

HOW CAN YOUNG PEOPLE...



COPE WITH LIFE?

About the Cover: Long ago, God spoke to Joshua, saying, "... be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go" (Joshua 1:7). Young people who choose God's Way (Deuteronomy 30:19-20) will have "a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11) and a life filled with truly abundant blessings (John 10:10).

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Introduction

This booklet was written for all of our readers, with special emphasis on *parents and their children*. It addresses the problems with which especially young people are confronted today, and it is meant to help parents to help their children to deal with those problems. In this evil world, it is necessary that parents teach their children God's values, as set forth in the Bible. But how can the Bible become attractive to young people, and how can Bible study become a joy, rather than "boring" and a "nuisance"?

Parents have a vital and all-important role in making the Bible known to their children, and so, we offer suggestions in this booklet to the parents as to how to fulfill this critical responsibility of teaching their children God's Way of Life.

At the same time, we emphasize that ultimately, young people must decide for themselves that they want to follow God. They must develop their own conviction. Parents can and should help to lead and guide their children, but it must be the responsibility of young persons to choose the Way of God, because they have convinced themselves that it is the right way.

The Bible is full of direction, advice and guidance in so many areas of life, and children and teens are by no means excluded or overlooked. Just the opposite is true. We have therefore dedicated large portions of this booklet to questions such as peer pressure, teasing and bullying, self-defense, and the proper kind of music, sports, and adequate clothing. In passing, areas such as sexual conduct, tattoos and the use of drugs and alcohol have not been overlooked as well.

We answer the question as to how young people can cope with life and have hope for the future; how they can and must conquer Satan the Devil; and why they must come to their own conclusion that the Bible is God's Word and right in everything. We also discuss the biblical teaching that our children are "sanctified" and "holy," showing what this means, and how it has practical relevance for their lives.

And there is so much more.

It is hoped that parents will read this booklet TOGETHER WITH their children and teens, and take time to answer questions which might arise. In fact, stimulating conversations between parents and children might ensue. AND if children are too young to read this booklet, then parents should read and explain it to them. Depending on the age of their children, parents might choose to just explain the contents of some of the chapters of this booklet in their own words.

One purpose of this booklet is to fulfill our part in God's end-time commission to His Church to "turn The hearts of the fathers [and mothers] to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers [and mothers]" (Malachi 4:6).

You will note that the *subheadings* in the text speak exclusively to young people. While the text itself addresses principles, guidance, suggestions and directions for all of us, including parents and children, the focus of this booklet is on YOU, the young people... with the hope that you will enjoy, become encouraged and convicted, and adhere to what is stated in this booklet.

When should YOU get serious about the principles and teachings contained in this booklet, which are based on the Bible? There is no better time to start than right now!

Chapter 1

How Can Young People Have Hope for the Future?

It can seem bleak when it comes to the immediate future. Especially, when looking at it through the eyes of a young person growing up to become a Christian. With everything that is happening in the world at this time, how can a young person have hope for their future? Is it worth growing up and trying to accomplish things in this life?

The definition of hope is “to trust in, wait for, look for, or desire something or someone; or to expect something beneficial in the future.” Viewing hope through the eyes of a young person is not something that comes easily. It is, however, something that is learned and which needs to grow. God will protect and help design the lives of the youth, giving them hope and encouragement throughout their lives.

When we are young, it can be hard to see the future. Everything seems to be in the “here and now.” In an age of immediate gratification, it is challenging to sow seeds for the future. But these formative years as a young person are quite important.

The book of Proverbs, being very informative, gives young people useful knowledge to live by. One of the best things one can do as a young person is to learn how to apply knowledge and understanding. Many young people in the world today are growing up without Godly knowledge, resulting in the breakdown and destruction of society.

Notice, we are told in Proverbs 20:11: “Even a child is known by his deeds, Whether what he does is pure and right.” Today, most children are not worried about nor do they care about doing what is right; or we find most are doing whatever they *feel* is good. Society and social media continue to feed young children’s minds with thoughts of equality and gender neutralism with a picture of a “feel as you are” mentality.

While it is the *parent’s duty to help educate children to understand the difference between right and wrong and to encourage them to do what is right*, there is much more to say.

Honor Your Parents

One of the most important things to understand is that God has placed parents in young people's lives for a reason. The 5th Commandment, which is the first one mentioned after the first four which are directed towards God, is to honor our parents. Giving honor to parents is the first command that comes with a reward. By honoring our parents, God says we will receive a long life.

How do *you* as a child honor your parents? Do you listen to what they have to say? Do you respect their wishes? Do you have good communication with them and do you not talk back? The list of questions could go on and on, but the idea is pretty simple—what do you do to show respect and honor?

Going back to the promise of long life, this command is directed to children today! Long life will be theirs if they are willing to obey God. His commands come with built-in rewards. It is truly remarkable.

God gives us hope for our futures—even for the future of young people!

Use Your Talents

It is not wrong to think in terms of what one wants to do in the future. God gives everyone gifts in terms of talents (Romans 12:6)—what they are good at. Some people are good at math. Some people may be gifted at music or art. Not everyone is able to do the same things.

As *you*, as a young person, grow up, your talents and gifts will start to mature. This becomes important as you move on with your life. Including God in these matters and asking Him to show you the course of direction is extremely important. There are a few persons in the Bible who did this, and God led them through their lives (including Samuel, Daniel and his friends, Jeremiah, and Jesus Christ). Even Christ grew up learning how to be a carpenter.

In our free booklet, "*Do You Know the Jesus of the Bible?*", in chapter 9, it states that Christ was a carpenter or an architect. He didn't just get this skill automatically and by chance. It took a lot of learning from His step-father Joseph, and He did work in this occupation until He started His public ministry. This is important to realize as you grow up. If there is a trade that interests you, you are going to have to spend time and effort in acquiring the skills to learn this trade.

There is a large group of younger people today who feel lost and unsure. They are scared of all the uncertainty and are in desperate need of direction. It is easy to fall into this category. But this is not the type of attitude God wants young people (or anyone else, for that matter) to have. In 2 Timothy 1:7, we find quite the opposite, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

When the writer of this chapter was growing up, he remembers hearing messages from some ministers about the end of the world and how close it was, and he remembers overhearing adults around him being fearful. He remembers growing up and not having a purpose and wondering what he would do. Would Christ come back before he had a chance to grow up? Was the world going to end soon? What was the point of school, of education, and of finding something meaningful to do?

Make Plans and Study

Well, many years later, he looks back and realizes that this was the wrong attitude to take. Since then, he has heard ministers in the *Church of the Eternal God* say, and rightly so, that we need to live as if we have a lifetime ahead of us and yet be ready at all times for the return of Christ. As a young person, this means making plans for the future and spending time learning and being curious about how the world works, by asking questions. You need to have hope that you, as a young person, will accomplish the goals and the tasks you set your hand to. But at the same time, don’t engage in foolish and ungodly conduct.

The early disciples tried to stop children from coming to Christ at times, and Christ rebuked them and had the little children come to Him. Mark 10:14–15 reads: “But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’” The attitude of children is what Christ was observing—being humble and able to learn, being willing to listen to adults and showing respect.

Include God in Your Life

God clearly states that He knows us and our children, being called and sanctified in this lifetime, well before we are born (Psalm 139:15–16). We will explain the meaning of your “sanctification” later in this booklet. God’s plan for each and every person has its time and place. Those whose parents are called as Christians now are in a special group of people. God will certainly work with those young people and encourage them, giving them the help they need and directing their lives as long as they depend on Him, respecting and building a proper relationship with Him.

As a young person, the hope for *your* future begins now. It begins when you start to choose to learn about God’s ways—when you start including God in your thoughts and in your prayers. We are told that God is a rewarder of those who diligently—constantly—seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). Building faith in God can begin at a young age. Converted parents have seen miracles that God has done for their children. God is constantly watching over them, as they also know that He has protected them multiple times so far.

Psalm 108:13 tells us: “Through God we will do valiantly.” With God’s help, we will do mighty things. As children, it can feel challenging at times with situations they may go through, and it can feel like they don’t know what to do, say, or think; especially, when it is a big trial, or challenge, or the test of their conviction. No matter what it is, God promises that if they take their request or challenge before Him and ask for help, for understanding or guidance, He will provide a solution or a door will open that they had never considered.

The Bible is full of Scriptures showing us that when we are overwhelmed, we can turn to God and expect answers.

The apostle Paul was encouraged to write the following in Romans 8:31: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” Paul went through incredible challenges as he lived his life, and so for him to tell us this, we should feel encouraged.

One of the very interesting things about God is His desire for us to try out His Way of Life. He tells us to tithe diligently [that is, giving Him ten percent of our earnings], and then to watch and observe how He opens the doors and gives us blessings. God leaves the choice to do this up to each one of us.

Think of Your Future

The future of God's Kingdom is ahead of us. God says He will protect and preserve our children. They will live in the Millennium and will continue to learn how to live righteously. We do not quite know in every little detail what the future will be like in the Millennium, but much has been revealed to us (compare our free booklet, *"Biblical Prophecy—From Now Until Forever"*). We can be certain that there will be peace, no more wars [with two noteworthy exceptions at the beginning and the end of the Millennium] and plenty to do. The skills and experiences that children are forming now will be useful for their future. With all the previous destruction that happened before Christ's return, there will be a lot of opportunities in the Millennium to help regenerate the earth and learn how to do things in a better way.

In all of this, we should remember that God is the One Who is in control. He tells us in Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." A future and hope belong to our young people who learn to rely and lean on God throughout their lives.

Chapter 2

How Can Young People Deal with Peer Pressure?

Peer pressure is an incredibly challenging thing that almost all young people will experience at one time or another in their lives—especially as those who are on their way toward becoming true Christians. Even adults have to face peer pressure. The problem with peer pressure is that people want to fit in. They want others to like them and are at times willing to change their conviction in order to gain the approval of those around them.

The Bible makes very good points about peer pressure and shows good examples of how to deal with these pressures.

It takes a solid understanding of what one believes, and to act toward that understanding to deal with and counter peer pressure. It should be noted that not all peer pressure is bad, and it can be useful to encounter peer pressure of both types to learn how to deal with each kind.

Peer pressure really starts for early teens when they are trying to understand the world more and as they start to experience and gain more independence from their parents. And it continues throughout life to varying degrees.

Peer pressure in and of itself is not a bad thing. Peer pressure can be positive or negative. There is a coach for teens whom the writer of this chapter follows on Instagram, and he is constantly posting that one of the most crucial things for teens is to choose their friend group—because it has a direct impact on the types of things each individual or the group are going to be influenced to do.

The Company You Choose

Bad peer pressure can come about because of the type of people one associates with.

Two quotes come to mind in this regard.

“Associate yourself with people of good quality, for it is better to be alone than in bad company” (Booker T. Washington).

And a very famous one, with the origin unknown, is: “You become like the 5 people you spend the most time with. Choose carefully.”

When it comes to choosing with whom we make friends, it is essential to look at the qualities they bring to the table. Good people challenge one to also do and be good. A bad friendship causes one to veer off into areas that are not good.

Choose Good Friends

Here is a quick list of Scriptures that talk about good friendships and what they provide:

“The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray” (Proverbs 12:26).

“A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself; The simple pass on and are punished” (Proverbs 27:12).

“He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20).

“A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17).

“A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful... Ointment and perfume delight the heart, And the sweetness of a man’s friend gives delight by hearty counsel” (Proverbs 27:6, 9).

“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Avoid Bad “Friends”

The Bible also gives us advice on the types of “friends” whom we should avoid so we don’t have to deal with bad peer pressure:

“Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits’” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

“A violent man entices his neighbor, And leads him in a way that is not good” (Proverbs 16:29).

“Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go, Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul”

(Proverbs 22:24–25).

“Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful”
(Psalms 1:1).

“I have not sat with idolatrous mortals, Nor will I go in with hypocrites. I have hated the assembly of evildoers, And will not sit with the wicked” (Psalm 26:4–5).

Stand Up for What Is Right

When considering with whom to make friends, we should realize that there may be times when we will have to stand up to them in order to keep doing what is right. It may come to the point where we have to distance or disassociate from people whom we once called friends because we choose to walk a different path.

It can be challenging and hard to walk away from a group of friends; we may be called names and made fun of or worse, people can try and defame us or cause problems for us.

Three Stories for You About Daniel

Daniel and his friends, when they were young, were asked to eat what appears to have included unclean food. (Unclean food was not created for human consumption. A list of unclean food can for instance be found in Leviticus 11). They decided not to do this as they were following their conviction. They had to ask the people over them to give them a trial—they would not eat the unclean food while everyone else did. At the end of the trial, they were found to be healthier than everyone else.

Daniel 1:8–16 tells this story. Daniel “set his heart” not to eat the food. Daniel understands the situation, and decides, in his heart, based upon his knowledge of what is right and what is wrong, and chooses to do the right thing. Once set, Daniel would not be moved. Not to give in to bad peer or even government pressure shows the proper type of attitude.

Later on in the book of Daniel, we again see bad peer and government pressure at play. This time, Daniel’s friends were being “snatched” upon by people who should have been their peers. It involved the king of Babylon and the desire of the king to be worshiped by all people.

Daniel's three friends knew better and chose not to, because they knew they should only worship God, obeying the First Commandment which says that we are not to have other "gods" before or besides the True God. The story shows that they had the faith to stand up for what they believed in, even if it would have resulted in their death. This type of faith was a result of consistent actions throughout their lives.

Further on in the book of Daniel, in chapter 6, we find when Daniel is praying that people take notice. They were jealous of Daniel. They attempt to trap Daniel, again using the King's power. They tricked the king who then, following his own law prohibiting praying to God, has to throw Daniel in a den with wild lions. Yet Daniel never strays from God, never stops doing what he knows to be right, and never gives in to outside pressure. And in return, God powerfully protects him from the lions in the den.

These three stories iterate the power of bad peer or outside pressure and how evil can be used against God's people—including young people. More importantly, it shows that God is the One in control and knows the situations that we face. When we include Him in our ways and show Him that we are willing to stand up for what is right, instead of bowing to the pressures of doing what others think is right or cool, He will provide the way of escape. He will give us the power and the strength we need.

