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Our Times

A FAMILY MAGAZINE FOR BETTER LIVING

Why Blame God?



EDITORIAL

It was a Sunday afternoon. I walked with my son towards the playground. There were a few boys kicking the football around. They divided into two teams and moved to the respective sides. One of the teams had one player less so they asked me to join them and keep goal.

The game warmed up and after crossing over, with the score at one all, it started getting a little rough. Suddenly our forward had their stopper by the collar and was pushing him. The referee ran over, cooled tempers and resumed the game.

It was just a friendly game. There was no trophy to be won. All the boys were from the same community, yet there was so much of foul play and bad spirit involved.

Turn to the sports page of any newspaper and inevitably you find the news of a tennis player fined for abusing the referee; a footballer suspended for fisting an opponent; or an athlete barred from competitive sports for having taken drugs. Fair play is so much at a premium that in tournaments it is common to award a trophy for 'Fair play'.

Fair play and rules are not confined to sports alone. In industry, business, and marriage, the game must be played according to the rules, with no exception. The professional sportsman who breaks the rules is disqualified.

Tell a little child not to do a certain thing and his first impulse is to do it. This is not confined to children alone but also to grown-ups. Some people just hate to submit to rules or regulations. "Why should I do it?" or "I will do it if I please!"

"None of us liveth to himself" (Romans 14:7), said Paul. Yet, some of us get lost in our own desires and pleasures that we forget the existence of the person next to us. Rules in society have been made for us to live as good neighbours. We have to recognize the existence of our neighbour and that he has as much right to a happy and peaceful life as we have. When he lives by the laws of the country and you also abide by them, you will have a happy neighbourhood.

Blackmarketing and hoarding are so common in business that people have come to accept it; disloyalty in marriage is not only accepted but also a way of life in many countries; sexual promiscuity is so prevalent among the youth that it is accepted as the 'in thing'. But whenever rules are violated or laws broken the penalty has to be paid. And very often it is very severe. Disloyalty in marriage ends up in broken homes and divorce. Often it is the destitute children who suffer the most. God has given us His Ten Commandments in which He has spelt out all the rules for a clean and pure life. It would do us good if we heed these rules, especially those pertaining to purity spelled out in the seventh and tenth commandment.

Our life on this earth is hazardous, and it requires a lot of courage, self-discipline and hard work to make it successful. But with the help of God we can have victory over sin and enjoy the fruits of our labour. We should form the habit of letting God rule our lives and allow His purposes to be fulfilled in our lives.

It may be difficult to play the game according to the rules, but in the Christian life, true freedom only comes in submitting our will to the will of our Heavenly Father. "No athlete can win a prize unless he has kept the rules," (2 Timothy 2:5, NEB). Let us find God's rules for our lives and live and play according to them.

—Edwin Charles

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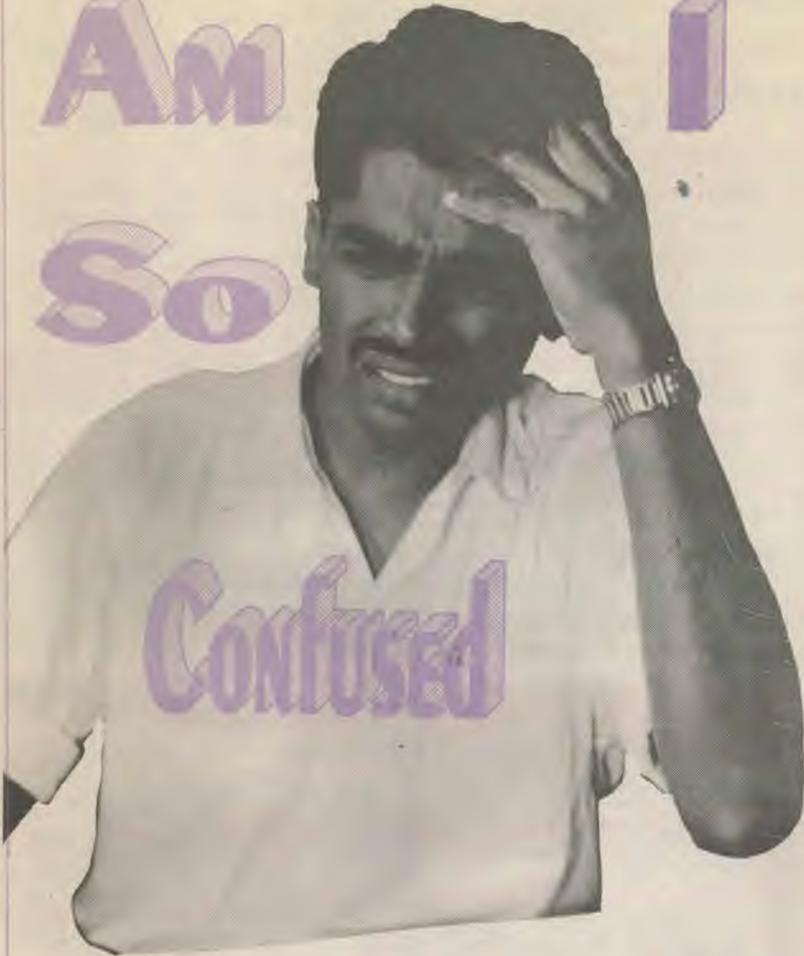
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Why

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Confused



Eight clear, practical steps to help you cut through the confusion and get on the right road—the road God wants you to follow.

Would you like to know the future? Do you wish you knew how to make the right choice in the decisions you face? Do you believe that God has a plan for your life, and do

you know how to discover what His plan includes?

The world is full of the search to find out what is coming, stumbling over itself

seeking for guidance. The astrology charts are in print on every hand. Fortune tellers and palm readers still abound. People everywhere want to know what will happen next and how to prepare for it. It is part and parcel of being human, this drive and curiosity to find out about tomorrow.

For the Christian, one of the most-often asked questions is how to know God's will in his life. Sometimes we are frustrated by the apparent lack of divine guidance in our day and age. We look back to Bible times, when angels came and walked with men at midday, when prophets were alive and well, and we wish we had the same access to knowing God's will.

On one hand the immature Christian often resorts to gimmicks and man-made maneuvers such as flipping a coin or elaborate routine for God to follow, to make known His will. The guidance received from such methods can come from chance, or even from the devil himself. Even the atheist could employ coins and straws in an attempt to arrive at some decision.

