

Reaching Out

Issue #73

Welcome to Reaching Out,

a Christian magazine to serve the community.

Our goal is to offer Biblical solutions to the problems facing our society today.

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How Big Is God . . . ?

—Dallas Witmer

The heathen hunches over a block of wood. He whittles out a grotesque figure about two feet tall. Then he falls down and worships it. We call that an idol and spell his god with a small “g.”

Small gods are easily controlled. On special occasions they can be dressed up and carried about the streets on floats. Their worshipers may burn incense and sing to them. Some gods are quite cruel and demanding at times. But the handy thing about small gods is that they can be carried back into their temples and forgotten for long spells of time.

But our Jehovah God is great. *The heaven of heavens cannot contain [Him]* (2 Chronicles 6:18). *It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain . . . Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand . . . and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales . . . the nations are as a drop of a bucket* (Isaiah 40:22, 12, 15). No one controls Jehovah. It is He that controls the universe. *Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased* (Psalm 115:3).

Which god do you worship? One you can control? Does he stay where you set him? Or is your God big enough to set you straight?

Modern concepts of God make Him more like an idol than the Lord God. If you can worship him on Sunday and live your life your own way the rest of the week, if he stays meekly at church while you decide whom to date, what car to drive, how to make a living, what home to own, and how to dress, all by yourself, then you are worshipping a very small god. But God will not be whittled down to our size. And only those whom HE controls are truly worshipping Him.

A big God is not one to be scared of. Christ invites us to learn of Him, that He is meek and lowly (Matthew 11:29). Isaiah 40 describes not only the great God but the personal God. “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (verse 11).

It might seem convenient to have a god we can control while we think we can take care of ourselves. But when it comes time to die, I’m sure we will all want one big enough to see us safely through to the home He has promised to those who serve Him. To have a big God then, we must serve the Great God now.

(Reused from the first issue of Reaching Out published in 1994.)

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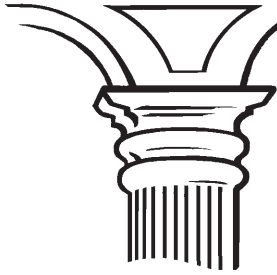
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—Lester Troyer

The Sovereignty of God and Our Wills

We face two basic questions: How does the sovereign God relate to the will of men and women? Are the seeming choices people make merely puppet-like movements, with God as the divine, behind-the-scenes manipulator? And the second question. If we have the free exercise of will, is it of any serious consequence what we do with it? If believers get this wrong, will this not impact their lives, their salvation, and leave an erroneous example to the surrounding culture? (Sovereignty means that God is in complete control. He can do what He wants to do with His creation.)

Obviously, the community of Christian believers is sharply divided on these issues. For example, Philip Yancey, a popular author writes: *Grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more—or love us less.* But in contrast, John Wesley (1703-1791), in a famous sermon, said, “The nature of the covenant of grace gives you no ground, no encouragement at all, to set aside any instance or degree of obedience.”

Our purpose in identifying the role and consequences of human will is not a claim that we completely understand God’s sovereignty, let alone challenging His sovereignty. It is not an attempt to explain every Bible account of God’s control versus man’s decision. For example, John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. This seems not to mean any choice whatsoever on his part. There are also other instances (Pharaoh and Esau, for example) whom God used and judged very negatively.

What is less clear (especially with Pharaoh) is whether he made earlier choices that so far removed him from the favor of God. But even if we are persuaded that the sovereign God made the choices for certain individuals, that is hardly the only measure of sovereignty and could well be seen as the exception, not the rule. This can be illustrated in the way God exercises sovereignty over nature.

We would be shocked, indeed alarmed, if we suddenly discovered the sun standing still in the sky or if it started moving backward. Why? Because the sun doesn’t normally do that. On the other hand, God caused the sun to do exactly that; but as far as we know, it has only happened once. The sun stood still in the sky in Joshua’s day, and it went backward in Hezekiah’s day.

God exercises His sovereignty equally, whether in the usual pattern or in the unusual. The other point that must not be lost is that the common or “normal” course of the sun is as much the work of God as is the unusual. In the same way, all salvation is of the Lord God. It’s within His sovereignty and His mercy to give the call to repent and believe. Giving man a choice is not a violation of God’s sovereignty.

