One Minute After Death – A Christian Understanding of What Happens at Death

Rusty Wright examines the question of what happens to us after we die. Many Christians have questions about this and there is a lot of information floating around on the topic. Rusty applies a biblical worldview perspective to explain a distinctly Christian view of this topic we all have an interest in. When we examine the Bible, we can develop a clearer picture of God's answer to this question.

This article is also available in Spanish.

"I was dying. I heard the doctor pronounce me dead. As I lay on the operating table of the large hospital, a loud, harsh buzzing began to reverberate in my head. At the same time, I sensed myself moving quickly through a long, dark tunnel. Then suddenly I found myself outside my own physical body! Like a spectator, I watched the doctor's desperate attempts to revive my corpse.

"Soon…I encountered a 'being' of light who showed me an instant replay of my life and helped me evaluate my past deeds.

"Finally I learned that my time to die had not yet come and that I had to return to my body. I resisted, for I had found my afterlife experience to be quite pleasant. Yet somehow I was reunited with my physical body and lived."{1} Many people have reported near-death experiences (NDEs). What do they mean? What happens when we die?

While writing a book on this subject, I interviewed people with fascinating stories. A Kansas woman developed complications after major surgery. She sensed herself rising

out of her body, soaring through space, and hearing heavenly voices before returning to her body.

An Arizona man in a coma five months after a motorcycle accident said he saw his deceased father, who spoke with him.

Various theories attempt to explain these NDEs. Physiological explanations suggest a physical cause—perhaps a blow to the head or lack of oxygen in the brain. Pharmacological explanations point to drugs or anesthetics. Psychological explanations propose mental causes such as defense mechanisms or wish fulfillment. Spiritual explanations cite NDEs as previews of the afterlife, either genuine (if divine) or distorted (if demonic). Applications of these theories can be complex.{2} During my sophomore year at Duke University, the student in the room next to mine was struck by lightning and killed instantly. For days our fraternity was in a state of shock. People were asking questions such as, “Where is Mike now?” “Is there life after death?” “If so, what is it like?”

LIFE AFTER DEATH?

Can we know whether there is life after death? What method would we use to find out?

The experimental method, useful for scientific questions, is inadequate for evaluating NDEs. It is impossible in medical emergencies to establish the required controlled situations and repeatability. Scientists also have no mind-reading machines to evaluate mental/spiritual experiences. And finding volunteers for NDE experiments would be difficult.

The experiential method receives mixed reviews. NDEs can provide useful information, but the mind can trick us. Dreams, fantasies, hallucinations, drug trips, drunkenness, states of shock—all can evoke mental images that seem real but aren’t.

Some suggest a spiritual method for evaluating these phenomena. What if we could find a spiritual authority,

someone with trustworthy credentials, to tell us the truth about afterlife issues?

Following Mike's death, I explained to the men in our fraternity that an increasing number of educated men and women believe that Jesus Christ is a trustworthy spiritual authority. Once I, myself, was skeptical of Christianity, but examining the evidences for Jesus' resurrection convinced me He could be trusted. I found the resurrection of Christ one of the best attested facts of history.{3} If Jesus died and came back from the dead, He could accurately tell us what death and the afterlife are like. The fact that He successfully predicted His own resurrection helps us believe that He will tell us the truth about the afterlife. What did Jesus and those He taught say about it?

WHAT IS THE AFTERLIFE LIKE?

Jesus indicated that the afterlife will be personal.

Our personalities will not be annihilated. We won't blend into the great impersonal ocean of cosmic consciousness, as some propose. We will continue to exist. We will not become angels, as others suggest. Angels are "ministering spirits" sent out to serve believers in Christ.{4} They are already-created beings, distinct from humans.{5} At the moment Jesus died on the cross He cried out, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

Earlier, a thief who hung on a cross next to His said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus responded, "I tell you the truth. today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42-43).

Jesus believed that His own spirit was going to be with God. He also believed that the thief (apparently the thief's soul or spirit) would be with Him in heaven that same day. Clearly, Jesus was not thinking of death as annihilation but as a

separation from the physical body.

Elsewhere Jesus implied that our personalities somehow remain intact after death. He once said, “Many will come. . .and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 8:11).

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the forefathers of the Jewish nation—had died centuries earlier. Yet Jesus, speaking about a future event, mentioned them by name. He implied that their personalities were maintained.

Did you ever wonder if you’ll be able to see departed loved ones after you die? Apparently those who participate in eternal life will be able to recognize each other. King David, who reigned over the ancient nation of Israel around 1000 B.C., spoke of being with his dead son again.{6} Jesus’ disciples once caught a glimpse of Moses and Elijah, two long-dead heroes of Israel, and recognized them. {7}

Jesus taught that eternal life will be relational.

Life in heaven will focus on a personal relationship with Him and on meaningful relationships with each other. These will be the warmest and most enriching relationships we could ever have.

Before His death, Jesus promised His disciples that one day they would be with Him again: “I am going. . .to prepare a place for you. And. . .I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:2-3).

Paul, a first-century believer in Jesus, wrote about his “desire to depart and be with Christ” (Philippians 1:23).

Jesus defined life in heaven when He said, “This is eternal life: that they [people who believe in Him] may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). In other words, eternal life will involve getting to

know God and the meaning of life better.

Eternal life will be enjoyable.

Paul also wrote, “No mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (l Corinthians 2:9).

John, Jesus’ disciple, wrote, “[God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Revelation 21:4). Another New Testament writer encourages us to “fix our eyes on Jesus…who, for the joy set before him endured the cross…and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). Eternal life with God will be joy that defies description and exceeds our imagination.

Life after death will be eternal.

It will never end. Have you ever watched a movie so good you wished it would never end?

Have you ever savored a dessert so sweet, you wished it would last and last? Have you ever had a relationship so fulfilling you hoped it would go on forever? Eternal life will be that good, and better! It will never end. “God has given us eternal life,” wrote John, “and this life is in His Son” (l John 5:11).

Jesus taught that eternal life involves all of the positive and none of the negative. God loves us and desires only the best for us now and in eternity.

How sad that some people don’t take advantage of all He has provided.

DON’T STOP!

Chattanooga cardiologist Maurice Rawlings, M.D., tells of a patient who had a cardiac arrest in Dr. Rawlings’ office. Throughout the attempted resuscitation, the patient faded in and out. Each time the doctor interrupted the heart massage,

the patient appeared to die again.

When the man came to, he screamed, “I am in hell!” A look of sheer terror clouded his face. “Don’t stop!” he begged. “Don’t you understand? I am in hell. Each time you quit I go back to hell! Don’t let me go back to hell!” The patient survived and put his faith in Christ to take away his sins and secure his place in heaven.{8} The place the Bible calls hell, or hades, is the current home of those who do not accept Jesus’ gift of forgiveness. It is a place of constant, conscious torment.{9} Hades is not the final dwelling place of those who die without a personal relationship with Christ. John says these will be judged at the “great white throne” judgment. Since no one’s deeds are sufficient to earn eternal life, those without Christ’s pardon will be cast into the “lake of fire.”{10} Jesus said that “the eternal fire…has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).