On the other hand, the intellectual Christian concludes that God gave us all the guidance He intended to give when He created us with minds that can think and reason. The Sadducees in the days of Christ were victims of this philosophy and

concluded that after starting man in his existence. God left him to his own devices, They believed that the method by which mankind could know God's will for his life was by the simple process of thinking it through and making a decision. But once again, if logic and reason are all God uses to communicate His will, the atheist and infidel could be as certain of making the right choice as could the Christian, and guidance would become a matter of I.Q., rather than spiritual insight.

Perhaps all of us have used one of these approaches at some time in our lives, either concluding that whatever we decide must be God's decision, too, or trying one of the gimmicks for want of a better method.

One year in college I was faced with a decision concerning my summer employment. This particular Summer, I was going to sell books. After writing some letters of inquiry to the various places I could go, I ended up with three invitations: to Washington, Texas, and Wyoming.

It seemed to me that one of the three choices ought to be better, or even the best of the three and so I wanted God's guidance in order to make the right decision. After considering how this might be done, I decided the pieces equally among four stacks. Then I wrote "Washington" on one stack of papers,

"Texas" on another stack, and "Wyoming" on the third stack. The fourth stack of papers I left blank, just to be fair to God and give Him the option of "none of the above." You'll have to admit that this was a carefully planned operation!

Then I put all of the pieces of paper in a hat and shook it up and down to mix the pieces. After that, I knelt down and prayed that God would guide me in the decision I was going to make and that if I was supposed to go to one of these three places, or to some unknown place, He would let me know His will by causing me to draw out the same answer three times in a row.

I drew out a slip of paper. It said "Wyoming." I put that slip of paper back, shook the hat some more and took out a second slip. "Wyoming." I was beginning to get excited! I replaced the second slip, shook the hat one more time, and picked a third slip. "Wyoming"! Three times in a row!

I was elated! I was ready to go out and buy my cowboy boots and Stetson hat that very night! But since it was too late to go shopping, I did the next best things and rushed across campus to the home of my favourite Bible teacher to tell him the good news.

To my astonishment, he clouded up and rained all over me! He really let me have it. He told me that this was a

very immature way to discover God's will, and by the time he had finished, I was no longer elated. My chin dragged all the way back across campus, and I went to sleep that night a very discouraged student.

But I still had to make the decision. During the next day, I began to think about Gideon. Now there's a Bible example for you—good old Gideon! He asked for a sign, not once, but twice. And God honoured his request by causing the fleece to be first wet, then dry. The more I thought about Gideon, the more I was sure that my Bible teacher didn't know everything after all!

So that evening I reminded the Lord of Gideon and got my hat out for the second time around. I shook it thoroughly and once again drew out three slips of paper. "Wyoming." "Wyoming," and "Wyoming"—three times in a row second night as well.

Now I was excited again! I took off across campus—but not to the same Bible teacher's house! He obviously hadn't appreciated the miracle that was taking place, so I decided to try someone else. I chose another Bible teacher this time and told him about what had happened—two evenings in a row.

He was no more encouraging than the first teacher had been. He also reproved me for my immature methods and suggested that

there was no guarantee that God would choose to communicate through the system that I had set up.

So I threw away the pieces of paper, and that summer I ended up going to Nebraska! I've often wondered what would have happened if I had gone to Wyoming.

Actually, I am not willing to throw this experience out entirely. God often meets people where they are and graciously responds to their seeking after Him, even when they do not understand that much about Him. But perhaps the greatest lesson I received from the Lord in this experience was a better understanding of how to seek his guidance, according to what His Word reveals as the best methods for seeking Him!

If you have ever read biographies of George Mueller, you know that his track record for understanding the Lord's guidance was impressive. For the first 20 years of his life Mueller was a reprobate. After his conversion, he began a ministry that was to last more than 50 years, running orphanages for the street urchins of Bristol. He never had a public relations man. He never advertised his needs. Whenever he needed money, food, or clothes for his orphans, he told no one, but went to his closet and prayed. During his lifetime, George Mueller received millions of dollars solely in answer to prayer.

One time Mueller was on a ship out in the Atlantic, headed for Bristol. Fog came in, and the captain of the ship who later told the story had been at his post for three days, guiding the ship at a snail's pace. Mueller approached him and said, "Captain, I need to be in Bristol on Saturday."

"There's no way you'll be in Bristol on Saturday," the captain replied. "Can't you see this fog?"

Mueller replied, "My eyes are not on the fog, but on the living God. Captain, will you go below with me and pray that God will remove the fog?"

The captain followed Mueller below, and they knelt together. Mueller said a simple prayer that a Sunday School boy might have prayed. "Dear Jesus, You know about the appointment that You made for me in Bristol on Saturday, so please take the fog away, Amen."

The captain was going to try to manufacture some kind of prayer, but Mueller stopped him. "In the first place, you don't believe God can do it," he said, "and in the second place, I believe He's already done it. If you will go back up to the bridge, you will find that the fog is gone."

The captain went outside and discovered that the fog was indeed gone, just as Mueller had said. They were in Bristol on Saturday.

How is it possible to be so sure of God's will? How could Mueller live with such certainty? When someone who is that tuned in to the will of the Lord begins sharing with you how to know God's will, you listen. Near the close of his godly life, Mueller gave seven steps for knowing God's will. I have added one more. I would like to invite you to study these steps and make use of them in your own life.

1. *No will of your own on the given matter.* Your own will is in neutral. This does not mean you will have no preference, but that you are willing to go in whatever way God directs. This is possible only for one who is involved in daily fellowship with God, for we cannot bring ourselves to surrender. God must do that for us. Jesus' example in this is recorded in Matthew 26:39 and John 4:34.

2. *Don't go simply by feeling.* In fact, you don't go by any one single step. It is the combination of all eight of them together that is significant. But often there is the temptation to make your decision on the basis of feelings, so this is a warning. Don't do it! Although the Holy Spirit often leads through impressions upon the heart (see Isaiah 30:21). We should never make a decision on the basis of feelings alone.

3. *Study God's Word* to see what is revealed that may give direction on the present

decision. God always guides us through His Word, never contrary to it. See Psalm 119:105. There may not be specific *information* on your particular decision, although there are often principles that apply. But you can always go to the Word for *communication*.

4. *Consider providential circumstances.* "Thou shalt remember all the way which the God led thee." Deuteronomy 8:2. Look at God's leading in the past and see how the current decision might fit into a pattern that has already been developing.

