

# *Reaching Out*

ISSUE 113

## **WELCOME TO REACHING OUT**

a Christian magazine to serve the community. Our goal is to offer Biblical solutions to the problems facing society today.

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# Left Out

by Clay Zimmerman

The words "left out" can bring a very negative feeling. "Left behind," "rejected," "not included," all come with the same thought. If something is going on and we're not allowed to be there, we're left out.

On the other hand, we like being included when family or friends have a get-together. If we try out for a team, we are happy if we "make it". Any social group that accepts us makes us feel positive. They think we're important, and they want us there!

A feeling of "left out" can bring a host of questions. If a close friend has a picnic and invites other friends, but not us, we wonder what's wrong. Are we not as good of friends as we thought? Did we say or do something wrong? Are we not interesting enough for their good times? Don't we belong? This can happen at a birthday party, holiday gatherings, or simply when friends get together for coffee. If we're not along, we can feel "left out." Some of us are more loners than others but there is something in mankind that wants to belong, to be together.

In the book of Genesis in the Bible, we read that when the original couple was created, they were given a beautiful garden home. They had togetherness. Not just together with each other but together with their Creator as well. God Himself would come at the end of the day and walk and talk with them. They had the beauty of a perfect relationship. Then the enemy came and threw doubts into their thoughts—"There is more, but God is not including you! You could reach a new level but are being held back! He knows something, but it's being kept from you! You are being left out!"

They tried for the "more" but lost what they had. Now they were sinners because they doubted

God and disobeyed. Disobedience brought the death sentence. God expelled them from their garden home. Gone were the walks in the evening with their Creator. Grief, shame, and disappointment was the result of it all. When their oldest son killed their second son, their family was ripped apart. They were now feeling "left out." Left out of all the good things that had once been theirs. Left out of that special relationship they had enjoyed with God Himself.

But it wasn't all over, for this is the Creator's response: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). This is God's offer to bring us back into His family! Jesus died on the cross so we can be forgiven. He rose from the dead to give us life. We can be children of the Father and have Jesus as our brother. When we take this offer, we will no longer be left out.

The Bible says that at the end of time, a great separation will take place. Some people will be rejected—"left out." They'll be those who wasted their lives, chasing their own ideas. They were looking for the "more" of the enemy's lies. They stayed in a failed relationship with their Creator.

The other side are people who responded to God's love and offer to bring them back. They received forgiveness and restoration. They built a relationship with Him and can now truly call Him Father. The promise is a glorious future with Him for all eternity. Perfection restored!

Don't be left out!

*Would you like to receive each issue of **Reaching Out**, or do you know of a friend who might? Send your requests to the church represented on your back page.*

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# WISDOM FOR YOUTH

## Blowin' in the Wind?

by Gardell Strite

Bob Dylan was a famous American musician, composer, and singer. He was very influential in the early 1960's and is considered by many to be a fore runner of the modern rock musicians. In the lyrics of one of his most famous songs, "Blowin' in the Wind", he asks questions about: the depths of sorrow and the length of toil, the wisdom of war and the purpose of freedom, the making of men and the destruction of mountains.

The questions in the song are symbolic of life's perplexities and the response given to the questions is that "the answer is blowin' in the wind". In other words, life's problems have no answer. People lead a pointless life never understanding why they exist, and life is a meaningless series of events. How depressing!

These ideas are the background for despair which is one reason for the high rate of teenage suicide. If life has no meaning, then why should anyone abide by any moral code. People with few moral restraints indulge in pleasures such as drug abuse and sexual sin. This leads to feelings of emptiness and worthlessness. Why continue with life?

Violence, as manifested in school shootings, is also a result of no absolutes. If my life has no meaning, then neither does anyone else's. Human life becomes cheap. People think that they must get revenge on those who wrong them because they do not believe in a just God who will someday bring justice to all situations.

Thankfully, Creator God has given us a message through His Answer Book, The Bible. And it is a message of hope!