Not a pleasant subject. But remember, God does not want you to perish in hell. He loves you and wants you to spend eternity with Him. Not without Him.{11} Paul wrote that God our Savior wants all people to be saved (or made safe from the consequences of sin, which is separation from God). He wants us to know Him because He is truth.{12} God sent Jesus Christ, His Son, to pay the penalty for our sins (attitudes and actions that fall short of God’s perfection). Jesus literally went through hell for us. We simply need to receive His free gift of forgiveness—we can never earn it—to be guaranteed eternal life. “Whoever hears my word, Jesus says, “and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24).

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

According to the latest figures, the death rate in this country is still 100 percent. Every day on this planet about 140,000 people die.

What most of us are interested in is not “What happens to people when they die?” but “What will happen to me when I die?”

Some seek to avoid the issue of death or to insulate themselves from concern through popularity, possessions, pursuits, or power. Many feel that whatever belief makes you feel comfortable is OK. Do any of these descriptions fit you?

A nightclub near Cincinnati was packed one evening. Suddenly a busboy stepped onto the stage, interrupted the program, and announced that the building was on fire. Perhaps because they saw no smoke, many of the guests remained seated. Maybe they thought it was a joke, a part of the show. When they finally saw the smoke, it was too late. More than 150 people died as the nightclub burned.

As you consider death, are you believing what you want to believe or what the evidence shows is true? Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies” (John 11:25).

Place your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, and you, too, will live even if you die.

Notes

1. Adapted from Raymond A. Moody, Jr., M.D., *Life After Life* (New York: Bantam, 1976), pp. 21-22.
2. For a more complete discussion, see the book from which this article is adapted: Rusty Wright, *The Other Side of Life* (Singapore: Campus Crusade Asia Limited, 1979, 1994).
3. See, for example, Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1972).
4. Hebrews 1:14.
5. Hebrews 2:16.
6. 2 Samuel 12:23.
7. Matthew 17:14.
8. Maurice Rawlings, M.D., *Beyond Death’s Door* (Nashville:

Thomas Nelson, 1978), pp. 19-20.
9. Luke 16:23-24.
10. Revelatlon 20:11-15.
11. John 3:16.
12. I Timothy 2:3-4

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Dynamic Sex: Unlocking the Secret to Love

Still searching for the secret of love? Missing the deep satisfaction you both want? To enjoy love and sex to the fullest, consider the total person – physical, psychological and spiritual.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

"A fulfilling love life. How can I have one? How can I get the most out of sex?" University students worldwide ask these questions. Why? Because both pleasure and emotional fulfillment are important facets of sex.

Sex is often on our minds. According to two psychologists at the universities of Vermont and South Carolina, 95% of people think about sex at least once each day.{1} You might wonder, "You mean that 5% of the people don't?"

One way not to have a dynamic sex life is to concentrate solely on technique. There is certainly nothing wrong with learning sexual technique—especially the basics—but technique by itself is not the answer.

A good relationship is important for good sex. Psychiatrist and bestselling author Anthony Pietropinto and coauthor Jacqueline Simenauer write, “When emotional issues involving anger or a need to control are encountered on the road to sexual fulfillment, the journey is interrupted until these conflicts are resolved.”{2}

Many sex therapists agree that great technique does not guarantee great sex. They emphasize that the qualities that contribute to a successful sex life are the same ones that contribute to a successful interpersonal relationship. Qualities like love, commitment and communication.

Consider love. As popular speaker and author Josh McDowell points out, those romantic words, “I love you,” can be interpreted several different ways. One meaning is “I love you if—if you go out with me…if you are lighthearted…if you stay committed to me…if you sleep with me.” This type of love is given on the basis of what the other person does. Another meaning is “I love you because—because you are attractive…strong…intelligent.” This type of love is given on the basis of what the other person is. Both types of love must be earned.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to be loved for what you are, but problems can arise with having “if” or “because of” love as the basis of a relationship. Jealousy can set in when someone who is more attractive or more intelligent appears and the partner’s attention shifts to the newcomer. People who know they are loved only for their strong points may be afraid to admit any weaknesses to their partners. This dishonesty can affect the relationship.

THE BEST LOVE. The best kind of love is unconditional. This love says, “I love you, period. I love you even if someone better looking comes along, even with your faults and even if you change. I place your needs above my own.”

One young couple was engaged to be married. Their popularity, intelligence, good looks and athletic success made their future together seem bright. Then the young woman was in a skiing accident that left her paralyzed for life. Her fianc deserted her.

Portrayed in the popular film, “The Other Side of the Mountain,” this true story was certainly complex. But was his love for her “love, period”? Or was it love “if” or love “because of”? Unconditional love (or “less-conditional,” because none of us is perfect) is an essential building block for a lasting relationship.

You can probably see how unconditional love can help a sexual relationship in a marriage. In order for sex to be most fulfilling, it should be experienced in an atmosphere of caring and acceptance. Sex, viewed in this manner, becomes not a self-centered performance but a significant expression of mutual love.

MUTUAL COMMITMENT. Another quality necessary for a strong relationship and dynamic sex is commitment. If two people are completely committed to each other, their relationship is strengthened. Without mutual commitment, neither will be able to have the maximum confidence that the relationship is secure. The fear may exist that, should they encounter a trial, the other may not be there for support. This can erode their bond.

Total, permanent commitment is important in sex, too. It brings security to each partner. It frees them from feeling they have to strive to keep from losing the other and releases them to enjoy one another. It can be an important result of and expression of unconditional love. Commitment helps to breed satisfaction.

COMMUNICATION. A third quality essential for a strong relationship and dynamic sex is communication. Even if

partners have mutual love and commitment, they need to communicate this to each other by what they say and do. If a problem arises, they need to talk it out and forgive rather than give each other the silent treatment and stew in their juices. As one sociology professor expressed it, “Sexual foreplay involves the ’round-the-clock relationship.” Communication affects your total life; your total life affects sex. Couples need to communicate about their hopes, dreams, fears and hurts as well as the daily details of life in order for the relationship to flourish.

Sex is a form of communication. You can bet that if partners are harboring resentment or not communicating appropriately, it shows in their sex life. Psychologists, sex researchers and textbook authors Albert Richard Allgeier and Elizabeth Rice Allgeier note that “a substantial number of sexual problems could be resolved if people felt free to communicate with their sexual partners…about their sexual feelings….”{3}

So, how can you have a dynamic sex life? By developing the same qualities that contribute to a strong relationship: unconditional love, total and permanent commitment and clear, meaningful communication. These qualities combine to help produce a maximum oneness and bring the greatest pleasure.

To this point we’ve been saying that sex is designed to work best within a happy marriage. “But,” you ask, “what about premarital sex?” This is, of course, a very controversial topic. While wanting to convey respect for those who differ, it’s best that couples wait until marriage before having sexual relations. Why? Consider three reasons.

WHY WAIT? First, there is a practical reason for waiting. Premarital sex can detract from a strong relationship and a dynamic sex life. All too often, premarital sex ends up a self-seeking, self-gratifying experience. After intercourse, one partner might be saying “I love you” while the other is thinking “I love it.”

