the Church of England by the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE). These churches are growing, and are in need of episcopal leadership. Therefore, we have decided to consecrate a missionary bishop who will be tasked with providing episcopal leadership for those who are outside the structures of any Anglican province, especially in Europe."

It is interesting that an African missionary is thought necessary to be sent to the UK over the rejection of biblical marriage by the Scottish Episcopal Church as the same-sex marriage issue takes root.

In days gone by, missionaries from the UK and other Western nations were sent to Africa to evangelize there.

How times have changed!

Chapter 9

Interracial Marriage

It is important to understand what the Bible has to say about the subject of interracial marriages.

Let us first of all explain that no ethnic group, race or color is superior or better than another. The concept, as taught by Hitler and others, that there exists a master race is simply demonic. This Satanic concept was derived from the equally demonic concept of the Theory of Evolution, which holds that only the fittest animals survive while those less fit die out. Hitler, adopting racial theories taught by quite a few at his time, both inside and outside of Germany, applied the Theory of Evolution to man (after all, according to that abominable concept, man is just the highest developed form of an animal). Hitler postulated that the Germanic race was a superior master race to all other races. This idea, which ultimately caused mass murders of millions of innocent people, is clearly inspired by Satan and is nowhere taught in the Bible.

God's Word does teach, however, that God created different races of people for a purpose. Biblically speaking, and as explained below, God created basically three different races or colors of people—the yellow, the white and the black races. God made of one blood all the nations of men (Acts 17:26). Eve is identified as the mother of all humans (Genesis 3:20). All humans are children of God through Adam, and God intends for all to repent in order to attain the potential of man—the reason for man's creation—to become a born-again spiritual member of the God Family (Galatians 3:28–29; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 21:3–7). There is no superior race of people in God's eyes.

In a letter from the Personal Correspondence Department of the (now defunct) *Worldwide Church of God*, dated January 1988, the long-standing teaching of the Church was set forth as follows:

“God created Eve with the capability of producing children having the varied characteristics that are now manifested in the different races... The children and grandchildren of Adam and Eve would have naturally separated into families of racially similar people, and as they continued to marry within their own groups, distinct racial traits would have become established. God tells us that He separated the families of man and decreed the boundaries of their dwelling places (Deuteronomy 32:8; Acts 17:26). Natural barriers, such as mountain ranges and oceans, would have served to keep the racial families apart and prevent amalgamation. Thus, God intended that there be different races and He caused them to develop.”

In a related letter from the Personal Correspondence Department of the *Worldwide Church of God*, dated January 1988, these additional statements were made:

“Anciently, God separated the different races by giving each its own area of the world to develop (Genesis 10:5, 32...). He placed them where geographic features... formed great natural barriers and boundaries between them. He obviously did not want different people to intermingle. Notice also that Abraham... was deeply concerned that his son Isaac should find a wife among his own people rather than from among the Canaanites, who were a different people (Genesis 24). In turn, Isaac instructed his son Jacob to go back to their ancestral home to find a wife (Genesis 28:1–2)... It is in keeping with these biblical principles, then, for a person to marry someone of the same race and who is compatible in personality, culture, temperament, and outlook on life. Disregarding these principles is likely to result in problems and hardships for the couple and for the children.”

Some claim that Abraham and Isaac only asked their sons not to marry a Canaanite woman because the Canaanites were pagan idol worshippers. They say that the request had nothing to do with race—even though Isaac and Jacob were white, while the Canaanites were black (Canaan was the son of Ham. The word Ham means “dark.” On the other hand, Genesis 12:11 describes Sarai, Abram’s wife, as “fair” or of “beautiful countenance.” The word in Hebrew means, “bright.” A scroll from the Dead Sea states about Sarai that “her brightness was lovely.”)

The concept that Abraham’s and Isaac’s sons were not to marry

Canaanite women just because of religion cannot be correct. We read in Genesis 11:28 that Abraham (then called Abram) lived in Ur of the Chaldeans. Ur means “fire”—it was a place of worship of the pagan fire god. Joshua 24:2,14 tells us that Abram’s relatives were idol worshippers.

The *Broadman Bible Commentary* states: “Both Ur and Haran [where Abram went when he left Ur] were important centers of moon worship, and his living there indicates that Terah [Abram’s father] probably was involved in that cult. The fact, however, that Terah practiced idolatry (Josh. 24:2) does not mean that he was not also acquainted with the true God. Laban asserts that the God of Nahor and Terah was the God of Abraham ([Genesis] 31:53).”

The Bible strongly indicates that Abraham’s relatives, Laban, Rebekkah and Rachel, were still involved in idolatry at the time when Abraham’s servant appeared to seek a wife for Isaac, and when Jacob came to live with that family. We read that upon Jacob’s departure, his wife Rachel stole the household idols of her father Laban (Genesis 31:34, 30). From this it follows that Abraham’s and Isaac’s requests of their sons not to marry Canaanite women (the Canaanites were idol worshippers) was not ONLY based on religion (as Laban and his household were still engaged in idol worship, too). It HAD to also be based on race. The following explanations will make this fact clearer.

Noah Was Perfect in His Generations

To introduce the next section, let us just state that the *Church of the Eternal God* and its affiliates teach what was taught under Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong (1892–1986), who was the late human leader of the Worldwide Church of God. Unless we can prove from Scripture that the doctrines or practices that were taught by Mr. Armstrong were wrong, we will abide by those doctrines and practices.

With this background, let us focus on Mr. Armstrong’s book, *Mystery of the Ages*. In that book, Mr. Armstrong had much to say about the origin of the races and the concept of interracial marriage. When discussing the reasons for the worldwide flood at the time of Noah, Mr. Armstrong pointed out the following, on page 147 (hard copy):

“Noah was ‘perfect’ in his generations [Genesis 6:9 reads: “Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations.”]. That is, his heredity, ancestry

(Genesis 6:9). Proof of this lies in the meaning of the Hebrew word translated 'perfect.' It may refer either to spiritual character (Genesis 17:1) or to physical characteristics (Leviticus 22:21). Therefore Genesis 6:9 allows the translation that Noah was either 'blameless' or 'unblemished.' The context (Genesis 6:2) clearly indicates the latter is the intended meaning of 'perfect.' So a good rendering of Genesis 6:9 is that Noah was the only 'just' man (in spiritual character), and also 'unblemished' (in his genetic heritage) among his contemporaries."

Appendix 26 of *The Companion Bible* seems to confirm this understanding. Note its comments about this Hebrew word, translated "perfect" or "unblemished" in verse 9 of Genesis 6:

"The Heb. word *tamiym* means without blemish, and is the technical word for bodily and physical perfection, and, not moral. Hence it is used of animals of sacrificial purity. It is rendered without blemish in Ex. 12.5; 29.1; Lev. 1.3, 10; 3.1, 6; 4.3, 23, 28, 32; 5.12, 18; 6.6; 9.2, 3; 14.10; 22.19; 23.12, 18; Num. 6.14; 28.19, 31; 29.2, 8, 13, 20, 23, 29, 32, 36; Ezek. 43.22, 23, 25; 45.18, 23; 46.4, 6, 13. Without spot: Num. 19.2; 28.3, 9, 11; 29.17, 26."

Mr. Armstrong, when describing the worldwide conditions at the time of Noah, continued on pages 148–149:

"...men 'took them wives of all which THEY chose [Genesis 6:2]'. There was rampant and universal interracial marriage—so exceedingly universal that Noah, only, was unblemished or perfect in his generations—his ancestry. He was of the original white strain. It is amply evident that by the time of Noah there were at least the three primary or major racial strains on earth, the white, yellow and black, although interracial marriage produced many racial mixtures. God does not reveal in the Bible the precise origin of the different races.

"It is evident that Adam and Eve were created white. God's chosen nation Israel was white. Jesus was white. But it is a fair conjecture that in mother Eve were created ovaries containing the yellow and black genes, as well as white, so that some of the children of Adam and Eve gave rise to black, yellow, as well as white. The one man God chose to PRESERVE the human race alive after the Flood was perfect in his generations—all his ancestry back to Adam was of the one strain, and undoubtedly that happened to be white—**NOT that white is in any sense superior...** [Noah's] wife and three sons were of that same white strain. But Japheth

evidently had married an Oriental woman, and Ham a black.”

Another way of explaining the existence of different races would be that the three sons of Noah—Shem, Ham and Japheth—were white, black and yellow. As mentioned before, the meaning of the word “Ham” is black. This would mean that God created Eve with the capacity of producing black, white and yellow offspring.

The Scattering at the Tower of Babel

After the Flood, Noah’s descendants tried to build a great tower at Babel, so that they would not be “scattered abroad.” Mr. Armstrong comments on these events on pages 151 and 152 of his book:

“These people were not only of one language, they were of three races or families—white, yellow and black. Just as God created varieties in many species of flowers and of animals—for example, many varieties and colors of roses—for greater beauty, so God created the three races and colors of human skin. God intended to prevent racial intermarriages. But man has always wanted to violate God’s laws, intentions and ways. They wanted to become one race or family through intermarriage of races... God had set the bounds of the races, providing for geographical segregation, in peace and harmony but without discrimination. But the people wanted to be of one amalgamated people. One purpose of the tower of Babel was to unite them, and to prevent them from being scattered...”

But we read that God confounded their languages and scattered them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Some claim that Judah, one of Jacob’s sons, married Shua, purportedly a woman from a different race. This would not prove, however, that God favored interracial marriages. The Bible contains many examples when Judah did not live up to God’s standards. He even violated his own daughter-in-law, and he was instrumental in selling his own brother Joseph into slavery.

Some say that interracial marriage is perfectly acceptable to God, as Joseph married an Egyptian and Moses an Ethiopian. We discuss these episodes in **Chapter 7** of this booklet, “Unequally Yoked.” IF Joseph had married a pagan idol worshipper from a different race, he would have been wrong. (In any event, this argument does not assist those who advocate interracial marriages, as they still have to admit that

Joseph would have acted wrongly by marrying an idol worshipper.) But Joseph might not have done any of this. As we explained in **Chapter 7**, Joseph's wife might not have been an idol-worshipper at all. Furthermore, there is no proof that she, as an Egyptian, was of a different race or a black woman, so that Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were not of "mixed blood."

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, states the following:

"The question of the race of ancient Egyptians was raised historically as a product of the early racial concepts of the 18th and 19th centuries... A variety of views circulated about the racial identity of the Egyptians... [In] an article published in *The New-England Magazine* of October 1833... the authors dispute a claim that 'Herodotus was given as authority for their being negroes.' ... in 1839... Jacques Joseph Champollion-Figeac... blamed the ancients for spreading a false impression of a Negro Egypt, stating 'The opinion that the ancient population of Egypt belonged to the Negro African race, is an error long accepted as the truth...'

"In 1854, Josiah C. Nott with George Glidden set out to prove 'that the Caucasian or white, and the Negro races were distinct at a very remote date, and that the *Egyptians were Caucasians*.' Samuel George Morton, a physician and professor of anatomy, concluded that although 'Negroes were numerous in Egypt... their social position in ancient times was the same that it now is [in the United States], that of servants and slaves.'...

"Egypt has experienced a number of foreign invasions during historical times, including by the Canaanites (Hyksos), the Ancient Libyans, the Nubians, the Assyrians, the Scythians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Macedonian Greeks, the Romans (Byzantium in late antiquity/early Middle Ages), the Arabs, the Turks, and the British.

"In 1975, the mummy of Ramesses II was taken to France for preservation. The mummy was also forensically tested by Professor Pierre-Fernand Ceccaldi, the chief forensic scientist at the Criminal Identification Laboratory of Paris, who wrote: 'Hair, astonishingly preserved, showed some complementary data - especially about pigmentation: Ramses II was a Red haired cymnotriche leucoderma', that is a *fair-skinned* person with wavy red hair."

Even though the question about the race of the Egyptians at the

time of Joseph is still being debated by scholars, there is really no compelling reason to conclude that Joseph's wife was black.

We also discussed Moses' conduct of marrying an Ethiopian woman in **Chapter 7**, which might have occurred long before his conversion—before he actually knew God and His laws, which would explain why God was angry with Miriam and Aaron to bring up something that might have occurred more than 40 years earlier.

In any event, the episodes pertaining to Joseph and Moses cannot be used to prove that interracial marriages are in accordance with God's Will, as we explain in detail. Note that when God chose the nation of Israel to offer them physical blessings, He never called them for salvation. Rather, God was fulfilling an unconditional promise that He had made to Abraham because of his unquestioned obedience and loyalty to God.

On pages 166–173 of the aforementioned book, Mr. Armstrong explains the reason for the nation's call to PHYSICAL greatness:

“WHY did God raise up this special Hebrew nation as the ‘chosen people’? WHY, when God never made accessible to them his Holy Spirit? One point to notice here. The probability is that these people were all—or nearly all—of the white racial strain, unchanged since creation. After Jacob and his sons and families had come into Egypt at Joseph's behest, they were kept in the locale of Goshen—geographically separated from the Egyptians, marrying among themselves.

“In this connection, go back momentarily to Abraham. He prevented his son Isaac from intermarrying among the dark Canaanites then in the land... Jacob had six sons by Leah, two from Rachel—all of the same original racial stock, and two each from the maids of Rachel and Leah... Even the maids of Leah and Rachel undoubtedly were of pure Hebrew stock... [As a note of interest, our discussion above shows that Joseph's marriage to an Egyptian princess and the birth of their children, Ephraim and Manasseh, do not negate the accuracy of Herbert Armstrong's comments in regard to the white racial strain of Israel.]