5. *Consult with godly friends.* This is the step that I added to Mueller's list. It's found in Proverbs 11:14 and Psalm 1:1. Don't consult with your ungodly friends! And once again, don't make your entire decision based on what your friends say. But put their counsel into your portfolio to help you come to a decision.

6. *Ask God in prayer, to reveal His will to you concerning the decision you are going to make.* See James 1:5.

7. *Make a decision!* On the basis of what has gone before, in the first six steps, make a decision. Don't wait for a sign or a bolt of lightning from heaven. Consider prayerfully the weight of evidence, and decide. And tell God what your decision is.

8. *Proceed with your decision,* inviting God to stop you if you have missed your signals.

Then be sensitive to the swinging doors. God knows how to open and close doors. At times, you may find a door slammed in your face. I've had it happen on occasions! And it's usually because I've missed it on step one. But even the apostle Paul found doors closing in his face at times. You can read about it in Acts 16:6-9.

Those are the steps, and for those of us who have used them over the years in making decisions and in seeking to know God's will in those decisions, we have found that they are extremely helpful.

God has a will. He is interested in guiding you in the decisions of your life. He has a plan for you, and your greatest happiness will be found in following that plan. If it is His will for you to go to Nineveh, it will not be equally satisfactory for you to head for Tarshish. God knows what will be best for you and bring the greatest blessing to others, and He is willing to make His will known to those who are willing to listen.

In Psalm 32:8 the promise is given, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." John 10:3-5 says, "The sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a

stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

David prayed, "Lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:24. Proverbs 3:5,6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not on



thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Paul tells us in Romans 12:2, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." And Jeremiah 10:23 says, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is

not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

We could list many other Bible references to prove the point. God wants to lead us, to guide us, to manifest Himself to us. He does not desire that we rely upon our feeble



wisdom, nor that we stumble about in the dark, not knowing whether or not we are choosing aright. He has a will, and He wants to reveal that will to us.

But there is a major premise to understanding God's will that we want to underline and emphasize before we go any further. For the one who truly is seeking to know God's will, there will be a daily seeking to

know God. The matter of guidance is not a fire escape routine, that calls upon God only when there is a major decision to be faced. It is in seeking to know God day by day, through prayer and the study of His Word, that we are brought into a position to even begin to know His will regard to the details of our daily lives.

Suppose I were to give you a list of steps to use in learning how to swim. Suppose, furthermore, you were to go down through the list holding your breath, moving your arms, cupping your hands, and kicking your feet. Suppose that finally you came back to me and said, "It didn't work! I still can't swim." And as we discover that you never realized you were supposed to be in the water! That would represent a serious breakdown in communication. wouldn't it?

It would be a tragedy to make the same mistake in knowing God's will in your life. I cannot emphasize it too much, elementary as it is. *In order to know God's will in your life, you must first know God.* It is not enough to turn to Him only when there is a problem or crisis.

Notice again the verses in John 10. It is the sheep who know His voice who are able to follow the leading of the Shepherd. They have become familiar enough with the Shepherd that they can distinguish His voice from all the other voices. Then, when

He speaks, they can follow His guidance.

Do you know Him? Do you know what it means to set aside prime time each day to further your acquaintance and relationship with Him? Do you know what it means to talk to Him just for the sake of talking, even when you don't need anything from Him but Himself? Do you know what it means to listen to Him talk to you, through His Word? Have you experienced, as the disciples did on the road to Emmaus, what it is like to have your heart burn within you as He talks with you by the way? Are you on speaking terms with Him day by day?

If you can answer Yes to these questions, then you are in a position to seek His guidance with regard to the particular details of your life. If you do not know Him then your first work is to become acquainted with Him for yourself. It is only when you know Him for yourself that you can correctly understand His guidance, or even be willing to accept His guidance when it is understood.

Don't try to learn to swim without going near the water. Get in the water! Become acquainted with the best Friend you can ever have. Learn to know Him. And then as you face the decisions of life, you can learn to know His will for you in your daily living as well.

Why BLAME God?

by Frank B Holbrook

Here is a sound Biblical answer to the inevitable tragedies of life

"I HATE GOD! I hate Him!" The atmosphere was tense, and the young woman spoke vehemently. Her passionate outburst was somewhat unnerving. "Why was I pregnant? I prayed earnestly for the life of my babe, but it was stillborn. Later, my brother was involved in a road accident which I witnessed. Trapped in the burning car, he died attempting to claw his way out through the back seat. God didn't hear our cries. Oh I hate God!"

Recently a sad, perplexed grandfather wrote the following lines: "My wife and I had a daughter-in law and two little grandchildren we just adored. They were all three killed in a cyclone.

"Our daughter-in-law was just twenty-one years old and so beautiful and healthy and got so much out of life. She was a good mother to her children, and we loved her so much. . . . We buried them together in the same grave. . .

"I think about this thing all the time. It's a nightmare. I . . . try to live a Christian life; I've prayed constantly that God would show me the answer or the reason for it. Do you think God had a purpose or reason for this thing?"

But not all persons face benumbing tragedy or suffering with such candour as this grandparent. For example, one embittered individual queries:

"Why are there two classes of people on earth, the ones that were given every faculty at birth to win anything on earth they wanted, and the ones that were born mentally retarded or physically deformed so they could have nothing normal? Does God think that these misfits did not want something out of life also? If one must pay, why not all?"

Why Blame God?

People vary in their reactions toward misfortune and suffering, as has been observed in the earlier part of this article. Some react angrily to personal tragedy, and openly denounce and hate the

God of heaven. Others are patiently resigned, but wonder what might be God's motives in permitting misfortune. Still others nurse a smouldering resentment which embitters their lives and cripples their usefulness.

Each in his own way feels that God is responsible in some manner for his personal heartache. But why blame God? Why does human nature make God the scapegoat of all earthly frustrations? God is blamed for bloodshed, for crippling diseases and untimely deaths. Is he really responsible for the anguished lives of earth's sick and broken?

The Scriptures abundantly testify to the character of God. "God is Love," (1 John 4:8). The colours of the rainbow are like the components of His character. He is "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Exodus 34:6.

The question of human suffering is inextricably locked with the origin of sin and its presence in the universe. She is the cause of human suffering

and death. Sin is the culprit—not God. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Romans 5:12.

Surprising as it may be, sin originated in heaven. “I beheld Satan as lightening *fall from heaven*,” asserted Jesus (Luke 10:18). In a prophetic flashback, John the revelator was permitted to see the first war ever fought. Challenging the authority of the Deity, Satan led out in an insurrection of heavenly angels against the government of God. “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Revelation 12:7-9.