Ask God for Good Friends

Taking this one step further, we could even pray to God and ask Him to provide friendships for us that are good and helpful. Knowing that we can come to God and ask Him in faith for things such as this is powerful and should be reassuring for us.

Good peer pressure is having an influence on people's lives that is positive. Christians are told to be the "lights" of the world (Matthew 5:14–16)—meaning, we are to be the ones standing out. Even children, teens and young adults can be lights. This can be very hard for young (and old) people who want to fit in with their peers. Peers are often-times thought of as friend groups, but peers can actually be anyone with a similar status, such as age groups or some attribute that is shared.

Good peer pressure is in finding groups where we are drawn to accomplish useful things such as doing well in school, encouraging

others, developing a good work ethic, being kind to people, choosing not to follow other's wrong examples, having good clean fun, enjoying other's company, or finding and keeping up with interesting hobbies. Remember, other people's behavior can be very influential. If one can act with integrity and confidence in good ways, others will take notice and follow.

Philippians 4:8 tells us: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."

Bad peer pressure isn't hard to find. It is easy to fall into the traps of bad peer pressure. It will always be harder to swim against the current of popular culture and maintain that which is good.

Understand Bad Peer Pressure

Bad peer pressure can involve many things such as using bad language, taking God's Name in vain, including expressions such as "My God," "My Gosh," "Gee," "Oh my Lord," "My goodness," cursing and swearing, lying, cheating, calling people names, bullying, harassing, using social media in mean and cruel ways, engaging in inappropriate and wrong activities, smoking, taking drugs, drinking too much alcohol, engaging in fornication or adultery, sex or sexting, encouraging others to do wrong things.

When we engage in bad types of peer pressure, we lose confidence and respect for ourselves, and others can come to lose respect for us as well. God especially will be definitely saddened. When such activities are happening, it is often the case that it can feel scary and intimidating to say no when a wrong action has taken place and continues.

It is important to realize that one should not engage in them in the first place. If the courage to say no is there at the outset, it will make the future easier. If you find yourself in a place where you are compromising with what you know to be right, then there are a few things to immediately do.

Seek Help to Avoid Bad Peer Pressure

Pray—pray to God for forgiveness as He is the only One with

the power to forgive fully. Then ask God for the courage to stop and for help to figure out how to get out of the situation. God is always there and wants to help when you include Him. Next, talking to your parents or a minister about your situation will help you to see the broader picture. When sin takes hold of you, it can be hard to see a way out, and it can narrow your field of view. The Bible refers to sin as a passing pleasure (Hebrews 11:25). Yes, sin can feel good! But the end is always misery and death, which may perhaps be hard to picture in the moment!

Peer pressure will be something all young people will deal with. We cannot state strongly enough that God really cares. He knows what we go through. He observes. When we choose to include Him in our lives, actions and challenges, then we can expect help and make better choices and decisions. God is always just a prayer away! Start practicing and see what happens. See how He will help you. The only way to really know is to try and see how it will work out.

Peer pressure will be a part of almost everyone's life at some point in time. Understanding what it is, should help us to see that a lot of it is about people being insecure and a desire for acceptance from all involved. But we don't have to fit in with this world, and we are actually told that we shouldn't fit in with it. Romans 12:2 tells us:

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Don't Let Others Manipulate You

If people intimidate you, they are trying to manipulate you! It is very important that you make your own decisions and be the type of person to follow what God says, realizing that everything that He says is for our benefit and well-being.

We must settle it in our hearts that we will not give in to peer pressure, no matter what we are facing. If we allow others to decide what we do and how we will behave, we lose our sovereignty. We have the right to our own thoughts. We have the right to choose not to follow what everyone else is doing. If we give that away, it plays right into Satan's hands, with him seeking how we can fail.

When we don't stand up for what is right, we are in essence standing

with those who are doing wrong, as it says in Romans 1:32 "...who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." The previous verses also show in part what is going on in this world and how, with Satan's influence growing stronger, people are given over to sin and will attempt to get us to follow suit.

We will be able to overcome bad peer pressure when we realize it for what it is. Think carefully about the future and realize that many friends in early life will only be there for a brief time, while sometimes it can be a lifelong relationship. What really matters are good friendships and a strong relationship with those who truly love and care for your well-being—God, your family and true and helpful friends.

Chapter 3

How Can Young People Handle Bullying and Teasing?

We live in an age where bullying and teasing are rampant, and we hear all these stories about physical bullying, psychological online bullying, known as cyberbullying, and other intimidation and manipulative techniques. This can happen anywhere, whether it be at school, at work, or through social media, and anyone can be a victim; but in this chapter, we want to concentrate specifically on young people as victims of bullying.

How should they respond? We may have been a victim ourselves or we may have even participated in being the bully or involved with teasing, causing hurt to others, which we shouldn't do, since we are to be good examples. There are attempts in the workplace or at schools where recommendations are made about whom we need to talk to when trying to deal with these problems, as well as reporting the bully to proper authorities, such as administrators, counselors, human resource departments, psychiatrists, therapists, and so on, but they tend to dismiss the most important One who could truly help us.

What about God? How can God actually help US in these situations? And what does GOD say about how we should or should not react?

When it comes to God's people specifically, we can be bullied or teased strictly on our beliefs and faced with situations where we are put to the test, as many examples in the Bible of God's people show who had to go through this type of situation. How did they deal with it? They were also confronted with peer pressure, just as we are on a continual basis, but the important thing is how they handled it and how we should do likewise.

Do we believe in God and rely on Him for our protection, having the faith that it is GOD who is our protecting shield? Do we think that God is incapable of helping us in certain circumstances?

Do What You Can to Avoid Dangerous Situations

We should, of course, do everything that we can do to avoid getting into dangerous situations. We obviously should not go to places where gangs assemble, and we should not get involved with people who are known to be active in crimes, for instance. In addition, Proverbs 15:1 tells us that a soft answer turns away wrath but that grievous words stir up strife. So then, we need to be peacemakers, and we need to avoid everything that would create strife.

Proverbs 18:6 reminds us that a fool's lips enter into contention and that his mouth calls for violent reactions. We are also told in Proverbs 26:17 that he who passes by and meddles with strife belonging not to him, is like one who takes a dog by the ears. The point is, the battles of this world, which are fought by this world, are not our battles! This Scripture tells us not to be a fool, meddling with strife not belonging to us!

Believe in and Pray to God as Your Protector

The most important of all the things you can do to avoid using violence is to pray to God, on a daily basis: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (compare Matthew 6:13). We are to plead with God daily to NOT ALLOW a tempting situation that might be too difficult for us to bear, to overtake us. However, we read in the Bible that righteous persons have sometimes found themselves being attacked by others. What did they do, and what should YOU do, if God allows it?

First, realize that God would NOT allow it if you were not able to bear it, as 1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us. And when God does allow it, He will also provide a way of escape for you. This is sometimes literally the case. Sometimes you need to actually flee, to run away! Christ did so on occasion. We read in John 10:39: "Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand." When we find ourselves, or others, in a dangerous, challenging, life-threatening situation, we must PRAY to God, with faith, to HELP us out of that situation. To fight our fight for us! To give us the wisdom and the power NOT to do the WRONG thing, however tempting it may be.

Don't Try to Kill or Seriously Injure

We must realize that no matter what harm we may WANT to do

physically in a given situation, we must not seriously injure or kill the attacker. If we carry a gun with us or have one handy, say, next to our bed, we will certainly try to use it, but then may be killed in the process. In any case, to use a gun and shoot the attacker would be against the clear biblical teaching of prohibiting killing. But what about just trying to injure him? In the heat of the moment, you may not be able to do just that, even if you wanted to. And if the attacker would only be injured, he would still have the chance to kill you or others who are with you. Christ told Peter, when he pulled his sword in defense of Christ and just injured the servant, to put his sword away. Christ's protection did not depend on human weapons. It depended on God the Father and His angels. So, too, with us. Our real protection comes from the same source.

The same applies to the use of a knife or other tools which a bullied person could use as weapons. The principle is clear not to use anything for the purpose of seriously injuring or even killing an attacker, including a bully. This could even include our own physical strength or skills which would enable us to seriously injure a bully.

The whole issue really comes down to where we place our trust and confidence for our protection, in EVERY situation. When you place your trust and confidence in God, He will protect you. Ultimately though, no matter the consequences, we must be living a life pleasing to God. We must never fear the ones who can take our physical life from us, but we must fear, or deeply respect, the One who can refuse to give us ETERNAL LIFE.

We must always have the attitude that Daniel's three friends had when they were asked to violate God's laws by worshipping an idol, and in case of refusal, were threatened with being thrown into a fiery furnace. We need to speak and act in the same way when we are being tempted to worship Satan—the god of war—by picking up a gun or a knife or another weapon to injure or even kill another person. We read their answer in Daniel 3:17–18: "... our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." We must not serve the wisdom of this world, worshipping the power of the air and the god of destruction and war.

Rather, we must always follow the PRINCE OF PEACE.

Remember what the angels told the shepherds when Christ was born: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests” (Luke 2:14, *New International Version*), or, as the *New Revised Standard Version* renders it, “. . . with whom He is pleased.” When God is pleased with us, when His favor rests on us, THEN He will be our shield and protection in times of impending battles. We must trust in God (compare Psalm 56:3–4, 8–11), AND we must be willing to obey His commandments, no matter what the situation, circumstance or consequence.

Bullying, even over the internet as cyberbullying, is a form of verbal physical attack. In any situation that we may be in, we must firmly keep in mind God’s limitless power and His willingness to help His people, who place their trust and confidence in Him. If we are a victim of bullying, we may think about ways of fighting back, including injuring or bullying the bully. But that could also have its consequences that we just read about. Again, resorting to violence with the intent to seriously injure or kill another person, including damaging his or her reputation, even for the purpose of self-defense or defending others, is not in conformity with Christ’s teaching. Let us also never forget that God has assigned angels for our protection. Christ also knew that His protection did not depend on man’s strength—including His own—but on God the Father’s.

Allow God to Fight for You

True Christians and those who are growing up to become true Christians, must allow God to fight their battles for them. The Bible contains numerous examples of when God did just that.

When the ancient Israelites left the slavery of Egypt and were pursued by the Egyptians, God fought their battle for them, by drowning the enemy in the Red Sea. Moses told the Israelites at that time: “The LORD shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace” (Exodus 14:14).

This is proven throughout the Bible on many occasions, showing what God accomplished for His people—and what He is willing and capable of doing TODAY for you and me—if we trust in His protection.

He protected Daniel in the lions’ den, and He protected Daniel’s three friends in the fiery furnace. All these things recorded in the Old

Testament “were written for our admonition [or instruction], upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). Christ told us that we must not take the sword or resort to violence. God and His mighty angels are always there to help us (compare Psalm 34:7; 91:11). But we must believe and be persuaded that no matter what the circumstances, we have to remain peaceful, while praying to God to fight our battles for us!

God who protected Daniel in the lions’ den is ready and able to protect us today, if we long for His protection. We don’t need to use violence against others for our own protection, when we trust that God is there to help us, whenever we are in need. As we read in Psalm 46:1–3: “God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling.” And notice this comforting reassurance and promise of God’s presence in our lives, and His protection:

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you” (Isaiah 43:2).

At the same time, we must always look at God’s overall Will for us and our great potential and destiny for our lives, as Christ expressed in Matthew 10:28–31: “And do not fear those who kill the body [who can take your physical life] but cannot kill the soul [this is not saying that the soul is immortal, but rather, that God has the power to resurrect us and give us life again, which man cannot do]. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [He can destroy us by burning us up in hell fire, thereby ending our physical life]. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground APART FROM YOUR FATHER’S WILL. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

What Is Your Attitude Toward a Bully?

We also need to consider our thoughts and attitudes toward bullies. It may be easy to think of them as evil people but this is not a godly attitude.

Quoting from *gotquestions.org* on bullying:

“At the very least, we should pray that the bully would have a change of heart... Many times, though, bullies act the way they do out of their own hurt. Perhaps they were bullied in the past. Perhaps they feel insecure, and the only way they can feel acceptable to themselves is by belittling others. We can empathize with their hurt and extend God’s compassion, love, and grace to them while also maintaining solid boundaries to address their wrong behavior. Whether bullying is driven by past hurt or simply the sin nature, God is the one who can bring healing, restoration, and change. It is always appropriate to pray for both bullies and their victims. Similarly, when we are the victim of bullying, we can go to God with our hurt and seek His reassurance and healing.”

Romans 12:17–21 says, “Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to [God’s] wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

When we bless those who curse us, we do this with our mouth—but our words must be coming from the heart. This includes, praying for them. Our prayer could include, asking God to grant them repentance so that their sins may be forgiven. It could include asking God to prevent them from continuing their evil deeds, since their attitudes and conduct harm themselves and others.

Our prayer might include the plea to God to let our enemies see that what they are doing is wrong. We are not to avenge ourselves because we know that God will avenge us—and if this means that God will allow or bring trials on our enemies to bring them to repentance or a recognition of the evil of their doing, then that, too, would be a blessing for them.

Blessing would mean not to slander our enemies or to speak evil of them, by inventing facts or “adding to” the truth. It does not mean hiding the facts if there is a need to speak out, but even then, we must be sure that we do not speak or act with hate and with a desire to avenge

ourselves (2 Timothy 2:17–18, 20–21; 4:14–15; 1 Timothy 1:18–20).

This does not mean that we have to be passive victims of bullying and must not do anything in response.

You Don't Have to Be Passive Victims of Bullying

In Matthew 5:38–41 and in Luke 6:27–30, Christ says that we must not resist an evil person; pointing out that when we are being hit, we are to turn the other cheek; when someone tries to take our cloak, we ought to leave him our tunic; and when someone compels us to go one mile, we must go with him two miles—the famous extra mile.

Does all of this mean that we have to passively give in to violent conduct and that we can do nothing in our defense?

According to the *Lamsa Bible*, the concept of “turning the other cheek” is an Aramaic idiom, meaning, “Do not start a quarrel or a fight.”