“[Israel] became God's chosen nation. BUT WHY?...

“Undoubtedly, one reason was to preserve the original physical racial strain... Here was a people of almost clear racial strain, and the God believing heredity of Abraham, Isaac and Israel... They, despite their favorable heredity, FAILED UTTERLY TO QUALIFY... The Promised

Land was then called Canaan. Canaanites, racially dark, had settled in the land. But God had given this land to the racial descendants of Abraham BY PROMISE! It did not belong to the Canaanites or other races settled there... GOD INTENDED TO KEEP THEM [the nation of Israel] PHYSICALLY SEPARATE from other nations—both nationally (racially) and religiously. For them to intermarry with other races would result in two things: It would interbreed them into other races, and mix them into other idolatrous religions!... Much later, after the captivities of both Israel and Judah, God sent a colony of Jews...to Jerusalem. Against God's command, the people of the colony began to intermarry with Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites and other races, 'so that the holy seed [racially pure, for they had not the Holy Spirit] had mingled themselves with the people of those lands...' (Ezra 9:2)."

As Mr. Armstrong goes on to explain, God proved, by choosing a physical nation with everything going for them, that they were still unable to obey Him without His Holy Spirit within them. Their heredity and environment, and even the fact that God Himself was among them, did NOT prevent them from sinning and rebelling against Him. What a lesson of history—and what a warning for us today, not to neglect the gift of God's Holy Spirit within us.

Paul Does Not Justify Interracial Marriages

Some have claimed that Paul teaches in Galatians 3:28 that interracial marriages are now in accordance with God's Will. This is not true. Galatians 3:28 addresses the spiritual potential of all men, from all races, ethnic groups or cultures. It says: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This Scripture cannot be used to justify interracial marriages; because with the same argument, we might as well justify homosexual or lesbian relationships (as it says, "there is neither male nor female."). As stated, this Scripture strictly addresses the equality of our calling. "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:35).

From all the biblical evidence at our disposal, and considering the long-standing teaching of the Church on this subject, we must conclude *that entering* an interracial marriage relationship is not in

accordance with God's Will.

However, couples who *are* married interracially are not to separate for that reason. The Church has NEVER asked interracially married couples to separate. This booklet is written to caution those who might be thinking of marrying interracially. Administratively, ministers of the *Church of the Eternal God* and its affiliates have carefully considered this issue and concluded, barring extraordinary circumstances, that they could not, in good conscience, officiate over a marriage which is clearly, obviously and visibly interracial. However, this would *not* include marriage candidates who are of "mixed" blood. The Church has always taught, for instance, that a child of a black and a white parent is free to marry a black or a white person. We are only addressing clear cases here.

We state the following in our free booklet, *Old Testament Laws—Still Valid Today?*, under "Marriage Prohibitions" (page 13):

"God did not intend *interracial marriages*—a union between clearly defined members of different races. God had originally separated the races and nations to prevent interracial marriages. According to Scripture, there are three different races—black, white and yellow. This means, a member of the white race should not marry a member of a black race, and so on. In our modern inter-connected world, *this distinction has now become more and more academic*, since the prohibition does not apply to members of mixed races who would be free to marry any member of a different race. That is, a descendant of a black mother and a white father could marry someone within the black or white community, etc."

God designed all ethnic groups and races from one human ancestral pair, and all members of every ethnic group and race are made in the image and likeness of God. All Spirit-begotten members in the Church are spiritual brethren, irrespective of any other consideration. It is God's purpose and command that we preach the true gospel to every ethnic group and race in the world, without fear or favor. The Bible forbids a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, and the Scriptural evidence shows us that marrying someone of another color, as explained here, is also not in accordance with God's Will.

At the same time, our comments regarding "common law" marriages

between a believer and an unbeliever (compare **Chapter 7**, “Unequally Yoked,” of this booklet) apply as well to interracial couples who are not legally married, but who have been living together as if being married. That is, in the case of a “common law” marriage, especially when there are children, the Church would recommend prior to the baptism of one or both partners, to legalize the relationship which has been in existence for a long time, if both partners want to get legally married. Counsel with a true minister of God would be highly advisable in such a case, but this would constitute an “exception” to the general rule that there should not be interracial marriages, and if both partners are willing to get married legally, they should do so immediately.

Chapter 10

Relationships in the Home

In previous chapters, we looked at marriage relationships. In this chapter we will probe further into other aspects of relationships within the home.

In **Chapter 3**, we looked at the “frog in boiling water” principle and the state that we have arrived at over many years of change. Not only has the biblical principle of marriage been altered in so many ways, but the leadership and relationship structure in the home has also been turned upside-down. There can be no argument that in the last few decades, many things have been redefined, perhaps none more so than the responsibilities that men and women have within the home, as well as in society in general.

Society, often in the guise of the most energetic activists with usually the loudest voices, along with opportunities to propound their new “understanding” of what should be done in any given set of circumstances, accepts these new radical views while the silent majority remain just that—silent. Accordingly, the outrageous and abnormal practices take root and, little by little, overtake what was previously the accepted way. Of course, poor practices do need improvement, but when God-ordained roles are tinkered with and wrong alterations are allowed free rein, then trouble cannot be too far away.

Galatians 3:28 tells us the following: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” God does not have favorites but He has assigned the order of a family.

The Bible is very clear, and we will examine from the Word of God what the ideal is. We will be able to see how far the current practice around the world has moved away from the Bible.

The Position and Role of a Husband

At the beginning of re-creation around 6,000 years ago, God established the husband's authority from the very beginning. "And the LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him'" (Genesis 2:18). This is then reported in verses 20–23: "So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to *every beast of the field*. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

Adam was given the authority to name the animals (cattle, birds and every beast *on the field*), after which he named his wife "woman." We read in Genesis 3:20: "And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living."

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, we read: "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." There we have the structure—

God the Father, Jesus Christ, the husband and then the wife. At this point, the women's lib movements will usually protest vehemently about this piece of Scripture, but God Himself says that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). We should not use the "pick and mix" approach of so many, agreeing with the bits we like and disagreeing with the inconvenient bits.

More instruction on this subject is found in Ephesians 5:25–28: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself." And in verse 33: "Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife *see* that she respects *her* husband."

Colossians 3:19 reads: “Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.”

1 Peter 3:7 adds: “Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* (a wife) with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”

1 Timothy 3:5 talks about the qualifications for an elder in the Church of God: “... (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?).”

A man is also expected to provide for his family: “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8). With authority comes responsibility, as this verse clearly shows.

Far too many men today can be too passive, allowing their wives to take over and “wear the trousers.” That is not the way that God ordained the roles in marriage. The husband is the “head of the household” and should take his responsibilities seriously, but in the right, proper and loving way. It does not mean an autocratic approach where everything he says goes; but his wife is to be cared for, respected and looked after properly as is the duty of a good husband.

The Position and Role of a Wife

We read in Genesis 2:18: “And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make a helper comparable to him.’” She was equal to Adam and was created to assist her husband, not to be the leader.

The role of the husband in Ephesians 5 is quoted above, but in the same chapter, the role of the wife is mentioned in verses 22–24: “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”

We can see that the physical roles are inextricably linked with the spiritual explanation about Christ loving the Church, which has both male and female members. There is no favoritism here, only clearly-defined roles.

That is a verse that does not go down well with a lot of women, and

it is not a cultural matter as some would have you believe. Paul used a “creation argument” for the establishment of male leadership, meaning that God established this order from the beginning. The firstborn child would often receive a double portion of the inheritance. The birth order showed one’s rank. Similarly, Paul said God’s creation of Adam was by sovereign design. It was meant to show his leadership in relation to his wife.

In the *New King James Bible*, the sub-heading of Colossians 3:8 is, “The Christian Home,” and verse 18 gives an admonition to wives: “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”

At the same time, we read in Ephesians 5:21 that husband and wife ought to *submit to each other* in the fear of the Lord. We state the following in our free booklet, *Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians*:

“Even though it is the foremost responsibility for the **wife to submit** to her husband as to the Lord (verse 22; Colossians 3:18)—that is, submitting to him when his requests are in conformity with Christ’s teachings and not contrary to the will of God (compare *Albert Barnes’ Note on the Bible*)—so the **husband is to love his wife** as Christ loves the Church (Ephesians 5:25).

“And still, Paul introduces this section in verse 21 with the admonition to **submit one to another** in the fear of the Lord. Even though the husband is the head of the wife (1 Corinthians 11:3), as Christ is the head of the husband, he is not to act selfishly and pursue just his own interests. Rather, he has to have the mind of Christ, and if he does, then he will also look out for and submit to the interests of his wife—as his wife will to the interests of her husband (Philippians 2:5, 4).”

Sexual conduct plays a big part in this regard. We read Paul’s admonition to husbands and wives in 1 Corinthians 7:3–5:

“Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

Paul wrote about “men and women in the church” in 1 Timothy 2:12–13, where we read: “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to

have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve." This, again, is not a matter of men's superiority over women, because we are all equal in the sight of God. Yes, men and women are equal, but they do have different roles to play.

Sarah, Abraham's wife, was submissive to her husband and this was an example for the early New Testament Church and for everyone else since. It reads in 1 Peter 3:5–6: "For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror."

Titus 2 shows "the qualities of a sound church," and verses 3–5 show the example that the women should play: "... the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed."

In the book of Proverbs, we read of the value of a good wife:

Proverbs 12:4 says: "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who causes shame is like rottenness in his bones."

Proverbs 31:10–31 is about the virtuous wife, and the following extracts show her qualities and real value:

Verse 10: "Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies."

Verse 15: "She also rises while it is yet night, And provides food for her household, And a portion for her maidservants."

Verse 20: "She extends her hand to the poor, Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy."

Verses 25–31: "Strength and honor are her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all.' Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, And let her own works praise her in the gates."

That is quite an example!

The right relationship between a man and his wife, *including the right sexual conduct*, can be a blessing to both parties, and to the family when these principles are put into practice.

The Position and Role of Parents and Children in the Home

Many youngsters growing up today have no leadership role model when the father is absent and the mother has to assume responsibilities for raising children in a one-parent environment.

Unfortunately, with the free and easy *sexually-oriented society* that we have lived in for so many years, many men just procreate for self-satisfaction and then disappear off the scene. In such cases, and there are far too many, there is no proper male leadership in those homes and family units are destroyed pretty much before they even begin in far too many cases.

“Children are a heritage from the LORD” (Psalm 127:3), and in Deuteronomy 6:7–9, we find a great piece of advice about teaching them the Way of God:

“You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

There is a lot of good information in the book of Proverbs regarding raising children, and in Proverbs 22:6 we find a particularly wonderful piece of advice: “Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.” This will apply to all training – even if the parents don’t have any religious convictions, they can still guide the children in doing what is right and become a decent law-abiding member of society. This principle and command applies especially in regard to *sexual conduct*. Parents ought to teach their children what is right and wrong sexual behavior, which necessitates that they themselves know the difference and practice what is good.

Both husbands and wives should be involved in the upbringing of children and building close personal relationships with them that will last a lifetime. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1) and fathers are not to provoke their children (Ephesians 6:4). It

is mutual respect that will pay handsome dividends.

It is way beyond the scope of this chapter to cover such a huge subject and what we have looked at is but a brief overview of roles and relationships within the home. Much more information is contained in our free booklet, *The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families*.

Relationships within the home are of paramount importance, and success in this area will produce some very good outcomes.

Chapter 11

What is a Family?

There is so much confusion about the definition of a family today where secular society, governments and politicians have made up their own definitions, and so this question as to what is a family is not quite as simple as it might at first seem.

Marriage and the family have long been accepted as the building blocks on which a stable society is founded. However, attitudes have changed; the liberal society with its permissiveness has invaded every nook and cranny of society, and instead of looking for inspiration and direction from the Word of God, most countries now find themselves overtaken by secularism. God is generally excluded from any discussions about right and wrong, with man making up his own definitions.

Human Definitions

One UK politician said that a family was any group of people who live together. That was something that he thought up without consulting the Holy Bible. That means that he (and others) would consider that homosexuals living together would be a family, as would two lesbians. Cohabiting would also fall, erroneously, into that same category. Any group, however made up, would be a family! And politicians who make such ridiculous assertions are those who frame our laws!

The *BBC News* Channel published an article on November 6, 2007, with the title, “The UK family: In statistics,” stating the following:

“Families are changing shape and facing up to new lifestyle challenges. The facts and figures below give an idea of what the typical UK family looks like in the early 21st century.

“WHAT IS A ‘TYPICAL’ FAMILY?”

“There were 17.1 million families in the UK in 2006—up from 16.5 million in 1996. Most were still headed by a married couple (71%),

although the proportion of cohabiting couple families had increased to 14%, from 9% 10 years earlier.”

Of course, since that time, the percentage of married couples (between a man and a woman) has decreased in comparison, as the number of cohabiting couple families have increased and laws have been passed to legalize same-sex marriages (which is a contradiction in terms). Marriage, as God ordained it, is only between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24).

The official site of *PruHealth* states this, regarding the situation in the UK (which was and is not necessarily the same in other Western countries): “Civil unions are now permitted in Western countries, but for nearly a thousand years marriage in the Western world was a religious contract. The Christian church undertook its supervision in the 9th century, when newlywed couples instituted the practice of coming to the church door to have their union blessed by the priest. Eventually the church regulated marriage through canon law.”