Very often premarital sex occurs in the absence of total and permanent commitment. This can bring insecurity into the relationship. Both short—and long—range problems can result, especially with the breakdown in trust. For instance, while the couple is unmarried, there can always be the nagging thought, "If s/he's done it with me, whom else have they slept with?" After they marry, one might think, "If that person was willing to break a standard with me before we married, how do I know they won't now that we are married?" Doubt and suspicion can chip away at their relationship.

POOR COMMUNICATION, POOR SEX. Premarital sex can also inhibit communication. Each might wonder, "How do I compare with my lover's other partners? Does s/he tell them how I perform in bed?" Or perhaps they think, "Should I be totally honest and vulnerable and share my heart with this person when I don't know if they'll be around tomorrow? Can I entrust all of me to them if I don't have all of them for me? There will be part of me emotionally that I'll hold back." Each becomes less open; communication dwindles. And poor communication makes for poor sex. Bad feelings result, communication deteriorates and so does the relationship. In short, premarital sex can put people at a disadvantage because it can lessen their chances to experience maximum oneness and pleasure.

One young woman at Arizona State University expressed it like this: "I understand what you're saying about unity or oneness. I've had several premarital sexual experiences with different men. After each one, I've felt like I've left a part of myself with that person emotionally. What you're saying is that it makes sense for a person to save themself so they can give themself completely to their spouse."

There is a second reason for waiting: None of the arguments for premarital sex are strong enough. Of course, it's always easy to rationalize in the heat of passion and say it's right. But that is why it is important to decide beforehand—to think with your brain instead of your glands. Consider several

common arguments.{4}

The Statistical Argument: "Everyone else is doing it." Oh, no, they're not! Some studies have shown high statistics, but never one that says 100%. Besides, even if "everyone else" were doing it, that is a lousy reason for doing anything. Suppose 90% of your friends developed ulcers. Would you try to emulate them? Should you? This is not to equate sex with sickness. The point is that just because "everyone else is doing it" doesn't make it advisable or right. You need a better reason.

The Biological Argument: "Sex is a biological need, like the drive for food, air and water. When I have the impulse, it needs to be satisfied." You can't live without food, air or water. Believe it or not, you can live without sex. (It's been documented.)

The Contraceptive Argument: "Modern contraceptives have removed the fear of pregnancy." Don't kid yourself. There's always a chance of pregnancy. No contraceptive is 100% foolproof. Even many marital pregnancies are unintended. A lot of married couples have had "little surprises."

Even with all the modern contraceptives, there are one million teenage pregnancies in the U.S. each year.{5} And if one chooses abortion as a "solution," there can still be emotional scarring and, for many people, a guilt burden. Incidentally an estimated 55 million people in the U.S.—about one in five—have a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Each year there are twelve million new STD infections in the U.S.{6}—an average of over 20 new cases every minute.

HIV, the deadly virus that causes AIDS, has focused world attention on sexual risks. About 6,000 people around the globe become infected with HIV daily.{7} In the U.S., AIDS is the leading killer of people ages 25 to 44, according to the Centers for Disease Control.{8} So-called "safe sex" is not

really safe at all. Condoms can slip, break and leak.{9} Johns Hopkins University reports research on HIV transmission from infected men to uninfected women in Brazil. The study took pains to exclude women at high risk of contracting HIV from sources other than their own infected sex partners. Of women who said their partners always used condoms during vaginal intercourse, 23% became HIV-positive.{10}

The Hedonistic Argument: "But it feels so good when I do it—and afterward, too!" The question is, "How long after?" What feels good for a few seconds may leave you feeling miserable for years. Self-fulfillment is hard to come by without self-respect. Also, don't forget the other person. Sometimes one partner's pleasure is another partner's misery. How would you like being used as nothing more than someone else's pleasure machine?

Basketball superstar Magic Johnson shocked much of the world when he announced he was HIV-positive. Now married and an advocate for premarital abstinence, Johnson recalls that his former sexploits—a parade of one-night stands—left him empty: "I was the loneliest guy on the face of the earth….I didn't have anybody to share with who loved me for me. For Earvin (his given name, i.e., his real self), not for Magic (the sports legend)."{11}

The Experiential Argument: "Practice makes perfect and I do want to please my partner when I do marry." As previously mentioned, communication and commitment—not just technique—are keys to dynamic sex. Why not learn with your own spouse—together—instead of on someone else's wife or sister or husband or brother? Remember, too, that good sexual adjustment takes time, love and understanding.

The Compatibility Argument: "We need to experiment to see if we're sexually compatible, especially since marriage is such a big step." Some express it like this: "You try on a pair of shoes before you buy them!" The "try-before-you-buy" idea

breaks down because the human plumbing system is very flexible and almost always works. Again, premarital sex can erode trust and communication. It's wiser to test your compatibility as persons. Even happily married couples often need several years to adjust sexually to each other.

Besides, sex can cloud the issue. Sex is not the key to love. Love is the key to sex. Couples who approach marriage thinking that "We're in love so it's OK to have sex" or "We'll use sex to determine if we're in love" may be sorely disappointed. They may discover that what they thought was love is only charged-up sex sensations. Waiting until marriage does not guarantee that you'll be emotionally compatible, but it does help create a less confusing environment in which to find out before you take the step of a marriage commitment.

The Marital Argument: "If we're really in love and plan to get married, why all the fuss over the license and date?" Plans don't always end up in reality. (Chances are you know someone—perhaps yourself—who suffered a broken engagement.) The public declaration at a wedding can be an important evidence of commitment. Why? It takes a certain level of conviction to be able to state a commitment publicly. Affirming marriage vows in public helps give each partner greater assurance that each really means it. It can also act as a deterrent to future departure. The desire not to be publicly perceived as a promise-breaker can help dissuade partners from seeking supposed "greener grass." Of course a wedding is no guarantee one won't leave in the future, but it can be a preventive.

Third, there is a moral reason for waiting. According to biblical perspective, God clearly says to wait.{12} You might be thinking, "See, I told you God didn't want me to have any fun." Many people think this initially, then they realize that the reason God, as a loving parent, gives negative commands is for our own good. He wants us to experience something better!

Waiting until marriage can help you both have the confidence, security, trust and self-respect that a solid relationship needs. “I really like what you said about waiting,” said a recently married young woman after a lecture at Sydney University in Australia. “My fianc and I had to make the decision and we decided to wait.” (Each had been sexually active in other previous relationships.) “With all the other tensions and stress of engagement, sex would have been just another worry. Waiting till our marriage before we had sex was the best decision we ever made.”

THE GREATEST AID. One final concept that is perhaps the greatest aid to fulfilling sex concerns relating as a total person. Human lives have three dimensions: Physical, mental and spiritual. If communication on any of these levels in a marriage is missing, the relationship is incomplete.

Some are surprised to learn that sex and spirituality can mix well. A highly-acclaimed University of Chicago study of sex in America found that among women, conservative Protestants were those most likely to report they always had an orgasm during intercourse. While that finding does not prove causation, the high correlation between spiritual commitment and sexual pleasure prompted the researchers to note that the image of Christians as sexually repressed may be a myth.{13}

Certainly biblical writers support a healthy view of sexuality. For example the Hebrew Song of Solomon, a beautiful and passionate love story, has been called one of the best sex manuals ever written.