The Old Testament concept of an eye for an eye principle was never meant to be applied literally by actually maiming an offender. It was meant to outlaw personal vindictive “self-help” and to allow, instead, a magistrate or a judge to consider the case and render righteous judgment by ordering the offender to pay just compensation to the victim.

Jesus Christ addressed a wrong understanding of His listeners who thought they could avenge themselves. He cautioned all of us to be forgiving and kind, and He encouraged us to avoid fights and especially violence, even, if need be, at the price of foregoing our legal rights.

As we can see, Christ did not mean to imply that we are to be helpless and passive victims and bystanders when confronted with violence. Rather, He told us not to treat violence with violence and revenge.

Rather than starting a violent fight, during which we could get seriously hurt or injure the other person, it would be better, at that moment, to just let the abuser who wants to take our possessions to take what he wants.

Don't Listen to Everything

It is also important when we are victims of bullies, not to pay attention to or get excited about every little comment made about us. Ecclesiastes 7:21–22 admonishes us: “Also do not take to heart everything people say, Lest you hear your servant cursing you. For many times, also, your own heart has known That even you have cursed

others." Proverbs 10:12 adds: "Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins." And Proverbs 19:11 tells us: "The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression."

Speak to the Bully

If you are a victim of a bully, it might be appropriate, depending on the circumstances, to confront the bully, if known to you, and talk to him or her. But it is important to pray first to God that He will give *you* a discerning and calm heart and a willingness to help the bully to stop hurting you and others, and to give the bully a discerning and receptive heart to see and appreciate his evil conduct. The principle is laid out in Matthew 18:15. Even though it speaks of spiritual brothers, it could also apply in other situations: "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother." You might also note the admonition in Proverbs 25:8–12:

"Do not go hastily to court; For what will you do in the end, When your neighbor has put you to shame? Debate your case with your neighbor, And do not disclose the secret to another; Lest he who hears it expose your shame, And your reputation be ruined. A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver. Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear."

Rather than immediately reporting a bully to the teacher or school principal, or to the boss at work, or "discussing" the bully with other friends in an attempt to "get even," it might be a better idea to speak first to the bully in a private setting, after having prayerfully sought God's guidance and inspiration as to what to say, and how to say it.

There are ways we can cope with bullying and teasing as mentioned above, especially for God's people. There is NOTHING impossible for God who can help us in every possible way, as long as we do our part and continue being obedient to Him, obeying His Laws, and BELIEVE and have the FAITH that He will help us. Trust in God and we will have nothing to fear.

Chapter 4

How Can Young People Develop Faith in God?

In this evil world, it may sometimes be difficult to develop an attitude of fully and totally trusting God—that He is always there and watching us, and that He will not allow that anything will happen to us which would be too difficult for us to endure.

But even apart from the Bible, there are more recent experiences which Christians reported showing that God IS keeping His Word.

Notice This Modern-Day Example of God's Protection

In 1982, the Mail Processing Center of the *Worldwide Church of God* published a collection of special letters, titled, "God Still Works Miracles Today." These letters testified to the intimate involvement of God in people's lives and His protection in times of trials. Note these excerpts from one remarkable letter, dated March 31, 1981:

"I would like to share with you an incident which happened at work, at a coal mine, several days ago. I received word from a foreman to go and repair the roof-drill for a new employee. When I got there, the employee informed me that he had already repaired the roof-drill."

The letter continued to describe how that employee engaged the writer in a discussion regarding the Sabbath, the Church of God and Mr. Armstrong, the late human leader of the Church. It continued:

"He then grabbed me, and threw me on the mine floor. With the cold edge of his knife at my throat, he said, 'Take the words back that Armstrong is an apostle for today!' All the time he was cursing Mr. Armstrong. I refused to take back my words. I managed to get my hand on his forehead and push him off but knew that if he got me down again, without a hand from God, he would kill me. I uttered a silent prayer, and immediately he started fighting something other than myself—and something I could not see. He began to vomit and cry violently and kept it up for several minutes. Then he crawled to the other side of the mine."

Many think they must do something physically, by resorting to violence themselves, to fight a violent attacker. But when we react this way, do we REALLY believe at that moment that God is there to help us in every situation?

Notice How God Helped Elisha

When the king of Syria sent his army to capture the prophet Elisha, God intervened in this—humanly speaking—hopeless situation. The Bible reports in 2 Kings 6:14–18:

“Therefore he [the king of Syria] sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, ‘Alas, my master! What shall we do?’ So he answered, ‘Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.’ And Elisha prayed, and said, ‘LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. So when the Syrians came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, ‘Strike the people, I pray, with blindness.’ And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.”

This account is very interesting in several respects. It shows first of all that God is protecting His people with angels. But in this case, the angels did not even have to do anything. God did it all. He intervened directly by striking the enemy with blindness and rendering him incapable of doing any harm to Elisha and his servant. Do we believe that God has lost His power to do likewise today for His people, if the situation warrants it, and if it is His Will? And if it is not His Will to intervene, do we really think that we then have to take matters into our own hands, by resorting to violence ourselves?

Notice How God Helped King Jehoshaphat

On another occasion, a great multitude of enemies attacked Judah. King Jehoshaphat in front of all the people prayed to God for His intervention. He was not too proud to humble himself publicly, and he was not too ashamed to confess that Judah’s only help would have to come from God. He said in 2 Chronicles 20:12: “O our God,

will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.”

God inspired a prophet to assure them of His protection, reminding the people that “the battle is not yours, but God’s” (verse 15). They were also promised that they did not have to fight (verse 17). Because the King and the people believed in God and His power, as well as in His servants the prophets who taught the people God’s Word (compare verse 20), God set ambushes against the enemy and used other means to destroy him (verses 22–23). This episode led to lasting peace for Judah during the reign of King Jehoshaphat (verse 30), as “the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel” (verse 29).

These are accurate accounts and give us timeless testimony of what God DID accomplish for His people—and what He is willing and capable of doing TODAY for you and me—if we trust in His protection. These examples should help you for developing faith and confidence in God’s limitless power and might.

Chapter 5

How Can Young People Stand Up for Christian Values and Beliefs?

Growing up is hard. During our teens and twenties, we discover our values, form our identity, and transform from childhood to adulthood. Going through the experiences inherent during the formative years, we learn about the world, ourselves, and how we fit into the world. These are foundational moments in life with tremendous value.

Growing up with Christian values brings an added element into the picture. It is first and foremost a great advantage to begin life with a solid Christian foundation. Developing knowledge of the Truth at an early age makes it possible to establish values that will lead us into the most satisfying life. The challenge, of course, is that Christian values are at odds with the world in which we live. Inevitably, being a Christian brings with it the certainty of confrontation with the world, and those who abide by worldly values. Being a young person willing to live a Christian Way of Life multiplies the challenge because peers, the education system, and the need for a sense of belonging in the community are very strong forces to deal with at a young age.

Realize How Wrong This World Is

We don't have to look very far to see how opposed the pressures of contemporary society and education are to the Truth.

Schools teach the theory of evolution as fact, denying the biblical Truth of creation and the amazing Creator.

Gender identity leads people to impose their feelings upon others in defiance of how God created male and female.

Our Bible-based convictions against voting, participation in worldly politics, jury duty, and military service are viewed by this world as a denial of civic duty and national patriotism.

The world glorifies premarital sex, drug use, tattoos, and other

physical mistreatments in open rebellion against the physical well-being that the Bible teaches.

Social and school events regularly conflict with the weekly Sabbath and God's Holy Days.

On top of it all, being atheist or vaguely "spiritual" is considered to be "progressive," while following Christian values is considered naïve. We are sure you can think of many more examples of how difficult it is, being a young person with Christian values in this world.

With so many pressures to conform to worldly values that are unique to the life of a Christian, what can one do to stand up for the Christian Way of Life that leads to the greatest possible reward? There is no prescription of dos and don'ts that guarantee an easy path. Rather, we will cover a few principles that can help when facing challenging circumstances as a young man or woman who is set apart and called to the Truth.

Strengthening Christian stamina begins with having the right frame of mind. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

You Must Become Convinced

Standing up for your beliefs must originate with your personal convictions founded on the Truth learned from the Bible and the ministry of the Church of God. Without being convicted in what you believe, you are vulnerable to rhetoric and biased media.

To be conformed to the world is to not think critically and independently. To be renewed in our mind is to develop an understanding of the Truth proven to ourselves and rooted in faith. You ought not merely follow a friend's or classmate's ideas because it appeals to your human nature. You must independently think for yourself, so that you can prove to yourself what beliefs you have that are worth standing up for.

Rejecting the pressure to conform to the world by thinking critically is the way to begin your Christian journey. However, you cannot stop there. Strengthening Christian values requires that you receive the Word of God with an open mind. Give the Truth a chance! When Paul and Silas went to Berea, they taught in the synagogues to people who

were ready and willing to learn, and proved what they were taught:

“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men” (Acts 17:11–12).

Having an open mind, willing and ready to learn about the Truth is required to develop convictions and beliefs worth standing up for. Without taking the time to learn about the Truth, you will not be able to defend your beliefs.

Take Note of the Parable of the Sower

Just as in school, having the right attitude about learning can make all the difference in putting lessons into practice for our benefit. The Parable of the Sower demonstrates a variety of common attitudes and circumstances that affect our spiritual growth (compare Matthew 13:18–23). When we hear or read the Word of God, but don’t ask questions and take the initiative to understand what we learn, Satan will snatch away our understanding.

The Word of God will not profit if we only hear the words without having the ability to explain why we believe them. If we learn about the Truth and become enthused without having a firm conviction about it, we will stumble when our beliefs are put to the test. In addition, we must value the Truth if we are to stand up for it. If we don’t value the Christian Way of Life far above the worldly way of life, we will inevitably slip back into the grip of the world.

The way to profit in life with the Truth requires that we invest our efforts so that we bear fruit. Jesus Christ ends the Parable of the Sower by characterizing the model of successful individuals. These are the ones who are receptive to learning the Truth; who put in the effort to ensure they understand it; and finally, value it enough to put the lessons into practice so they bear fruit. Putting this model to work at an early age will make it much easier to stand up for Christian beliefs in all kinds of adversity, because the Truth becomes part of who you are.

Develop a Love for the Truth

Having a solid foundation in learning to live by the Truth places us

in a strong position to withstand the temptations in the world. Going further, we must learn to also love the Truth. If we really, truly love this Way of Life, the ways of the world will have no power to persuade us to give it up! But not developing a love for the Truth places us in a dangerous position.

“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:9–12). Without having a love for the Truth, we become vulnerable to giving it up.

Live by God’s Commandments

The final principle to put into practice follows naturally from the above. And that is to live by the commandments! Doing so brings inherent blessings, but it also increases the understanding needed to more firmly establish our beliefs. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever” (Psalm 111:10). By following God’s commandments, we learn from experience why it is valuable to live obediently. And when we understand the value of the Truth from experience, we become stronger in our convictions.

As a young person with Christian standards, his or her values are in their formative state. Even though the development of Christian values is a deeply personal process, it helps to have a guiding framework for how to do so successfully. The process begins by refusing to be conformed to the world and having an open mind to learn about the Truth. From there, the process continues by putting in the effort required to understand what we learn and to love the Truth. Finally, we put everything into practice when we live by what we learn and strengthen our understanding. This progression takes place continually, but is even more vital when we are young.

If you love God and prove it by the way you live in obedience to Him from an early age, you will have the strength to stand up for what you believe in without any fear of the consequences.

Chapter 6

How Can Young People Survive Spiritually in This Day and Age?

Surviving in the present age involves many challenges on several levels and God does not want us to get a hunting rifle or a fishing rod and go live in the wilderness, or to live in a monastery, waiting for the return of Christ. Notice the admonition of Christ in John 17:15: “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.”

We have to live in this world and since one of our responsibilities is to support the Work of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world, which includes warning the world of impending doom because of sin, we need to do our best to survive ourselves under these conditions now and in the near future.

We all face different challenges, based on age, marital status, raising a family, or being retired or widowed. The physical challenges come with aging and we have to learn to do our best in whatever circumstance we find ourselves.

In this chapter, we will look at our relationship with God, our family, our employers and our neighbors, always with the view to our survival.

Your Relationship With God

We need to have and maintain a close relationship with God by using the tools He has provided for us, including prayer, Bible study, meditation, and occasional fasting.

Make Prayer a Habit

In regard to prayer, we read that Christ often got up early, went to a remote area where there would be no distractions, and prayed there. During the day, He was surrounded by crowds seeking healing and wanting to hear what He was saying, even to the point that at one time it was challenging to eat, as we read in Mark 3:20: “Then the multitude

came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread." Mark 6:31 records another episode: "And He said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.' For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat."

There were other times when Christ prayed all night, alone, or when He prayed not too far away from His disciples. So, following His example, we need to find a private place to pray without distractions, and depending on our situation, we may have to adjust our schedule to accomplish this. The same is true for our Bible study, and there may be several times during a day when one is able to meditate. David said in Psalm 119:15: "I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways."

Fasting should be planned in such a manner that it gives us a chance to combine it with prayer, Bible study and meditation.

With this introduction, we want to concentrate on building our relationship with God by keeping God's commandments which we must do if we want to survive the evil time to come.

Keep God's Commandments

We prove our love for God by keeping His commandments. In John 14:15, Christ tells us: "If you love Me, keep My commandments." To some in the world, obeying God is foreign to them and not on their agenda.

The commandments are not complicated rules to follow, and the first four of the Ten Commandments tell us how to love God.

You Must Not Worship Other Gods

Exodus 20:1–3 states:

"And God spoke all these words, saying: 'I *am* the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before [or beside] Me.'"

This is not complicated. We are not to place anything between us and God; be it another person, job, position, or even our intelligence, abilities and talents (which come from God)—in other words, anything that could become a stumbling block before us. We are to put God first in our lives and utilize the fact that He and His Son dwell in us (when we are converted baptized members of the Church of God)

or with us (when we are on the way to become baptized members) and look to Christ's perfect example of always giving glory to God the Father. We must give God the credit for what He is able to do through us. We are to put the spotlight on God, not on ourselves.