Who is Satan, and why did he live in heaven? Did God create a devil? And what was the cause for a war in heaven?

Satan (or Lucifer, the Daystar—his designation in prophecy) was once a holy, sinless angel who stood in the presence of the Deity.

Like all the angel hosts, Lucifer was a created being—a pure, sinless intelligence.

Jealousy

But little by little, in some manner mysterious to us, Lucifer began to foster and to cherish jealousy toward the Creator, desiring the power of Deity. “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness,” continues the divine commentary. Verse 17. “For thou has said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.” Isaiah 14:13,14.

As jealousy was nourished, it engendered hatred and rebellion. Lucifer left his position to poison the heavenly hosts against God. “He was a murderer,” declared Jesus, “and abode not in the truth. . . . When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and father of it.” John 8:44. Hatred is the mother of murder (1 John 3:15), and misrepresentation is lying.

Prompted by its growing hatred, Lucifer questioned the authority and justice of God. By misrepresentation he secured the loyalty of a large portion of the angels. The rebellion eventually came to a head, and Lucifer openly threw off the yoke of the divine government (1 John 3:4,8). Then there was “war in heaven.” Revelation 12:7. Just what kind of war angelic forces fight we do not know.

But the record is clear that the challenger for the throne of the Deity was expelled from heaven with all the angels who had allied with him.

But the controversy begun in heaven between Satan and God was not thus ended, although he was expelled from heaven with all the angels who had associated themselves with him.

By bringing Adam and Eve under his control, Satan usurped their rulership over the earth (Genesis 1:26, 28). For the time being the Scriptures therefore refer to him as “the God on this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4; John 12:31). Satan holds the planet earth as a sort of beehive in his continuing war against the sovereignty of God.

Why Didn't God Destroy Satan?

The question naturally arises, if God is love and if God is sovereign in His universe, why did He not destroy Lucifer at the outset of his rebellion, and thus spare humanity these long centuries of suffering? The answer lies in the nature of the character of God.

“God is love.” His governing of the universe is based upon the principle of love. God desires only obedience that issues from loving, willing hearts. All intelligent creatures are free moral agents, given the right

of choice, so that they may make free responses to the will of Heaven. Love does not force or coerce obedience. However, because God is love, the commandments of the Deity are always in the best interest of the creature. "His commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3.

When Lucifer as a holy angel began to question God's law, his character, and His government of the universe, he sought to be independent of his Creator. The challenge came as a new and strange thing. Rebellion against the will of God had never occurred before. No one had ever chosen to disobey God. Now heaven's highest angel was raising questions and sowing the seeds of distrust and rebellion. The insurrection was large and deep-seated. Even the loyal angels did not understand the significance of disobedience.

If God at this point had blotted out the rebels, He would have effectively destroyed the very basis of His government; voluntary, loving obedience. A display of force would have annulled it all. Furthermore, such an act on God's part would not have settled the issues. Fear of God would have supplanted love. Rebellion would have risen up again and again.

There was only one way to effectively meet the issues involved in sin and rebellion. It would be necessary for the spirit of lawlessness to

develop its principles, to come to full maturation and fruition. Then all the universe would see the evil results of sin and would concur in its final eradication.

For this reason Heaven has permitted the continued existence of Satan and the evil angels. Our earth has become the laboratory and the stage of the universe, demonstrating to what lengths Satan will go in his murderous war against all that is good and holy—and to what depths of misery sin and its consequences can plunge the creature.

But God has not forgotten His earth-born children who have become caught up in this great conflict. In this same arena He has staged the greatest love drama of the ages. In the Incarnation, life and atoning death of His Son, God has provided both a full revelation of His character, and also a way of escape for mankind. Through the plan of salvation, made possible in Christ, each individual sinner is given a chance to choose. He may follow the ways of sin and rebellion and receive the wages of death, or he may accept the grace of a sin-pardoning God and receive the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23).

Owing to the nature of the great controversy between God and Satan, it is necessary that time be given for the development and maturation of the principle of sin and rebellion, as we have noted

before. In effect, this means that Heaven must permit Satan's operations to extend to all mankind—to the good as well as to the evil.

Satan's control, however, is limited. If he were to have total sway, he would sweep mankind from the earth. But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make



way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13. Test and trial come to all, but God does not allow them to go more than we can bear through His sustaining grace. (Compare 2 Corinthians 12:9).

Specific Causes

What should be a Christian's attitude toward his personal suffering or trial? Although the Scriptures make

clear that the presence of sin is the source of human woe, yet it only hints at what might be specific causes of a given personal tragedy. The main thrust of the Scriptures is to help the individual to meet the inevitable tragedies of life whether explained or not.

If a Christian is suffering from disease or physical disability, he ought to seriously examine his life to see whether wrong habits of living have been the cause of his problem. If so, he should confess his sins to God and align his life and activities in harmony with the laws of health. If he can determine no cause for his suffering, he may conclude that he is being permitted, because of the nature of the great controversy, to be under attack by Satan.

Like Job, the Christian humbly submits his life to the providence of God. "He knoweth the way that I shall come forth as gold." Job 23:10.

When Satan strikes, he does so with the intent to ruin and to destroy. He intends that the follower of God will become so discouraged that he will blame God for his troubles, and give up his faith. But the divine assurance to every suffering Christian is, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28.

The apostle does not mean that everything that befalls us

is good. Rather, he means that if the Christian submissively trusts in his God, He will overrule all the heartache and suffering for his good. Just as a sailing vessel may make headway against contrary winds by tacking, so God may deflect the blows of our adversary the devil to work development of character in us. Suffering, thus thwarted from its satanic aim, may work a ministry of grace in our lives, rendering us kinder, sweeter, and more understanding of others. A Christian's steadfast trust under trial vindicated God before the universe and gives others courage.