(1) We can know who created the universe because God tells us in the very first verse in the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"! Revelation 4:11 tells us why He created: "[God] has created all things, and for [His] pleasure they are and were created." Life is not a series of random events without purpose, but God has a plan for the universe and will bring the world to a conclusion someday. Those who obeyed him will be rewarded and those who disobeyed him will be punished.

(2) God created YOU for a purpose! God says, "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee: and

before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee" (Jeremiah 1:5). "Sanctified" in this verse means "dedicated", as in "dedicated for the purpose of choosing to serve God". God knew you before you were born. He knew which parents would bring you into the world and the time of your birth. He knew the set of surrounding circumstances of your life. In fact, God knows more about you than you know about yourself. Do you know how many hairs are on your head? God does. (Matthew 10:30) God has a plan He wants you to follow for your life. God has a perfect plan for YOU.

(3) The Bible has the answer to the perplexities of life. Many of the Bible answers are quite easy to understand, but much more difficult to obey. For example, the Bible says, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you" (Matthew 5:44). We know from experience that this is a difficult command to obey. But think about it. If everyone did this, there would be no need for tanks, missiles, or machine guns. We would have no terrorist attacks or mass shootings. Lawsuits and broken homes would be greatly reduced or eliminated. God's love is the true answer to hatred and murder. So it is for all of life's difficulties.

What is the purpose for our existence? Does God care about me? How can we know what is true? God gives us solid answers through His Written Word, the Bible.

In contrast to the meaningless lyrics of "Blowin in the Wind", read a song with a positive message that gives definite hope:

Jesus loves me, this I know  
For the Bible tells me so!  
Little ones\* to Him belong,  
They are weak, but He is strong!  
Yes, Jesus loves me,  
Yes, Jesus loves me,  
Yes, Jesus loves me,  
The Bible tells me so!

-Anna Bartlett Warner

\*Young people and adults too





# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## Have You Bought Gold Lately?

by David L. Martin

"Gold loves bad news," we are told. When the news is frightening, people look for something solid, something that keeps its value. Gold looks like a good investment. Hasn't gold been around for thousands of years? With more and more bad news, more and more people buy gold. The law of supply and demand comes into effect, and the price of gold goes up. Indeed, gold loves bad news.

Unfortunately, there is more bad news! Gold is not altogether free from the problems that plague other investments. Scams, frauds, and counterfeits worry investors. And of course, there are outright thieves. (They've been around for thousands of years too.)

Furthermore, gold just sits. Other investments often produce more returns than gold does. For instance, someone who builds a house ends up with a house in which he can live. In contrast, an investor in gold comes back years later to find the gold dead cold. It might have gone up in dollar value, but the

investor can't walk into it, sit in it, or sleep in it. It won't even keep the rain off his head. It hasn't blessed a single soul in all those years. What is more, a house might have gone up in value more than the gold did.

What does the Bible say about gold? Bible writers are not altogether cynical about gold. After all, God made it. The Bible's first mention of gold says, "*The gold of that land is good*" (Genesis 2:12). God blessed Abraham, among other things, "*with silver and gold*" (Genesis 24:35). Solomon lavished gold on his temple (1 Kings 6:21).

But Solomon, who probably had more gold than anyone else in history, admitted at last that gold does not satisfy. He complained, "*I gathered me also silver and gold*" (Ecclesiastes 2:8), but "*all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun*" (2:11). What is more, "*riches profit not in the day of wrath*" (Proverbs 11:4). What is "the day of wrath"? Possibly a national emergency such as a war. Possibly a personal emergency. Either way, you cannot always count on gold.



## What then can you count on?

Solomon went on to say, *"but righteousness delivereth from death"* (Proverbs 11:4). Jesus said the same thing: *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal"* (Matthew 6:19-20).

The Bible also speaks of *"an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you"* (1 Peter 1:4). This speaks of something having a higher quality than the yellow substance here on planet earth.

How do you lay up high-quality, zero-risk treasure in a place you have never seen?