Biblical Definition

While there is much confusion, even argument and debate in society about the definition of a family, the Bible gives us clear-cut answers.

The Creator God, who created man in His own image, gave a blueprint in His instruction manual for mankind to be able to enjoy life and live happily. The general definition of a family used to be: “A fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children.” We must further stress again that those parents should be married as the Bible clearly teaches, and that “living together” without being married is “fornication” and a sin. There are many verses in the Bible that condemn fornication (see 1 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; and many other references).

It is clear that marriage is between a man and a woman, who then have children. That group is a family. Of course with the divorce rate so high, a spouse can be left on his or her own to bring up any children from that union, which of course, is still a family.

Those who are reared in a family where Christianity is a strong influence will, in general, tend to be so minded, while those who are not brought up in a family with those same core values may very

well adopt a secular position. We know that there are examples where this does not apply, but often they would be in the minority. As was mentioned earlier, the book of Proverbs teaches us to “Train a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6; compare also Deuteronomy 6:6–9).

In a family environment, parents (or a parent) can teach their children the right way to go and how to follow the ways of God. We read in Proverbs 13:1: “A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.”

Many Christians believe that the family is the best place for having and raising children, and they believe that parents play an important role in showing their children, and non-family members, how much God loves and cares for them.

The five cardinal sins of Rome—and of all past great nations—are described in Edward Gibbon’s work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1788). The first of these five reasons was “the increase of divorce and breakdown of the family.” It happened then and it is happening again now!

We read in Hebrews 2:9–11: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

This passage, written by the apostle Paul, shows that Jesus “is not ashamed to call them brethren.” This clearly shows that true Christians are of the same family—the God Family. When they receive the Holy Spirit at the time of their baptism, they are *begotten* children of the God Family. When they are changed to immortality at the time of Christ’s return, they will be *born-again* members and God beings in God’s Family.

God Is a Family Now!

God is a Family already, consisting of God *the Father* and Jesus Christ *the Son*. In our free booklet, *God is a Family*, the following is

taken from page 1: “The Bible reveals that God is not just a single being, but is comprised of two separate beings. These two beings are often referred to as the ‘Father’ and the ‘Son,’ illustrating the fact that God is actually a Family. While the Bible reveals that God is, in fact, a Family, it also shows that God is not a trinity. The Holy Spirit is not God, nor is it a separate being within the God Family. It is literally the power of God through which the God Family works.”

If Satan the devil can confuse society as to what a family is, he is also able to hide the fact that Spirit-born members will become part of the God Family. Revelation 19:7–9 states the following about the marriage between Christ and His Church: “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb [Jesus Christ, compare Revelation 5:1–14] has come, and His wife [the Church, compare Ephesians 5:31–32] has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”’”

Satan wants to distract and divert those who are called by God, by causing confusion as to how much marriage matters and what a family is.

The last three paragraphs in our booklet, *God is a Family*, are very instructive:

“We would like to encourage our readers to read or re-read our free booklet, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of God*, which proves from the Bible that it is indeed the potential of man to enter the kingdom of God—by becoming a member of the Family of God.

“The very last book of the Bible tells us the destiny of those who become born again members, that is, Spirit beings—God beings—in the God Family. We read in Revelation 3:12, ‘He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God.’ They will receive God’s name—they will enter the very Family of God as born again spirit beings. Revelation 22:4 confirms this, ‘They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.’ At that time, they will be truly ‘born again’—and not before then. At that time, they will truly have inherited ‘all things.’

“Yes, God IS a Family—and He wants YOU to truly become a born

again member of His Family—His spiritual offspring. This is the reason WHY you were born. Just imagine YOUR awesome potential and destiny—to become, and to be named, GOD!”

The family, as correctly defined, is vital to a healthy society today. For even more information, please also read our free booklet, *The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families!*

In the future, in the Kingdom of God, all those who are saved and changed from physical into spirit will be members of the Family of God forever! Converted parents are to teach their children that they, too, have the potential of becoming GOD BEINGS in God’s FAMILY, but only, if they abide by God’s instructions about right conduct, *including in sexual matters.*

Chapter 12

Marriage Prohibitions

God created marriage as a union between a man and a woman. As we discussed, this would exclude marriage relationships between two men, or two women; nor would it allow polygamy—a practice that is covered in **Chapter 17** of this booklet.

In addition, as we will explain, the Bible prohibits marriages today between brothers and sisters or between a man and his niece. This then poses the question, Where did Cain get his wife after he had murdered his brother Abel?

In the booklet “In the Beginning...”, which was published by the (now defunct) *Worldwide Church of God*, the following answer is given:

“Cain married one of his sisters. There simply wasn’t any other female for him to marry. In Genesis 5:4–5 we read: ‘And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters: and all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died...’ These brothers and sisters would have had to marry each other in order to obey God’s command to propagate the human race (Gen. 1:28).”

The *Commentary on the Torah* by Richard Elliott Friedman agrees, stating that Genesis 5:4 gives us “the presumed answer to the question of where Cain’s wife came from.”

Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible elaborates:

“... he [Adam] begat sons and daughters; not only after the birth of Seth, but before, though we have no account of any, unless of Cain’s wife; but what their number was is not certain, either before or after; some say he had thirty children, besides Cain, Abel, and Seth; and others a hundred. Josephus says the number of children, according to the old tradition, was thirty three sons and twenty three daughters... the families listed in this chapter must have been large by today’s standards. Given their long life, this is not at all unusual.”

Regarding Genesis 4:17 (“And Cain knew his wife...”), Gill states: “Who this woman was is not certain, nor whether it was his first wife or not; whether his sister, or one that descended from Adam by another of his sons, since this was about the one hundred and thirtieth year of [man’s] creation...”

It is clear then that Cain married a female descendant of Adam—perhaps one of Adam’s daughters, or even one of Cain’s nieces.

The booklet “In the Beginning...” continues:

“Today, there are biblical laws which forbid marriage between those who are closely related. But, it was not wrong for brothers and sisters to marry at that early time in human history. However, in Abraham’s day it was permissible to marry only one’s half-sister. Abram married his half-sister, Sarai (Gen. 20:12). Nahor married his brother Haran’s daughter (Gen. 11:29). There was then no genetic harm to the children. When men and women over the centuries continued in sin, it became genetically harmful for close blood relatives to marry (see Leviticus 18), and for the sake of future generations it is forbidden.”

Levitical Prohibitions

In the book of Leviticus we find clear instructions given at the time of Moses regarding prohibition of marriages between partners “near of kin” (Leviticus 18:6).

Apparently, certain laws governing *incest* did not become established until the time of Moses. Any such requirement of God is not revealed until Leviticus 18:6–17, where God described—from that time forward—those type of actions as “wickedness.” Verses 9 and 11 specifically forbid marriage with one’s step-sister, or with one’s half-sister, and verse 6 forbids *incest between father and daughter* and between a brother and his full sister (compare *The Nelson Study Bible*, comments to verses 6, 9 and 11).

The *Pulpit Commentary* explains regarding Leviticus 18:6–18:

“In the code before us, confirmed by that in Deuteronomy, marriage is forbidden with the following blood relations: mother (verse 7), daughter (verse 17), sister (verse 9...), granddaughter (verse 10), aunt (verses 12, 13...); and with the following relations by affinity: mother-in-law (verse 17...), daughter-in-law (verse 15...), brother’s wife (verse 16...), stepmother (verse 8...), stepdaughter and

step-granddaughter (verse 17), uncle's wife, or aunt by marriage (verse 14...)... *incest is intercourse with a brother's wife*. Yet this is commanded under certain circumstances in the Book of Deuteronomy, and was practiced in patriarchal times."

However, the law requiring a brother of a deceased husband to marry his late wife is no longer binding for us today (see our free booklet, *And Lawlessness Will Abound...*, pages 52–53).

Regarding Leviticus 18, verse 17, Gill explains:

"Thou shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter... That is, if a man marries a woman, and she has a daughter, which is the man's daughter-in-law, after the death of his wife he may not marry this daughter..." Verse 17 continues to state that he is not to marry her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter either.

However, as will be explained below in regard to the prohibition against marrying two sisters, the prohibition against marrying a woman and her daughter from a prior marriage should be viewed in the light of *polygamy* (compare **Chapter 17**). Even though we read about polygamy in Old Testament times, God made very clear that a man could not marry a woman and her daughter *at the same time*. The *Soncino* commentary states that "a legal marriage with both is not possible."

A similar prohibition is expressed in verse 18: "Nor shall you take a woman as a rival to her sister... while the other is alive."

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* commentary states, quoting verse 18 from the *Authorized Version*: "Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her":

"The marginal construction involves an express prohibition of polygamy; and, indeed, there *can be no doubt that the practice of having more wives than one is directly contrary to the divine will*. It was prohibited by the original law of marriage, and no evidence of its lawfulness under the Levitical code can be discovered, although Moses—from 'the hardness of their hearts' [Matthew 19:8; Mark 10:5]—*tolerated it...*"

"The second interpretation forms the ground upon which the 'vexed question' has been raised in our times respecting the lawfulness of marriage with a deceased wife's sister. Whatever arguments may be used to prove the unlawfulness or inexpediency of such a matrimonial relation, the passage under consideration cannot, on a sound basis of criticism, be enlisted in the service; for the crimes with which it is here

associated warrant the conclusion that it points not to marriage with a deceased wife's sister, *but with a sister in the wife's lifetime*, a practice common among the ancient Egyptians, Chaldeans, and others."

Gill disagrees, stating:

"... some have concluded... that a man might marry his wife's sister after her death, but not while she was living; but the phrase, 'in her lifetime', is not to be joined to the phrase 'thou shall not take a wife'; but to the phrases more near, 'to vex her in her lifetime', or as long as she lived... for that a wife's sister may be married to her husband, even after her death, cannot be lawful..."

This concept, as expressed by *Gill*, does not seem to be convincing, especially since verse 18 says: "Nor shall you take a woman AS A RIVAL to her sister... while the other is ALIVE." A marriage is binding as long as the partners are alive, and it ends when one of the partners dies. At that time, the surviving sister could not be looked upon *as a rival* of her deceased sister; therefore, God expressly stated that *polygamy, which was not God's Will to begin with, should most certainly not be extended to two women who were sisters*. It is true that Jacob, being deceived by his uncle, was married to two sisters, Leah and Rachel, but many serious problems were the consequence.

Marriage of Cousins

In considering the prohibitions of certain marriages listed in Scripture, we find that the Bible nowhere specifically prohibits marriages between cousins. In the past, marriages between cousins were not that unusual. Some have even concluded that Mary and Joseph were first cousins. Today, it is considered illegal in many countries. For instance, in the US, half the states declare it to be illegal, and as Christians, if we are living in a country or a state which declares marriages between cousins to be illegal, we are to obey the law of the land or move to a country or a state where it is legal.

Some claim that a prohibition of marriages between cousins is included in the Bible, as the list in Leviticus 18 only contains some examples, without mentioning every single relationship by name. Others disagree, stating that God is very specific in His prohibitions, which are not only addressing blood relationships, so the fact that marriages between cousins are not prohibited means that they are permitted.

The *Associated Press* concludes in an article, dated April 20, 2002, that marriages between cousins are not biblically prohibited, stating:

“Must first cousins be forbidden to marry? In the Bible, and in many parts of the world, the answer is no. But the answer is yes in much of church law and in half the 50 United States. This issue became news when the April issue of the *Journal of Genetic Counseling* said risks have been exaggerated for serious birth defects, retardation or genetic diseases among children of first-cousin marriages.

“Generally, an unrelated couple has a 3 percent to 4 percent risk of having a child with such problems, while marriages of close cousins add 1.7 percent to 2.8 percent to the risk. Genetic problems are considerably higher with the forms of close inbreeding that the Bible forbids and secular culture abhors as incest.

“First cousins cannot marry under the age-old laws of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, covering much of world Christendom. But in the Reformation, the Church of England followed Protestantism’s ‘sola scripture’ (Scripture alone) principle and returned to biblical law, which also binds traditional Jews. Under Queen Elizabeth I, Anglicanism decreed that ‘no prohibition, God’s law except, shall trouble or impeach any marriage outside Levitical law’... This ‘Levitical law’ is found in Leviticus 18:6–18, supplemented by Leviticus 20:17–21 and Deuteronomy 27:20–23. Among the forbidden couples are parent-child, sister-brother, grandparent-grandchild, uncle-niece, aunt-nephew, and between half-siblings and certain close in-laws...

“The idea of moving beyond the Bible to ban first-cousin marriages... was promulgated as Catholic canon law by a church council in 1215. The Orthodox Church’s prohibition dates from a council in 692.”

We are also informed that Albert Einstein and Charles Darwin married their first cousins, but that such cousin marriage was banned by the Roman Catholic Church under Pope Gregory I in an attempt to prevent the accumulation of wealth and power within families.

To summarize, the Bible is very specific regarding prohibitions of certain marriages. When in doubt about entering a particular marriage relationship, which might be perceived as being against Scriptural injunctions, counsel with one of God’s true ministers would be highly recommended.

Chapter 13

Adultery

Does the Bible permit adultery when the non-involved mate consents?

The Old Testament very clearly reveals God's stance on adultery—a sexual sin which involves at least one married partner. We read in Leviticus 20:10 that “The man who commits adultery with another man's wife... the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.” There is no room for adultery by consent from the non-involved mate. This is the reason why Abram's and Sarai's conduct—to bring forth offspring through intercourse between Abram and Sarai's maid Hagar—constituted adultery in God's eyes.