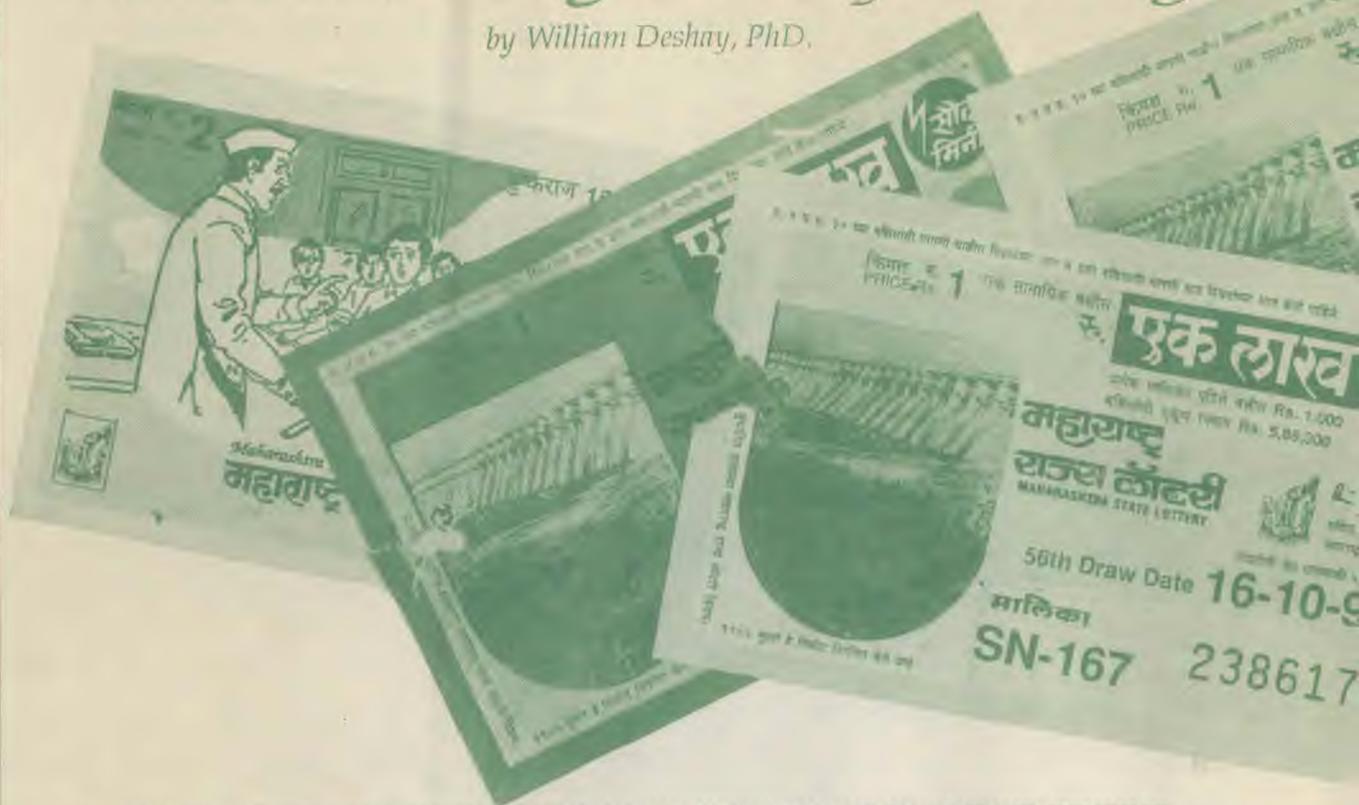
Our Heavenly Father understands. And while He must for the moment permit the operation of Satan, He promises, "when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." Isaiah 43:2.

The tragedies that enter our lives continue to remind us that we live in the land of the enemy. This earth is not our home. Suffering deepens our appreciation of the resurrection of Christ, and makes keener our longing for the second advent of our Lord when all the inequalities of life will be balanced out.

In the great day of the Lord, mankind's true enemy, Satan, will be fully disclosed, and the issues in the controversy that tore asunder the peace of the universe will be fully understood. Heaven will be fully vindicated. ●

What's Wrong with Gambling?

by William Deshay, PhD.



While casinos, racetracks, numbers games, cards, and many other forms of gambling have gone full speed ahead for some time. The gambling scene more recently has been and is dominated by the lottery craze. Operated by the state and therefore legal, the lottery, promising so much for so little, made so convenient and accessible to the ticket purchaser, glamorized in the paper and through the media causes one to ask, why not? What's wrong with gambling?

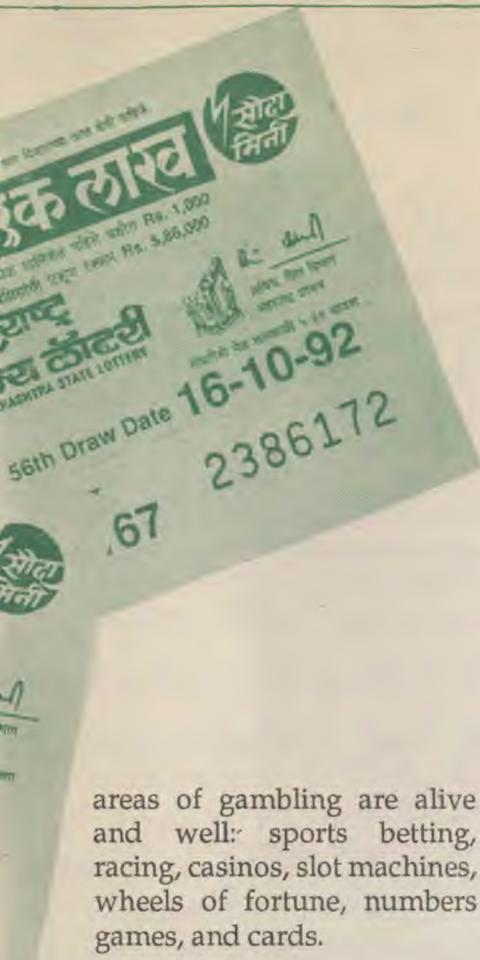
Government support

For the present, it might be much easier to ask what is good or right about it, since the government has joined the craze and have lotteries in full swing. Government might answer that Question in much the same way: Taxes are out of control (or at least unpopular), and this will relieve some of

the demand. Others will talk about the needs of education being greatly subsidized by the operation of a lottery. Concerned parents are made hopeful by promise of aid for parks and recreational centres. And individuals concerned about the care of the aged are happy that the new lottery craze promises funding for more medical care and better

facilities for the elderly. All of this while enjoying the dream if one day becoming a millionaire. The privilege of contributing to so many worthy projects is sufficient reason to participate even if there were no chance of gain.

While the lottery is most prominent in the news, it should be stated that all other



areas of gambling are alive and well: sports betting, racing, casinos, slot machines, wheels of fortune, numbers games, and cards.