Our initial introduction to Adam and Eve was in a perfect world where personal choice and exercise of the will mirrored a perfect relationship with God. But Satan, in lying deception, persuaded the first couple that the exercise of their will contrary to God’s will would offer them godlikeness.

The sinful choice to disobey God had the

same results then as every sinful choice ever since. God did not suppress the exercise of the will, nor the wrong choice itself. But in the aftermath of choosing disobedience to God (carefully hidden behind the desirable looking, but forbidden fruit) they had no control of the consequences of their disobedience. Adam tried to cover his sin by covering himself with fig leaves, but the attempt proved futile.

This single most damaging choice in all of history puts the desires of the flesh at odds with the will of God in control. It contaminates all human decisions and conduct. This doesn't mean that every work of man is obviously corrupt, but that even the "good" is contaminated by the polluted heart. (Whoever offends in one point of the law is guilty of all, according to James 2:10).

One thing that did not happen in the Fall—sin did not "uncreate" man from the image of God. Man is still the threefold being of body, soul, and spirit and retains the functions of mind, will, and emotions of His creation. If this were not so, we should hardly expect God to waste His efforts to save sinful man. Man without the image of God could hardly be of more value than refuse. God did not strip man of the exercise of choice. Quick analysis of God's dealings with the immediate descendants of Adam and Eve—beginning with Cain and Abel—confirms this fact. After rejecting Cain's offering of the fruit of the ground, God clearly put the responsibility back on Cain: *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?* (Genesis 4:7). Example after example of personal choices and national choices appear throughout the Scriptures, along with many admonitions to choose to serve God. It is a false notion that God superimposes His will on all decisions of people, and that in wrongdoing we really have no choice.

We do not minimize the will of man, but stand in awe of its impact. The only fitting response to the reaping from Adam's choice is that of caution and reverence in decision making, and dread, yea, even terror, of wrong choices. It is men who sow and it is men who will reap. God gives the commandment; man makes the choice; God controls the consequences. He does so justly, and in absolute sovereignty. In fact, none who understand the seriousness of the exercise of the will can be proud

or arrogant or delight in having destiny on one's hands. It is a wicked heart that proudly bears the banner of being one's own boss or having the power to do as one pleases.

We are often confronted with making choices with extremely limited knowledge and understanding. The humble person fears his own frailty in this and gladly defers or surrenders the will whenever appropriate. The Bible teaches—indeed commands—this very thing: The child is to defer to parental will, the wife to the husband's, the employee to the employer's, the citizen to laws of the land, and the believer to church authority. Above all, as Jesus submitted His own will to that of the Father, even so we are to measure our choices according to the will of Christ.

It really comes down to making decisions, for the exercise of the will is nothing more or less than that. What lends further sobriety to the exercise of the will is the fact that God judges on motivation and choice, not in whether we have the means to attain the desired outcome. The rich fool in the Bible was judged for planning his security without God, though he never got to realize his dream. The brothers of Joseph would face the judgment of God (had they not repented), not on the good outcome of the ill treatment of their brother, but on their murderous intent. Man sins and faces judgment quite apart from the power or the opportunity to fulfill his sinful intent.

As we saw in the introduction, many today see the exercise of will as being in conflict with justification by faith alone. For that, we would point you to the theology Jesus taught. He describes eternal life as knowing the only true God, through the Son (John 17:3). He goes on to His definition of what it means to be a Christian in terms that many would consider heretical today. The Christian not only knows God. He knows the will of God and actually does it (Matthew 7:21). It will be a horrifying day for many, when Jesus dismisses the workers of iniquity as those that He never knew (Matthew 7:23). The mistake is not in the role of justification by faith, but in putting faith to death by robbing it of life-changing content. Jesus said: *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love* (John 15:10).



The Christian Home Series

—Marlin Kreider

Our Homes—The Foundation of Society's Values

Serious-minded, thinking people today are rightfully questioning the future survival of this present society. Why? There is something drastically wrong with our value system!

We quote the dictionary definition of the word *values* as it relates to sociology: "The established ideals of life; objectives, customs, ways of acting, and the like, that the members of a given society regard as desirable." Man lives by values; all his enterprises and activities make sense only in terms of some structure of purposes which are themselves values in action.