- First, lay aside any thought of a dollar-for-dollar transaction. The apostle Peter once told a man, *"Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money"* (Acts 8:20).
- Next, let the Lord invest in you, and let Him do it His own way. *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ"* (1 Peter 1:18-19). Tell the Lord you accept His way and will follow it all your life.
- Next, invest in the things that rich people at the close of life wish they had invested in. Jesus told one such young man, *"Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me"* (Matthew 19:21). He didn't tell the young man to throw his riches in the river, but rather to invest them in something worthwhile.
- Finally, make friends with other people who have done these things. People who

do these things find themselves rich in ways a little hard to explain, but they understand each other. Find a church that teaches God's way and is investing in the kingdom of God.

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## "LAY UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURE IN HEAVEN"

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### Want some expert advice?

Jesus said, *"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich"* (Revelation 3:18). Jesus

was speaking not only of some faraway, future gold, but of something we can enjoy right now. His gold, by the way, also loves bad news. The worse the news, the more God's people value the gold that no one can take away from them.

### More Expert Advice

*"Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

*Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

*Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

*Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteousness man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

**Isaiah 55: 1-3, 6-9**



# THE BIBLE & SCIENCE

## Scientific Errors in the Bible?

by Denton Ford

*"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be [complete], throughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

Does the Bible have scientific errors? Some people would claim that the Bible contains many scientific facts that are mixed up. Is there some basic, observable science that the Bible gets wrong? Let's look into a few of these claims.

### What the Bible is not

First, the Bible is not a science textbook. Its primary purpose is not to teach us about science. The far bigger purpose in the Bible is to communicate the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ and how we can be reconciled to God. Does this mean that the Bible's account cannot be trusted when it touches on science? Certainly not! As we will see, though not a science textbook, the Bible is completely accurate and trustworthy in every area that it touches on science.

### Miracles

To start, we need to address miracles. Miracles are often pointed out as scientific errors in the Bible because they are things that cannot happen naturally. Think of the supernatural six-day creation, the Red Sea crossing, Jonah in the fish, Elijah and the widow's oil, Hezekiah and the sundial going backwards, Jesus' virgin birth, countless miracles that Jesus performed, His resurrection, and many more miracles. These are all things that obviously didn't happen by natural processes like we're used to. That's why they're called miracles. They are by definition not natural! The Bible doesn't claim that these miraculous events happened naturally. That they are not natural phenomena is the whole point! People who insist that miracles disprove the Bible's accuracy are often simply exposing their presupposition

that the natural world is all that exists.

### Bats as Birds

Leviticus 11:13 says, "And these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospray," and later in verse 19, "And the stork, the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat." Many other English translations in verse 13 use the word 'birds', instead of 'fowls.' If this is a list of birds, why are bats included? They are mammals, not birds. Is this a scientific error?



Upon closer inspection, no. The word translated as "fowls" or "birds" in verse 13 is the Hebrew word *oph* (אֵיף, Strong's 5775). It can mean birds or fowls but is sometimes used in a wider meaning as 'winged creatures', which certainly includes such animals as bats. Also, why should we expect the ancient Israelites to have used our modern classification systems in the first place?

### Four legged Insects

Another supposed error is found in Leviticus 11:20: "All fowls that creep, going upon all four, shall be an abomination unto you." In the next verses it seems



clear that "fowls" (same word as in verse 13) is here referring to insects. Now we know insects have six legs, not four, but here it seems that they are described as having four. Thus, a scientific error, right?

Not at all. We commonly use the phrase similarly today without intending to specify the number of legs. "On all fours" is mainly referring to posture and movement, not amount of feet<sup>1</sup>. And later this passage describes quite accurately how locusts have legs for crawling and separate legs for leaping.

### Word change: Replenish

Sometimes what looks like an error or a contradiction is simply the result of language changing over time. An example of this is Genesis 1:28: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." These were God's instructions to man at the end of the creation week. Some have pointed out the word "replenish" and concluded that there must have been other humans or human-like creatures before God created Adam, perhaps for millions of years. This would contradict the rest of the Bible, which makes it clear that Adam was the first man. So, is this a contradiction?