Consider this perspective: Relating on a spiritual level centers around the most unique person of history, Jesus of Nazareth. Evidence backs up His claim to be God{14} and as God what He offers can affect everyone in a personal way, including the area of sex.

One first century follower of Jesus described the quality of

love He offers: “Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered…bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails….”{15} What man or woman would not want to love or be loved like that?

THE POWER SOURCE. During His time on earth, Christ explained that everyone is born physically alive but spiritually dead. In order to properly relate on a spiritual level, He said, one must be spiritually reborn.{16} He later rose physically from the dead to make this new life possible. Jesus offers a life that has power. Power for living, power to love others less conditionally, power for self-control in one’s sex life. Even after having experimented with premarital sex, one can find in God the strength to stop, to resist future temptation and to wait for one’s life partner.

Jesus also offers forgiveness from every wrong—no matter what—that we’ve ever done because He died on the cross in our place, bearing the punishment we deserved. Anyone can be completely forgiven if he or she will come to Christ. God can cleanse a person’s mind of all past guilt. He can restore the freedom of mutual love and trust in a relationship.

All you need to do to begin this spiritual journey is simply to believe that Christ died for you, ask for and accept the forgiveness He offers, and invite the living Christ into your life. It’s saying in faith, “Jesus Christ, I need You. Thanks for dying for me. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior. Give me the fulfilling life You promised.”

Christ’s entry into your life will enable you to begin living with an added spiritual dimension and to have eternal life.{17} As you grow in your new relationship with Him, you’ll find your attitudes and actions changing and becoming more fulfilling. Life certainly won’t become perfect. There

will still be struggles and discouragements, but you'll have a new Friend to help you through. The maturing Christian experiences the most challenging and rewarding life possible.

Two marriage partners having growing relationships with God will grow closer to each other: spirit to spirit, mind to mind, body to body. Their love, commitment and communication will become increasingly dynamic, and so will their sex.

Notes

1. Kathleen Kelleher, "Entertaining Fantasies? Don't Worry, Everyone's Doing It," Los Angeles Times, August 15, 1995, E13. She cites Harold Leitenberg of the University of Vermont and Kris Henning, "now at the University of South Carolina Medical School."

2. Anthony Pietropinto, M.D. and Jacqueline Simenauer, *Not Tonight, Dear*, New York: Doubleday, 1990, p. 79.
3. Albert Richard Allgeier, Ph.D. and Elizabeth Rice Allgeier, Ph.D., *Sexual Interactions*, Fourth Edition, Lexington (MA): D.C. Heath and Company, 1995, p.236.

4. Most categories and names for these arguments are taken from Jon Buell, "Why Wait Till Marriage?" (lecture outline) and Jim Williams, "The Case for Premarital Chastity" (cassette tape), both produced by Probe Ministries International, Dallas, TX.

5. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "The Failure of Sex Education," *The Atlantic Monthly* 274:4, October 1994, p. 73.

6. Sandy Rover,"United We Stand: The U.S. Isn't Alone in Its Ignorance About Sexually Transmitted Diseases," *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 1995, E3. Rover cites as source Peggy Clarke, president of the American Social Health Association.

7. "Speaking Of: World Health," *Los Angeles Times*, May 2, 1995, H2; citing "The World Health Report, 1995 – Bridging the

Gaps."

8. Bettijane Levine, "The Changing Face of AIDS," *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 1995, E1.8

9. For documentation on condom risks, see the references in Rusty Wright, "Safe Sex?", *Connecticut Medicine* 59:5, May 1995, pp. 295-298; reprinted from Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity's Cross and Crescent 81:4, Winter 1994-95, pp. 19-21.

10. Mark D.C. Guimaraes, et al., "HIV Infection among Female Partners of Seropositive Men in Brazil," *American Journal of Epidemiology* 142:5, 1995, pp. 538-547.

11. Bruce Newman, "The Business of Being Magic Johnson," *Los Angeles Times* Magazine, September 10, 1995, p. 35.

12. I Corinthians 6:18, I Thessalonians 4:3.

13. Robert T. Michael, et al., *Sex in America: A Definitive Survey*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1994, pp. 127-130.

14. Josh McDowell and Bill Wilson (ed.), *A Ready Defense*, San Bernardino (CA): Here's Life Publishers, 1990, pp. 187-267.

15. I Corinthians 13:4-8, New American Standard Bible.

16. John 3:1-16.

17. I John 5:11-13.

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Christians Retrace Crusaders' Steps

Written by Rusty Wright

Lynn Green entered with apprehension a Muslim gathering at a Turkish mosque in Cologne, Germany, on Easter.

In one of the cities where the medieval Crusades began in 1096, the veteran Youth with a Mission staffer was accompanied by other Christians determined to retrace the steps of the eleventh-century Crusaders and to apologize to Muslims and Jews for the atrocities committed against their forebears.

The Muslim imam's public response startled Green and the others. "When I heard the nature of your message, I was astonished and filled with hope," he told the crowd. "I thought to myself, 'Whoever had this idea must have had an epiphany.'" In further conversation, the imam told Green that many Muslims had begun examining their sins against Christians and Jews but have been unclear about what they should do. The repentance offered by Christians because of the Crusades has set an example of apologizing for Muslims to follow, the imam said.

The effort is being called the "Reconciliation Walk." And the 2,000-mile, three-year walk across Europe, through the Balkans and Turkey, then south to Jerusalem, seeks to build bridges of understanding and to reverse a legacy of animosity among three of the world's most prominent religions.

In Cologne, loud, sustained applause followed as 125 Christians formally presented the Reconciliation Walk declaration of apology in Turkish, German, and English to about 200 Muslim disciples. The imam, the most senior Muslim teacher in Europe, sent copies of the statement to the 600 mosques throughout the continent. With this achievement, the

walk had a promising beginning in April.

REMOVING ENMITY

Green says the purpose of the walk, an independent initiative involving many Christian groups, is to remove enmity and mistrust.

Now, 900 years after the first Crusade, some Muslims and Jews still harbor ill feelings toward Christianity because of the atrocities committed. In turn, many evangelical Christians have disowned the Crusades as a dark chapter of pre-Reformational Christian history, finding it has little to do with their beliefs or practice.

In the eleventh century, Christendom witnessed a feud between the bishop of Rome (the pope) and the patriarch of Constantinople (modern Istanbul). Divided over doctrine, culture, politics, and turf, each excommunicated the other in 1054.

In the meantime, the aggressive Muslim Seljuk Turks advanced on the Constantinople-based Byzantine Empire, ambushing Christian pilgrimages to Palestine. When Byzantine emperor Alexius I appealed to Rome for help, Pope Urban II called in 1095 for a Crusade to wrest the Holy Land from Muslim control. Thousands marched, many convinced their efforts would help them gain eternal life.

However, the zealots committed the equivalent of modern-day ethnic cleansing, murdering Jews and warring against Muslims en route to Palestine. In 1099, when they reached Jerusalem, blood flowed freely. Crusaders burned a synagogue into which thousands of Jews had fled and stormed a mosque, slaughtering thousands of Muslims.