A Closer Examination

With all these seeming benefits as pluses of the lottery, one again echoes, what's wrong with gambling? Well, gambling has usually been linked to organized crime and so linked to drugs, alcohol, prostitution, murder, and many other vices. So with the government operating the lottery, doesn't this eliminate the criminal element of gambling and make it all right? What could still be wrong?

"Gambling is not wrong in itself, for life obliges us to take risks at almost every turn of

the road. The parable of the talents blames the one-talent man for not taking risks. But gambling in which we play our own providence with risks that we arrange for earthly and greedy rewards—that is another item."

"The Christians were sometimes called 'riskers' in the early days of the church. They buried the dead in the times of plague, when others would not risk life in such a task. Paul says of the loyalty of Epaphroditus that 'he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete your service to me' (Philippians 2:30). 'Risking' is there the exact translation, and it throws a sudden light on the King James Version. The Christian must take risks, for his faith is not a timid respectability: he must take the risks to which Christ has pointed him by the venture of the cross." The good Samaritan's risk was to save another's life, not to fleece it. These risks taken by the early Christians are examples of "service chance" for the good of another.

However, many past and present church leaders and theologians view contemporary money chance risks as gambling, which "is a form of stealing in its many and varied manifestations. Men and women through betting, lotteries, and all sorts of 'skin games' are trying to get something for nothing." Most, however, turn out to be losers.

The Real Losers

Who are the real losers? "Chief among the concerns is that lotteries amount to a regressive tax on those who can least afford to pay. A study found that the poorest one third of state households bought half of all weekly lottery tickets—and 60 per cent of daily game tickets. 'Seventy per cent of those who buy my tickets are poor, Black, or Hispanic,' says newsstand mogul Rasik Patel, New York's busiest lottery agent. Some critics have accused lottery officials of deliberately targeting minority players in inner-city neighbourhoods—particularly for daily games patterned after the illegal numbers rackets. 'A lottery is the sale of an illusion to poor who view it as the only possibility for breaking out of the cycle of poverty they live in,' says Weston Ware of the Baptist Christian Life Commission. 'It's bad public policy, bad social policy, and bad moral policy for the state to huskster or be its own bookie for its people.'"

While Thomas Jefferson referred to the lottery as willing, "taxation only upon the willing," it would seem to prey on the poor and seriously damage, if not erode, the work ethic among those, ironically, who most need to work. "If you are using rent, lunch, or grocery money, then it can be very destructive," says Robert

Gould, a psychiatric professor at New York Medical College."

"People who don't play the lottery say they refrain because they equate the lottery with gambling or because they are level headed enough to figure out that they're more likely to hold one of the 3,499,999 losing tickets than to hit the jackpot. And if there is a type that plays regularly, it's not the smart money—the more education you have, the less likely you are to play. Interestingly enough, though, many regular players tend to fall rather solidly in the middle range of income instead of in the lowest, as you might think. Not surprisingly, those who make more than this don't buy tickets as often as people with lower incomes. It certainly makes sense that people who earn less money are more likely to dream about the glorious possibilities that a winning number could provide."

A bad habit

Gambling not only develops in us the pernicious habit of wanting something for nothing, it also vitiates the morals of millions of people. And the church has not escaped. Even there, gambling often seems to be in good and regular standing. A popular evangelist once put it this way: "The man who gambles and wins is a thief; the man who gambles and loses is a fool. Now take your choice."

In his book *The Ten Commandments* R E Golladay says: "Gambling stands in about the same relation to stealing as dueling does to murder. Because a man is willing to risk his life in an encounter does not make it right for him to take another man's life. *Nor does the fact that a man is willing to risk his own property in a game of chance make it right for him to take another man's property without payment of an equivalent.* There is nothing considerate or brotherly in a gambling transaction. Men gamble simply as a result of their feverish desire for quiet and easy gain at any cost, even of their souls."

Desire for quick gain often undermines the day-to-day struggle that develops one's selfworth and esteem. We must understand that there is no shortcut to achievement. There is nothing in gambling that is beneficial to soul or body. There is nothing to strengthen one's intellect; there are no valuable ideas to store for future use.

Those who occupy themselves with games of chance become intensely involved, soon losing all relish for useful and elevating occupations. A small sum is staked, and then a larger, until a thirst for gambling is acquired that leads to certain ruin. How many has this pernicious amusement led to every sinful practice—to poverty, to prison, to murder, and even to suicide?

A better alternative

It was ordained by God that man should work—for his personal happiness: God gave Adam the task of dressing the garden and keeping it. The personal satisfaction and benefits of work are largely forgotten by the masses of people today, for many are involved in pleasure seeking. For these, work has neither interest nor dignity, but is regarded as a drudging necessity. However, Thomas Carlyle captured the original thought when he said that "all true work [is] sacred; in all true work, were it but true hand labour, there is something of divineness." This same thought is very elegantly stated by Longfellow in "The Ladder of Saint Augustine":

We have not wings, we cannot soar;

But we have feet to scale and climb;

By slow degrees, by more and more,

The cloudy summits of our time.

The heights by great men reached and kept

Were not attained by sudden flight,

But they, while their companions slept,

Were toiling upward in the night."

COMEBACK OF A NONFOOD

by Hans Diehl & Alleen Ludington

Long thought to be useless, fibre is now being recognized as an important part of good health and a proper diet.

What is fibre?

Fibre, basically, is the framework of plants. Because it passes through the body without being absorbed by the blood, it was long thought to be useless. Removing it increased the calorie value of food and the efficiency and speed of absorption. This was thought to be an advantage.

What does fibre do?

Fibre is like a general, controlling many different body processes. It has the unique ability to absorb water, up to four to six times its own volume, creating a soft, spongy mass in the stomach and intestines. This is why foods high in fibre give a sense of dullness to the stomach much sooner than low-fibre foods, thus protecting against overeating and aiding in weight control.

The fibre mass acting like a soaked-up sponge, fills the intestines more completely and stimulates them to lively activity. Instead of idling for three to five days in the gastrointestinal tract in a compacted mass, the spongy food passes along much more quickly and is evacuated in two to three days.

Increasing fibre-rich foods in the diet can relieve most

constipation, reduce blood cholesterol levels, and markedly diminish problems with haemorrhoids, varicose veins, hiatal hernia, appendicitis, and colon diverticula, diseases typically found only in Western society.

Are there other advantages of a shorter transit time through the intestinal tract?