The commandment against adultery included not only a married woman who has had sexual intercourse with her husband, but also a virgin “betrothed” to her husband, prior to the consummation of the marriage. As you will recall, betrothal in biblical times was a binding and enforceable contract, containing promises to consummate the marriage with each other. The Bible considered betrothed partners as husband and wife, and a betrothal could only be dissolved by a decree of divorce.

We read in Deuteronomy 22:23–24: “If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city [thereby consenting to the adulterous conduct], and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife [even though she was only “betrothed,” and the marriage had not yet been consummated]; so you shall put away the evil from among you.”

On the other hand, as Deuteronomy 22:25–27 continues to point out, “... if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who

lay with her [i.e., the rapist] shall die. But you shall do nothing to the young woman; there is in the young woman no sin deserving of death [since the rapist forced himself upon her; there was no consent to this act by the woman], for just as when a man rises against his neighbor and kills him, even so is this matter. For he found her in the countryside, and the betrothed young woman cried out, but there was no one to save her.”

In the New Testament, Christ even warned His followers not to look at a married woman with lust or evil thoughts—wanting to commit adultery with her—because such uncontrolled desire already constitutes adultery in the mind and heart (Matthew 5:27–28; compare Proverbs 6:23–35). Please note that Christ did not say that one can look at another man’s wife with evil thoughts as long as the wife’s husband “consents” to this.

At the same time, Christ also taught that every sin can be forgiven, upon genuine repentance. He refused to condemn the woman caught in the very act of adultery when He saw her humiliation and repentance (compare John 8:1–12). God also requires mercy and compassion. Joseph, being a righteous man, intended to leave Mary secretly when he thought that she, who was betrothed to him, had committed adultery. He just wanted to put her away secretly, “not wanting to make her a public example” (Matthew 1:18–19).

God wants us to have happy and productive marriages, and He is against any conduct that could destroy or jeopardize our success in marriage. If such conduct occurs, God is willing to forgive, but He still requires appropriate behavior to guarantee the success and endurance of the marriage relationship.

For further information, please read our free booklet, *The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families*.

Chapter 14

Divorce, Separation and Remarriage

God's judgment on divorce is clearly shown in the following Scripture:

"For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence,' Says the LORD of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously'" (Malachi 2:16).

God makes this statement for the following reasons: Divorce does not really solve the problem(s) that the persons may have and that brought the marriage to this condition. When there are children involved, they are certainly the innocent victims of divorce. The impact of divorce can carry on for decades in children's lives in devastating ways.

Divorce plays into the hand of Satan, since he would love to see Christian couples split up, because the Christian marriage, which is a binding contract between a man and a woman before God, is a representation of the relationship between God and His Church.

Marriage is the manner in which potential sons and daughters of God can be born and become begotten and born-again members of the God Family, which, together with and under Christ as the husband, will replace Satan and his demons—the current god and rulers of this world (compare 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 6:12). It is evident that Christ's relationship with the nations of ancient Israel and Judah was, symbolically, that of husband and wife, and because of Israel's and Judah's unfaithfulness in committing spiritual adultery by worshipping idols and not being loyal to keeping God's commandments, Christ as the God of the Old Testament "divorced" His wife—Israel and Judah.

We read in Jeremiah 3:6–14:

"The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: 'Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the

harlot. And I said, after she had done all these things, "Return to Me." But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense,' says the LORD.

"Then the LORD said to me, 'Backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: "Return, backsliding Israel," says the LORD; "I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful," says the LORD; "I will not remain angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, That you have transgressed against the LORD your God, And have scattered your charms To alien deities under every green tree, And you have not obeyed My voice," says the LORD. "Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion."'"

True Christians Are Today "Betrothed" to Christ

They did not return to God and thus He divorced Israel and Judah. But as true Christians, we are today spiritual Israelites and Jews—regardless of our race or ethnic background. True Christians are today "betrothed" to Christ when they became properly baptized. They are living today under the conditions of the New Covenant, which is also a marriage agreement. Their marriage with Christ will be consummated at Christ's return. (For a thorough explanation of these concepts, please read our free booklet, *And Lawlessness Will Abound*.) And once Israel and Judah become converted, they will also enter into the conditions of the New Covenant.

The fact that Christ divorced Israel and Judah supports the biblical teaching that under certain circumstances, divorce is acceptable to God. The ideal is of course to work on the marriage relationship and not let it slide into a fragile and irreconcilable situation, either by neglect or outright sinful behavior, since the Christian marriage is intended for life, just as the marriage with Christ and the Church will last for all eternity.

Most Marriages Are Not Bound By God

Before continuing, we must clarify that we are addressing here marriages which have been “bound” or “joined together” by God. Not every marriage in this world is “bound” by God; in fact, most are not. This is not to say that married couples are not *bound by the state* and that they are guiltless if they break up their marriage for unbiblical reasons. The fact remains that they promised to each other that they would be married for life (and *broken promises constitute sin*), but their marriage was not bound by God. For instance, God does not bind the marriage of two atheists who get married in front of a magistrate.

It is obvious that God binds a marriage between two converted Christians when they get married by a minister of the Church of God. But a marriage also becomes bound by God at the time when at least one spouse becomes converted. At that time, God accepts the Christian in the state in which he is (compare the principle in 1 Corinthians 7:20–24)—and if he is married, he is called by God as a married person—and he is not free before God to subsequently divorce his spouse, except for biblical reasons.

We stated the following in our free booklet, *The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families*:

“God wants our marriages to succeed. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). A couple who face difficulties and look at divorce as an easy ‘solution’ to their problems may make a serious, and even fatal mistake. Divorce is seldom a positive solution. Biblically, divorce with the freedom to subsequently marry someone else is permitted only under very limited circumstances. God created the marriage unit and He intended that it should flourish and endure (Matthew 19:4–6). Two truly converted married Christians (as long as both remain alive and converted throughout their marriage to each other) must never divorce and subsequently marry somebody else! Their marriage, which has been bound by God, is for life (1 Corinthians 7:10–11; Romans 7:1–3; Luke 16:18).”

However, under what circumstances is divorce permitted?

In Matthew 5:31–32, Christ tells us:

“Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her

to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”

Christ is addressing here marriages which God has bound or joined together, as He clarifies in Matthew 19:6 “Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

But Christ makes it clear that even marriages which God has “bound” can end up in divorce, when for instance “sexual immorality” is involved. Sexual immorality [*porneia* in the Greek] includes adultery, incest, homosexuality and other types of deviant sexual behavior, such as transgenderism (note **Chapter 16** of this booklet), pedophilia or bestiality (compare Leviticus 18:23).

But even then, the Bible is clear that once a person repents by ceasing from and changing his behavior that could lead to or justify a divorce, the other party may be under a moral and spiritual obligation to forgive. This is not to say, however, that there is in each case a duty to continue with the marriage relationship. In some of the types of deviant sexual conduct mentioned above, God would not even have bound the marriage if such conduct existed and was hidden from the spouse at the time of marriage; rather, this would have been a case of fraudulent action justifying annulment of the “marriage” upon discovery.

On the other hand, if sins are repented of and maybe even confessed to a potential spouse before marriage, then these *forgiven* sins cannot be the basis for a later divorce. If fraud has been committed by one spouse at the time of the marriage and the other spouse finds out about it subsequently, then the innocent spouse could ask for an annulment. But the request for annulment would have to be made right away upon discovery of the concealed facts.

However, if the spouse decides to continue the marriage (assuming, there is no longer any deviant sexual conduct by that time), then no more grounds for annulment exist, as then, God accepts the spouse’s decision and binds the marriage. Subsequent (recurring) deviant sexual conduct would of course be the basis for a divorce.

Problems in marriage will arise, but they need to be coped with and managed. It is important to always bear in mind that Satan wants to destroy our marriages, and we must be aware of his devices and temptations.

A Believer Who is Married to an Unbeliever

If a “believing” spouse is married to an “unbeliever,” then Paul states the following in 1 Corinthians 7:12–16:

“But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?”

If the unbelieving spouse is no longer pleased to dwell with the believing spouse and ends the marriage relationship, then the believing spouse is no longer bound by God, either. However, if the unbelieving spouse is willing to dwell with the believer, then no grounds for divorce exist.

On the other hand, an unbeliever may show by his conduct that he is no longer pleased to dwell with the believer and that he has departed from the marriage relationship, even though both spouses might even live in the same house. For instance, when someone engages habitually in adulterous conduct, he has thereby manifested that he is an “unbeliever” who has denied the faith and has become worse than an “infidel”—he was never converted or has ceased to be converted (compare again Matthew 5:31–32 with 1 Corinthians 7:15).

But note again our comments in our free booklet, *The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families*:

“What about a married couple where one mate is a true Christian, making every effort to apply God’s principles, and the other mate is not? Even in such a case, divorce and subsequent remarriage is not biblically permitted, unless the ‘unbelieving’ mate departs from the marriage, by not fulfilling his or her marriage duties, and the ‘unbeliever’ is no longer willing to live with the converted Christian mate (cp. 1 Corinthians 7:12–16). Such total departure from the marriage by the ‘unbeliever’ can be seen in serious continuous violations of his

or her marriage duties and responsibilities, such as the sinful practice of 'sexual immorality' (Matthew 5:31–32; 19:9). But even then, counseling with one of God's ministers is highly recommended, with the goal to restore, rather than to sever, the marriage."

Separation of Husband and Wife Who Are Believers

What does the Bible say about separation of a marriage relationship between two believing spouses?

1 Corinthians 7:10–11 states the following:

"... A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife."

Separation is not a solution and must not be looked upon in this manner. It should be looked upon as a temporary measure with the intent to have the marriage repaired so that it is functioning properly. We have been called to be in the God Family. Our relationship with Christ is one of husband and wife. We made a commitment at baptism to be faithful to the end of our lives or until Christ returns. We made a commitment at marriage to remain faithful till the death of one of the spouses (1 Corinthians 7:39; compare again Romans 7:2–3).

In our free booklet, *Old Testament Laws—Still Valid Today?*, we discussed in great detail (on pages 14–18) whether Deuteronomy 24:1–4 is still applicable today regarding prohibiting a divorced wife, who married a second husband, to return to her first husband. You might want to read the entire discussion which pointed out that this passage might or might not apply today, depending on the circumstances.

We should be committed to making our marriages work, since we know that God hates divorce (and by extension separation which could lead to divorce), while Satan loves divorce and he wants our marriages to fail.

Chapter 15

Homosexuality

Before covering the controversial issue of homosexuality, we feel it is necessary to state our position, as anyone who opposes this behavior is commonly thought to be a homophobe or homophobic. This term is casually used against anyone who has the audacity to question the morality of such behavior, especially when asserting it to be sin, which homosexual lobbyists often refer to as hate speech.

This argument is invalid, as people on both sides of the argument must be allowed to agree or disagree about homosexuality in a free and fair society. To assert that homosexual behavior is a sin is simply stating a biblical fact, and Christians who live by the Word of God are simply stating what God's Word clearly reveals. There should be no hate for the individual concerned, just sadness at their way of life.

Definitions of Homophobe and Homophobia

Homophobe or homophobia can mean different things to different people. Its first known use was in 1971 and so it is a relatively new word.

The *Merriam Webster Dictionary* gives this definition of homophobe as "a person characterized by homophobia... who hates or is afraid of homosexuals or treats them badly."

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines a homophobe as "A person with a dislike of or prejudice against homosexual people."

The *free dictionary online* defines a homophobia as "Fear, hatred, or mistrust of lesbians and gay men."

The *dictionary.com* defines homophobe as "A person who fears or hates homosexuals and homosexuality."

Other definitions of homophobia and homophobe include: "a dislike of or prejudice against homosexual people" and "a person with

an extreme and irrational aversion to homosexuality and homosexual people.”

The Church of God, which takes the Bible literally, takes the stance that we should love the sinner and hate the sin, and so there is no hatred whatsoever of homosexuals themselves. However, their conduct is roundly condemned by the Bible and it is the conduct which is addressed herein.

The Bible Must Always Be the Last Word on Doctrinal Matters

There has been much discussion over the years on the question of homosexuality, particularly with the ordination of a homosexual bishop in the USA a few years ago.

The Bible must always be the last word on all doctrinal matters, not the personal opinions of man. One pro-homosexual website puts forward the following observations when talking about quotations from the book of Leviticus (which condemns homosexuality): “Clearly many of these laws reflect the cultural mores of their time and can have little or no relevance for us. The problem comes when we try to decide when a law or a piece of teaching has relevance today or when it should be rejected or disregarded.”

It is plain from such attitudes that the Word of God is used when supportive and discarded when inconvenient, but it must be remembered that ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16). Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, as Hebrews 13:8 explains. Clear biblical instructions are therefore not open to alterations or amendments when cultural views change.

The instruction in the Old Testament on homosexuality is clear. In Leviticus 18:22 it states that: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.” This is but one of the instructions on illicit sexual behavior where the Israelites are told that such conduct not only defiles them but also the land (verse 27). Some may conclude that ungodly conduct affects only the perpetrators and those around them, but the lack of righteousness—including sexual immorality—affects the very land on which we dwell.

In verse 28, God reminds the Israelites that because the Canaanites (see verse 3) committed abominable sexual acts, the land was going to “vomit them out.” This reveals a very real spiritual law: When a nation

becomes sinful, even its land is defiled because sin affects everything.