BETRAYING CHRIST

Participants in the reconciliation walk are focused on dissolving the ancient divides between Christians, Muslims, and Jews. The reconciliation walk message says the Crusaders "betrayed the name of Christ by conducting themselves in a manner contrary to his wishes and character."

By lifting the Cross, "they corrupted its true meaning of reconciliation, forgiveness, and selfless love." The messengers "deeply regret the atrocities committed in the name of Christ by our predecessors."

"We are simple followers of Jesus Christ who have found forgiveness from sin and life in him," they explain. "We renounce greed, hatred, and fear, and condemn all violence done in the name of Jesus Christ." They hope to share their message face to face with 2 million Muslims.

The walk also is designed to heal rifts in Christendom. In Istanbul, an advance team focused on atrocities committed during the fourth crusade, praying for forgiveness at Hagia Sophia and the Galata Tower. The destruction in Istanbul has been a barrier between the Orthodox and Catholic churches.

Green says response has been universally positive among the intended audience, although some Christians question the theological basis for contemporary Christians confessing to contemporary Muslims the sins of long-deceased predecessors. When Christians see these results, Green says the theological and historical debates, albeit important, become secondary.

Duke University religion professor Eric Meyers, who is Jewish, says, "Reconciliation between Christianity and the Jewish people or Christianity and the Islamic world is certainly a laudable and noble aim."

Meyers says, "In their fervor to bring the 'true' message of Christianity to Jews and Muslims, namely, 'reconciliation,

forgiveness, and selfless love,' I sincerely hope that the participants will not lose track of the import of God's universalistic vision implicit in Luke (4:18-19) and at the very core of Old Testament eschatology."

George Washington University Islamic Studies professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a Muslim, says, "Every effort by both sides to bring Christians and Muslims closer together and to unify them before the formidable forces of irreligion and secularism, which wield inordinate power today, must be supported by people of faith in both worlds."

Organizers are inviting church groups across North America to join the walk. Small groups of a dozen or fewer will go for a week or more to declare the message.

The walk aims to reach Jerusalem in July 1999, the nine-hundredth anniversary of the Crusaders' invasion of the Holy City.

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Best Way to Avoid AIDS: Know Your Partner

The recent World AIDS Day brought accelerated national and state efforts to combat the deadly disease.

The federal Centers for Disease Control launched a major, campaign to make young Americans aware of AIDS risks, and California's Department of Health Services announced a three-

year, $6 million effort to reduce the spread of HIV in the state.

The advertising, marketing and community relations' strategy is impressive. But is its message completely on target?

The number of AIDS cases diagnosed in the United States, recently passed 500,000. An estimated one of every 92 American males ages 27 to 39 has the HIV virus. The CDC says AIDS is now the leading killer of people ages 25 to 44. California has more than 87,000 documented AIDS cases. Many people don't realize they're at risk. The campaigns wisely seek to warn them.

The young adult component of the California campaign, "Protect Yourself- Respect Yourself " promotes "safer sex" practices. It says that "latex condoms, when properly used, are an effective way to prevent (HIV) infection." Just how safe are latex condoms?

Theresa Crenshaw, M. D., is past president of the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists. She once asked 500 marriage and family therapists in Chicago, "How many of you recommend condoms for AIDS protection?"

A majority of the hands went up. Then, she asked how many in the room would have sex with an AIDS-infected partner using a condom. Not one hand went up.

These were marriage and family therapists, the "experts" who advise others. Dr. Crenshaw admonished them, "It is irresponsible to give students, clients, patients advice that you would not live by yourself, because they may die by it."

Condoms have an 85 percent (annual) success rate in protecting against pregnancy. That's a 15 percent failure rate. But a woman can get pregnant only about six days per month. HIV can infect a person 31 days per month. Latex rubber, from which latex gloves and condoms are made, has tiny, naturally

occurring voids or capillaries measuring on the order of one micron in diameter. Pores or holes 5 microns in diameter have been detected in cross sections of latex gloves. (A micron is one-thou-sandth of a millimeter.) Latex condoms will generally block the human sperm, which is much larger than the HIV virus.

But HIV is only 0.1 micron in diameter. A 5-micron hole is 50 times larger than the HIV virus. A 1-micron hole is 10 times larger. The virus can easily fit through. It’s kind of like running a football play with no defense on the field to stop you.

In other words, many of the tiny pores in the latex condom are large enough to pass the HIV virus (which causes AIDS) in its fluid medium. (HIV sometimes at-taches to cells such as white blood cells; other times, it remains in the tiny cell-free state.)

Earlier this year, Johns Hopkins University reported re-search on HIV transmission from infected men to uninfected women in Brazil. The study took pains to exclude women at high risk of contracting HIV from sources other than their own infected sex partners. Of women who said their partners always used condoms during vaginal intercourse, 23 percent became HIV-positive. Risk reduction is not risk elimination.

One U. S. Food and Drug Administration study tested condoms in the laboratory for leakage of HIV-size particles. Almost 33 percent leaked. That’s one in three.

Burlington County, New Jersey, banned condom distribution at its own county AIDS counseling center. Officials feared legal liabilities if people contracted AIDS or died after using the condoms, which the county distrib-uted.

Latex condoms are sensitive to heat, cold, light and pressure. The FDA recommends they be stored in “a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight, perhaps in a drawer or closet.” Yet they are

often shipped in metal truck trailers without climate control. In winter, the trailers are like freezers. In summer, they're like ovens. Some have reached 185 degrees Fahrenheit inside. A worker once fried eggs in a skillet next to the condoms, using the heat that had accumulated inside the trailer.

Is the condom safe? Is it safer? Safer than what?

Look at it this way. If you decide to drive the wrong way down a divided highway, is it safer if you use a seat belt? You wouldn't call the process "safe." To call it "safer" completely misses the point. It's still a very risky—and a very foolish —thing to do.

AIDS expert Dr. Robert Redfield of the Walter Reed Hospital put it like this at an AIDS briefing in Washington, D. C.: If my teenage son realizes it's foolish to drink a fifth of bourbon before he drives to the party, do I tell him to go ahead and drink a six-pack of beer instead?

According to Redfield, when you're talking about AIDS, "Condoms aren't safe, they're dangerous."

"Condom sense" is very, very risky. Common sense says, "If you want to be safe, reserve sex for a faithful, monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner."

At this season of the year, much attention is focused on a teacher from Nazareth, who said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Could it be that the sexual practice that he and his followers advocated—sexual relations only in a monogamous marriage—is actually the safest, too? AIDS kills. Why gamble with a deadly disease?

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Church’s Intolerant Past Not a True Representation of Christianity

The Southern Baptist Convention recently made headlines for renouncing racism, condemning slavery and apologizing for the church’s intolerant past. That laudable contrition raises a deeper question: Why would Christianity ever be associated with racial oppression in the first place?

How did the faith whose founder told people to “love one another” become linked with human bondage, social apartheid and even today’s racist militias?

As a white baby boomer growing up in the South, I experienced segregated schools, restrooms drinking fountains and beaches. My parents taught and modeled equality, so I was saddened by the injustice I saw. A CBS documentary emphasized the Ku Klux Klan’s use of the Bible and the cross in its rituals.