The word translated as "replenish" is the Hebrew word *male* (מָלַא, Strong's 4390), which

means "to fill." Today the word "replenish" means "to refill," but at the time the King James Version was translated "replenish" simply meant "to fill."<sup>2</sup> This was not a refilling, and it fits the rest of scripture perfectly. It's not a contradiction.

### Conclusion

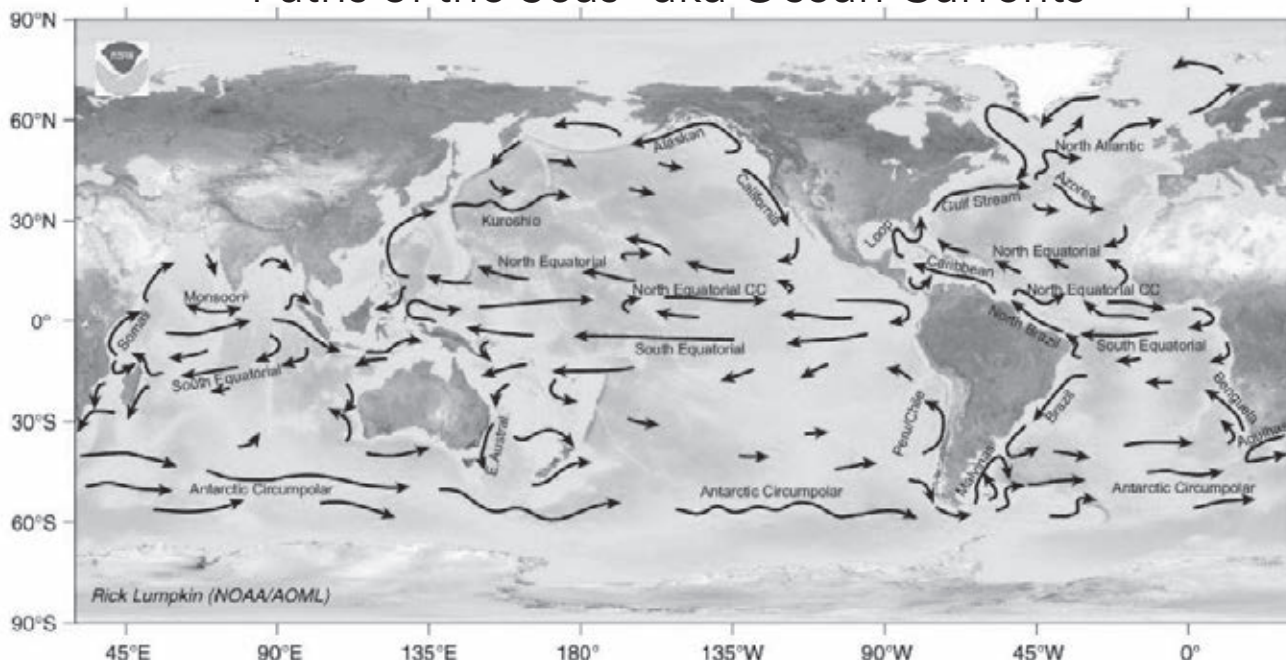
In this article, we've focused on just a few of the supposed scientific errors that skeptics often use against the Bible and found that there are good explanations showing the Bible's accuracy instead. Not only does scripture stand up against scrutiny, but it also has accurately described scientific truths long before they were discovered in modern times. Some examples include: Psalm 8:8 mentioning the "paths of the seas" which prompted the discovery of ocean currents; the description of the seafloor in Jonah 2:6 as having mountains when many throughout history thought the seafloor was flat; proper hygiene practices in the book of Leviticus long before anyone had a microscope to study germs; and many others.

Even though it's not a textbook, the Bible is accurate in every area that it touches on science. And we can most certainly trust its truths in the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ as the way to eternal life.