Two chapters later, in Leviticus 20:13, God again rejects homosexual conduct, when He states: “If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination.”

If the practice of homosexuality is acceptable to God, why would God mention this practice in condemnatory terms on so many occasions? In Genesis 2:24 we read that “...a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Here, at an early stage of biblical instruction, we see that the natural union was to consist of a man and a woman—not of a man and several women, and not of two people of the same sex.

Sodom and Gomorrah

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is certainly well known. In Genesis 18 and 19 we read about their depravity. The men of the city (Genesis 19:4), both old and young, surrounded the house where the two angels dwelled as Lot’s guests. They wanted to know them carnally (verse 5). This means, the Sodomites practiced homosexuality. [Today, the word “sodomite” is also used in respect to another form of depraved sexual conduct, namely bestiality, which is also strongly condemned in the Bible, but in the report about Sodom, it clearly refers to homosexual conduct.] We know from Ezekiel 16:49–50 that the iniquity of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah was not limited to this sexual practice, but it was certainly a hugely contributory factor.

There are a number of references that refer to sodomites, in the *Authorized Version* (Deuteronomy 23:17; 1 Kings 14:24; 1 Kings 15:12; 1 Kings 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7). Sodomites were the inhabitants of Sodom. As we saw, the term refers to those practicing homosexuality. They were to be banished from the land—which is hardly a ringing endorsement!

New Testament Condemnation

In the New Testament, we continue to find the same condemnation of this practice. We read in the first chapter of Romans: “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the

Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting..." (verses 24–28).

While the Western world today seeks to popularize and legitimize homosexuality, the Word of God clearly reveals that it is not acceptable to God. God has set in motion certain laws, and those who misuse their bodies receive in themselves that recompense of their error which was due. The word "debased" in verse 28 means "unapproved" or "undiscerning." Since they had suppressed the Truth of God revealed to them, they did not retain God in their knowledge and consequently, God gave them up (or over) to what they wanted to do all along. The results were and still are disastrous.

1 Corinthians 6:9–10 clearly states this: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."

The *Ryrie Study Bible* explains that in the above-quoted passage, the words "homosexuals" and "sodomites" (the *Authorized Version* says, "effeminate" and "abusers of themselves with mankind") are both "expressions" which "refer to homosexuals, the first to those who allow themselves to be used unnaturally, and the second, to active homosexuals." The *Life Application Bible* speaks of "male prostitutes and homosexuals."

However, in verse 11 we read: "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

Notice what Paul said: "Such were some of you." This is a telling phrase. Paul cited the fact that there were some in the congregation who were formerly characterized in the catalogue of sinful conduct listed in verses 9 and 10. But Paul also makes clear that there is hope for those who are willing to repent and turn from their evil ways. With

the help of God, they can be washed, sanctified and justified—but only on genuine, sincere repentance.

It should be noted here that, both in New Testament times and in recent decades, homosexuals who repented of their actions and sins were, and have always been accepted into the Church of God and have become baptized members.

Yes, homosexuality CAN be repented of—it is not something men or women are just born with and which they cannot overcome, even if they wanted to. Unfortunately today, many have convinced themselves that homosexuality is acceptable to God, or even the way God created some men or women, merely because it has become culturally acceptable. The Bible clearly reveals otherwise, as the saying goes: “Fashions may change but standards do not.”

In the final book of the Bible, this same theme is repeated in Revelation 21:8, pointing out that those who refuse to repent, including the “sexually immoral”—including those who practice homosexuality and other unacceptable sexual conduct—will have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone.

Does It Really Matter?

Some might ask the question: Does it matter? Of course it does! It is amazing to observe the lengths that those who support their homosexual practice will go to in order to justify it! If we believe that the Bible is the revealed Word of God, then we should live by every word of God (Matthew 4:4). And the Bible—in both the Old Testament and the New Testament—roundly condemns the practice of homosexuality.

At the same time, we must be careful that we do not lose God’s perspective on the matter of homosexuality by replacing one extreme viewpoint with another.

As we read, the practice of homosexuality is most certainly a sin that **MUST** be repented of if one wants to enter the Kingdom of God. We are told that if we do not repent and give up wrong habits, replacing them with God’s righteousness, we will not enter the Kingdom of God!

Homosexuality is most certainly a **SIN** that must be overcome—but it is **NOT** the **ONLY** sin that must be overcome. Notice Revelation 21:7–8:

“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly [those who know better,

but are afraid to change and stand up for what is right], unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and ALL LIARS shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Those who know better, but WILLFULLY, and with HATE AND ANGER, permanently and irrevocably REFUSE to repent of their evil conduct will end up in the lake of fire. They will NOT enter the New Jerusalem. Revelation 22:14–15 states:

“Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs [compare Philippians 3:2] and sorcerers and sexually immoral [including homosexuals, AS WELL AS those who engage in other sinful sexual conduct, such as fornication and adultery] and murderers and idolaters, and WHOEVER LOVES AND PRACTICES A LIE.”

For some, it is easy to see that homosexuality is sinful. At the same time, it is very difficult for them to see that lying or killing (even in war) is sinful and must be repented of as well. God calls homosexuality an “abomination.” Note, however, what else is an “abomination” in God’s eyes:

“These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an ABOMINATION to Him: A proud look, A LYING tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A FALSE witness who speaks LIES, And one who sows discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:16–19).

The biblical teaching is clear and consistent: EVERY SIN that we REFUSE to repent of—including, but not limited to the sinful practice of homosexuality—will keep us out of the Kingdom of God!

Did Christ Condemn Homosexual Conduct?

Some have advanced the argument that the homosexual lifestyle is acceptable today because Christ Himself did not condemn it. The assumption here is that if Jesus did not specifically denounce the lifestyle, it can be interpreted to mean that He, in fact, approved of it.

In one American television drama, a person who was a wedding organizer was asserting her right as a business person to refuse to serve a homosexual couple because of her Christian faith. She was told that

nowhere is Jesus quoted as even mentioning the subject and yet He mentioned marriage on three occasions. She could not answer this clever ploy! If we are asked the same sort of question, we need to be able to answer this correctly and with conviction!

Society has been actively promoting homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle for many years. Even many mainstream churches have fallen into line with this approach, ignoring the biblical teaching on this matter, which should be the foundation for their teachings. When this happens, secular and religious views combine, thus giving this biblically condemned behavior an approval which cannot be sustained or upheld by the Word of God.

It would seem that the biblical injunctions on this issue are rarely reviewed, and when they are, they are usually dismissed by some clever arguments that seem, on the face of it, to allow such sinful behavior. Isaiah sums up such behavior and “understanding” as: “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20).

As we have seen, homosexuality is condemned in the Old Testament (please see Genesis 18:16–33; 19:1–29; Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17; 1 Kings 14:24; 1 Kings 15:12; 1 Kings 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7). Note that it is also true in the New Testament (Romans 1:26–27, 32; 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; 1 Timothy 1:9–10; Revelation 21:8).

The fact that Christ did not specifically comment on a particular conduct does not mean that He approved of it. There are many other issues of life that Jesus Christ did not specifically comment on either. For example, there is no mention that Jesus commented on abortion, but we know that this is sinful. (For further information, please read our free booklet, *Are You Already Born Again?*) Christ did not specifically comment on racial discrimination, sexual discrimination, drug abuse, terrorism, bestiality, polygamy, pedophilia, Sunday worship, Christmas or Easter celebrations, or a range of other issues, but does this mean that these are neither important nor covered by the Bible itself in other places? Certainly not!

After all, Sunday worship, as well as Christmas and Easter celebrations, were known at the time of Christ, and many pagans did practice them in honor of sun gods, such as Dionysus, Attis or Mythra.

In our *Statements of Beliefs*, under the heading “The Holy Bible,” we state:

“Our doctrines and practices are based upon a literal understanding of the teachings revealed in the entire Bible. We believe that the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments are God’s revelation of His Will to man, inspired in thought and word, and infallible in the original writings; that said Scriptures are the supreme and final authority in faith and life, the source of Truth and the foundation of all knowledge.”

We do not “pick and mix” selected parts of the Bible that we feel comfortable with, while ignoring those passages that some may not agree with or feel that they are not applicable today.

In John 16:12–13, we read that Jesus said: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when [it], the Spirit of truth, has come, [it] will guide you into all truth; for [it] will not speak on [its] own authority, but whatever [it] hears [it] will speak; and [it] will tell you things to come.”

First of all, please note that we have substituted the word “it” for “He” as the use of the term is strictly a grammatical issue; the Holy Spirit is the power of God, both of the Father and of the Son, given by God to a truly repentant person at the time of baptism. (See our *Statement of Beliefs*, under the heading “The Holy Spirit of God”, as well as our free booklet, *Is God a Trinity?* Please also read our free booklet *How to Find the True Church of God*, which explains our Statement of Beliefs in great detail and shows how our doctrines are strictly based on the Bible.)

Secondly, Jesus said that then was not the time to tell them many things they needed to know, and in John 14:26 we read: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, [which] the Father will send in My name, [it] will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (which is obviously how the Bible was written with the Holy Spirit—the mind of God—guiding that which was written).

We read in John 21:25: “And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.”

To expect that everything that Jesus spoke about and did is

contained in the Bible, is obviously not correct.

There are Scriptures that clearly tell us that the whole of God's Word is applicable. In Deuteronomy 8:3 we read: "So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD."

Psalm 119:160 reads: "The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever."

Proverbs 30:5 reads: "Every word of God is pure...."

Matthew 4:4 reads: "But He answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (Please also see Luke 4:4.)

Romans 15:4 reads: "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

1 Corinthians 10:11 reads: "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

In 2 Timothy 3:16 we read: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..."

Did Jesus Address Homosexuality?

Is it even true that the Bible does not record that Jesus spoke about homosexuality? Consider the following in Matthew 19:4–6, where Jesus spoke about marriage: "And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.'"

Here Jesus was endorsing marriage but He condemned sexual activity outside the confines of the marital union. When asked by the rich young ruler which commandments to keep, Jesus said: "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness'..." (Matthew 19:18). Jesus here

condemned adultery and He also condemned fornication (please see Matthew 15:19).

We see that Jesus only approved of sexual intercourse for those who were married, and He condemned such sexual activity outside the confines of marriage [a union between a man and a woman], which would include homosexuality and all other wrong arrangements. The only conceivable conclusion is that marriage between a man and woman is the only approved and authorized union that God allows!

We ought to consider further that “the WORD”—the Logos or Spokesman, the God of the Old Testament—became Jesus Christ in the flesh. Therefore, He inspired all Old and New Testament passages which we quoted above regarding homosexuality; and it was He who stated in Genesis 2:24: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

Jesus Christ was and is the Word of God in Person (compare John 1:1; Revelation 19:13); and the entire Bible is the Word of God in writing. The Scriptures are clear on what is sexually right and wrong. It is true that in Old Testament times, some practiced polygamy, but this was never in accordance with the Will of God. (**Chapter 17** in this booklet addresses the issue of polygamy.)

We conclude from all of this information that the Scriptures were inspired by God through the Holy Spirit, and homosexuality is clearly condemned. Jesus Christ, by approving the state of marriage between a man and a woman **ONLY**, backed up the writings of the Old Testament, including the condemnation of homosexuality.

The mind of man comes up with an array of spiritual pyrotechnics and mental gymnastics that can confuse and disorient Christians if they are not close to God and fully understand His Way of Life. We must not let such clever arguments mislead us, as we know that Satan is behind all of the confusion that abounds in the world. We read in 1 Corinthians 14:33: “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints,” showing the opposite approach to that of our adversary.

Pride in Perverted Use of Sex!

As a final point, it is interesting that when marches are conducted by homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders (LGBT), these

marches are called Gay Pride.

Proverbs 8:13 says: "Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate."

Those who are involved in these marches are proud to be involved in perverted practices and evil ways. They "thumb their nose" at God and are not interested in what He states in His Word.

In Proverbs 6:16–17 we read: "These six *things* the LORD HATES, Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him: A proud look..." A proud look is the first thing mentioned and then six other things that God hates are listed.

"Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7), a verse to deeply ponder.

"Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished" (Proverbs 16:5).

Psalm 10:4 reads that "The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts."

To take pride in practicing homosexuality and to proclaim this in public in the streets and squares of the world's leading cities is a sin of the spirit—a direct challenge to the Law of God!

We know that pride was the downfall of Lucifer. We read in Isaiah 14:12–14: "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'"

When he sinned because of pride, Lucifer became Satan the devil and, subsequently, he has influenced the world in his wrong ways. Pride is a terrible thing, and to flaunt perversion is something that God will only allow for so long.

Chapter 16

The Transgender Issue

Before we look at the Bible's straightforward teaching on this subject, let us first of all look at the current state of affairs in society today. There is no doubt that there are those who espouse a very liberal approach, perhaps none more so than those who are involved with the gender agenda, which includes many sexual variations and perversions.

In an article in the *Brighton Argus newspaper* (UK) on January 28, 2016, Brighton school children were asked to choose from a list of terms to describe their gender. The selection list included: "Agender," "All genders," "Androgynous," "Bi-gender," "Boy," "Demi-boy," "Demi-girl," "Female," "Gender fluid," "Gender nonconforming," "Genderqueer," "Girl," "In the middle of boy and girl," "Intersex," "Male," "Non-binary," "Not sure," "Others (please state)," "Rather not say," "Tomboy," "Trans-boy," "Trans-girl," "Tri-gender," "Young man" and "Young woman."