During college, a friend brought an African-American student to a church I attended in Durham, N. C. The next Sunday, the pastor announced that because of “last week’s racial incident” (the attendance of a Black), church leaders had voted to maintain their “longstanding policy of racial segregation.” Thereafter, any Blacks present would be handed a note explaining the policy and asked not to return. I was outraged and left the church.

Some 19th-century ministers preached that slavery was a divine decree. In his book, “Slavery Ordained of God,” Fred A. Ross wrote, “Slavery is ordained of God … to continue for the good of the slave, the good of the master, the good of the whole

American family.” Those words seem quite different from the biblical injunction to “love your neighbor as yourself,” a statement with equally poignant historical roots.

In first-century Palestine, the Jews and Samaritans were locked in a blood feud. Divided by geography, religion and race, the two groups spewed venom, with Jewish pilgrims deliberately lengthening their journeys to bypass Samaria. Once, a Jewish lawyer asked Jesus of Nazareth, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus, who as a Jew surprised people by freely mixing with Samaritans, told a now famous story: The Good Samaritan aided a badly injured Jewish traveler who had been ignored by two passers-by, Jewish religious leaders. Which of the three was the “neighbor”? Obviously, the one who showed mercy.

The power of true faith to reconcile enemies was driven home to me in the’70s by Norton, Georgia state leader of the Black Student Movement, and Bo, a prejudiced White church member. Once during an Atlanta civil rights demonstration, Bo and his pals assaulted Norton. The animosity was mutual. Norton later discovered that Christianity was not a religion of oppressive rules, but a relationship with God. As his faith sprouted and grew, his anger mellowed, while his desire for social justice deepened. Meanwhile, Bo chose to reject his hypocrisy and follow his faith. Three years after the beating, the two unexpectedly met again at a conference on the Georgia coast. Initial tension melted into friendship as they forgave, reconciled and treated each other like brothers.

Historical and contemporary examples abound of true faith promoting reconciliation and opposing racism. John Newton, an 18th-century British slave trader, renounced his old ways, became a pastor and wrote the hymn “Amazing Grace.” Newton encouraged his Christian friend William Wilberforce, who faced scorn and ridicule, in leading a long but successful battle in Parliament to abolish the slave trade.

In South Africa in 1988, my heart ached as I saw impoverished Black townships and inequality falsely justified by religion. I also saw signs of hope. At a multiracial university student conference, Peter, a white Afrikaner, told me, “All my life, I’ve been taught the races should be separate. But now because of my faith, I believe we can be one.”

Sadly, his efforts to convince his friends back home were frustrating. “Maybe, you can love the Black man,” they reluctantly conceded, “but you can’t associate with him.” Inner change often takes time and hinges on individual willingness.

Two years ago in Cape Town, radical Black terrorists sprayed a multiracial congregation with automatic gunfire and grenades. Eleven died and 53 were wounded, some horribly maimed. The world press was astounded by the members’ reaction.

Lorenzo Smith’s wife, Myrtle, died from shrapnel that pierced her heart as he tried to shield her. In spite of his loss, he forgave the killers: “I prayed for those that committed the crime.” The pastor explained, “Christian forgiveness doesn’t mean that we condone what has happened or that we don’t wish the law to take its course, but that we have no desire for vengeance. We’re more determined than ever to contribute toward reconciliation and a peaceful future.”

Former Vermont Sen. George Aiken said that if one morning we awoke to discover everyone was the same race, color and creed, we’d find another cause for prejudice by noon. Human hearts need changing.

A young African-American woman heard a speech on this theme in her sociology class at North Carolina State University. “All my life I’ve been taught that white Christians were responsible for the oppression of my people,” she noted. “Now, I realize those oppressors weren’t really following Christ.”

The Southern Baptists were right to renounce racism. Other

institutions should take note. Racist policies, laws and yes—militias—need changing. But so do human beings. True Christianity does not promote racism but seeks to eliminate it by changing human hearts.

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Safe Sex?

Starlight dances off the sparkling water as the waves gently lap the shore. A cool breeze brushes across your face as you stroll hand in hand along the moonlit beach.

The party was getting crowded and the two of you decided to take a walk on the deserted waterfront. You've only known each other a short while but things seem so right. You laugh together and sense a longing to know this person in a deeper way.

You pause and tenderly gaze into each other's eyes, blood rushing throughout your body as your heart beats faster. Soon you are in each other's arms kissing softly at first, then fervently. You tug at each other's clothes and both kneel to the sand. The condom comes on. You join in passionate lovemaking, then relax, hearing only the gentle waves and each other's breathing, grateful that you are comfortable in mutual care and that all is safe.

Or is it?

Was the condom you used enough to keep you safe? Aside from the emotional and psychological implications of your romantic encounter, realize that the condom is not a 100% guarantee of

safety against AIDS for the same reason the condom is not a 100% guarantee of safety against pregnancy. There's always the possibility of human or mechanical error. Condoms can slip and break. They also can leak. Even the experts aren't certain condoms can guarantee against sexual transmission of the HIV virus.

Theresa Crenshaw, M.D., has been a member of the President' s Commission on HIV. She is past president of the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists{1} and once asked this question to 500 marriage and family therapists in Chicago: "How many of you recommend condoms for AIDS protection?"

A majority of the hands went up. Then she asked how many in the room would have sex with an AIDS infected partner using a condom. Not one hand went up.

These were marriage and family therapists, the "experts" who advise others. Dr. Crenshaw admonished them that, "It is irresponsible to give students, clients, patients advice that you would not live by yourself because they may die by it."{2} What does this tell you about the confidence experts have in condoms to protect persons against AIDS?

Not too long ago herpes caught the public's attention. Now, of course, the focus is on AIDS. As with herpes, it is very difficult to be absolutely certain that your partner in premarital sex does not have AIDS and there is no known cure. But, of course, there's a big difference between herpes and AIDS: herpes will make you sick; AIDS will kill you.

Assessing the Risk

After I had made these remarks at a university in California, one young man asked me to explain what I meant when I said that condoms aren't safe. Consider this:

Condoms have an 85% (annual) success rate in protecting

against pregnancy. That's 15% a failure rate.{3} But remember, a women can get pregnant only about six days per month.{4} HIV can infect a person 31 days per month.

Latex rubber, from which latex gloves and condoms are made, has tiny, naturally occurring voids or capillaries measuring on the order of one micron in diameter. Pores or holes five microns in diameter have been detected in cross sections of latex gloves.{5} (A micron is one thousandth of a millimeter.) Latex condoms will generally block the human sperm, which is much larger than the HIV virus. (A human sperm is about 60 microns long and three to five microns in diameter at the head.{6} But the HIV virus is only 0.1 micron in diameter.{7} A five- micron hole is 50 times larger than the HIV virus. A one-micron hole is 10 times larger. The virus can easily fit through. It's kind of like running a football play with no defense on the field to stop you or shooting a soccer ball into an open goal. The hole is huge!

In other words, many of the tiny pores in the latex condom are large enough to pass the HIV virus (that causes AIDS) in its fluid medium.

One study focused on married couples in which one partner was HIV positive. When couples used condoms for protection, after one and one-half years, 17% of the healthy partners had become infected.{8} That' s about one in six, the same odds as Russian roulette.