Today time-proven, Biblical, Christian values are being discarded and replaced with atheistic, humanistic, psychological, New Age, and Eastern mystic philosophies. This shift in values is clearly seen and felt from the wealthiest communities to the inner-city ghettos, from the financial institutions in New York to the homes and churches in both urban and rural areas. This shift in values has caused home life and structure to collapse at an alarming rate! As a result, both federal and local governments are trying to do what the home, fathers, and mothers used to and still must do. Here are three of many possible illustrations:

1. The weather service today sometimes gives direction as to what to do and how to dress in extreme hot or cold temperatures. They mean to be helpful, but I smile. When I was a boy, my mother taught me all of that and taught it well.

2. The government today is attempting to regulate what public restaurants and schools may serve on the menus, calorie limits, etc. Again, how much better job parents can do. When good values, personal disciplines, and common sense are taught

at home, the government will have a lot less work to do. What the people will buy, known as supply and demand, will take care of the issue.

3. Public sex education? This is best and most appropriately done in the home—fathers to sons and mothers to daughters. If proper training were done at home, educational institutions would not need to become involved in sex education. Of course the teachers should be exemplary role models of high moral standards and maintain an orderly, respectful standard of conduct that supports and complements what the home is teaching. What we have today is only compounding our moral breakdown. Can others replace what God has ordained the home and parents to do? If we will not return to God's all-wise plan for a solid home structure, there are no other good, enduring remedies to our social ills!

Let's look at a few basic values that are essential to any society's stability, tranquility, and longevity:

1. Respect for human life: God in the Bible tells us that human life is sacred (Exodus 20:13). God created life, He alone gives life, and He is the one who has the right to terminate life. God has ordained civil government to keep law and order in the world (Romans 13:1-4). We believe this includes the use of capital punishment when someone intentionally terminates a fellow human being's life (Genesis 9:6). Otherwise, abortion and euthanasia are the earmarks of a decadent culture that will in time reap God's judgment! When man tries to play God, this is evidence that man has lost his respect for God and the sacredness of

human life. When parents do not restrain their children's sinful expressions of selfishness, rebellion, jealousy and anger, and the like, the door is left wide open for all kinds of vice and wickedness, including the loss of respect for the life and property of others. This is why the Bible says, *Chasten thy son while there is hope and let not thy soul spare for his crying* (Proverbs 19:18). Today, the godly training and discipline of children is being neglected and prohibited. This is an unaffordable loss of a foundational value!

2. Respect and obedience to authority: You will see that all these values connect and are inter-related. They will rise or fall together. When obedience to authority, parents, teachers, or policemen is not taught and required, you will have rebellion and anarchy. There is a good reason for the Bible command, *Children, obey your parents* (Ephesians 6:1). Many of society's problems are a result of children never being trained to accept "No" for an answer. People have never learned to surrender their will to another, not even God. Things are only going to become worse and worse (2 Timothy 3:13).

3. Honesty and Integrity: This is the foundation of any sound economy—mutual trust and an honest day's work for a fair wage. Labor unions cannot fix this problem. Notice, this is about the moral fiber of a given people. This is about the heart of man, his view of and relationship with the eternal God, and how that affects his treatment of his fellowmen.

But when you disregard God and the Bible as much of our society has done, then there is no standard to guide, no enduring values to stand for, and no solid answers. Such a society is gullible for quick fixes and deceptive remedies.

4. Sound work ethic: This is complimentary to honesty and integrity. Every able-bodied person should make his contribution in the home, the workplace, and the church. Then there will be extra to share, enough moral and spiritual fiber to love, care, and provide for the truly handicapped or needy. The result is very little need for welfare programs.

Too many depend on and worship the god of human government. Values in personal, home, and church relationships are lost and our downward spiral picks up speed. And if we do not get what we want, we can always "sue" someone for something. The answers are spiritual and practical, not political. Except for God's mercy, this society would already be history.

5. Moral standards of right and wrong: These values are first taught at home, and the best resource book is the Bible. Any society that

disregards absolutes of right and wrong will not endure.

In previous issues, we have addressed Biblical roles for men and women. The Bible teaches respect and reserve that promotes purity between the genders. This calls us to abstinence before marriage and fidelity in a lifelong commitment in marriage. Sex outside of the marriage of a man and woman is sin. The account of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 and the teaching in Romans 1:24-32 are very clear on these issues.