On April 20, 2016, the *Daily Mail* reported that "the proposed national survey was linked from the website of the Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, and was forwarded to some schools by local councils. It later emerged that the survey had been withdrawn. Anyway it was only a draft."

Christian Institute Deputy Director Simon Calvert maintains that "there are simply two sexes—not 20-plus genders—and that the survey only incited confusion and jesting. [Giving children so many options will spur answers] across the spectrum—not least from kids who want to make fun of the whole thing," Calvert contends. "But for some children, it will be profoundly confusing to find out that there are adults who don't seem to know that boys are boys and girls are girls. The British Christian leader insists that the distinctions given in the Bible about human sexuality are those given by God to safeguard them from falling into all types of deviant attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles."

In *Time* magazine, Vol. 189, No. 11 in 2017, the cover had a headline: "Beyond He or She – How a new generation is redefining the meaning of gender." There was a long article in this issue entitled "Infinite Identities" and observations were made that "Facebook with its more than 1 billion users, now has about 60 options for users' gender. By some counts, there are more than 200 regular or recurring LGBTQ (Q stands for "queer") characters on cable TV and streaming series." The article went on to say: "A bill introduced in California in January (2017) would add a third gender option on identification documents like driver's licenses and birth certificates: male, female or nonbinary."

This article went on to say that "the erosion of these binaries" "could, over time, have profound implications for the many systems that prop up the two-gender reality most people are accustomed to: not just in Facebook statuses, but in competitive sports, courts, the military, toy aisles, relationships."

How many reading this chapter who have Facebook accounts, realize that Facebook is into this sort of thing? It is quite shocking to think a seemingly harmless social networking site has been willing to go along with such perversion, and a site which now has more than one billion active users, which is quite a sphere of influence!

We can see the momentum in this area, going from over 20 gender descriptions in 2016 to over 60 on Facebook in 2017, with more than 200 recurring characters in so called entertainment. You can be assured that in the current climate of "diversity and anything goes," the liberals' agenda momentum will continue to expand. Now that this process is in play, it will take on a life of its own! In other words, total confusion will continue to abound because biblical instructions are plainly ignored.

In fact today it seems to be a badge of honor to be different from the previously accepted societal norms, and the Way of God! How tough it must be for parents with young children who, if they realize it is perversion, have to combat this and its all-consuming mindset.

In April 2015, CNN wrote:

"2015 may be remembered as the year the term 'transgender' fully entered mainstream consciousness. In January, President Obama condemned the persecution of 'people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender,' becoming the first president to utter the word in a

State of the Union address...

“Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity—their internal, personal sense of being a man or a woman—differs from what’s typically associated with their sex at birth. Some transgender people alter their bodies through hormones and or surgery, although many don’t...”

A *Newsmax* report in September 2016 had the headline, “Transgender Bathroom ‘Rights’ Upheld by Bush-Appointed Judge,” part of which stated:

“Bathroom access has become a flashpoint in the legal and cultural battle over transgender rights in the United States. An estimated 0.6 percent of U.S. adults identify as transgender...”

An article, written in the *Wall Street Journal* on May 13, 2016, entitled “Transgender Surgery Isn’t the Solution—A drastic physical change doesn’t address underlying psycho-social troubles,” Dr. Paul McHugh, former psychiatrist in chief at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, USA, examined the matter, and here are a few excerpts from that article:

“...policy makers and the media are doing no favors either to the public or the transgendered by treating their confusions as a right in need of defending rather than as a mental disorder that deserves understanding, treatment and prevention. This intensely felt sense of being transgendered constitutes a mental disorder in two respects. The first is that the idea of sex misalignment is simply mistaken—it does not correspond with physical reality. The second is that it can lead to grim psychological outcomes.

“For the transgendered, this argument holds that one’s feeling of ‘gender’ is a conscious, subjective sense that, being in one’s mind, cannot be questioned by others. The individual often seeks not just society’s tolerance of this ‘personal truth’ but affirmation of it. Here rests the support for ‘transgender equality,’ the demands for government payment for medical and surgical treatments, and for access to all sex-based public roles and privileges.

“You won’t hear it from those championing transgender equality, but controlled and follow-up studies reveal fundamental problems with this movement. When children who reported transgender feelings were tracked without medical or surgical treatment at both Vanderbilt

University and London's Portman Clinic, 70%–80% of them spontaneously lost those feelings. Some 25% did have persisting feelings; what differentiates those individuals remains to be discerned.

"At the heart of the problem is confusion over the nature of the transgendered. 'Sex change' is biologically impossible. People who undergo sex-reassignment surgery do not change from men to women or vice versa. Rather, they become feminized men or masculinized women. Claiming that this is [a] civil-rights matter and encouraging surgical intervention is in reality to collaborate with and promote a mental disorder."

In short, Dr McHugh opined that the transgender issue was a *mental disorder*. It seems that, like many other sexual orientations, it may have become a fashionable thing to do. We must never underestimate the power of peer pressure.

Christian Headlines wrote on November 10, 2017:

"A 14-year-old girl who began a transition to become a boy is speaking out about the dangers of transgenderism, particularly for young people. Noor Jontry... shares that her exploration of her gender began when she encountered *young people online* who were transitioning to another gender. She says she realized she wanted to be a boy because she wanted to be 'masculine.' '[B]eing masculine was about feeling safe,' she said...

"Noor has come to believe that... most teens and young people who think they are trans are *simply confused* or going through a time of transition in life. When asked what she would say to other girls who think they are boys, she replied, *"There's nothing wrong with your body. To be straightforward, you will never be male... Stop hurting yourself. Not wanting to be female doesn't mean you're really male..."*

Somewhat related to transgenderism is the concept of *intersex people*. While intersex people are being described as not clearly male or female, transgender people belong to one particular identifiable gender, but are "unsatisfied" with it.

In regard to intersex people, Germany's Supreme Court ruled on November 7, 2017, that the German parliament must *legally recognize a "third gender" from birth*. Legislators must by the end of 2018 pass a new regulation to offer a third gender option in birth registers.

People who identify as intersex are recognized in official documents

in some countries, including Australia, India, New Zealand and Nepal.

Bild Online commented on November 8:

“About 160,000 people live in Germany who have male and female characteristics. Until now, the *parents determine* at the time of birth the designation of the child’s gender. The WHO [World Health Organization] considers Intersex people as *suffering from a sickness or a birth defect...*”

Bild Online also wrote that sometimes, young intersex people are being operated on or receive hormones. In quoting an expert, the paper wrote that this is a wrong, harmful and traumatizing procedure.

It seems that the WHO is correct in its evaluation of intersex people as suffering from a *sickness or a birth defect*. At the same time, transgender people seem to be suffering from a *mental disorder*, confusion and a wrong concept of God and His creation.

God Created Male and Female

The Bible is very clear on this matter. We previously discussed in this booklet that God created human beings as man and woman (Genesis 1:27–28; 5:2; Matthew 19:4–6)—two genders with no other variation—and told them to be fruitful and multiply. That cannot happen with a number of wrong sexual practices that exist today.

Wrong Practices Highlighted

In Deuteronomy 22:5 we read: “A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all who do so *are* an abomination to the LORD your God.” In this passage, God condemns *transvestism* and, by extension, *transgenderism*. He calls it an abomination which is defined as something that causes disgust or loathing.

Synonyms are: atrocity, disgrace, horror, obscenity, outrage, curse, torment, evil, crime, monstrosity, violation. God does not mince His words.

As we discussed before, God talks about His wrath on unrighteousness in Romans 1:24–32, and He tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God. There is a lot in these passages but it can be very briefly summarized by saying that those who practice any of these sexual sins are deserving of death

along with those who approve of such practices. Those involved with transgender issues had better be careful as we have seen from this and other passages. There is only one way of proper sexual conduct, and that is between a man and a woman who are married to each other, and God allows no other variation.

Satan is the Author of Confusion

What we always have to remember is that Satan is the author of confusion. Conversely, 1 Corinthians 14:33 states: “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” Having to select from 20 plus definitions to define gender is confusing, especially for the young mind, but God has made the whole process simple by creating man and woman with no other acceptable variations.

As we race toward the end of this age, Satan will become more and more accusatory and dangerous, as we read in Revelation 12:9–12: “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, ‘Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.’”

It is a sad fact that today the biblical approach is one that is scorned and disregarded, which is a very dangerous thing to do. We should have love and concern for those who are engaged in wrong sexual practices, loving the sinner but hating the sin. God instructs us in His Way which is always for our own good, and we ignore it at our peril.

The *Daily Signal* wrote the following on July 3, 2017, where the myths of transgender ideology were exposed:

“Twin studies prove no one is born ‘trapped in the body of the wrong sex.’... the idea that ‘feminized’ or ‘masculinized’ brains can be trapped in the wrong body from before birth... is a myth that has no basis in science... 75 to 95 percent of pre-pubertal children who were

distressed by their biological sex eventually outgrew that distress. The vast majority came to accept their biological sex by late adolescence after passing naturally through puberty...

"There is an obvious self-fulfilling effect in helping children impersonate the opposite sex both biologically and socially. This is far from benign, since taking puberty blockers at age 12 or younger, followed by cross-sex hormones, sterilizes a child... the risks of cross-sex hormones include, but are not limited to, cardiac disease, high blood pressure, blood clots, strokes, diabetes, and cancers...

"Advocates... allege that suicide is the direct and inevitable consequence of withholding social affirmation and biological alterations from a gender-dysphoric child... there is no evidence that harassment and discrimination, let alone lack of affirmation, are the primary cause of suicide among any minority group... Over 90 percent of people who commit suicide have a diagnosed mental disorder... Adults who undergo sex reassignment... have a suicide rate nearly 20 times greater than that of the general population...

"... professionals are using the myth that people are born transgender to justify engaging in massive, uncontrolled, and unconsented experimentation on children who have a psychological condition that would otherwise resolve after puberty in the vast majority of cases. Today's institutions that promote transition affirmation are pushing children to impersonate the opposite sex, sending many of them down the path of puberty blockers, sterilization, the removal of healthy body parts, and untold psychological damage. These harms constitute nothing less than *institutionalized child abuse*."

There is no doubt that false transgender ideology is extremely harmful to children and parents. *The Telegraph* wrote on July 2, 2017, about the possibility of people becoming transgender through pills and drugs:

"A fifth of male fish are now transgender because of chemicals... being flushed down household drains... Male river fish are displaying feminised traits and even producing eggs, the study found. Some have reduced sperm quality...

"The chemicals causing these effects include ingredients in the contraceptive pill, by-products of cleaning agents, plastics and cosmetics... More than 200 chemicals from sewage plants have been identified

with oestrogen-like effects and drugs such as antidepressants are also altering fish's natural behavior..."

It is a good question to ask that if chemicals have these effects on fish, causing transgender, maybe they can have similar effects on humans.

Media Attention Increases

September 2017 was quite a month for the transgender movement.

In early September 2017, the *Daily Mail* reported that there had been a backlash at the John Lewis department store over new 'genderless' labelling on children's clothing. The chain ditched 'boys' and 'girls' labels from its children's clothing range. It became the first major retailer to scrap 'boys' and 'girls' signs from its children's wear departments and bring in gender-neutral labels on own-brand clothing for children up to the age of 14. Shoppers threatened to boycott the chain after accusing it of taking political correctness too far. On the other hand, campaigners called on other stores to follow suit with neutral clothing

Meanwhile, the gender-neutral movement gathered pace. Priory School in Lewes, East Sussex, banned girls from wearing skirts in order to accommodate the growing number of transgender pupils.

The Times wrote on September 24: "(The) headmistress of the private James Allen's Girls' School in south London, said last week she had changed her vocabulary in recent years to try to avoid causing offence to teenagers querying their gender identity. She said: 'I try not to say "girls", [but] when you have been teaching for 20 years it is very hard not to say "girls."' Instead, she tries to use the term 'pupils' and the pronoun 'they'—in place of 'she'—to be sensitive to the feelings of transgender students."

During this same month, a 30-year-old female made headlines after she became Britain's highest-ranking transgender soldier. She began dating a transgender filmmaker a few years ago. It was reported that "they both hope to continue inspiring other trans people on their path to love and have vowed to have a family together and overcome any complications they may face."

A newspaper report toward the end of September addressed a disturbing situation where a six year old now living as a boy was actually born a girl. The report went on to say that the tomboyish girl announced to her mother, at the age of five, that she was a boy! The report also stated

that the six year old boy talks of having a wife and children when he is grown up. “He’ll probably have to adopt, unless he doesn’t transition and lives as a man with female organs,” said his mother. The mother dismissed the claim made by author and academic Dr Joanna Williams that “the time, effort and money that goes into producing and monitoring transgender policies is out of all proportion to the tiny number of trans children currently in British schools’ as deeply unfair.”

There are those who believe that there is a politically correct agenda driving the issue in schools, and that transgenderism has morphed from a serious condition affecting a small minority to a fashionable ideology spearheaded by fanatics who bully those who do not subscribe to it.

The subject of gender identity in childhood has become one of the most contentious of our times. Such “news items” will continue to be reported. As with the case of other sexual deviances, there will continue to be reporting of such issues with the intention to wear down the opposition and generally gain acceptance by the majority of the population.

The following month (October 2017), the Daily Mail reported that “50 children a week—some as young as four—are being sent to gender reassignment doctors because they think that they were born in the wrong body. Record figures suggest that 2,600 youngsters are expected to be referred to Britain’s largest gender clinic this year. In the year 2009–10 there [were] just 97 while the following year there were 139.”