You Must Not Worship Idols

Exodus 20:4–6 continues:

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of *anything* that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

Several religions blatantly break this commandment by praying to statues or human figures, and they number in the billions. Such worship is all in vain, as described by these words:

"But they are altogether dull-hearted and foolish; A wooden idol is a worthless doctrine" (Jeremiah 10:8).

"You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led" (1 Corinthians 12:2).

Today, people idolize movie stars and rock stars. One popular competition show is called "American Idol." However, idol worship became a stumbling block for Israel and was one of the reasons why they had to go into captivity.

Idolizing anyone—any man or woman—and any object breaks the Second Commandment.

You Must Not Use God's Name in Vain

Exodus 20:7 continues:

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."

On any job site in the Western world, God's name is continuously used in vain. This is also the case in many songs and in movies. It's hard to find a song or a movie where God's name is not used in vain.

The Third Commandment prohibits using God's name in vain, such as "My God," but it also includes vain repetitions, as is the custom in some

churches and in prayers, or cursing (“God da...”), or using euphemisms which appear harmless like “my goodness”, “gee,” “gosh” or “geez.”

All these are an affront to God and should be avoided.

You Must Keep the Sabbath

Exodus 20:8–11 reads:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

God says, remember the Sabbath, and man quickly forgets or substitutes other days like Wednesday, Friday or Sunday; and some say, the Sabbath could be every day of the week. But God makes clear that the weekly Sabbath is from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. We are to refrain from working and doing business on that day, and we are instead to spend time at services or listening in to services if one lives too remotely to be able to attend in person. We do not do our own things like attending sports events or watching them on TV. The Sabbath should be dedicated to God. It was a day of rest for God after six days of His creative work, and it should be a day of rest for us. God was of course not tired after His creation, but He kept the Sabbath for us, showing us that we must follow His example. It sets us apart as God’s people, and it is a sign for us that we worship the true God.

Exodus 31:13 tells us: “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.’”

It points to the God of creation. It sets us apart as His children who worship the God of creation. No other day does that, be it Sunday, Friday or any other day. This also includes the annual Sabbaths and Festival seasons which outline God’s plan for mankind from repentance and baptism to becoming full members of the God Family as God beings, which is our ultimate potential.

The tools of prayer, bible study, fasting and meditation are useful for having and maintaining a good relationship with God, and keeping the first four commandments demonstrates our love for God.

Your Relationship With Your Family

Husband and wife ought to be on the same page when it comes to following the dictates of the Bible in the relationship between them. Our booklet *“The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families”* goes into detail about how to achieve this.

One key issue in the raising of children is not to allow a child to create a division between the parents. They must agree on how to deal with requests from their children. Children have to see parents as united for the purpose of keeping harmony in the family.

Parents must be aware of what their children are exposed to at school or by their peers. Schools may propagate the critical race theory which teaches children to hate their country, or promote sex-changing drugs and abortions without the parents’ knowledge and consent. Parents need to stay informed as to what their children learn and must counteract at home any evil teachings their children may be exposed to.

You Should Talk to Your Parents

At the same time, young people should tell their parents about what they are exposed to in school and otherwise. Communication between parents and children is very important.

Children need to be taught about God and His ways and to get used to the habit of praying and studying the Bible.

Your Relationship With Your Employer

If youths are self-employed, he or she can determine when to take time off to attend the Feast of Tabernacles and keep the other Holy Days. As an employee, it is sometimes more challenging. A good relationship with one’s employer is crucial in getting time off for God’s Holy Days.

If we are diligent and conscientious workers, employers may not want to fire us for keeping God’s Holy Days at an “inopportune” time, even though they do not like to grant us time off. In any event, it is critical that we pray to God first, before making our request, that God will give us favor in the eyes of our employer.

Your Relationship With Your Neighbors

Being friendly to our neighbors without getting involved in their lives is good advice. They will soon find out that we are different in that we don't swear or use bad language, we are polite and we go out every Saturday dressed up with the family. We don't have Christmas lights on our property or pumpkins on Halloween.

You Should Make a Difference

They will see we are not involved with work projects on Saturday, nor do we cut the lawn on Saturday, but they may hear our lawnmower on Sunday (unless it is against the law to mow our lawn on Sunday). We go "on vacation" in the fall for over a week with our children. Our children are polite, non-destructive and help around the yard, and even though we have different practices, we are good neighbors who can be trusted.

At least, that is how it should be, even though we all lack in this to an extent. Still, even though our neighbors see and scoff at our strange behavior, they may respect us for our friendliness and willingness to help when there is a need.

We live in a perverse, corrupt and evil society that is under the influence of Satan the devil—an evil being beyond redemption for his evil deeds. Satan hated God in that he tried in the past to overthrow Him and take possession of ruling over God's creation, but he was cast down to this earth in failure. He will try again to fight against God in another rebellion, proving he is unwilling and unable to change because he will again attempt to rebel and fight against God.

He hates God's Church and people, including children, and would like to see us fail in our calling and lose out on our salvation, and he will try to get us to compromise or fall short so that we fail.

If this is unsuccessful, he will try to destroy us physically. That is why we need to seek God's protection and pray we may be counted worthy to escape the trials and destruction coming on this world in the near future.

Unfortunately, some having fallen a little short in what is required to maintain a proper relationship with God, may have to go through the Great Tribulation.

Troublesome times are ahead, and this chapter was written to help

us survive what's coming and to stand before our beloved Savior at His return. Then, we can truly help change this world to become a better place in the Millennium and beyond, ruling under Christ when Satan's influence is removed.

We want to ensure we fulfill our destiny to become God beings in the glorious Kingdom of God, which is not too far away.

Chapter 7

How Can Young People Avoid Satan's Influence?

Many might say that Satan cannot influence us. After all, we belong to the *Church of the Eternal God* and are therefore of the Body of Christ. But do we understand how Satan exerts influence, how he operates, how he deceives us? A deceived person is not aware of being deceived.

We find a statement in Ephesians 2:2 about Satan, who is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience..."

Satan, the god of this world, is "the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience." Now we might assume that this excludes true Christians or their children, who would have nothing to worry about, since as a matter of principle, they are not children of disobedience.

That would be a terrible mistake. When we are tempted by Satan and fall for his devices, we are no longer obedient. Satan broadcasts his waves through the air, and just like receiving electrical waves through the radio or the internet, they can be received by us. We may not see them or hear them, but if we have the "right tuning" and frequency, we receive Satan's waves like one receives waves on radio, television or wireless devices so common today.

Satan implants his message into our heads through the human spirit. Our reception is, by default, tuned to Satan's wavelength.

He does not broadcast in words or in pictures, but rather, he broadcasts an attitude of self-centeredness, vanity, lust, greed, jealousy, envy, competition, strife, violence, hatred, resentment, bitterness, rebellion and defiance of authority. All this describes human nature; respectively, the nature of Satan.

God's Way, on the other hand, is the exact opposite. It is the Way of love, of concern for the well-being of others.

Now, properly baptized Christians have received the Holy Spirit and can reject Satan's impulses through regular Bible study, prayer, and

Church attendance—leading to godly character by choosing to obey God. Likewise, the children of converted Christians, and any young person being called by God, can reject Satanic impulses through Bible study, prayer, and Church attendance—learning about godly character and the importance of obeying God. They ought to be close to God, and this is the only way they can succeed in resisting Satan, because Satan cannot impose his will on us.

Paul writes about those for whom the gospel was hidden. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, he speaks of those, “whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”

You Can Be Deceived by Satan

Paul feared that the Corinthians would be deceived by Satan, who still existed and was working powerfully, as was the case with Eve. In 2 Corinthians 11:3, we read: “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

Satan is still working, even in the members of God’s Church and their children, just as he did in the Corinthians who were also members of the Church!

Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, which was part of the Church of God, in Ephesians 6:10:

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”

He continued in verse 12: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” And in verse 11, he said: “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

These admonitions apply to us today. We must never think that Satan cannot tempt or deceive us. Satan is stronger than us, but not stronger than Jesus Christ. Some have left God’s Church because Satan deceived them. But a deceived person does not know that he has been deceived. He may think that he is correct. If that person knew about his deception, he would think and act differently. We must therefore approach God in prayer and ask Him to deliver us

from any deception. All of us must rely on Christ.

Satan is powerful, clever and acts quickly. His greatest trick was convincing people he didn't exist. But he does indeed exist!

Satan's way is neither better than God's Way, nor as good as God's Way; otherwise, God would tell us to "walk Satan's way." We are not to compromise either. What did Elijah write in 1 Kings 18:21? "And Elijah came to all the people, and said, 'How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.' But the people answered him not a word."

Be on Guard!

To everyone, but especially to our young readers we say: You need to watch out and be on guard. You need to be mindful of your environment and your "friendships". For a little leaven leavens the whole lump. One rotten apple in the basket will infect the apples next to it and they will rot, and so on, until all the apples in the whole basket are rotten.

This must not happen to you and in the Church of God.

Satan still has influence. It requires constant vigilance to keep our minds focused on Christ, on His work and on the things of God, and to avoid being deceived by Satan and his demons and adopting their attitude of rebellion.

We must not allow ourselves to be distracted from God's Way. For example, if we have neglected Bible study and prayer, we should not be surprised if we are irritable or judging others, if we have thoughts of competition or divisiveness, or if we mistakenly side with others. This all originates from Satan, for whose spirit of discord we have fallen. This would quench the love of God in our hearts.

That is why Christ warns us through Peter in 1 Peter 5:8: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." The *Living Bible* adds "hungry"—a lion that roars out of hunger.

Satan is trying to destroy us and the Church of God. There is a reason why God inspired Peter to write down the above-stated warning. We would be terrified if a hungry and roaring lion stood before us. Peter continues in verse 9: "Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world."

What do we read in James 4:7–8? “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

It is possible for Satan to make use of us, without us knowing it. We must acknowledge and confess our sins, and God will be faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

If you have such a God-pleasing attitude and mindset, you will be able to avoid Satan’s influence in your life better and better.

Chapter 8

How Can Young People Be Holy?

1 Corinthians 7:14 reads, “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*.”

The *Ryrie Study Bible* gives the following correct explanations of this passage:

“The presence of a believer in the home sets the home apart and gives it a Christian influence it would not otherwise have. A believing partner, therefore, should stay with the unbeliever. However, this does not mean that children born into such a home are automatically Christians. They are *holy* in the sense of *being set apart* by the presence of one believing parent.”

You Are NOT Cut Off

Even though they are not automatically Christians (as rightly understood, we are only Christians when the Spirit of Christ dwells in us (Romans 8:9)—the Holy Spirit which is given to us upon proper baptism (Acts 2:38)—that does not mean that our children are cut off from access to God. Even during the time of the Old Testament, Christ DID deal and work with humans, including the nations of Israel and Judah.

Christ did not deal with them by offering them access to the Holy Spirit and an opportunity for salvation (this will occur later, in the Great White Throne Judgment period, when God resurrects all those who died without knowing Christ to give them the opportunity to accept Him as their personal Savior), but He DID speak to them and showed Himself to them. It was Christ who spoke the Ten Commandments to the ancient Israelites—not the Father. He was the Rock who led Israel out of Egypt and dealt with them in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:4, 9).

Christ makes it very clear that one must be called by God the Father to have access to Him. Generally, when Adam and Eve sinned against God and were driven out of the Garden of Eden, God the Father cut Himself off from mankind. Christ says in John 6:44, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” In this day and age, God the Father calls or draws only very few. Most people today simply cannot understand the Truth of God, because God has not chosen to reveal it to them yet (compare 1 Corinthians 1:26–28; 2:6–14). He will do so later, in His due time (compare Romans 11:26; Ezekiel 37:11–14, 23–28).

God has decreed that the children of those whom He calls in this day and age do have access to Him. They are already called—like the rest of us—“in holiness.” They are not spiritually “unclean.” Even if only one parent is a Christian, his or her children are “holy”—that is, they CAN be blessed by having a relationship with God (compare Proverbs 20:7). They still must respond to their calling and choose to take advantage of the privilege that God has bestowed on them—nevertheless, God considers them “holy”—they have been set apart for the holy purpose of walking in God’s Way of Life

You Are Sanctified—What Does This Mean?

When we read that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by his believing wife, and that the unbelieving wife is sanctified by her believing husband, the Greek word for “sanctified” is “*hagiazō*,” which conveys the thought of being separated or set apart for a holy purpose. For instance, we read in John 10:36 that God the Father “sanctified” Jesus Christ and sent Him into the world to fulfill the holy purpose of His Coming. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ asked the Father to “sanctify” His disciples by the Truth of God, which is God’s Word (John 17:17).

They were to be separated from error and false human wisdom for the holy purpose of living truthful and godly lives. Paul says in Romans 15:16 that the Gentiles should become an acceptable offering to God, “sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” It would be through the gift of the Holy Spirit that they would be acceptable to God by becoming holy, acceptable and living sacrifices (Romans 12:1).

The Greek noun for “sanctification,” “*hagiasmos*,” conveys the same

thought as the verb “hagiazo.” In 1 Thessalonians 4:3 we read that our sanctification, according to God’s Will, means to abstain from sexual immorality. We are set aside for the holy purpose of living pure lives which includes possessing or dealing with our own vessel (our mate) in sanctification and honor (verse 4). In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul repeats the thought that “God from the beginning chose you for salvation *through sanctification by the Spirit* and belief in the truth.” And 1 Peter 1:2 states that we are the “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *in sanctification of the Spirit*, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”

As we can see, sanctification describes a process. God chose us “from the beginning” and “according to His foreknowledge” to sanctify or set us apart for the holy purpose of following Him and ultimately inheriting eternal life as immortal and glorified God beings in His Kingdom. This process is also described in detail in Romans 8:28–30.

Returning to 1 Corinthians 7:14, Paul is also saying that the children of at least one converted parent are holy. The Greek word for “holy” is “*hagios*,” and it too describes the fact that those children are sanctified, separated or set aside for a holy purpose of God. Luke 1:70 speaks of God’s “holy prophets”—they were set aside by God to proclaim His Word. In 1 Corinthians 3:17, Paul says that we are the temple of God which must not be defiled, as it is “holy”—being separated from the world and set aside for the purpose of living holy lives.