Not only is constipation relieved, but there is much less putrefaction of food in the intestines. This decreases the amount of irritation and helps heal ulcerated conditions. It is this action, along with a low-fat, low cholesterol diet, that is thought to contribute to the prevention of colon cancer. The presence of fibre also helps insulate the lining of the colon from damaging chemical residues in food. And that soft sponge has a wonderfully cleansing effect on the entire intestinal tract.

Fibre also slows down the rate at which nutrients enter the bloodstream. This slowing action smooths out the ups and downs of blood-sugar levels and provides more consistent energy to the body. A stabilized blood sugar also relieves most hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) and aids in the control of diabetes (high blood sugar).

If food processing removes fibre, what about meat and dairy products?

Animal foods do not contain fibre. Meat and dairy products make up about 40 per cent of typical Western diet, and most of the rest comes from refined foods, extracted fats, and sugars. This makes average diet very low in fibre (Western diets contain 15 to 20 grams of fibre; non-Western diets contain 50 to 70 grams).

There are many different kinds of fibre on the market. Which ones are the most important?

Different types of fibre fill different needs in the body. Since fibre is prevalent in all unrefined plant foods, eating a variety of fruits, grains, vegetables, and legumes (beans, peas etc.) assures a good supply of the different varieties of fibre the body needs.

Fibre is not a medicine. It is not enough to swallow tablets or sprinkle some of it over rich foods. It would take a whole bottle of fibre pills (which are expensive) to supply what one can obtain by eating a bowl of hot cereal topped with fresh strawberries. A diet containing a variety of plant foods is a cheaper, more healthful, and safer way to go.

Get your body off "hold" and "on the move" the natural way!

THE MAN WHO COULDN'T

Mr Wong was an unusual man.

Mr Wong lived in China, you see, and most Chinese people are fairly reserved. They don't freely express their feelings—not about friends, and especially not to strangers.

Then, too, Mr Wong lived in China during the Cultural Revolution—a time when most Chinese people went to great lengths to keep their feelings to themselves. This was a time, after all, when talk about anyone other than party Chairman Mao Zedong could result in a prison term—or even a bullet to the head.

In spite of all this, Mr Wong greeted everyone he met with a warm smile and the question, "Do you know my friend Jesus?" He didn't worry about being reported to the authorities. He just wanted everyone to have a chance to meet his friend.

Arrest

One day, some youths with red armbands visited Mr Wong. "We hear you talk about Jesus," they snapped.

"Yes, I do," Mr Wong replied even though he knew

A true story of one man's courage during China's Cultural Revolution.

by Stanley Maxwell



Be Killed

"I cannot stop talking about my friend if that's what you mean," calmly replied Mr Wong. He knew that the Red Guards—many of them not yet middle-school students—were caught up in a cause they didn't fully understand. They were only parroting the slogans they'd been taught.

"We have a law!" barked the Red Guards.

"I know the law."

"Take him to prison!"

"I'm ready." Mr Wong picked up the case containing his few belongings—the case he'd packed against just this event. "Take me!"

One of the Red Guards crammed a paper dune cap on Mr Wong's head, while another forced down Mr Wong's head as he walked. All this was to show his "guilt." The Red Guards then formed a procession and marched Mr Wong to the city's prison, chanting his crimes to passersby. Word of his arrest had spread widely by the time they reached their destination.

If the Red Guards thought placing Mr Wong behind bars would silence him, however, they were mistaken. In prison, many inmates were willing to talk with him about his friend.

"You know why you're in prison!" the guards would shout at him. "Why do you still break China's law?"

"I love china, but I can't stop talking about my friend,"

Mr Wong would reply. "Lonely prisoners need to know Jesus.

"Listen to us," the guards would reply. "We're your friends. Don't make us have to throw you into a stricter prison."

Mr Wong smiled. "I'll talk about Jesus any where."

The guards transferred Mr Wong to a stricter prison, as they'd promised. But soon he was talking with yet another group of prisoners about Jesus. As a result Mr Wong was transferred to the Qinghai Hard Labour Camp.

Cold

Qinghai is a flat and barren land near Tibet. The air there is thin; the climate, harsh. Besides the usual afflictions of hard work and scant food, prisoners there often suffered from exposure, altitude sickness, and dysentery. As a result, many of them died.

When he arrived in Qinghai, two of the guards again ordered Mr Wong to stop talking about Jesus.

"Do you know what we'll do to you if you don't quit?"

"You can't kill me!" Mr Wong knew his words sounded brash. To be honest, he had a hard time believing he'd said them!

The guards angrily bound Mr Wong and beat him. They then led him to a post outside the camp, stripped him of his

them to be members of the notorious Red Guard. Red Guards often went for days with hardly a bite of food or a wink of sleep—all for a misguided love, almost worship, of Chairman Mao.

(To be sure, their Zeal was sometimes also derived from their desire to clear black marks from their dossiers—dossiers tarnished by being descendants of Kuomintang, capitalist, or intellectual parents.)

"Jesus is my best friend," continued Mr Wong. "He can be your friend too."

"You're proselytizing!" shouted the Red Guards. "Proselytizing is illegal! Religion is the opiate of the people. Liberate yourself from this feudalistic nonsense and come into step with New China. Follow of our Great Helmsman, Mao Zedong."

clothes, and bound him hand and foot to the post. Unprotected, unable to move, Mr Wong faced a long, cold night alone.

Except that Mr Wong was not alone. He still could pray to his friend.

As Mr Wong prayed, he sensed the presence of another individual—an unseen someone who came to him, untied his ropes, then left. The ropes were loose! Mr Wong was free!

When morning came, however, Mr Wong faced another problem. Freed of his bonds, Mr Wong had been able to move around and stay warm. If the guards found him unfettered on the other hand, they might accuse Mr Wong's friends of sneaking out to untie him. Mr Wong was glad to be alive, but he had no desire to see other prisoners tortured or killed because of him.

So Mr Wong tied himself up—or at least he tried to. Retying his ankles was easy enough, but how was he to bind his own wrists?

"Lord," prayed Mr Wong, "you sent my guardian angel to untie me; now, please, tie me up again!"

The guards, of course, were dumbfounded to see Mr Wong alive. Muttering to themselves, they untied his ankles. They muttered even more when they tried to untie his hands. The knot at his

wrist was so tight, it took the guards half an hour to get it free!

Beatings

Several years of relative freedom from abuse passed before the guards again tried to get Mr Wong to give up his faith. This time all the prisoners were gathered to watch the reenactment of a torture common in the late Ch'ing Dynasty.