As a pastor, it has been my joy to see young people come to the marriage pure and to see older couples who have faithfully been married for 40, 50, or more years! This is all possible when we are willing to do things God's way. These are values that contribute to the stability and longevity of a nation or society (Proverbs 14:34).

Living by the "Golden Rule" (Luke 6:31) is a moral issue. We all make mistakes and appreciate God's and our fellowman's mercy at those times. Our society's "suing" mentality is another indicator of how far we have fallen from Biblical values.

Many of the "role models" set before the masses both young and old, in the religious, business, sports, and entertainment world, say volumes about a wrong and perverted value system. This is not to mention the filth flowing profusely from the mass communication of TV, DVD, Internet, social networking, and the like.

6. Personal responsibility and accountability: Modern psychology teaches us that somebody else is to blame, someone has to be liable, and it's certainly not me because I am just a victim of the circumstances. Many are unwilling to take personal responsibility for their behavior. Accountability is an unpopular word and a lost value in much of society and also many churches. This is another root cause of many of our unresolved issues today. This writer thanks God for parents, teachers, and ministers who loved me enough to hold me accountable. This builds character and conviction that is so sadly lacking in the masses today.

In conclusion, these and similar values, standards, disciplines, and restrictions (call them what you will) are what bring security and strength to those who believe and, by God's grace, live them! But today many have swallowed the lie of no absolutes, everything is relative. As a result, we have a society at sea without a compass or an anchor.

We pray that all who still reverence God and His truth will stand, and lead the way back to Biblical, eternal, and commonsense values. Are we living in obedience to God's will? Our future depends on it!



THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE

—Elvin Stauffer

A Biblical Worldview

There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning (2 Peter 3:3, 4).

A major shift in moral values and lifestyles is taking place in our western culture. The term “worldview” has come into use as a descriptive term for this paradigm shift. A paradigm is an overall concept accepted by most people . . . because of its effectiveness in explaining a complex process, idea, or set of data. We could say our worldview is our beliefs about where we came from, what we are doing here, and where we are going—more succinctly, our origin, purpose, and destiny.

The two basic worldviews describing opposing viewpoints are creation versus evolution. God either created the cosmos, or He didn’t and it all self-organized from nothing. A person’s worldview has tremendous consequences in his actions and outcome. He will either live a life according to God’s Word or live according to the world, his bodily desires, and Satan’s dictates (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

The Apostle Paul describes life from a Biblical worldview in Colossians 3:1-10. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above . . . for ye are dead [to sins of the world] and your life is hid with Christ in God . . . put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.* In verse five Paul lists the actions resulting from a secular godless worldview. *For which . . . the wrath of God*

cometh on the children of disobedience (verse 6). But for the godly: When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory (verse 4).

Our Historic Worldviews

For many of us in North America our ancestors were the barbarian tribes of early Europe and Africa. They followed nature religions, worshiping spirit gods in the earth and sky. When the Gospel of Jesus Christ swept across Europe, for example, its civil and moral ethics appealed to many. Through fire and bloodshed (of dying Christians), many accepted the Christian worldview.

However, in the mid-1800s Charles Lytle, then Darwin, again popularized the pagan view of spontaneous generation over inconceivably long ages of history. Evolution has now been forced on quite a few generations of people. Through media propaganda and intimidation, the naturalistic worldview has again saturated society. Occultism has also experienced a revival with the demise of Christianity.

Opposing Worldviews — God’s Word Versus the “Secular” Worldview

1. Absolute truth. God is right versus tolerance—everyone’s right.

The human history of conflict, suffering, and death proves that it

is not in man to direct his steps (Jer. 10:23). The tolerant spirit that avoids conflict by saying everyone is right is irresponsible. When God’s truth is followed in society, there is peace and man’s social needs are met. It works! *For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89).*

2. Creation by God versus evolution from nothing.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1) is still the best explanation of origins and has never been disproved. However, evolutionists teach that all the biodiversity of our ecosystem self-organized from inorganic minerals! This is now bearing its fruit in the prevalence of death in abortions, infanticide, and shootings in the school and workplace.