Simon Calvert, of the *Christian Institute*, stated: “Some people may consider gender confusion for a whole host of complex reasons but you have to ask yourself if the media’s fixation with these issues is causing some children to question their gender identity who may not otherwise have done so. We are already seeing the stories starting to emerge from children who were encouraged to transition by parents and doctors and who are now regretting it.”

On November 22, 2017, the *Daily Mail* published the following article by Piers Morgan:

“Natasha Devon advised that teachers should no longer refer to female students as ‘girls’ or ‘ladies’, or to male students as ‘boys’... I’ve never heard such utter garbage in my entire life, and given I judged talent shows for six years that is a very high bar of garbage.

“Speaking as a father of four children—three boys and a girl—I’ll tell you what I think might just cause young kids more anxiety than

being called 'boys' and 'girls'—and that is telling them they CAN'T be called 'boys' and 'girls'.

"The simple reason is they were born boys and girls. Yes, they were all handed to their proud parents at birth with the words 'Congratulations, you have a little boy' or 'Congratulations, you have a little girl.' Not, 'Congratulations, you have a non-binary, gender fluid creature of indeterminate sexuality'.

"These children will have spent years happily being boys and girls, and for the vast majority of them that's exactly how they wish to remain. To banish these descriptive terms now is... the first step to banishing gender altogether, thus disrupting and destroying one of society's strongest and until now, least contentious norms: i.e. that we're all either male or female.

"I suspect the real reason for Natasha Devon's speech can be found buried away as almost an afterthought. She said she was also advising the abandonment of the terms 'boys' and 'girls' to protect the feelings of transgender children...

"This new gender war is being driven by the radical transgender community, which—like radical feminism to non-radical feminism—is a very different, far more aggressive, loud and extreme group to the non-radical transgender community... their campaign has been undeniably successful. That's why Facebook currently provides over 70 different gender 'options', from 'two-spirit person' to 'neutrois' and 'transmasculine'. One is simply: 'neither'...

"I do care when massive pressure is applied on the rest of us to stop using words like 'boys' and 'girls' because it may offend the gender fluid brigade. I also care that kids as young as five are being encouraged to embark on a journey to change their gender and/or sex before they even really know what either of [these] things even mean. Anyone who's had children knows they go through all kinds of confusing emotional turmoil before, during and after puberty. Why add to that confusion by making them think that 'boys' and 'girls' are offensive terms?...

"Some schools have begun eliminating gender distinction in their sports programmes, so any boy who feels he's a girl can play on the girls' team... Other schools now allow boys who identify as girls... to use the female bathrooms...

"Companies are being bullied and harangued into converting to

non-gender-specific merchandise lest they get branded ‘trans bigots’ on social media. We see it in our high street stores and on our TV commercials. The problem gets even more acute when we consider sexual offenders in prison. Already, we are getting cases of male rapists identifying as female so they can switch to female prisons. It doesn’t take a genius to work out why they may want to do that...

“What does the word ‘gender’ even mean? Well, check any dictionary and it will provide a simple answer—something like this: ‘The state of being male or female.’ Therefore we are all either boys or girls, men or women...”

The *Daily Mail* wrote the following in mid-December 2017 about events in the UK:

“It was revealed this month that children as young as three are being read transgender books which encourage them to question their gender. The books are on reading lists for nurseries and primary schools provided by Educate and Celebrate, an organisation funded by the Department for Education to help schools prevent transphobia. Questions for discussion at the back of the book include: ‘Does it matter if Tiny is a boy or a girl?’ and ‘Should Tiny be allowed to play football and dress up as a fairy?’ The books aim to promote tolerance of transgender people among young children, but critics say it will confuse them.”

As we plunge headlong through huge moral crises, of which this is one, it will only be solved by the return of Jesus Christ. Transgender practices, along with many other sexual sins, are not to be part of any true Christian’s life. Such practices will not be allowed in the Kingdom of God and that should be enough proof for anyone with an open mind and a willing heart.

Chapter 17

Polygamy

As we point out on pages 11–13 of our free booklet, *Old Testament Laws—Still Valid Today?*, God never promoted polygamy or intended that His followers should engage in that practice. Although the Old Testament records that several of the patriarchs practiced polygamy, it was never in accordance with God’s Will and His intent for marriage. When a man took more than one wife, curses and punishment were the consequence.

Abraham sinned when he had sexual relationships with Sarah’s maid Hagar. This was a sin not only because he lacked faith in God that He could give him a son through his wife Sarah, who was barren, but he also sinned because he was married to Sarah and therefore committed adultery with Sarah’s maid.

Even though Sarah had consented to this act, it did not in any way negate God’s Law. And so, we read that Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham, “to be his wife” (Genesis 16:3), but when God speaks to and of Hagar, she is only referred to as Sarah’s maid (Genesis 16:8) or the bond-woman (Genesis 21:13). God never calls Hagar Abraham’s wife, but when God is referring to Sarah, He speaks of her consistently, even after the episode with Hagar, as Abraham’s wife (Genesis 17:15, 19; 18:9–10; 20:2, 7). In Genesis 21, it is recorded that Abraham sent Hagar away, as Hagar’s and Ishmael’s presence created problems for Sarah and Isaac. After the episode with Hagar, the Bible does not mention that Abraham had sexual relationships with any other women but Sarah, until Sarah’s death.

Isaac had only one wife—Rebecca. Although Isaac repeated Abraham’s mistake when he lied about his wife by calling her his sister, he did not repeat the mistake of his father Abraham to try to produce offspring through Rebecca’s maid. Instead, he waited on God to give

him children through Rebecca, trusting in God that He would heal Rebecca who was barren (Genesis 25:21–22).

Jacob took more than one wife (Leah and Rachel), and he repeated the mistake of his grandfather Abraham and produced offspring through the maids of his wives, but he was unconverted at that time. His conversion apparently took place when he wrestled with God, as recorded in Genesis 32:22–32.

Israel's first king, Saul, took more than one wife, and thereby sinned, following the practices of the pagans all around him. He violated God's specific command to Israel's kings in Deuteronomy 17:17, not to "multiply wives for himself."

David had more than one wife. We read of his wives Michal, Abigail, Bathsheba, and of other wives and concubines (2 Samuel 5:13). At least ten of his concubines (2 Samuel 15:16) are also called his wives in 2 Samuel 12:11. It seems to follow from 2 Samuel 19:5 that David had even more concubines and wives than just the ten whom he left in Jerusalem to guard his court when he fled from his rebellious son Absalom. David followed the practice of Saul and other kings in having multiple wives, though against God's explicit commandment prohibiting such practice.

We read in 2 Samuel 20:3 that David no longer had any sexual relationships with his concubines after they had been disgraced by his son Absalom. We also read that Michal was once his wife (1 Samuel 25:44), but ceased to be so, when she had become the wife of another, namely Paltiel. When that happened, the Bible calls Paltiel her husband (2 Samuel 3:15), and David was not supposed to take her back when he had become king, according to the law in effect at that time (compare Deuteronomy 24:1–4). David probably did so for political reasons, so he could say that he was the husband of King Saul's daughter. The Bible does not refer to Michal as David's wife after he had taken her back, but consistently refers to her as "Michal, Saul's daughter" (2 Samuel 6:16, 20, 23).

David's son Solomon took seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, transgressing thereby God's commandments, and they turned away his heart. What Solomon did was "evil in the sight of the LORD" (1 Kings 11:6).

Polygamy Was Never Approved of by God

These Old Testament examples only prove to show that polygamy always has been wrong and against God's Law, and this fact is clearly confirmed in the New Testament.

As was already discussed several times in this booklet, Christ explained (in Mark 10:6–9) that God's intent for marriage was a relationship between one man and one woman. The "TWO" (verse 8) were to become one flesh. We do not read that the "three" or the "four" are to become one flesh.

Christ Will Only Marry One Wife at His Return

As stressed before, human marriage is symbolic of the spiritual marriage between Christ and His Church, as Ephesians 5:25–33 brings out. There, too, we read about the fact that "each one of you... so love his own wife as himself" (verse 33). We do not read about a husband loving his own WIVES as himself.

Christ will only marry ONE wife—not many wives. It says in Revelation 19:7: "His wife has made herself ready." It does not say: "His wives have made themselves ready." Christ's Church is a spiritual organism, consisting of all in whom God's Spirit dwells, but it is ONE body (Colossians 1:18), not several bodies.

We read in 1 Timothy 3:2, 12 that a minister or a deacon must only have one wife. But this does not mean that unordained Church members are permitted to have more than one wife. As we saw, God intends marriage to be a bond between one man and one woman. When addressing the requirements for ministers and deacons, Paul emphasizes God's teaching of not having more than one wife just as he emphasizes other character traits required of ministers and deacons (such as, to be "temperate," "of good behavior," "not violent," "not greedy for money," etc.). This does not mean that these are requirements only for ministers and deacons, and that other Church members are not sinning when they behave badly or when they are violent or greedy for money.

In the booklet, "In the Beginning... Answers to Questions from Genesis," by the (now defunct) *Worldwide Church of God*, copyright 1980, the following is stated about polygamy:

"God never approved or sanctioned the practice of polygamy. He

did permit it in the law of Moses—just as He allowed divorce because of the hardness of man’s heart (Matt. 19:8). Nevertheless, according to the Bible, the ideal marital state is one husband and one wife who become one flesh in marriage for life. God gave Adam one wife (Gen. 2:24). Jesus also said that from the beginning it was God’s will that a man leave his parents and cleave to his wife—not wives—and the two of them would become one flesh (Matt. 19:4–9). In the New Testament, a minister or a spiritual leader is to set the right example and have only one wife (I Tim. 3:2). In addition to the scriptural admonition, polygamy is against the laws of the United States and most other countries. Romans 13:1–7 states that Christians are to obey the laws of the land.”

The outdated concept of polygamy sometimes included concubines. As *Gill’s Commentary* explains in regard to Genesis 22:24, a concubine was “not an harlot, but a secondary wife, who was under the proper and lawful wife, and a sort of a head servant in the family, and chiefly kept for the procreation of children; which was not thought either unlawful or dishonourable in those times such as was Hagar in Abraham’s family.”

However, it was clearly against God’s Law and God’s Will. There are many definitions and observations about concubines or concubinage. *Baker’s Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1997, Vol 1, p. 504, writes:

“Concubinage was practised in many ancient cultures, especially in Mesopotamia... where a private citizen might have one or two concubines in addition to his primary wife... a concubine was often a slave or part of the booty of war (Judges 5:30). A man might have a concubine simply as an economical form of marriage, since no dowry or bride-price was required. A concubine could add to a man’s prestige by giving him two wives and thus an increased capacity for children. Such offspring were normally delivered onto the knees of the legal wife, thus establishing their legitimacy as family members. The concubine was also another servant to add to his work force.”

Regardless of human traditions, customs and ideas, the teachings of both the Old and New Testaments are clear and consistent: It was not and is not the Will of God that a man should have more than one wife; nor, that he should have concubines in addition to his wife.

Chapter 18

Our Personal Relationship With God

In the Introduction of this booklet, various types of relationships were mentioned, the first being that of the relationship between God and man. It is worth looking in more detail at this vital relationship, as it is, in fact, the most important relationship that anyone can possibly have.

The *English Oxford Living Dictionaries* defines the word relationship as, "The way in which two or more people or things are connected, or the state of being connected." Obviously, unless there is another person, no relationship can exist. So then, some may ask how Church members are supposed to have a relationship with a Being whom they have never met or seen or heard. For those who have no faith or understanding of God's Way of Life, it can indeed be a strange thing to contemplate, and so we will explain.

It must first be understood that no one can "join" the true Church of God. Rather, God must call and draw someone (see John 6:44, 65). For those who are indeed called and chosen, they have to respond positively to this calling. That means, as Peter said in Acts 2:38: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

God gives His Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32), and so it is more than just "giving your heart to the Lord." Rather, we need to have a close personal relationship with the great God of the universe.

In 1 John 4:19 we read: "We love Him because He first loved us." We also read in Leviticus 26:12: "I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people." The ancient Israelites were chosen by God for a physical reason, as God did not offer them the gift of the Holy Spirit; still, God laid out the conditions for such a physical relationship with Him. They were supposed to recognize Him as their

one true God and worship Him accordingly by at least keeping the letter of the Law, something that they regularly failed to do, as the Word of God reveals.

The Most Important Relationship of All

For those who are called by God in this day and age to become converted Christians, the responsibilities and duties are even stronger. We read in Matthew 10:37: “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” Christianity is a Way of Life as we read in the book of Acts (9:2; 19:23; 22:4; 24:14; 24:22). This means that God must take precedence in our lives. Christianity is a full time occupation, not just a one-day-of-the-week commitment.

Building a relationship with the Being who created all things through Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:16) must be something that we work at on a daily basis, and we can do this through a number of ways.

Prayer Is Vital

In any relationship, there must be conversation between the participants—to listen to and learn from the other person. We do this by prayer to God. We can, in fact, speak to the greatest Being in the universe, day or night. Unlike a telephone call where the other person may be busy speaking to someone else, God is always available. Such is His capacity that He can listen to multiple prayers at the same time.

If we were to receive an invitation to meet the Queen of England, the Prime Minister of the UK, the President of the United States or any other world famous personality, we would, no doubt, be very excited. How much more excited should we be to have access, at any time, to the One who created the universe, and all of us? He is instantly available, whereas the people mentioned above could only talk specifically and be involved with one person at a time. God the Father is not limited in that way. We also have a High Priest, Jesus Christ, who is at the Father’s right hand, interceding for us (Romans 8:34). Prayers of true Christians should be asked in Jesus’ Holy name (John 15:16).