Those who are called today for salvation have been set aside or “sanctified” “from the beginning,”—before they were born; before the “foundation of the world” and even “before time began” (compare Jeremiah 1:5; Ephesians 1:3–4; 2 Timothy 1:9). This is not to say that those who are called in this day and age are automatically saved, but they have been given the opportunity to have access to God the Father and to respond to Him.

You Are to Have a Relationship With God

The same is true for the children of converted parents. They have also been sanctified or set aside for the purpose of having a relationship with God—they CAN speak to God, expecting to be heard, and they can experience and obtain an answer from God. They are not cut off from God the Father, but they must make a choice. They must

not forsake the Way of God and neglect that precious and priceless opportunity of having communication with their Creator. And if they stay loyal to that Way of Life, then, in due time, when they are old enough, they can also become baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit which is a guarantee, a security and a downpayment for their eternal salvation in God's Kingdom.

Our children are very important to God. Jesus Christ, while here on the earth as a Man, specifically and ceremonially blessed little children: "And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them" (Mark 10:16; compare Matthew 19:13–15 and Luke 18:15–17). The Church of God now follows this example by blessing little children, and especially, asking God to grant them His protection and guidance.

The laying on of hands is meaningful and critical. The symbolic act of laying on of hands at baptism sets the baptized person aside or sanctifies him or her for the divine purpose of receiving from God His Holy Spirit. The prayer for the blessing of healing is accompanied with the laying on of hands by the elders, setting the sick person aside for the divine purpose of physical healing. During the marriage ceremony, the minister places his hands on the couple, while asking God in prayer to sanctify the marriage and to set aside the couple for the holy purpose of the marriage relationship—so that the marriage will be blessed by God. And finally, ordinations are always accompanied by the laying on of hands—setting the ordained person aside for the godly office of a deacon or deaconess or a minister.

Likewise, Christ blessed little children by setting them apart for God's special protection, guidance and a special relationship with Him. In addition, when the ministry blesses a little child, they are asking God the Father to assign an angel to the child, as the Bible clearly teaches the existence of guardian angels.

You Have a Guardian Angel

In Genesis 48:15–16, Jacob acknowledged the presence of his guardian angel throughout his life. We read in the *Revised English Bible*, "The [G]od in whose presence my forefathers lived, my forefathers Abraham and Isaac, the [G]od who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who rescued me from all misfortune, may he

bless these boys.” Jacob was convinced that God had been with him all of his life, and He was specifically present through a particular angel whom He had assigned to watch over Jacob.

Acts 12:15 shows that the disciples thought that Peter’s angel had appeared, as they believed Peter to be in prison. They specifically said, “It is *his* angel.” In other words, they thought it was the particular angel whom God had assigned to watch over Peter.

Notice, too, the following remarkable statement of Jesus Christ in Matthew 18:10, in talking about little children that believe in Him, as well as true Christians who must become “as” little children: “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven *their angels* always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”

We read that a star appeared to the wise men from the East, leading them to the place where Jesus Christ dwelt, after He had been born. We read in Matthew 2:1–2 that they had “seen *His* star in the East.”

This was not an ordinary star, but a bright, shining angel. The Bible identifies and compares stars with angels on numerous occasions (compare Revelation 1:20; 9:1–2; 12:4). Note that the wise men from the East refer to this star as “*His*” star—that is, the star, or angel, of the Christ Child.

If they understood that the star was an angel, then they also knew that this angel was assigned to the Christ Child. This is not to say, of course, that only one angel watched over Christ. On one occasion, He mentioned to Peter that He could ask His Father for “more than twelve legions of angels” (Matthew 26:53)—more than 72,000 angels.

God may assign one angel to guard or protect numerous people, or an entire nation. For instance, the archangel Michael is described to Daniel as “The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people” (Daniel 12:1).

The fact remains that God assigns guardian angels to our children for their protection, and God’s ministers will ask God during the blessing of the little children ceremony to do so. We do not mean to say that God will only do so when a little child is blessed; we saw that in many cases, God had assigned guardian angels to people for their protection even though their blessing as a little child is not mentioned. We do not know when God, exactly, assigns guardian angels

to people in general; but we do know that the children of converted parents are being protected by angels so that they can reach their potential of becoming baptized and ultimately born-again members in the God Family.

You Must Decide

It is true, of course, that the teaching and conduct of parents can have an influence on the decision of the children to either become and stay loyal to God or to reject Him, but, as we will show, it is ultimately the *decision* of the child or teenager or young adult as to how to conduct his or her Way of Life and whether or not to maintain a relationship with God.

For instance, we read in 2 Kings 22:1–2, “Josiah was *eight years old* when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father [*i.e.*, forefather] David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.”

Josiah was *eight years old* when he became king. His mother is mentioned by name—Jedidah. Although the son of an evil father, Amon, he turned out to be one of the most righteous and outstanding kings that have ever lived (compare 2 Kings 23:25). It is obvious that his mother Jedidah had trained him up “in the fear of the LORD.”

When Josiah was 16 years old, “while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David” (2 Chronicles 34:3). Notice, it was he himself who made the decision; it was *his* decision—not the decision of his mother—prompting him to really seek the true God and to become more and more familiar with Him.

It is critically important to realize and emphasize the individual decision of the child. The righteousness of parents does not automatically mean that their children become and stay righteous; and the unrighteousness of parents does not mean that their children must become and stay unrighteous.

David was a righteous man who will be in the Kingdom of God. But his son Absalom rebelled against his father and God. David’s son Amnon violated his step-sister. David’s son Solomon departed from God’s Way of Life—at least temporarily.

Samuel was a righteous prophet of God, but his sons did not walk in God's ways (1 Samuel 8:3).

Noah was a righteous man, but the Bible does not say that his sons were righteous. In fact, we read that his grandson Canaan, the youngest son of Ham, violated and sexually abused his own grandfather (see Genesis 9:20–27; it was Ham's *youngest* son Canaan who had violated Noah, compare verse 24 in most translations, but Ham was not Noah's youngest son).

Lot was righteous, but this cannot be said about his two daughters (Genesis 19:30–38).

There is even strong evidence to conclude that Moses' grandson, Jonathan, was deeply involved in idolatry (Judges 18:30; other translations and commentaries say here that Gershom was the son of "Moses"; not of "Manasseh").

You Alone Are Responsible

The Bible makes it very clear that in the end, every person is individually responsible for what he or she is doing. To blame shortcomings on others is not an acceptable "excuse" in the eyes of God. In Ezekiel 18:4, God explains that the soul who sins shall die. He then describes a righteous father who begets an unrighteous son, and explains that the unrighteous son will die because of his unrighteousness, while the father will live because of his righteousness (Ezekiel 18:5–13). We read in Ezekiel 14:19–20:

"'Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out My fury on it in blood, and cut off from it man and beast, even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live,' says the LORD God, 'they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness.'"

On the other hand, we also read in Ezekiel 18:14–17 that if an unrighteous father begets a son who sees and considers the sins of his father and decides to live a righteous life instead, he will "not die for the iniquity of his father; He shall surely live."

Exodus 20:4–6 does not contradict the foregoing. It reads: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image... you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and

fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

You Are Not "Punished" Because of the Sins of Others

This passage does not say that the child will be cursed by God because of his or her parents' sins, even though the child itself is innocent. Note that Exodus 20:5 speaks of those "who hate Me." *Soncino* points out that the phrase applies to the *children*; i.e., God will punish those children who hate Him. *Soncino* comments, too, that the punishment will be brought upon the children, "when they retain the evil deeds of their fathers."

The *Companion Bible* comments on Ezekiel 18:4, 20: "Descendants were not punished for the sins of their ancestors unless they persevered in their ancestors' sins." In addition, passages like Deuteronomy 24:16 state that children are not to be put to death for the sins of their fathers. The same is expressed in 2 Kings 14:6. Again, it depends on the child's decision to either live righteously or unrighteously; to either be blessed or cursed by God. The child of a converted parent is "sanctified" or "holy"; that is, he or she CAN have a relationship with God, but the child must respond to God's sanctification in order to ultimately receive his or her glorification.

Understand Proverbs 22:6 Correctly

Rightly understood, Proverbs 22:6 does not teach that a child who has been trained by a righteous parent will continue automatically in God's Way of Life. Proverbs 22:6 reads: "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it."

Some claim, this passage implies that the child might depart for a while from God's Way of Life, but later return to what he or she has been trained in. Some go a step further and claim that the correct rendering should be, "Train up a child in the way he should go, EVEN when he is old he will not depart from it." They teach that this passage conveys the thought that the child will never depart from his way, throughout his life, including or even when he or she is old. Most, though, reject this rendering and interpretation for good reasons, as this understanding is clearly not biblical.

The *Broadman Bible Commentary* points out: "The 'way he should

go' of v. 6 is not defined specifically, but in the context there can be little doubt that it includes the way reflected in the positive elements of vv. 1, 3, 4, 5, i.e., pious and properly prepared for life. However, this may well include vocational training as well. The training needed for life should be given in the early years, when habits and patterns of behavior and work are set."

In light of the fact that the Bible emphasizes individual responsibility, it must be concluded that Proverbs 22:6 does not intend to impress the idea that the righteous teaching of parents will *automatically* lead to the conversion of a child. It is true, of course, that parents are to teach their children about God and His Way of Life (Deuteronomy 11:18–19). But this does not mean that converted parents can bring about the conversion of their children. They have their own responsibility in the matter.

Ultimately, a child who is "brought up" in God's Church CAN make it into God's Kingdom. Those who are called today for salvation have been foreknown and predestined by God to be called before they were born. This does not only apply to converted parents, but also to their children (Of course, many times those who were predestined to be called in this day and age were not even children of believing parents, but we are concentrating in this chapter on those children who were and are being raised by converted parents.)

This means, God is willing to protect them, beginning with conception and birth and continuing throughout their growth until they reach the point where they can become baptized. (Of course, God will continue to protect His converted children.) The influence of their converted parent(s) can be of great help in this regard, but even if both their parents were to leave God's Church and His Way of Life, this does not mean that the children must follow their bad example. If they have learned that it is God's Will for them to keep the Sabbath, they can and must *decide* to continue to do so—even if they are the only ones in their family, in school or on the job. God looks at those who stand up for Him—no matter the costs and circumstances. This requires a strong will and great conviction—but God will give them the strength and the wisdom to continue in His right Way of Life, if they are willing.

Prove It for Yourself

It is also true, of course, that those children who are being taught and raised by their converted parents must come to the point where they prove for themselves that what they are being taught is true. They might have developed a “habit,” due to the teaching and practice of their parents, to “keep” the Sabbath by “going to church” that day and sitting quietly in services for two hours, but that alone is never enough.

Rather, they must prove for themselves in due time that God demands of them the keeping of the Sabbath and the annual Holy Days; the abstention from unclean meat; and the rejection of observing Sunday, Christmas, Easter or Halloween—again, no matter the costs and circumstances.

Act Upon Your Belief

The sanctified child, growing up, has a wide-ranging responsibility for making right decisions. Having been taught that it is wrong to smoke or to take drugs or to drink too much alcohol and get drunk, or to get tattoos, the child or teen must decide not to smoke or to take drugs or get drunk or get tattoos. The sanctified child had been taught that it is wrong to engage in pre-marital or extra-marital sex, and as a teen, he or she has to make the decision not to engage in such practices. The sanctified child had been taught that it is wrong to marry someone who is not converted; and as an adult, he or she has to make the decision not to even consider such a mixed marriage. The sanctified child had been taught that it is wrong to live an alternate lifestyle; as a teen, he or she will have to refuse to become and live as a gay or a lesbian; and he or she will certainly have to refuse to change his or her sex with which he or she was born.

A sanctified child had been taught to stay away from the bad crowd—not to “enter the path of the wicked” (Proverbs 4:14); as a teen or young adult, he or she will need to decide not to follow them or be a part of their company (compare Psalm 1:1). A sanctified child was taught about the Law of God; as a teen or young adult, he or she will have to decide to have “delight... in the law of the LORD” (Psalm 1:2; compare Psalm 119:97). He or she will have to appreciate that the Law of God makes him or her wiser than his or her enemies and even his or her teachers (Psalm 119:98–99); and he or she will grow

more and more in godly wisdom when doing what God commands (John 7:17; compare John 8:31–32).

As a sanctified child, he or she has been taught that it is wrong to cheat or to lie; as a teen or young adult, he or she will have to decide not to cheat or to lie, having convinced him- or herself that lying is of the devil (John 8:44). As a sanctified child, he or she has been taught that it is wrong to steal or to kill; as a teen or a young adult, he or she will have to decide never to steal or to kill, and his or her *conviction* will also prevent him or her from joining the army or the police force (compare Matthew 26:52; Revelation 13:10). In many cases, he or she will behave “correctly” due to the influence, direction and discipline of his or her parents; but the time will come for the teen or young adult to become thoroughly convicted and, based on this conviction, to decide doing the right thing irrespective of his or her parents.

As we pointed out before, King Josiah was eight years old when he became king. He did what was right, due, no doubt, to his mother’s influence, but when he was sixteen, *he himself began to seek the true God*, and when he was twenty, he had become convicted and bold enough to carry out what he, as the king in the service of God, was obligated to do (compare again 2 Chronicles 34:3). He started as a young boy and he became a strong man. Others started as young girls and became strong women. They had been sanctified by God, and they fulfilled their destiny (Compare Song of Solomon 8:8–10: When she was young, her older brothers protected her and took care of her, making sure that she lived the right way; when she grew older, she herself *decided* to live the right way).

It is a priceless privilege to be a “sanctified” child. Only very few children have this privilege today; and those who do should regard it as invaluable. It must never be belittled or neglected or treated in a lackadaisical way. Rather, a sanctified child is holy to God. It must be holy to us as well.

The Influence of Your Parents

Even though it is eventually the *decision* of the child or teenager or young adult as to how to conduct his or her Way of Life and whether or not to maintain a relationship with God, the teaching and conduct of parents can have great influence on the decision of the children to

either become and stay loyal to God or to reject Him. The example of parents is very important. For instance, when parents keep the Sabbath just as a matter of routine, but they are doing so grudgingly and with resentment and the attitude that it is a burden, and “we can hardly wait for when the Sabbath is over so we can do our own thing,” they give very mixed signals to the child as to the sanctity of the Sabbath and that it is supposed to be a day of joy.