3. Since man fell, human nature is sinful (Genesis 3) versus man is okay—it is his environment.

The Christian perspective is that man needs correction and punishment to prevent evil conduct. Secularism rejects sin and guilt as the product of religious notions. Offenses are often excused and penalties rejected as making things worse.

4. There is a curse on nature (entropy) versus the earth is evolving upward.

The second law of thermodynamics states the fact that everything moves in a descending

order of complexity—entropy. *The earth and the heavens are the works of thy hands: . . . they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up* (Hebrews 1:10-12).

Evolutionists believe in an increase in order from a big bang beginning.

5. Two kingdoms in conflict versus the “brotherhood of man.”

Many times the response to the evils of our day is, “We need to keep faith in man. Don’t worry, good will prevail.” However, there is a “conflict of the ages” in which two kingdoms are vying for the souls of men. People choose between God and Satan with Heaven or Hell as the reward. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many . . . shall not be able* (Luke 13:24).

Satan established his false political and religious system at Babel (Genesis 10:10). *Babylon hath . . . made all the earth drunken . . . therefore the nations are mad* (Jeremiah 51:7). It is this Babylon that God deals finally and thoroughly with in the end (Revelation 18) before Jesus comes in triumph (Revelation 19). *Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down and shall be found no more at all* (18:21).

6. Man needs a redeemer versus man can save himself.

Men have proven it is vain optimism that he can maintain a peaceful, virtuous society of brotherly love. He needs a new heart and nature. God graciously provided this in Jesus Christ. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead* (1 Peter 1:3).

7. The church is God’s kingdom among men versus human government and social services.

Human governments presume to provide for their people and

finally demand men’s allegiance and worship (Daniel 3:4-6). For the Christian, a Biblical church is where he places his allegiance, and his needs are supplied with love (1 Corinthians 16:1-3).

8. The family is God’s basic social unit versus men and women have individual rights.

God made man *Male and female, and said, for this cause shall a man . . . cleave to his wife and they twain shall be one flesh . . . What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder* (Matthew 19:4, 6).

Christian husbands, wives, and children can trust each other and have security. Sinful men and women are ready to leave partners and children or extinguish the life of the unborn. “Alternate life-styles” are practiced.

9. An order of authority in human relations versus individual rights. The Biblical order of command is God, Christ, man, woman, children (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 6:1). All legitimate authority originates with God. The godless worldview is that wives don’t need to respect husbands’ wishes and children are encouraged to inform against their parents. The Book of Judges records a time of confusion in Israel when atrocities were committed (19:22-29). The book ends with, *In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes* (Judges 21:25). The weak are suffering the same abuses in godless cultures today.

10. God is sovereign over human affairs versus history is just a survival of the fittest. King Nebuchadnezzar, the sovereign king of Babylon, learned that God was his superior. *The most high ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth is to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men* (Daniel 4:17). The secular worldview sees the course of human history as an accident with the strongest or most clever

prevailing.

11. Man has a soul that will live eternally versus man is just flesh and blood and dies like a dog. A Biblical worldview confirms to the child of God that after this life there awaits *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you* (1 Peter 1:4). The philosophy of unbelievers is “eat and drink for tomorrow we die.” Euthanasia (or suicide) is accepted as a legitimate way out if life becomes a burden.

The Biblical Worldview Explains Our Times

The godless worldview is a lie that Satan deceives people with *who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness* (2 Thessalonians 2:12). The Bible indicates there will be a miracle-working world leader in the end who will deceive many with a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12). In these times there will be those who *understand . . . and shall instruct many* (Daniel 11:32-36). Daniel wanted to know the end of world events but was told they are sealed till the end (Daniel 12:8-10). In Revelation 6, the Apostle John saw the seals of the book opened.

Revelation gives the culmination of world kingdoms in a grand consummation program that brings an end to the curse, wickedness, and death (1 Corinthians 15:21-25). We understand the conflict of the nations from this perspective. *I will overturn, overturn, overturn it and it shall be no more until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him* (Ezekiel 21:25-27). Righteousness then prevails in an everlasting kingdom.

The right worldview encourages the saints in perilous times, because they are wise to what is happening and know what will happen in the end (Daniel 12:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:4, 24).

Feature Article for Youth . . .

What Are You Facing?

Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully (Psalm 24:3, 4).