One U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) study tested condoms in the laboratory for leakage of HIV-sized particles. Almost 33% leaked.{9} One in three.

One analysis of 11 studies on condom effectiveness found that condoms had a 31% estimated failure rate in protecting against HIV transmission. In other words, as the report stated, "These results indicate that exposed condom users will be about a third as likely to become infected as exposed individuals

practicing “unprotected” sex…. The public at large may not understand the difference between “condoms may reduce risk of” and “condoms will prevent” HIV transmission. It is a disservice to encourage the belief that condoms will prevent sexual transmission of HIV. Condoms will not eliminate risk of sexual transmission and, in fact, may only lower risk somewhat.”{10} Burlington County, New Jersey, banned condom distribution at its own county AIDS counseling center. Officials feared the legal liabilities if people contracted AIDS or died after using the condoms the county distributed. They were afraid the county would be held legally responsible for the deaths. {11}

Over Easy Please

Latex condoms are sensitive to heat, cold, light, and pressure. The FDA recommends they be stored in “a cool, dry place, out of direct sunlight, perhaps in a drawer or closet.”{12} Yet they are often shipped in metal truck trailers without climate control. In winter the trailers are like freezers. In summer they’re like ovens. Some have reached 185F (85C) inside. A worker once fried eggs in a skillet next to the condoms, using the heat that had accumulated inside the trailer.{13} Are you thinking of entrusting you life to this little piece of rubber?

Is the condom safe? Is it safer? Safer than what?

Look at it this way: If you decide to drive the wrong way down a divided highway, is it safer if you use a seat belt?{14} You wouldn’t call the process “safe.” To call it “safer” completely misses the point. It’ s still a very riskyand a very foolishthing to do.

Remember that a national study found that condoms have a 15% failure rate with pregnancy. Perhaps you have flown in airplanes. Suppose only 15 crashes occurred for every 100 plane flights. Would you say airline travel was safe?

Safer?{15} Would you still fly?

AIDS expert Dr. Redfield of the Walter Reed Hospital put it like this at an AIDS briefing in Washington, DC: If my teenage son realizes it's foolish to drink a fifth of bourbon before he drives to the party, do I tell him to go ahead and drink a six pack of beer first, instead? {16} According to Dr. Redfield, when you're considering AIDS, "Condoms aren't safe; they're dangerous."{17}

The Test

You might say, "We've both been tested for AIDS. Neither of us has it."

The time span between HIV infection and detection of HIV antibodies has been found to be anywhere from three to six months, sometimes longer. {18}In rare cases it can even take years for signs of the virus to appear.{19} Dr. Redfield says that after he was exposed to HIV in his work, he waited 14 months before having sex with his wife.{20} Suppose you meet someone who says, "I had an HIV test a year ago; it was negative. I haven't had sex for a year. I just had another test; it was negative. I'm safe." You see the test results in writing. Is it safe to sleep with that person?

We all know how hormones can influence honesty. It comes down to this: Are they telling the truth about not being sexually active in the interim? Is there even a chance that person might twist the truth even slightly in order to get into bed with you? Even with the tests, it all boils down to trust. That's why I say, "It's very difficult to be absolutely certain that your partner in premarital sex does not have AIDS."

"Condom sense" is very, very risky. Common sense says, "If you want to be safe, wait."

The Total You

There are many other benefits to waiting (or to stopping until marriage, if you're a sexually active single). By "waiting," I mean reserving sex for marriage.

Sex involves your total personalitybody, mind, and spirit. Besides being physically risky, premarital sex can hurt you emotionally and relationally. While you are single, sex can breed insecurity ("Am I the only one they've slept with? Have there been, or will there be, others?"). It can generate performance fears that can dampen sexual response. (If you fear even slightly that your acceptance by your partner hinges on your sexual performance, that fear can hamper your performance.) It can cloud the issue, confusing you into mistaking sexually charged sensations for genuine love.

After you marry, you might wonder, "If they slept with me before we married, how do I know that they won't sleep with someone else now that we are married?" (Marital faithfulness in the age of AIDS is, of course, important both emotionally and physically.) When disagreements crop up with your mate, will you be tempted to ask yourself, "Did we just marry on a wave of passion?" Don't forget flashbacks, those mental images of previous sexual encounters that have a nasty way of creeping back into your mind during arousal. Who wants to be thinking of previous sex partners while making love with their spouse? Worse, who wants their spouse to be thinking of previous sex partners?

Waiting until marriage can help you both have the confidence, security, trust, and self respect that a solid, intimate relationship needs. "I really like what you said about waiting," said a recently married young woman after a lecture at Sydney University in Australia. "My fianc and I had to make the decision and we decided to wait." (Each had been sexually active in other previous relationships.) "With all the other tensions, decisions, and stress of engagement, sex would have

been just another worry. Waiting 'till our marriage before we had sex was the best decision we ever made."{21}

Why Is It Hard to Wait?

Apart from the obvious physical power of one's sex drive, there are other equally powerful emotional factors that can make it difficult to wait. A longing to be close to someone or a yearning to express love can generate intense desires for physical intimacy. Many singles today want to wait but lack the inner strength or self-esteem They want to be lovedas we all do and may fear losing love if they postpone sex. They are frustrated when unable to control their sexual drives or when relationships prove unfulfilling.

Often sex brings an emptiness rather than the wholeness people seek through it. As one TV producer told me, "Frankly, I think the sexual revolution has backfired in our faces. It's degrading to be treated like a piece of meat." The previous night her lover had justified his decision to sleep around by telling her, "There's plenty of me for everyone." What I suspect he meant was, "There's plenty of everyone for me." She felt betrayed and alone.

I explained to her and to her TV audience that sexuality also involves the spiritual. One wise spiritual teacher understood our loneliness and longings for love. He recognized human emotional needs for esteem, acceptance, and wholeness and offered a plan to meet them. His plan has helped people to become whole "new creatures,"{22} that is, "brand new person(s) inside."{23} He taught that we can be accepted just as we are, even with our faults.{24} We can enjoy the self-esteem that comes from knowing who we are and that our lives can count for something significant.{25} He promised unconditional love to all who ask.{26} Once we know we're loved and accepted, we can have greater security to be vulnerable in relationships and new inner strength to make wise choices for safe living.{27} This teacher said, "You

shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."{28} "My peace I give to you," He explained. "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."{29} Millions attest to the safety and security He can provide in relationships. His name, of course, is Jesus of Nazareth. I placed my faith in Him personally my freshman year at Duke, Two Lambda Chis influenced me in that direction. Though I was skeptical at first, it "has made all the difference," as Robert Frost would say.

Sex and spirituality are, of course, quite controversial topics. I realize that our International Fraternity contains a wide spectrum of beliefs on these issues. I offer these perspectives not to preach but to stimulate healthy thinking.

Diversity was one of the things that attracted me to our chapter at Duke. Politically, philosophically, and spiritually we ran the gamut. There were liberals, conservatives, Christians, Jews, atheists, and agnostics. We tried to respect one another and learn from each other even when we differed on issues like these. That is the spirit in which I offer these remarks; may I encourage you to consider them in the same way.