We stated this in our free booklet, *“The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families”*:

“In order to be able to teach God’s word effectively, it must first be settled in the hearts of the teachers themselves. Notice Deuteronomy 6:6–7, ‘And these words which I command you today *shall be in your heart*. 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.’

“If the words of God are NOT in our hearts, HOW CAN WE teach them diligently to our children? If we ourselves are not sure whether God’s instructions *always* apply in *every* situation without fail, how CAN we teach our children or teens that they do? If we doubt whether it is ALWAYS right NOT to lie, NOT to steal, NOT to kill, NOT to break the Sabbath, NOT to cheat on our wife or husband, how CAN we bring up our children or teens in the admonition of the Lord?”

It is true, as we pointed out earlier, that the righteousness of parents does not automatically mean that their children become and stay righteous; but converted parents who behave unrighteously certainly have a bad influence on the upbringing of their children. At the same time, righteous parents who behave righteously most certainly have a good influence on the upbringing of their children, helping them to make the right decision of staying loyal to God and responding to His calling.

The Bible emphasizes time and again that children will follow the example of parents who behave badly. The child of an alcoholic or of a homosexual parent may easily adopt that lifestyle. A father who beats his wife may raise a son who may do the same later to his wife.

Don’t Follow the Bad Examples of Your Righteous Parents

Abraham lied when he said that his wife was his sister (Genesis

20:2,13); and his son Isaac committed the same sin (Genesis 26:6–7).

David lusted after Bathsheba, but he also took other women, including Maacah, a Geshurite or Canaanite princess (something which God had forbidden; compare Deuteronomy 7:3). Their son Absalom (2 Samuel 3:3) killed his half-brother Amnon who had raped Absalom's sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1–14). David's son Solomon committed terrible sins when he married pagan wives and followed their pagan religion.

Don't Follow the Bad Examples of Your Unrighteous Parents

We pointed out previously that God will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those children who hate God (Exodus 20:5). Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah*, points out that this “may refer to the way in which [bad] behavior recurs through generations in a family.”

Christ emphasized that wicked fathers may bring up wicked children. He explained in Matthew 23:29–35 that even though the children might pretend to have acted differently, they would have done the same thing as their fathers did, as they were engaged in the same kind of practice as their fathers:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’ Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.”

This terrible and vicious “circle of life” is, sadly, repeated time and time again. God prophesies that the last generation of Americans and Brits will go into captivity, and Leviticus 26:37–39 explains why: “... you shall have no power to stand before your enemies. You shall

perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. And those of you who are left shall waste away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; also in their fathers' iniquities, which are with them, they shall waste away."

It Does Not Have to Apply to You

We emphasize that this development does not have to be automatic. A son can see the wickedness of his father and decide NOT to live that way (Ezekiel 18:14–17). This is especially true, in our context of sanctification, when a child was brought up in the Church but then experiences that his parents leave and go back into the world. That child does not need to follow his parents' example.

God had sanctified him or her, and that sanctification or holiness does not automatically cease to exist when the parents leave God's Way of Life. But it goes without saying that their bad example might have a tremendously bad influence on the child; and the child or teen or young adult must turn to God with all his or her might to maintain his or her sanctified relationship with Him.

Follow the Good Examples of Your Righteous Parents

On the other hand, parents who live God's Way of Life and don't deviate from it have a very positive influence on the child's development. God promises children tremendous blessings if they stay righteous (Psalm 103:17–18; Proverbs 20:7; Deuteronomy 4:40). God even offers physical protection in these terrible times to come, at a place of safety here on earth, for righteous parents and their children: "In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And His children will have a place of refuge" (Proverbs 14:26).

God speaks very clearly about the responsibility of the parents when He says: "Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 12:28). But God makes clear that when it comes to observing the law of God, more is necessary than just "keeping" it, so that parents can be great examples:

"Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with

them and with their children forever!" (Deuteronomy 5:29).

Make a Personal Decision to Follow God

We all will, to an extent, adopt the bad behavior of our parents. And as they are called upon to repent of it, we, as their children, must do likewise, and the same is true for our children. This command to repent applies also to the "children" of the last generation of Americans and Brits in captivity:

"But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land" (Leviticus 26:40–42).

As the new generation of Israel was called upon to enter into a covenant relationship with God at Moab, so each of us—grandparent, parent, children and grandchildren—is individually challenged to make that personal decision to follow God and not to walk away. It is interesting to read the words of Moses to that new generation of people who were ready to enter the Promised Land:

"The LORD our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: 'You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring places in the plain, in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates. See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them.' And I spoke to you at that time, saying: 'I alone am not able to bear you'" (Deuteronomy 1:6–9).

Moses reiterates events which had happened 40 years earlier. Most who were assembled now were not even alive when these events had taken place. Still, Moses addresses them directly by saying that he spoke to them. What had happened 40 years earlier had great consequences for the new generation. In Deuteronomy 1:21, Moses said to them:

“Look, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the LORD God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.”

The word in Hebrew for “you” is in the singular; Moses addresses everyone individually, because everyone had to make the individual decision to follow God. And so, Moses states this in Deuteronomy 5:2–3:

“The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive.”

Technically, God did not make the covenant at Horeb with the new generation as most were not even alive at that time. But in a sense, God did.

In Hebrew, it says, literally:

“... but with us! We! These! Here! Today! All of us! Living!”

Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah*, explains:

“Moses speaks to the people in front of him as if they had all been at Sinai forty years earlier. Now he says explicitly, powerfully, unmistakably, with seven different words: Each generation must see themselves as personally standing at Sinai, not just inheriting their parents’ covenant, but as making the covenant themselves. It is a present, living commitment.”

Parents might have entered into the New Covenant relationship at the time of their baptism. But this will not bring their children automatically to the point where they also become baptized. It is up to them. But converted parents can and must help.

Let us conclude this chapter with these questions and remarks:

Are you a converted parent? Make sure that you do whatever you can to help your child to live God’s Way of Life.

Are you a sanctified child? Then God has preordained you before you were born to be called in this day and age to have a special relationship with Him and to come to Him. He has chosen YOU and given YOU the opportunity now to become a part of His very Family. Value this precious and priceless gift very highly.

Chapter 9

How Can Young People Be Taught About God?

One of the greatest parental responsibilities is to TEACH their children about God. In fact, God Himself is quoted in the Bible when He spoke of Abraham, saying:

“For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him” (Genesis 18:19).

The *Authorized Version* is even more emphatic, stating: “For I know him, THAT he WILL command his children... and they SHALL keep the way of the LORD...” Similar the *NIV*.

Your Parents Need to Teach You

When God chose and redeemed Israel from Egyptian captivity, He commanded that the people should love Him with total commitment and that their children should be taught to do the same:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 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” (Deuteronomy 6:4–9).

Christians also face the great challenge set forth by God to teach their children about Him, as Ephesians 6:4 states:

“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

Quite obviously, teaching children requires a conscious commitment

from parents, and that dedication should, where possible, begin before children are born. Couples planning to marry ought to prepare by discussing child-rearing goals and methods. For those who already have children, planning and preparations are still a necessity. As shown in the preceding biblical quotes, parents must, themselves, be anchored in the Word of God to teach their children properly and successfully.

The purpose of this chapter is to address training young children about God and the Bible, and that training begins with the example of the parents.

Many parents wait longer than they should to begin teaching their children about God. They assume that small children are not ready until a point well beyond when they could—and should—have started teaching their children the basics about God and His Way of Life. Never forget that children are most impressionable at their youngest age.

At what age should we start teaching the Scriptures to our children? God's Word should be an important and natural part of life from very early childhood on. We expect small children to grow up learning songs, stories, the names of colors and the sounds animals make. Why not take advantage of the incredible, sponge-like learning capacity of a small child and start planting the most important seed of all—God's instructions—within them?

You Need to Accept the Teaching of Your Parents

Here are some strategies for teaching the Bible itself. The Bible is a large book, and to introduce its study to our children, we must first present it in small, manageable portions according to their age level. Decide what subjects you wish to cover and think about how to present them in a user-friendly way. You may choose to cover a topic over several sessions.

Focus on presenting important biblical teachings that they can use throughout their lives. Examples could include the Creation, the Exodus, the Ten Commandments, the life of David, Jesus Christ, lessons from the various "heroes" of the Bible, and as they get older, proofs of God's existence and the history of the New Testament Church.

How much time should we spend per session? Find the balance in setting a time that is neither unreasonably long, nor so short that it gives the impression God's Word is a low priority in our day. For

instance, how long can a preschooler sit to watch a television show or hear a story read to them? How long can an elementary-age child sit to listen to a teacher read a book?

Before launching into your teaching session, take a few minutes to do your “homework.” Preview the lesson and compile your ideas.

Your Parent’s Bible Curriculum

Here are some suggestions and recommendations to help set up your Bible curriculum. Certainly, there are many other ideas that you, the parents, will have.

Reading the Bible

There are many good materials to read, but ultimately there is no substitute for the Bible itself. You cannot go wrong by starting in Genesis and reading on through the Bible. Alternate methods are also fine. For young children, consider skipping over long lists such as genealogies, or briefly summarizing them. You may also want to paraphrase some passages, putting them into your own words in simple language your child can understand, instead of reading the text as written.

Your reading will become much more effective as you add your own comments to the passages you read. Ask questions to make them think (this is very important). Tell a little story that gets a point across. Act out the scenario. Anything you add along these lines is well worth the effort.

Whenever your child learns to read, present him or her with a Bible of his or her own. In order for our children to learn the Bible and become familiar and comfortable with handling it, they need to have one! It should be a true Bible (such as the *New King James Bible*), not a pseudo-Bible or children’s story-book-type volume. It should contain all the same Scriptures a regular Bible has. Thumb tabs are also very helpful for children to find books faster.

As the child becomes a more proficient reader, the publications of the *Church of the Eternal God* will serve as helpful study aids for parents. Bible atlases, Bible dictionaries and other reference materials can be introduced to the youth. In turn, parents can summarize important concepts in terms appropriate to their children’s learning level.

Memory Work

Memorizing is a normal part of life for a child—from the alphabet to nursery rhymes to state capitals. It should be a normal part of life to memorize the most important information of all—God’s Words. This would include the books of the Bible and their order; and the Ten Commandments. Memorizing specific Scriptures and learning what they mean can be fun. A child is ready to start memory work by the age of three. Start by choosing short verses to learn. This will build your child’s confidence. Teach them one phrase or word from the verse at a time. Say a word (or phrase), then point to your child to supply the next word.

Show your child where the verse is found in the Bible. Mark their Bible with a special color to identify verses they have memorized. Say the book, chapter and verse, before and after the Scripture. Recite the verse several times a day in your child’s presence so that it becomes familiar to them. Do not simplify the verses. It is important to teach God’s Word as it is recorded. Clarify any words they don’t understand.

It is not wrong to offer an age-appropriate reward. Make the rewards immediate if possible. Rewards could include small treats, prizes, stars on a chart, a trip to the store, or special time with mom or dad. Having them share their accomplishment by reciting it to someone else (grandparents, teacher, etc.) is very beneficial, too. Children like to feel they have accomplished something.

Pictures and Artwork

As the saying goes, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” Some Bible resource books (Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, etc.) contain good diagrams or pictures. A word of caution regarding pictures, however: A child’s mind is very impressionable, and a picture can stick in the mind for a long time. This also goes for adults.

We should avoid using pictures such as those that depict God the Father, Jesus Christ [either when He was here on earth, as a Man, or in His present state as an immortal God Being], Satan the Devil, angels or demons, and men with long hair (except for Nazarites).

Props

Props are a great teaching aid. A complete interactive felt or flannel

board teaching system used to teach and tell both Old and New Testament Bible stories is an excellent tool for illustration. This makes the Bible story come to life and lets the child interact and become part of the story—giving the child a chance to use his senses of hearing (listening to the story being read or told), seeing and touching. You can easily create a felt board by simply gluing a large piece of felt to a rectangular piece of cardboard.

Have the children draw or color pictures of Bible characters and props onto heavy paper or poster board, cut them out, and then place Velcro adhesive on the back of each piece. The kids will love it! Also, you can purchase the felt board projects at your local Bible Book Store or Online but be sure to remove items that are inappropriate.

Make a Timeline

Starting with the beginning of the Bible, you may want to consider having your child start a timeline of the sequence of the major events you are reading about through the Bible. You could provide a short roll of paper to make a continuous timeline that can be rolled up later. Children could draw and color pictures they have created on this timeline.

Teaching a Child To Pray

The beginning of the child's prayer life is essentially an activity. A mother might ask the question: "When shall I begin to teach my little child to pray?" This question should be met by another: "When do you intend to start teaching your little child a language?" If the father and mother kneel by the child's bed long before he can notice consciously what is happening, the child grows up during this event: "Mom and dad speaking to Someone whom they respect and love and cannot see." Let your child see you are praying. Children learn by example.

Our children and grandchildren need to understand that we, as Christian parents and grandparents, talk to God in prayer on a regular basis. Asking a blessing at mealtime, prayer of anointing for illness and prayers given at Church services provide important examples of our relationship with God. These illustrations become a Way of Life.

Supplemental

Using other Bible materials from the Internet can be very helpful,

if they adhere to the Truth and correct doctrines, but parents must be careful to closely monitor what they use.

Have a Pleasant Time With Your Parents

Make this a pleasant time for the child. By making it special, we are showing we place special value on God's Word and the privilege of studying it. Pick an area with a table, if possible, where the setting and atmosphere are clearly "study time" and minimize distractions. Clear the table of clutter. Leave the television, their computer or their "devices" off and mute distractions such as cell phones. Be sure to begin each study session with a brief prayer together, asking for God's help in understanding His Word.

These recommendations are suggestions as a starting point for prospective parents, parents, and grandparents. Understanding that God created humankind to eventually become part of His eternal Family makes the training of our children one of life's most important and rewarding endeavors!

Chapter 10

How Can Young People Appreciate Good Music?