We have this direct access to the Father and we do not have to go through a priest, or Mary, the mother of Jesus, or saints, as one very large denomination teaches. If that were so, a personal relationship

would not be possible with God. In the model prayer that Jesus spoke about (Matthew 6:9–13), the first two words are “Our Father,” which shows where our allegiance must be. It is a privilege for true Christians to be allowed to address our spiritual Father in heaven this way.

Prayer is an absolute necessity, and our free booklet, *Teach Us to Pray*, gives a very comprehensive review of this vital, daily practice that must be part of our Way of Life. The prayers of the saints are like incense to God (see Psalm 141:2; Revelation 5:8; 8:4).

Bible Study

Prayer is our conversation with God, and He communicates back to us through His written word, the Holy Bible. Daily study of His Word can help us to understand His Way more thoroughly, as did the Bereans (Acts 17:10–11). We cannot expect to come to the knowledge of God’s Truth without studying His Word. We have to realize that there is a huge difference between knowing about God and personally knowing Him. The Bible contains many examples of the patriarchs and others so that we can see what they did well and how they made mistakes and sinned. It reveals the Way of Life that we should live—how we should behave and react in many different situations. The book of Proverbs is a storehouse of wonderful advice and help for daily living.

In 2 Timothy 3:16–17 we read: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” That is the value of the written Word of God.

For a better grasp of God’s Holy Word, please read our free booklet, *The Authority of the Bible*.

Meditation

The third area for building a relationship with God is through meditation. In Proverbs 4:26, we read: “Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established.” In Psalm 119, sub-headed “Meditations on the Excellencies of the Word of God,” we read in verses 97–104 how the psalmist meditated on God’s Law, His Commandments, testimonies, precepts and judgments, from which he received understanding, making him wiser than his enemies, and saying in

verse 101: "I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word."

What is meditation? Meditation means the act of focusing one's thoughts to ponder, think on and muse. Meditation consists of reflective thinking or contemplation, usually on a specific subject, to discern its meaning or significance or a plan of action. For more information, please read our free booklet, *Hidden Secrets in the Bible*.

Fasting

The fourth area is that of fasting. The fast during the Day of Atonement—one of God's annual Holy Days—is the only commanded fast in the Bible (Leviticus 23:27, 29, 32). The fast on the Day of Atonement, referred to by the commandment to "afflict your souls," has been rightly understood as abstaining from food and drink for 24 hours. (For more information, please read our free booklets, *God's Commanded Holy Days* and *The Meaning of God's Fall Holy Days*.) However, we find that God's people fasted, or were asked to fast, on other occasions as well (compare, for example, Joel 2:12; Nehemiah 1:4; 2 Chronicles 20:3; Matthew 17:21; Daniel 9:3; Acts 13:2–3; Acts 14:23).

David, a man after God's own heart, wrote in Psalm 35:13: "I humbled (or: afflicted) my soul with fasting." Here, David fasted in the same way that was required on the Day of Atonement—by afflicting his soul. This would mean that he abstained from food and drink during his fast.

It can be an uncomfortable period of time when fasting, but it allows concentration and must be done with an attitude of seriousness and sincerity. Fasting deprives us of the normality of food which we need to fuel the body and give us good health, strength and energy. It enables us to be totally focused and directed toward God so that He may be the full source of our strength during our period of fasting.

When Jesus was asked why His disciples did not fast, this was the response: "And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast'" (Matthew 9:15). He also told us how to fast in Matthew 6:17–18: "But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your

Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

While building a right relationship with God, we will learn more and more what He considers to be acceptable and unacceptable conduct, *especially in the area of sexual behavior*. We will receive wisdom and strength from God as to how to live a life that is pleasing to Him.

There is no particular formula, intricate or detailed password, nor any special rites or complicated ceremonies associated with building a relationship with God. Prayer, Bible study, meditation and occasional fasting are the tools that the Word of God reveals are necessary. They are the keys to having and improving a close personal relationship with God, and when applied diligently, will result in the most important relationship that we can ever have!

Chapter 19

Endangered Species

Wikipedia defines endangered species as a population of organisms which is facing a high risk of becoming extinct because it is either few in numbers or is threatened by changing environmental or predation parameters.

There are those species that are already extinct, those that are extinct in the wild, those which are critically endangered, then the endangered, and then the vulnerable.

***EndangeredSpecie.com* is a website dedicated to “providing all the best endangered species information, links, books, and publications regarding rare and endangered species. This site also includes information about conservation efforts and endangered species organizations that are dedicated to saving and preserving the world’s most endangered wildlife and plant life.”**

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, there are 746 species of plants and 516 species of animals on the endangered species list in North America alone.

Money raising schemes abound to try and help so many worthy causes. Without belittling the hard work and efforts of these worthy organizations, there is an endangered species which is of far greater importance than any they may represent—true Christians, those whom God has called at this time to live His Way of Life and who will become part of His Family at the time of Christ’s return. Society rejects the biblical values of true Christians on a daily basis. Upholding and standing up for the Truth, especially in the area of sexual conduct and behavior, identifies a true Christian as somebody who does not “fit in.” Swiftly and surely, he becomes an endangered species.

We see almost daily the constant barrage of anti-biblical rulings, antagonism and antipathy toward true Christianity that would not

have been thought possible that long ago. But as we approach the time when Christ must return to save mankind from blowing itself off the face of the planet, the correct reading of Scripture shows that this is inevitable.

We should not be surprised as we have not been promised an easy life. God has to find out about us as we are tested and tried in many different ways and, being an endangered species at the end time is part of that process.

By producing the material that we do—this booklet being part of that process—we are ensuring that the message of true Christianity is being made available to all who read it, even though secular society will dismiss this as irrelevant in this “up-to-date” age of diversity.

However, being an endangered species will not prevent us from continuing our work, knowing that we can look forward to much better times in the Kingdom of God, which Jesus Christ will set up on earth at His return, and then true Christians will be endangered no more!

Conclusion

A senior figure in one of the large mainstream churches in the UK made these comments some years ago in answer to a question about being involved in the political and corporate life of our civilization:

“My disagreement stems partly from my understanding of the way in which I read the Bible, praying that the Holy Spirit will enlighten my understanding of what statements are unchangeable and what are conditioned by social and cultural norms of the time in which God spoke to those involved.”

In an answer to the question, “Must religions ‘change with the times’ to stay relevant?”, a Canadian churchman answered as follows:

“If a sect or religion is willing to compromise its beliefs to gain as many followers as possible or increase in wealth and/or political influence, then absolutely! It will be changing all the time.

“Whatever whim of culture comes blowing through it will jump on that bandwagon, and when the bandwagon passes, in a generation or two the (group) will either morph into something unrecognizable or disappear.

“Truth, authenticity, virtue and the betterment of mankind are always relevant. What matters is the source of your truth. The Bible purports itself to be the guidebook for life given by the creator and enabler of all things. If that is true, His Word would transcend cultures, and the drastic social and technological changes wrought by the passage of time. Gladly, it does.

“Deviation from His Word always results in a weakening of its power, which brings life, healing, restoration and joy to all that embrace it. Churches that refuse to acknowledge the authority of the Bible, instead choosing to change it to suit a lifestyle or opinion are either closing or at best struggling to stay alive.

“Hebrews 13:8 states: ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.’ He doesn’t change. Perfection does not need to change.

“If you think you can follow Him on your own terms, you’re going

to be disappointed. The Gospel transforms lives, it alters history, but its dynamic is lost when people who think they are smarter than God himself assume His Word needs ‘adjusting.’”

That response is an excellent one, except that mainstream Christianity did just that—they did deviate from the Truth and they did employ syncretism, which is the combining of different beliefs, and from as early as the first century.

In his book, *Mystery of the Ages*, Herbert W Armstrong, late human leader of the (now defunct) *Worldwide Church of God*, wrote the following in “Author’s Statement”:

“The Church was infiltrated during the first century with another gospel. Many false teachings and false churches under the name of ‘traditional Christianity’ arose. As God reveals in Revelation 12:9, the whole world has been deceived. These basic truths have been kept a mystery. Even sincere and well-meaning men among the clergy have received their teaching from other men as handed down traditionally in these churches. They have assumed these false teachings to be the true teachings of the Bible.

“Instead of putting the various pieces of the jigsaw puzzle properly and sensibly together, it has become the practice and custom to read an already-believed false teaching into each particular scripture, taken out of its context. In other words to interpret the scriptures to say what they have already been taught and come to believe. The Bible needs no interpretation because it interprets itself. This becomes clear when one sees the various scriptures of each subject properly put together, and the Bible itself says, ‘here a little, and there a little’ (Isaiah 28:10). Even the world of a professed traditional Christianity has been deceived.”

Selling True Christianity Short

Soren Kierkegaard, a 19th century Danish philosopher and churchman, felt that “Official Christianity,” or Christendom, had departed so far from the Christianity of the New Testament, that it needed to be torn down and rebuilt—not reformed. He wrote: “Here there is nothing to reform; what has to be done is to throw a light upon a criminal offense against Christianity, prolonged through centuries, perpetuated by millions (more or less guiltily), whereby they have cunningly, under the guise of perfecting Christianity, sought little by

little to cheat God out of Christianity, and have succeeded in making Christianity exactly the opposite of what it is in the New Testament.”

He further observed that “The path that Jesus described as ‘narrow’ was declared broad by Christendom. The Bible is very easy to understand. But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand, we are obliged to act accordingly.”

Another of his quotes stated that “When we receive a package we unwrap it to get at the contents. Christianity is a gift from God, but instead of receiving the gift, we have undertaken to wrap it up, and each generation has furnished a new wrapping around the others.”

This background helps us to see how far away from true Christianity mainstream has become. As we state in this booklet, God does not change, but living together or common law marriages have generally been accepted, homosexuals have entered the ministry of some churches, and many other types of sexual perversion, seen as an abomination to God, are seen as good by many churches who think that they know better than their Creator!

Where do we go from here? For true Christians, the path to eternal life has been understood from the time that they accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and the Way of Life He defines for a Christian. While the true Church of God has been given the ongoing commission to cry aloud and spare not and show the people their sins and transgressions, there is no way that God’s Church can change the way that society is going, nor is it their responsibility to do so. But it is the responsibility of true Christians to abstain from sin in any form or shape, and to shine as bright lights in the darkness of this world.

When Jesus Christ returns to set up the Kingdom of God, the Way of God will become the way of humanity, when all the deviations, abominations and perversions, generally applauded in today’s liberal permissive society, will be consigned to the dustbin of history.

God’s people are waiting, expectantly, for that time!

The following booklets are available, upon request:

And Lawlessness Will Abound...
Angels, Demons and the Spirit World
Are YOU Predestined to be Saved?
Are You Already Born Again?
Baptism—a Requirement for Salvation?
Biblical Prophecy—From Now Until Forever
Do We Have an Immortal Soul?
Do You Know the Jesus of the Bible?
Don't Keep Christmas
Europe in Prophecy: The Unfolding of End-Time Events
Germany in Prophecy—*The Mysterious Origin of German-Speaking Peoples and Their Prophetic Destiny*
God Is a Family
God's Commanded Holy Days
God's Law...or God's Grace?
God's Teachings on Sexual Relationships
Heavens and Earth...Before and After the First Man!
Hidden Secrets in the Bible
How to Find the True Church of God
Human Suffering—Why...and How Much Longer?
Is God a Trinity?
Is That In the Bible?—Man's Holidays and God's Holy Days
Is That In the Bible?—The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation
Jesus Christ—A Great Mystery!
Middle Eastern and African Nations in Bible Prophecy
Old Testament Laws—Still Valid Today?
Paul's Letter to the Ephesians—*How to Understand It*
Paul's Letter to the Galatians—*How to Understand It*
Paul's Letter to the Philippians—*How to Understand It*
Punishment for Our Sins
Should YOU Fight in War?
Sickness and Healing—What the Bible Tells Us
Teach Us to Pray!
The Authority of the Bible
The Book of Zechariah—Prophecies for *Today!*
The Fall and Rise of Britain and America

The Fall and Rise of the Jewish People
The Gospel of the Kingdom of God
The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord
The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families
The *Meaning* of God's Fall Holy Days
The *Meaning* of God's Spring Holy Days
The Mysteries of the Bible
The Sacrificial System and the Tabernacle In the Wilderness
The Ten European Revivals of the Ancient Roman Empire
The Theory of Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults?
Tithing—Today?
When and How Will Christ Return?

HOW THIS WORK IS FINANCED

Our activities and literature, including booklets, weekly updates, sermons on CD and video and audio broadcasts are provided free of charge. They are made possible by the tithes, offerings and contributions of Church members and others who have elected to support this Work.

While we do not solicit the general public for funds, contributions are gratefully welcomed and are tax-deductible in the U.S. and Canada.

Donations should be sent to the following addresses:

United States

Church of the Eternal God
PO Box 270519
San Diego, CA 92198
www.eternalgod.org

Canada

Church of God, ACF
Box 1480
Summerland B.C. V0H 1Z0
www.churchofgodacf.ca

United Kingdom

Global Church of God
PO Box 44
Mablethorpe, LN12 9AN
www.globalchurchofgod.co.uk

Please also visit our additional website in German:

www.aufpostenstehen.de