<sup>1</sup>Ken Ham, "The New Answers Book 2", (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008) p.294

<sup>2</sup>Ken Ham, "The New Answers Book 1", (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2006) p.62

## "Paths of the Seas" aka Ocean Currents







# THE CHRISTIAN HOME

## Selfish or Selfless

by Rodney Witmer

It would not have to be so bad. It wasn't always. Our hearts ache, despair mounts, and fears increase as with anguish we watch violence rock communities and snuff out innocent life. Vice of all sorts is systematically dismantling all that we once believed was indispensable to any enduring, functional, and respectable society.

Answers—oh, how we need them! How we seek them! Individuals and communities demand them. Politicians promise them. Yet, we're finding that bruised society is unable to correctly diagnose the problem and thus to prescribe the cure. Such is typical of humans. The Bible records a lament of the prophet Jeremiah with these words, *"The prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment"* (Lamentations 2:14).

This persistent dynamic, however, does not mean that mankind is hopeless. It does mean that we must derive from God the answers we desperately need. Ironically, when we do, we find that the answers are there and have been all along. This is our sure hope.

### Seek the virtue

The poet, John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892), penned his thoughts succinctly this way:

We search the world for truth, we cull  
The good, the true, the beautiful,

From graven stone and written scroll,  
And all old flower-fields of the soul;  
And, weary seekers of the best,  
We come back laden from our quest,  
To find that all the sages said  
Is in the Book our mothers read.

Too many generations have now gone by without sufficient attention to "the Book our mothers read." But the Book, the Bible, still exists. Its message still lives. And the blessings of those who adhere to the Book grow more glorious as the darkness and chaos precipitated by the wholesale abandonment of the Book deepens.

Mothers and fathers used to read the Book because they felt inadequate and valued its wisdom. They read the Book because they desired to instill its precepts into their children. Parishioners filled church pews because of the same desire. Even the old country schools aided the cause. Despite the imperfections that all parents possess, many of them got the job done well. They instilled in their offspring an awareness and worship of God. They instilled basic obedience, respect for authority, a noble work ethic, sound sexual morals, and the dignity of femininity and masculinity.

One of the most basic virtues they sought to instill was unselfishness. They correctly perceived that when a child attempts to make the universe revolve around himself, trouble and chaos result. The child, unwittingly, robs only himself.





Selfishness has destroyed so much good potential in our time. Sadly, the problem is compounded because it is well-entrenched in older folks whose job it is to train it out of the younger ones. What a blessing it would be if the obvious deterioration around us would cause us to be honest about the havoc that selfishness is causing.

### Selfishness, a vice

Selfishness is incongruous. It's inconsistent within itself—contradicts itself. Seeking to please self produces displeasure. Seeking to pamper self brings self-destruction. Seeking for ourselves a utopia, our mind, emotions, and total environment becomes a wrenching dystopia. Every rational adult knows that the screeching child at Walmart will not be satisfied with the toy he demands, and that the performance will eventually reoccur.

It was a Satanic lie that Adam and Eve fell for in Eden. They were led to believe that good was being withheld from them. Self-interest won. The resulting mess continues to worsen.

Let's be brave enough to face it. It's selfishness that engages in sex before marriage. It's selfishness that wrecks marriages and swamps divorce courts. It's selfishness that drives a man to use his size and strength to abuse his wife and children instead of to provide for and protect them. It's selfishness that rationalizes the horrific aborting of one's own offspring.

Further, so many of our precious youth today are aimless, untaught, unfulfilled, and frustrated. They have been physically, emotionally, and spiritually abandoned by those who have gendered them. The culprit? Selfishness! What follows is an escalation of conflict, reaction, illegitimate alternatives, and sometimes violence. The incongruity of selfishness is everywhere. Selfishness is not delivering its promised goods.

### Selflessness rewards

God's way does deliver the goods! It's not for lack of proof that so many people seek alternatives. It's that the devil has never ceased to promote the lie that, in following God's way, we are being robbed of pleasure.