The Bible talks about music quite a bit, showing its importance, as well as a couple of famous musicians who used music to praise God. Music can refer to lyrics, as well as instruments—the same types of instruments we use today, such as stringed instruments, harps, trumpets, horns, cymbals and percussion. These instruments have been modified over time but the principle still applies.

Music goes all the way back to the Old Testament of the Bible. In Exodus 15:1–18, Moses and the children of Israel sang out to the Eternal, praising God during the crossing of the Red Sea and being led out of Egypt. The prophetess Miriam, Aaron’s sister, “took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances” (verse 20).

Learn From David, the Musician

David, a man after God’s own heart, was a musician. When he was very young, his musical skill on the harp was admired by Saul who was at times troubled by a distressing spirit. David played the harp, and the evil spirit left Saul. We read in 1 Samuel 16:16, 23: “Let our master now command your servants, who are before you, to seek out a man who is a skillful player on the harp. And it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well... And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.” This musical “performance” was very calm and soothing, as we can imagine.

David also played, sang and danced with joy to praise the Eternal. One particular example is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 15:16, 28 when the Ark of God was brought to Jerusalem: “Then David spoke to the

leaders of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals, by raising the voice with resounding joy... Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn, with trumpets and with cymbals, making music with stringed instruments and harps." The music was loud and full of rejoicing and it pleased the Eternal. Here, in 1 Samuel 16 and in 1 Chronicles 15, we see two different types of music—one of which was calm and soothing and the other as being loud and full of rejoicing, and in both cases, it pleased the Eternal.

David wrote many songs throughout his life and many of these psalms are attributed to his authorship, which we read about in the Book of Psalms. These songs were accompanied by instruments, mostly stringed, that David himself played. All these songs are praising the Eternal. He was able to use his musical skills for himself and for others as many of the psalms he wrote we sing in hymns in worship services today, thereby also praising the Eternal and thanking Him.

Solomon followed in his father's footsteps as a songwriter musician. The Song of Solomon is one long song—a love song with metaphors and imagery. This book is arranged like scenes in a drama with 3 main speakers. According to some interpretations, we have the Shulamite, the bride who might also picture the Church; the king who would be Solomon; and the chorus, the daughters of Jerusalem. There are other interpretations regarding the identity of the speakers and actors, but all agree that it is a love song. At the beginning, there is a summary that explains the meaning behind this song.

David loved music, and he expressed his appreciation to the Eternal with music, dance and instruments—all kinds of instruments, as it says in Psalms 150:1–6: "Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament! Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp! Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!"

Also in Psalms 98:4–6: "Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; Break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises. Sing to the LORD with

the harp, With the harp and the sound of a psalm, With trumpets and the sound of a horn; Shout joyfully before the LORD, the King.”

What Is Your Approach to Today’s Music?

What about music today? Since there are so many different genres of music, and since everyone has a particular taste, how can one determine between what is “good” and “bad” music? Some like Rock music, some like classical music, some like operas, operettas and musicals, and there are others who like pop music, country, jazz, hip-hop, techno, metal, and so on. What about Christian music? Are there any guidelines a Christian can follow or are there certain liberties that allow Christians to listen to what they like? Is it wrong for a Christian to listen to different varieties of music?

First of all, we need to be mindful of what we are listening to, or what kind of music we might be performing. Music with bad language and profanity or using God’s name in vain would not be acceptable; nor, when it comes to certain “worship” music with lyrics referring to things which are not correct from a biblical standpoint. One should not attend a concert with religious music if the performance would be similar to, for example, a “Pentecostal worship service.” We need to be careful.

In the end, it is also about one’s personal conscience. If we have doubts about the music we are listening to or which we might perform and feel it is inappropriate or offensive, then we should not listen to or perform it. This also applies to parents who need to be aware of what their children are listening to or playing. Again, we must be cautious that we don’t become too strict and pharisaical or liberal, but we must have a “balanced” approach.

What Is Your Approach to “Sabbath Music”?

We state in our free booklet, *“How to Keep the Sabbath”*:

“When it comes to the type of music we might be listening to on the Sabbath, we need to focus on the godly principles when deciding what’s appropriate. Ultimately, it is up to the individual to decide what kind of music helps him or her to keep the Sabbath in the right frame of mind, focusing on God, His beautiful creation and the restful nature of His holy Sabbath day. Some might disagree as to what

type of music is appropriate for the Sabbath, but it is important that we don't become too liberal or too strict, and we must not judge and condemn someone for the type of music which he or she may be listening to on the Sabbath, even though we would prefer listening to something else."

We need to be careful that we don't become too judgmental on what others listen to or play, but at the same time, we need to be cognizant not to offend others with "our" music. If someone prefers a certain type of music which is not necessarily "approved" by us, we should not try to impose our beliefs and our personal preference on them, and *vice versa*. As mentioned, the same principle applies to "Sabbath music" as well.

Paul says, "But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in *our* brother's way" (Romans 14:10, 12-13).

Don't Violate the Other's Conscience

For example, if we are traveling in the car with someone whose taste in music is not necessarily our taste, we shouldn't play "our" music as it would be considered offensive to him or her. We would make it a stumbling block to them, which would be sin. If they are disturbed by the music we listen to, we should not play it in their presence.

If we perform music in a band, and we know that some don't like the type of music we play, then we should not invite them to one of our concerts. "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another" (Romans 14:19) and don't "do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak" (Romans 14:21).

Don't Be Too Judgmental

When it comes to being too judgmental, if we look at the example where Paul had to deal with the Church at Corinth, we see that members were too quick to judge others, and they were not resolving things between themselves or bringing the matter to the Church ministry,

but they were suing one another in court, getting into arguments over things which should have never been brought to a worldly judge.

Paul was not happy about this and said in 1 Corinthians 6:1–6, “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!”

At the same time, Paul was also very unhappy about the far too “liberal” approach in the Church at Corinth, and especially the local ministry, which allowed flagrant sins to go on without taking preventive action.

If a certain type of music causes someone to sin by violating one’s conscience, then it would be best not to listen to or perform it in that person’s presence. And again, *music with profanity or taking God’s name in vain should be avoided*, and this also includes *music with sexually explicit content or words inciting violence or glorifying war*, which could even cause one to inflict spiritual or physical harm.

It is important to keep a right perspective and balance, and we must be careful not to offend others. Everyone has particular tastes. Music is fine with a balanced approach.

Chapter 11

How Can Young People Appreciate the Right Kinds of Sports and Games?

The Church's position on violence and self-defense is critical for the understanding as to what kinds of sports you may or should not participate in. What is the Church's position on "violent" sports such as football, soccer, boxing, paintball and laser tag, as well as shooting with a gun or with an arrow? What is the Church's position on "defensive" sports such as karate and jiu-jitsu; and how would the Church look at "war games" such as chess? Should our motivation be considered when watching or participating in certain sports and other related activities?

Regarding violence, war and self-defense, please re-read **chapters 3 and 4** of this booklet.

In addition, please note that our fascination with guns and violence will not contribute to the end of the misuse of guns and violent conduct—it will not create a better world. What is needed is a change of heart—how we think, and for what we stand. In the famous millennial passage of Isaiah 2:2–4, we read about a new world which will be so much different from what we are confronted with today. Satan will have no more influence over unsuspecting and gullible people. Instead, God's law will be taught (verse 3). The consequence will be unparalleled in human history and truly earth-shaking: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore."

Their mind will be receptive to God's Way of Life. God's Law will be in their heart (Isaiah 51:7). They will walk in God's statutes and do them (Ezekiel 11:19–20). They will learn to live peaceably with their neighbor and with other nations. They will finally realize that committing violence against our fellow man will only bring destruction.

When God's Law of love rules in our heart—and love does no harm

to our neighbor (Romans 13:10)—then we would not even think of using a gun or a knife against someone. We would not even think of resorting to violence against another human being.

We will discuss below how these comments would not only apply to a handgun or a firearm, but also to potentially “violent sports” and “activities,” involving self-defense with the potential of seriously harming another person.

But since most, if not all, sports have the potential of harming another person (quite physically or at least emotionally), and since cheering for one’s team or athlete might be viewed as wanting to harm the opposing team or athlete, should you therefore totally abstain from watching or participating in competitive sports?

Sadly, all sports have terribly deteriorated, and soccer is by no means an exception. Although originally designed as a “no-touch” game, which did not permit a player to as much as intentionally “touch” another player (except for using one’s shoulder to touch the opponent’s shoulder), we see more and more “professional fouls,” and we are used to referees issuing warnings and giving out yellow cards and even red cards (signifying expulsion from the game).

Therefore, some have concluded that God does not approve of any competitive sports. But this conclusion is not necessarily correct.

Note What the Bible Says About Competitive Sports

In 1 Corinthians 9:24–26, Paul draws a spiritual analogy to competition in sports. This passage does not seem to allow for the conclusion that such competition is necessarily wrong. Paul says: “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty...”

David draws another analogy in the book of Psalms, comparing the sun with “a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, And rejoices like a strong man to run its race” (Psalm 19:5).

Don’t Try to Harm Your Opponent

But God does not want us to have an attitude of harming or injuring

an opponent, or of wishing that he be injured so that “our” team will get an advantage. When “competition” reaches that destructive level, it is wrong. But to want “our” team to win in a game is not wrong. And “our” team had better make every right effort to win, so that it is deserving of “our” support (Ecclesiastes 9:10). But once a game is finished, we are to go on with life and our responsibilities. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong commented once that he was enjoying watching a basketball game with the L.A. Lakers, but once the game was over, he would return to his duties. Some get so involved in the support of their team that they get all upset and can’t sleep at night if their team has lost. They might even get drunk to “forget their pain.” That, of course, is not indicative of a healthy and Christian attitude.

Sports can be good entertainment. They can contribute to our health and relaxation. They can be exciting. But they must never take first place in our lives. And even though watching sporting events can be good and clean fun, that should be all. In this world, “the race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong... Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all” (Ecclesiastes 9:11). So, let’s enjoy sporting matches in a right way, while never getting our priorities mixed up.

Avoid Sports Which Intend to Injure an Opponent

Before showing how concepts of violence and revenge apply to sports and other related activities, and what kinds of sports a Christian should view with disfavor, let us consider one more aspect. The biblical teaching does not only require God’s people to abstain from intentionally seriously injuring or killing another human being, including in self-defense, the negligent killing of another human being is likewise prohibited.

A perpetrator who “accidentally” brought about the death of another person (Numbers 35:15), without hating the victim, was allowed to flee to a city of refuge to escape the wrath of the avenger of blood. He was only allowed to escape death if he acted “unintentionally” or “ignorantly” (Deuteronomy 19:4). For instance, he might have killed a person by throwing a stone “at him, without seeing him,” not realizing that the victim was there (Numbers 35:23). In other words, he threw a stone, without realizing it would hit anyone (compare the *Living Bible*).

Or, he might have killed the victim without wanting to (Deuteronomy 19:5; Numbers 35:22). If, on the other hand, the perpetrator hated the victim in the past, or if he struck him intentionally with a stone, an iron implement or a wooden hand weapon, even though he might not have hated the victim, he was still to be executed (Deuteronomy 19:4, 6, 11; Numbers 35:20–21, 16–18).

The Scriptures tell us that the killing or “smiting” of another human being is wrong in God’s eyes and in violation of the Ten Commandments. The “accidental” manslayer, who did not hate his neighbor whom he killed, was not considered innocent, as his conduct, albeit unintentional or unknowing, led to the death of a person. With proper precautions, such a death could have been avoided. The accidental manslayer still had to flee to a city of refuge and stay there until the high priest died.

Considering all of these principles, it is becoming obvious that certain sports and games which are designed to injure a competitor might have to be avoided. But even games or other activities which might involve action causing serious injuries or even death may need to be avoided, even if the sports per se are not designed to cause such harm.

A clear distinction can be made between, on the one hand, sports or other activities which purposefully harm—or teach to harm—other human beings and, on the other hand, conduct which is not directly or indirectly focusing on others.

Understand the Distinction

Let us take shooting ranges as an example. We would reject firing exercises within the military or the police, because to a large extent, the purpose of those firing exercises is to train soldiers or members of the police to hate, shoot and kill others. It is different to shoot a rifle at the fair or to use a gun for hunting animals. The same conclusion would apply to the use of bows and arrows. (However, a distinction must be made between “needed” hunting for the purpose of the control of wildlife and the acquisition of food, and trophies hunting for “fun” and “entertainment.” Examples would be fox hunting in the United Kingdom and killing animals on a safari in Africa. Senseless killing of animals is wrong.

What Is Your Motivation and Conviction?

As we can see, the motivation for the use is very important. While we must be careful not to condemn others for their actions, we should stand by our personal decisions and convictions without fear of condemnation. If one has strong convictions not to use guns, bows and arrows under any circumstances, including at the fair or for the purpose of hunting animals, then one shouldn't do it. This would also apply to our children if we feel they could or shouldn't do it. In any event, parents need to properly educate their children so they understand the distinction between what is a "game", and what is "war." The use of "water pistols" in a swimming pool must never instill in a child the idea that it is alright to use a real gun against another human being.

You Can Play Chess

Another example of a harmless game, which we feel to be very appropriate, would be chess. For example, some say that playing chess is wrong since it is a game of war. We have never taught this in the Church, and many Church members are or were very good chess players. Even though world chess champion Bobby Fisher was never a member of the Worldwide Church of God, he showed some interest at one time and volunteered to play chess with many Ambassador College students. (He was an extremely talented chess player, and he played simultaneously numerous games with different students. At the same time, his fascination with chess caused him to be unbalanced.)

On the other hand, extremely violent games and those with demonic themes must be avoided! This especially applies to the computer-generated games that so easily captivate children's interest.

When reviewing sports which involve competing with or fighting competitors, the distinctions may become blurrier.

When You Should Abstain

For example, we would not recommend the avoidance of soccer (football for our British friends), because soccer, as designed, is not played with the intent of hurting someone, although one can get hurt playing it. If, on the other hand, it becomes obvious that the opposite team members are attempting to intentionally hurt someone, or playing so violently that injuries are the inevitable consequence,

then it would be advisable to abstain from such matches. The same principles would apply to other sports such as volleyball, basketball, baseball and softball; and of course, no problem would exist with sports such as golf, surfing, cricket and tennis, as well as other racing sports such as bicycling, running or swimming, even though they are of a competitive nature. In addition, no problems would exist for individual performance sports, such as gymnastics or figure skating. As we explained above, there is nothing wrong with playing competitive sports, as long as we don't do so with ungodly motives.