Where can I hide? That's the heart cry of dozens of young people, especially young men, who want to obey God and what the Bible teaches about moral purity.

But there's almost no place to hide anymore. The streets of every city and town are swarming with those who dress very provocatively and scantily.

For the Christian who wants to keep his mind clean and follow God's way, sex is not something dirty or wrong. It is meaningful and fulfilling when used as God planned—within the confines of marriage.

But you and I know very well there are hundreds of voices and "sights" in our society beckoning us to misuse our God-given urges. They can be found almost anywhere you go or look. They are readily available on television, in the movies, on the Internet, and on cell phones with Internet connections.

Perhaps you are faced with difficult situations too—perhaps it's at work, at school, or among your peers. What can you do to have "clean hands" and a "pure heart" in such a perverted world?

Avoid Looking? Satan knows he can quickly get us down by what we feast our eyes upon. Very often, in my own experience, I've had to look the other way or at least keep my eyes down on the pavement as I walked the street. I'd steal an occasional glance to keep my bearings straight. Sometimes we may need to turn and go the other direction. But that's pretty miserable to have to walk around looking at the ground all the time. Sometimes we just have no choice but to see what we shouldn't have to see. But we can . . .

Avoid the Second Look. It takes prayer and reliance on God's power, but we can avoid dwelling on what we see.

A technique that can be really helpful is to quote Scripture to yourself when temptation comes. Jesus Himself used this method. To be able to do this, you'll need to spend some time in God's Word, the Bible. Time spent meditating on and memorizing *whatsoever things are lovely* will fortify you like nothing else can. *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things* (Philippians 4:8).

As soon as you can, when faced with temptation, turn away. The quicker you do, the easier it will be to think right thoughts. Avoid second and lingering looks.

Beware a Cluttered Mind! One of Satan's techniques is to get you to use your memory and imagination to recall things you've seen and heard. At those times, it takes Christian fortitude to think on noble thoughts.

You needn't do this alone, however. Getting busy in God's work or meditating on Him while you're alone with your own thoughts will help carry you through.

Deal With the Source of Temptation. It is so easy, with personal computers and cell phones, to face the temptation to look at things that will pollute your mind and lead you deep into immorality. You may need to disconnect your device from the Internet or, at the very least, obtain a strict filter that will eliminate the worst of your temptations and will send reports of your activities to a friend. But you will still need to be careful.

Be Accountable to Someone. Find a concerned Christian friend, preferably someone older than you are, to be accountable to who will ask you what you are looking at and hold you accountable for what you are doing, especially when it comes to reading material and electronic devices. It is far better to give up something you think you can't do without than to be led into impurity that will ruin your mind and will send you to Hell.

Reading for Victory. Many a young man who might otherwise have stood for purity fell because of the smut he read.

Satan knows we have inquisitive minds, especially in areas that are somewhat "unknown" to us. There are plenty of good books on Christian morality and sex values without consulting the world of "pornographia." Counsel a mature Christian for advice on what to read. If you can't find someone close to you, contact the church or individual that has sent this magazine to you for help.

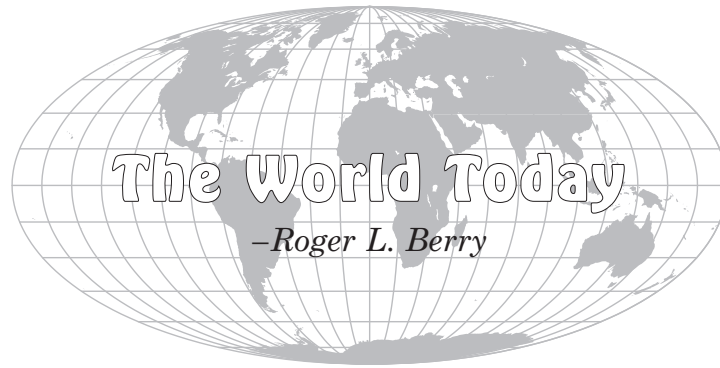
What you read on a subject must be constructive reading that will mold your attitudes according to God's will. The attitudes we get through "reading up" can either make or break a future marriage relationship.

Identify With God's People. Meeting week after week with a church family and Christians who uphold high standards of morality and modesty for men and women is one of the greatest encouragements to the pure life I know of.