Mr Wong's arms were tied behind his back. He was hung by his arms from the ceiling, and a millstone was hung from his neck. Then he was beaten by the guards.

"Are you going to quit taking this Jesus nonsense?" the guards would ask him.

Mr Wong was in great pain. He even thought he would have to give in—but not today, tomorrow, maybe, but for the sake of his friend, he would not give in today.

The guards continued the torture. They continued asking the same question. Though sorely tempted to give in, Mr Wong continued to give the same answer. After many days of this the guards took down Mr Wong and threw him on the trash heap outside the camp. They thought he was dead.

Some time later, Mr Wong regained consciousness atop a pile of dead bodies—the bodies of people who had not been so fortunate as he. His

skin—which had been badly injured by his ordeal—had healed. No scars remained. The pain in his arms and back had vanished. Mr Wong thanked his friend Jesus for healing him, then returned to the camp.

Now Mr Wong found it easy to form a group on which he could tell others about his friend.

Miracles

As the years rolled by, Mr Wong—now known as the man whom the guards couldn't kill—continued to talk to the other prisoners about Jesus. The guards let him do this; what else could they do? Finally, in 1979, Mr Wong was released from the Qinghai Hard Labour Camp.

Today, Mr Wong is still a very unusual man. Many Chinese people, you see, think that the Cultural Revolution wasted ten years of their lives, but not Mr Wong. That's because he has a collection of letters—letters from some of the other survivors of the Qinghai Hard Labour Camp, letters telling how his experience in prison inspired them to believe that his God exists. They thank him for talking about his friend Jesus.

And that is why, if you were to meet Mr Wong (who is over 80 years old, but looks and acts like a much younger man), he would smile, and he would ask you, "Do you know my friend Jesus?"

The Gentleness of Jesus

by George Morrison

There is an exquisite and charming instance of the gentleness of Jesus recorded in Mark 5, verse 22 and onward. It concerned what happened after Jesus raised from the dead the little daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue. The miracle itself was an emotional experience. Jairus and his wife understandably forgot everything else in the excitement of having their daughter back again. Probably they did drop to their knees in gratitude, for God comes very close in life's great moments.

As far as the disciples were concerned, they felt such awe into their hearts they could only be silent and adore the Master. But in that environment of awe and wonder, in that splendid moment of spiritual exaltation, when the power of God was manifestly present and the whole house vibrated with the joy of heaven, Jesus' gentleness shone forth brilliantly. He commanded that something be given the little girl to eat.

It was an exquisite and charming touch, which even genius could never have imagined. Great miracles are apt to seem remote. They are transacted in an alien atmosphere. They often carry

the guise of unreality in their aloofness from our common days, and then there comes quite unexpectedly, some little homely and familiar incident, which is wonderfully helpful to our faith.

Such is the gentleness of Jesus here. It touches that household with reality. It clothes the Son of God with the vesture of the Son of man. It was divine power which conquered death and commanded the maiden to rise. It was the thoughtfulness of a loving human heart which insisted that something be given a little girl to eat.

The gentleness of Jesus grows even more wonderful when we remember certain aspects of His ministry. His life was, for instance, as the gospels show us, one of constant movement and excitement. In quiet and uneventful lives there is always a margin for remembering. The slowly passing hours give ample leisure for the thoughtfulness and gentleness of loving hearts. But when the days are broken and the life unsettled by the throng and pressures of activities, it is always difficult to find a place for little thoughtful services of love.

Such thoughtfulness and gentleness in a career of

movement call for a steady mastery of life. They demand a spirit that knows interior rest though every day be broken into fragments.

The beautiful thing about Jesus' life is that in a life like His, with the intensity of Heaven compressed into three short years of public ministry, He had a heart that always was at leisure for the fragrant things that blossomed by the road. He did not miss the lilies. One who misses the lilies misses God. He did not miss the weed upon the bank, or the play of children, nor the widow's mite. And in Jairus's house, where the power of God was present, and everyone was hushed in wonder and awe, He commanded that something be given the child to eat.

And so many times we read in Scripture that they brought young children to Him that He should *touch* them. And He took them up in His arms, put His *hands* upon them, and blessed them. Jesus called His disciples unto Him and said, "Have compassion in the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint on the way." He was the high priest, touched with the feelings of our infirmities. ●

Jesus' Prayer

When Jesus had finished saying all these things he looked up to heaven and said. "Father, the time has come. Reveal the glory of your Son so that he can give the glory back to you. 2 For you have given him authority over every man and woman in all the earth. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. 3 And this is the way to have eternal life—by knowing you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth! 4 I brought glory to you here on earth by doing everything you told me to. 5 And now, father, reveal my glory as I stand in your presence. the glory we shared before the world began.

6 "I have told these men all about you. They were in the world, but then you gave them to me. Actually, they were always yours, and you gave them to me; and they have obeyed you. 7 Now they know that everything I have is a gift from you, 8 for I have passed to them the commands you gave me; and they accepted them and know of a certainty that I came down to earth from you, and they believe you sent me.

9 "My plea is not for the world but for those you have given me because they belong to you. 10 And all of them, since they are mine, belong to you; and you have given them back to me with everything else of yours, and so they are my glory! 11 Now I am leaving them behind, and coming to you Holy Father, keep them in your own care—all those you have given me—so that they will be united just as we are, with none missing. 12 During my time here I have kept safe within your family all of these you gave me. I guarded them so that not one perished, except the son of hell, as the Scriptures foretold.

13 "And now I am coming to you. I have told them many things while I was with them so that they would be filled with my joy. 14 I have given them your commands. And the world hates them because they don't fit in with it, just as I don't. 15 I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from Satan's power. 16 They are not part of this world any more than I am. 17 Make them pure and holy through teaching them your words of truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world, 19 and I consecrate myself to meet their need for growth in truth and holiness.

20 "I am not praying for these alone but also for the future believers who will come to me because of the testimony of these. 21 My prayer for all of them is that they will be one of heart and mind, just as you and I are. Father—that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you sent me.

22 "I have given them the glory you gave me—the glorious unity of being one, all we are—23 I in them and you in me, all being perfect into one—so that the world will know you sent me and will understand that you love them as much as you love me. 24 Father, I want them with me—these you've given me—so that they can see my glory. You gave me the glory because you loved me before the world began!

25 "O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. 26 And I have revealed you to them, and will keep on revealing you so that the mighty love you have for me may be in them, and I in them." John 17.TLB.