In Ephesians 5:28, the Apostle Paul declares a specific truth whose principle applies to a broad range of matters: *"He that loveth his wife loveth himself."* What an attractive truth! The point is that in selflessness our own needs are met. No, we can't necessarily control how someone else treats us, nor is it wise to try. But this we know, that selfless living provokes a far better response than selfishness does. Rather than building tension, competition, and escalation, selflessness relaxes, refreshes, and rewards.

Today, our civil leaders and politicians are bombarded with pressure to do something about the increasing violence in our communities. But it's hard to be honest about what would really make a difference, since few want to accept the responsibility or lifestyle change such honesty would bring.

Society would be beautifully transformed if:

- We each made our peace with God.
- We accepted marriage as God created it.
- Husbands and wives lived for, loved, and were faithful to each other every day.
- Fathers were involved in the physical, emotional, moral, and spiritual nurture of their children.
- Mothers cared for their own children and made house and home a welcome refuge for all.
- Parents reclaimed the responsibility for their children's education.
- We cleaned up our entertainment diet.
- We loved, read, and lived the Bible.
- Every selfish instinct in the young and old alike was curbed and selfless living insisted upon.

The answers exist. Don't let selfishness destroy lives and homes. Get desperate and let that desperation drive you to "the Book our mothers read."

### Do you have a Bible?

If not, please contact the church represented on the back page of this paper, and they will present one to you. The Bible is the road map to a selfless, peaceful life.





# MONEY AND ME

## What's Your Vision?

by Gary Miller

Each of us has a vision, and your vision has a powerful influence on your life and what it produces. Stop for a moment and do an analysis. What is the overriding vision of your life? Have you ever sat down and written it out? Is it possible that your financial problems are a result of an improper vision?

This topic of vision may seem pointless to you. Perhaps it seems like a waste of time to analyze your vision when what you really need is just more money in the checkbook. But I have found that our financial struggles are often a direct result of our overriding vision. All of us have many goals in life. Maybe it is difficult for you to identify an overriding goal, but I would propose you have one. As you examine your vision, be completely honest.

It is tempting just to say, "My ultimate goal in life is to bring glory to God." This sounds like a good vision, and such a statement would sound nice while sitting around with a group of church members studying the Word. But are the little choices you make each day proclaiming the same vision? Your vision will not be known as much by your stated goals as by the fruit of your life.

### Let's look at a few areas that can help us determine what our overriding vision really is.

- Jesus said, "For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). If you really want to know the overriding vision of your heart, examine your words. What do you enjoy talking about? What topic are you most comfortable discussing? If you were going to give a talk, what subject are you best prepared for? We are generally most comfortable discussing topics we have given thought to. I have overheard pilots spend a whole evening talking about different airplanes, runways, and flight experiences. They can do this because they have a great interest in the topic and have spent lots of time thinking about it. Identify what you enjoy discussing, and it will give you a clue as to what your vision and goals are in life.

- For what are you willing to sacrifice time? Time is a precious commodity. Examining our use of it can help reveal our vision. I remember a time in my life when

physical exercise consumed my thoughts. I looked for time to jog or lift weights. I was willing to give up just about any activity in order to work out. But behind this flurry of activity was a purpose. I had a burning desire, an overriding vision, to be physically fit. I wanted to be admired for my physical ability, and I was willing to sacrifice a great number of hours to pursue this goal. What do you sacrifice time for, and what does this tell you about your overriding vision?

- Where is your discretionary income going? Your checkbook speaks volumes about your vision in life. Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). If you want to know where your heart is, take a close look at where your money has been going. I find this truth very challenging. I like to think my life is devoted to God, but sometimes my checkbook reveals a different story. If you are serious about examining the overriding vision that is driving your life, take a close look at where your discretionary income is going.

### The Battle for Vision

I am convinced every man has an overriding vision. He may not have given much thought to what that vision is, but it nevertheless drives the choices he makes. But I am also persuaded that every man's vision is under attack. We can see this in the business world around us. A battle is raging, and your vision is the focal point of the fight. Capturing your vision is the objective of marketing schemes and advertising agencies.