Should You Abstain from Laser Tag?

This principle would include laser tag. As the *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* explains: "Laser tag is a tag game played with lasers. Infrared-sensitive targets are commonly worn by each player and are sometimes integrated within the arena in which the game is played... [It] may include simulations of combat, role play-style games, or competitive sporting events including tactical configurations and precise game goals... laser tag is painless because it uses no physical projectiles..."

Should You Abstain from Dodgeball or Paintball?

When focusing on sports with the potential of intentionally "hurting" someone, the distinctions become even more blurry. Using dodgeball or paintball as examples, these are games which are not played for the purpose of war, even though it is their purpose to hit the other person with the paintball or other device.

The *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* describes paintball as follows:

"Paintball is a game... in which players eliminate opponents from play by hitting them with dye-filled, breakable, oil and gelatin paintballs, or pellets, usually shot from a carbon dioxide or compressed air (Nitrogen) powered 'paintball marker'... Game types in paintball vary, but can include capture the flag, elimination, ammunition limits, defending or attacking a particular point or area, or capturing objects of interest hidden in the playing area... In most areas where regulated play is offered, players are required to wear protective masks, and game rules are strictly enforced."

Regarding dodgeball, the *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* writes:

"Dodgeball is a game in which players on two teams try to throw

balls at each other while avoiding being hit themselves... There are many variations of the game, but generally the main objective of each team is to eliminate all members of the opposing team by hitting them with thrown balls, catching a ball thrown by a member of the opposing team, or forcing them to move outside the court boundaries when a ball is thrown at them."

It is very important that the players understand the nature of the game; that they are not trying to injure another person; and that everybody plays with proper protection so as to avoid serious injuries. With these precautionary remarks, even playing American football or rugby might be appropriate, even though some or many Christians would probably avoid playing those games, given their violent appearance.

Should You Watch Boxing Matches?

A boundary could be drawn where the intent of the sport is clearly to hurt someone (for example, boxing), even though it may not be wrong to watch boxing matches. Paul makes reference to boxing in 1 Corinthians 9:26, when he says: "Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air." The *Ryrie Study Bible* explains: "This does not refer to shadowboxing but to wild misses during an actual boxing match." This seems to be correct. Paul makes his statement in the context of competitive sports (running a race) and combative fighting; not, as some erroneously write, in the context of the preparation for a fight or sparring in the school in sham-fight, wherein they struck out into the air as if at an imaginary adversary.

The fact that Paul draws this analogy of a real boxing match (even though improperly fought) with the Christian spiritual fight shows that he was familiar with—and had watched—boxing matches, even though this Scripture cannot be used to show that Paul would have participated in boxing matches, or that he wished the injury of one of the boxers.

Should You Participate in Wrestling Matches?

Another sport which is mentioned in the Bible and which was engaged in by godly people is wrestling. We read that Jacob wrestled with God—the second Member of the God Family, Jesus Christ (Genesis 32:24; Hosea 12:2). After wrestling for a long time, God struck the

socket of his hip which became out of joint, causing Jacob to limp for a while. One might conclude that it is therefore appropriate to injure an opponent in sports, but this would be a wrong assessment. In this case it was God—not a man—who acted in such a way in order to teach Jacob a particular lesson.

The *Benson Commentary* writes: “This was to humble him, and make him sensible of his own weakness, that he might ascribe his victory, not to his own power, but to the grace of God, and might be encouraged to depend on that grace for the deliverance [from Esau] he was so much concerned to obtain. It is probable Jacob felt little or no pain from this hurt, for he did not so much as halt till the struggle was over... If so, it evidenced itself to be a divine touch indeed, wounding and healing at the same time.”

The *Matthew Poole Commentary* agrees, stating that this “was done that Jacob might see that it was not his own strength, but only God’s grace, which got him this victory, and could give him the deliverance which he hoped for.”

Should You Engage in Bodily Exercise?

Another distinction needs to be drawn between those sports and activities which one may be engaged in for the purpose of bodily exercise (including in workout programs) and those which one might want to do for the purpose of learning how to defend oneself against an attacker and to fight another person. We read in 1 Timothy 4:8: “For bodily exercise profits a little”—that is, in comparison to the development of godliness in our lives.

Barnes Notes on the Bible states: “The apostle does not mean to say that bodily exercise is in itself improper, or that no advantage can be derived from it in the preservation of health.” It is also stated that an alternate reading would be: “For bodily exercise profits for a little while.”

Should You Practice Karate, Jujitsu or Kickboxing?

Applying these principles to sports which are commonly associated with the intention of defending against an attacker, such as Karate, Jujitsu or Kickboxing, it is very important that the motivation is godly, and that the children clearly understand why they are participating in those classes. It is easy to deceive oneself. It must never be our motive

to seriously injure another person, including in self-defense.

This is not to say that we can never physically defend ourselves or our loved ones, when we are attacked, but great caution is in order, as we are not to seriously injure, let alone kill an attacker. For instance, the use of pepper spray could lead to blindness of an attacker; so, again, it is important to consider the potential consequences before using specific defensive devices or engaging in certain defensive activities. It would be advisable to review again our comments on self-defense in **chapters 3 and 4** of this booklet, and what the best ways are of protecting ourselves against violent aggressors.

In many cases, we are called upon to make personal decisions based on our own conscience and conviction. After educated analysis of the issues at hand, based on the Bible and the explanations in this chapter, we must become fully convinced in our own minds as to how to act and what to do (Romans 14:5), because whatever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

Chapter 12

How Can Young People Learn How to Dress Properly?

It may sometimes be difficult to strike a proper balance as to what is appropriate and inappropriate clothing. There may be a tendency to set forth detailed rules and “descriptions” of what is supposedly allowed and prohibited, thereby creating what could be described as a “yard-stick” approach. In this chapter, we will NOT do this, but rather, we will set forth suggestions, recommendations, guidelines and principles, while avoiding to create teachings, perhaps based on human traditions (like the Pharisees did), which the Bible does not contain.

You Must Not Condemn Others

We need to keep in mind that we must NEVER condemn or judge self-righteously our spiritual brother and sister and their children for what is being worn (compare James 4:11–12; 2:1–4, 13). If a matter needs to be addressed on an individual basis, the ministry will do so. We are all learning to become more and more perfect in the eyes of God, and to increase in stature with people, and this process requires time and patience.

As a general principle regarding proper clothing, we need to reflect God’s standards at all times, when appearing in public. God’s people are to abstain from fleshly lusts (1 Peter 2:11). We read that we are to “make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Romans 13:14). Christ warned men not to look at a woman with evil thoughts or “to lust for her” (Matthew 5:27–28).

But let us not forget that Jesus Christ created Adam and Eve in the nude, and when Christ was a Man, He most certainly remembered their appearance... but He NEVER lusted after Eve with evil thoughts. Let us also remember that it was Satan who caused them to become ashamed of their nakedness as if part of God’s “very good” creation was something inappropriate and dirty. When Adam and Eve were

naked, no other human being was around.

This does not mean that we would advocate walking around or “sun-bathing” in the nude in public, including at the beach, or that women should wear topless bathing suits in public; nor, that men and women should wear string bottom or thong swim briefs bathing suits in public.

We also do not recommend the visit of mixed saunas where both men and women are naked. Nor would we recommend that a man visits a sauna exclusively for men, if he has had homosexual tendencies which he is working on overcoming. (The principle applies that we should avoid temptation. A recovering alcoholic, drug addict or smoker should not seek the company of alcoholics, drug addicts or smokers).

You Must Not “Show Off”

Women and girls have to be aware of the male tendency, and so they should not try to provoke and act inappropriately around a man to whom they are not married by showing off and flaunting their bodies.

At the same time, a man may lust after a married woman, no matter what she wears... and that may also be true for a woman lusting after a married man.

The over-riding questions that we should ask ourselves are why are we dressing the way that we are? Do we do this to honor God, or to entice another human being (excluding our mate), in one way or another, to awaken sexual desires in him or her?

Dress for the Occasion

God tells us that we are to take care of our bodies, without being ashamed of them. We dress nicely and buy clothing that fits us. Clothing trends and styles change all the time. Baggy clothes and loose fitting were a style in “ancient” times, but they appear sloppy today. Men also wear suits that are tailored based on their body type. It seems like people are even offended by clothing that “fits” to the shape of our bodies.

On the other hand, wearing certain colors might be looked upon as “gay.” Are we therefore to avoid those colors? Absolutely not! Society is not to dictate what we wear, as long as it does not violate God’s Word.

When people dress up at a very fancy or formal event with beautiful

dresses and suits that fit their bodies, others may find even that “offensive.” When we attend Church services, we do appear before God, properly dressed. Some have a problem with this, thinking they can come in jeans and open shirts. Some may have to learn what it means to show quality—even in what they wear.

How You Should Dress for Sabbath Services

We say the following in our free booklet, *“How to Keep the Sabbath”*:

“It has been the practice of the Church of God to recognize that we are appearing before God when we assemble for Sabbath services, as well as during other special commanded assemblies given by God [such as commanded worship services throughout the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, even though only the first day is a Holy Day]. As such, we do recommend that each person present himself or herself in the best apparel they have available. The foremost idea is to specially prepare to appear before God to honor HIM!...

“We must understand that we are appearing before GOD. God is a great King... If we were to be invited by an earthly king, how would we appear in front of him? Would you want to appear in unwashed, dirty clothing, wearing washed-out jeans, a T-shirt, and sneakers?...

“In this context, we must not neglect culture. In the Western World, it is normally appropriate for men to wear a suit, or a nice combination, with a shirt and a tie. In the U.S.A., Canada or in the UK [and we might include continental Europe as well], men are not dressed up when they appear in worship services with an open shirt, a T-shirt or jeans...

“Ladies should also wear appropriate clothing, of course. In addition, their dresses or skirts should not be too short or too tight or too revealing. God gives us the freedom to determine what is appropriate clothing, within the acceptability of proper dress in our cultures; but to clarify, God does not give us the freedom to violate His specific instructions so that we can follow our culture...

“... young children should attend Church services with their parents. The rules of proper dress code apply to our children as well. We are not saying, of course, that our young boys need to appear in a suit (even though some might wish to dress them up in such a ‘cute’ way), nor, that our young girls need to wear a ‘wedding dress,’ but our children

should not appear sloppy and uncombed, wearing ‘every-day’ street clothes, washed-out or torn jeans, T-shirts or sneakers. Their appearance should reflect the sanctity and holiness of Sabbath services.”

On the other hand, when we go to the beach, we do not go there wearing a suit and a tie.

Strike a Balance

We need to strike a balance between being “cutting edge” in fashion and so far behind that we draw undue attention to ourselves, keeping in mind that fashion changes and that it is different in certain countries. Once our dress and appearance become distracting in either sense, it has gone astray from God’s purpose of pleasing Him and of becoming “a Jew to the Jew and a Gentile to the Gentile,” in order to win some (1 Corinthians 9:19–20; 10:32–33).

However, this is not to say that we should wear inappropriate clothes just because “everybody else” in the world may do so. We are to come out of the world and be different (compare 2 Corinthians 6:17–18).

“Inappropriate” clothing is “inappropriate” in the eyes of the beholder. We do not think we have to spell out here what is truly “inappropriate.” It is important that we are *honest* with ourselves and not fool ourselves—nor, that we condemn others for what they wear which we may (or perhaps should not) want to wear.

We do not want to offend or become a laughing stock. We would not wear, for example, what Muslims might consider an “inappropriate” bathing suit in a Muslim country, while wearing a swimsuit from the 1930s at a beach in many Western countries would not be advisable.

We are also to keep in mind that if you are on the swim team or water polo team in school, for example, speedos are a requirement. Even when it comes to female volleyball players and women participating in many other sports, tight and smaller outfits are the requirement, and there are reasons for that as loose-fitting and baggy clothing affect their performance. Again, we are emphasizing that appropriate clothes are to be worn for the particular occasion, while not saying that Christians could not participate in such events.

Similarly, when going to the gym, women want and need to be comfortable and the material has to be functional, depending on the workout (yoga pants, sports bras, workout shorts). People—sometimes

“jealous” men—may even become offended by men who are shirtless and who are muscular (we are not making this up). But this does not mean men should never take their shirts off in public since that “could” be offensive to others.

Some will always find a reason to be “offended” about anything, while the vast majority would have no problem with it as it doesn’t bother or affect them in that way. Many times, it could also come down to jealousy of how someone may look or what they wear.

When focusing on bathing suits worn by women and men at the beach or at a pool, they can’t control what others may think of them, no matter what they wear and how they look. We must be careful that we do not impose human thinking on women or men which the Bible does not impose.

Some are so afraid of how others may look at them that they, because of an inferiority complex, refuse to even go to the beach to wear a bathing suit (we are not making this up, either).

On the other hand, if someone is bothered that much and is really offended based on what someone else wears and how they look, then that person should perhaps avoid going to places where that would be a concern for him or her, like the beach, a pool, the gym, or the person may even have to get off social media and stop watching sports events or dance competitions on television or the Internet. However, we do not recommend that; in fact, we feel that in such a case, a careful and honest self-examination might be required.

The overall goal for us is to please God and not to impose undue restrictions on others which the Bible does not contain; nor, to condemn others for conduct which does not fit our thinking and our paradigm.

Conclusion

This booklet has attempted to address issues which are important for young people who try to cope with life in this dark world. Surely, not all issues have been addressed, and another booklet might be written focusing on additional areas of life which you, the reader, might be interested in. So, tell us what else you might want us to talk about.

In the meantime, we hope and pray that what has been written in this booklet will help you, the young person, and you, the parents, to walk God's Way of Life together, ever increasing in confidence, conviction and God's grace, knowledge and love.

The following booklets are available, upon request:

And Lawlessness Will Abound...
Angels, Demons and the Spirit World
Are Jews and Christians at Odds with Jesus Christ?
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Are You Already Born Again?
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