Sure, God can give a man strength to stand alone if need be, but how much greater the strength if there are others to stand with him.

Finally . . . In the end, we'll not be sorry for taking a stand for purity of thought and action. Should God lead you to a Christian wife someday, you will be able to look her "straight in the eye" and have no past regrets. But most of all, you will be able to face God with no regrets! Sometimes temptations are very strong—almost overpowering—but God can bring you through victoriously if you're really bent on serving Him.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13).



Who Controls Your Mind?

A subtle and dangerous war is on! It's going on all over the world right now! This war is history's most destructive conflict, far surpassing the many wars of history. The appalling thing about this war is that few are prepared to do anything about it. It would shock us all to know how many people don't even know the conflict is raging.

Every war has its instigator or cause, and this one's no exception. This war is being waged by none other than Satan himself. The battleground is your and my mind. The weapons? They're so numerous that it would be difficult to enumerate them all.

As I pondered this war for man's mind, I thought about one of Satan's main weapons in our age. To be specific, I'm thinking about the *mass media*. These media include the Internet, television, radio, newspapers, and news magazines.

People can be manipulated by things they read and see. We know how the writings of Hitler, Stalin, and other violent visionaries influenced millions of people, enslaved many, and led to wars that destroyed thousands. People are even more manipulated by the things they see, hear, and read.

I shudder when I consider how people's minds are molded by the media. The Bible calls such control *strong holds* (2 Corinthians 10:4). It is going to take God's power to break strong holds in our lives brought on by the things we have allowed to control our minds. Are we going to be controlled by these things or will we allow God to control us and bring us lasting satisfaction and eternal life in Heaven?

The mass media has done some good things in keeping people informed and giving warnings concerning storms and other physical dangers. But the same media propagates violence, sexual vice,

drug culture, rock music, and a host of other things that tear down society.

Television, radio, and the Internet, in the hands of the wrong people, can subtly influence thousands to do things they never would have dreamed of doing.

What will those who control the media do next? Will they advocate drug use, abortion, mercy killing, persecution of those who don't "conform" to the majority? Many of these things are already happening. What will be next?

In light of how Satan has taken possession of the mass media, where do I stand? What can I do? God made me with a free will and the ability to make choices. Will I let Satan, through what I see or hear, program my mind to blindly follow the voices and pictures that beckon me?

Satan's drive to control our minds through the Internet is nightmarish. If only we could wake up and find it was all an unpleasant dream—but unfortunately, it isn't a dream, it's real, it's facing us. The battle is on for the control of our minds.

Praise God there's still hope in such a dismal, demon-controlled world. Deliverance from Satan's power can be yours and mine if we turn our minds over to God.

Through His Word, God can insulate our minds from satanic controls, if we let Him. I've heard of Christians who, through the power of God, resisted even intensive Communist and Nazi brainwashing that would have broken the spirit of any ordinary person.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

What can we do to resist Satan's subtle brainwashing through the media and other areas?

We must first let God control our minds. Then

we need to avoid being brainwashed. This will mean different things for different people. Certainly this will mean fleeing the temptations, not looking at the things that will take our minds in the wrong direction. In Bible times some even had book burnings to get rid of books that controlled their minds (Acts 19:19). Many people in our day have thrown away books, magazines, CDs, and other things that battled for the control of their minds. We all need to carefully watch and guard ourselves from Satan's subtle attacks. If he can't get us one way, he will try another.

We need to fill our minds with that which is good, beginning with God's Word, the Holy Bible. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11).

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The Way to God

REPENT . . .

To **repent** means to turn away from your disobedience to God's Word, the Bible. Disobedience to God's way is called "sin."

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19).

CONFESS . . .

To **confess** means to verbally acknowledge your sin and your need of Jesus as your Lord (controller) and Saviour (deliverer). Consider the following Bible teachings on confession.

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).

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved (Romans 10:9).

BELIEVE . . .

To **believe** means to completely accept what God has said, so you can act on it.

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6).

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved (Acts 16:31).

FOLLOW . . .

To **follow** Jesus Christ daily in life means that you will want to obey what He teaches you in His Word, the Bible. Through obedience, we show the world that we belong to Christ.

[Jesus Christ] became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him (Hebrews 5:9).

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