But the most important battle for your vision is going on in another realm. All through the Bible, the battle is fought for man's overriding vision as both God and Satan attempt to show man the advantages of serving them. Satan wades into the battle early in Genesis. He enters into dialogue with Eve in a deceptive attempt to show how great life could be if she would only listen to him.

All through the Bible this battle for vision continues until finally in Revelation the Lord gives suffering saints a picture of the magnificent glory to come. God and Satan both understand: if you capture a man's vision, you have captured the man.

Who controls your vision?

From *Kingdom-Focused Finances for the Family*.

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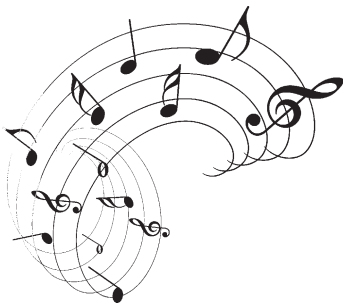


# THE WORLD TODAY

## Heart Music

by Daniel Allgyer

*"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Colossians 3:16*



### Music Expressed

Music is a vital part of the world today. We make music to express something we feel deeply about. In writing the lyrics, composing the music, or singing the song, we're communicating the depths of our heart.

God has designed mankind to worship through music. Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn at His last Passover supper. Nearly every religion today includes some type of music as a part of the worship.

People write, compose, and sing songs about what's happening to them. Their personal journey—joy or sorrow, hope or despair—is reflected in the music that springs from their heart. And since no one's journey is unique, others with similar experiences embrace the song as well.

Music has a powerful influence. The ideas, passions, and goals of a composer are effectively taught through his song. With his music, he can skillfully affect his audience to embrace his lyrics. Cultures have been upset and remade by the language and rhythm of their popular music.

Songs are an excellent library for truth. Songs have been used to memorialize the heroes and great events of a culture. Songs have a way of making things stick; and well-written songs usually stick around awhile.

Through music, man expresses his heart in worship, in testimony, in teaching, and in memorial.

### A Music Test

Can the expressions of our heart be right or wrong? Yes. Thus, as an expression of the heart, the music composed or sung by us can be right or wrong. Music is a moral issue. Jesus said, *"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil trea-*

*sure bringeth forth evil things"* (Matthew 12:35).

If music is contrary to God and His character, it's wrong music. If music supports God and His character, it's right music.

Sometimes it's hard to discern in which camp to put some music, but we must try to discern. We must judge music by God's standard, not by our personal tastes or by what's popular.

Rhythm, the pulse of music, is vital to the life of a song. An orderly rhythm supports the song, and a little syncopation can add some spice. But if the song is carried by a heavily syncopated rhythm that overpowers the melody, the song is no longer feeding our spirit. Instead, it begins to align itself with lust and rebellion.

If a concert turns its audience into screaming sensual bedlam, it's hardly according to God's character. We might say, "But my beat music has Christian lyrics." Adding Christian lyrics to the same destructive rhythm is like sticking a bandage onto our chest to fix a heart attack.

A heavily syncopated rhythm (though not the only test) is one mark of wrong music.

### Spiritual Music

As Christians, our music must be spiritual. Spiritual songs reflect the fruit of the Spirit: Love (not lust), Joy (not despair), Peace (not strife), Long suffering (not impatience), Gentleness (not ugliness), Goodness (not evil), Faith (not unbelief), Meekness (not pride), Temperance (not out-of-control)—Galatians 5:22-23.

A spiritual song will lead our spirit in worship to God. It will uplift our soul with its artistic harmony in tone and poetry. And the orderly rhythm carries the tones and lyrics, so they become a song—to sing and to remember.

Beautiful psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs lift our souls heavenward. They speak to us like a brilliant sunset or a mountain lake. Many times, a song can preach a more effective sermon than any pulpit-pounding preacher. And singing is one of the most beautiful ways to pray to God.