To summarize, the only truly safe sex is the lovemaking that occurs in a faithful monogamous relationship where both partners are HIV negative. Condoms may reduce the risk of HIV transmission somewhat, but they can't guarantee prevention. Please, don't entrust your life to something as risky as a condom.

Notes

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18. Ibid.
19. Ibid. Redfield says that some people with hypogammaglobulinemia do not make antibodies, hence it takes

years for them to show signs of HIV infection. (Current HIV tests detect not the virus itself, but rather the antibodies that the human body manufactures to attempt to fight the virus.)
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21. Space limits extensive development here of the practical, psychological, and emotional advantages of waiting. These have been more adequately discussed in Rusty Wright and Linda Raney Wright, *How to Unlock the Secrets of Love, Sex, and Marriage,* Barbour Books, 1981; Rusty Wright, "Dynamic Sex: Beyond Technique and Experience," Campus Crusade for Christ, 1977.
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23. 2 Corinthians, 5:17, Living Bible.
24. Luke 15:10-32.
25. John 1:12; II Corinthians 5:20.
26. John 3:16; 13:34-35; 17:20, 23, 26; I John 4:7-21.
27. Acts I :8; Ephesians 5: 18; Galatians 5: 16-24; I Corinthians 6:18-20.
28. John 8:32.
29. John 14:27, NIV.

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Hope For a World Gone Bad

“Give me your money,” snarled the young intruder. He climbed my staircase, brandishing a knife and flashlight. Noises in the basement had distracted my Sunday afternoon study. I investigated when the sounds persisted. On the way to the basement I came face to face with a menacing looking 20 year-old. Recognizing the danger, I gave him the dollar bill in my wallet, then opened drawers as he ordered. My eyes kept darting back to the flashing knife blade. He snatched a small plastic bag containing white detergent. “What’s this?” he demanded. “Laundry soap.” “No, it’s drugs,” he countered.

Perhaps he was on drugs or out for revenge and had the wrong house. I assured him I hadn’t stolen his truck. When he seemed convinced of his error, he became nervous, cut the kitchen phone line, and headed for the door, “Just don’t call the cops,” he pleaded. Then he fled.

On the phone to 911, my heart pounding, I described the invader. Reports, investigations, and questioning ensued. For the next several nights’ sleep was fitful. Reinforcing the doors helped increase feelings of security. So did the news that this criminal was captured and sentenced to three years in prison.

But if this could happen in my own home, what hope was there for genuine safety?

FARAWAY THOUGHTS

The petite, fortyish woman sat in the imposing gray room with a high, ornate ceiling, her thumb toying with the ring on her left hand. Despite murmuring in the background, Melissa’s thoughts were far away in the past, 15 years earlier—her wedding day. Bright lights, festive flowers, and joyful friends filled the church. She felt secure seeing Tom’s smile

and welcoming gaze as she strode down the aisle. “Do you take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife … for as long as you both shall live?” asked the black-robed minister. “I do,” replied Tom with confidence,

A tear meandered down her cheek. Suddenly everyone in the gray room rose as if something important were happening. The entrance of another black-robed man interrupted Melissa’s daydream. She heard Tom’s voice: “Your honor, I am convinced that this marriage cannot be saved. There is no hope of reconciliation.”

No hope? she wondered. Does he think that our 15 years of life, work, children, promises, struggles and successes amounted to nothing?

With her dreams dashed, the possibility of more unrealized expectations loomed enormously painful, was anything worth hoping for anymore?

IMAGES OF OUR WORLD

“Turning to international news we have some startling video to show you from Eastern Europe,” intoned the television newscaster somberly. “We must warn you that the pictures you are about to see are quite graphic and, because of the violence they depict, may not be suitable for small children.”

The screen fills with images of emaciated, shirtless men, apparently prisoners behind a barbed-wire fence. The despair on their faces haunts you. Next come scenes of what was an outdoor marketplace. A bomb had landed at midday, sending shredded canvas, shattered tables, bloodied limbs, and broken bodies everywhere. Then the scene switches to hot, tired, thirsty Caribbean refugees in overloaded rafts, bobbing in the ocean.

The TV images seem familiar by now and almost blend together. Where was that carnage and starvation? Somalia? Rwanda? Sudan?

South Africa?

A vulture stalks a starving infant. Middle Eastern children throw stones. Their relatives wield automatic weapons. Their leaders shake hands and hail peace on the White House lawn. Will it last? Might a terrorist state harvest a nuclear bomb?

Can peace come to these troubled nations? Agreements are signed and broken. Often chaos reigns. “The world has gone bad,” you decide, “What hope is there of people ever getting along?”

There is a good chance that you or someone you know has been a crime victim. Marriage is supposed to last forever. Now divorce increasingly rips apart hearts and homes, and with prospects of international peace rising and falling like a refugee raft on a stormy sea, is there anything that can save us from destroying ourselves? Will a baby born into our world today live to reach adulthood?

HUNGRY FOR HOPE

Two millennia ago a baby was born into a similarly troubled world. A foreign power occupied his parents’ homeland. Poverty, greed, theft, and corruption were commonplace. Marriages faltered. Authorities ruled that a husband could divorce his wife simply for burning supper.

At the time of this baby’s birth, people were hungry for hope. They wanted freedom from violence, family strife, and political uncertainty. They wanted the assurance that somebody loved and cared for them, that life counted for something, that they could muster the strength to face daily challenges at home and work.

Ironically, some saw hope in the birth of this particular baby. His mother, during her engagement, had become pregnant out of wedlock while strangely claiming to remain a virgin. Though he was born in a humble stable, learned leaders

traveled great distances to have the child as a king.

In his youth scholars marveled at his wisdom. In his thirties he began to publicly offer peace, freedom, purpose, inner strength, and hope to the masses. His message caught on.

A woman who had suffered five failed marriages found in his teaching "living water" to quench her spiritual and emotional thirst. A wealthy but corrupt government worker decided to give half of what he owned to the poor and repay fourfold those he had swindled. Hungry people were fed. Sick people became well.

The young man's family thought he had flipped. His enemies plotted his demise and paid one of his followers to betray this innocent man. His closest friends deserted him. He was tried, convicted, sentenced, and executed. In agony during his execution he yelled out a quotation from one of his nation's most revered ancient writers: "My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?"{1} At that moment he felt very alone, perhaps even hopeless.

FORSAKEN

Many crime victims feel forsaken by God. So do many divorced people, war prisoners, and starving refugees. But this young man's cry of desperation carried added significance because of its historical allusion.

The words had appeared about a thousand years earlier in a song written by a king. The details of the song are remarkably similar to the suffering the young man endured. It said, "All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads …. They have pierced my hands and my feet…. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."{2}

Historians record precisely this behavior during the young man's execution.{3} It was as if a divine drama were unfolding as the man slipped into death.

Researchers have uncovered more than 300 predictions or prophesies literally fulfilled in the life and death of this unique individual. Many of these statements written hundreds of years before his birth-were beyond his human control. One correctly foretold the place of his birth. {4} Another said he would be born of a virgin. {5} He would be preceded by a messenger who would prepare the way for his work, {6} He would enter the capital city as a king but riding on a donkeys back {7} He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of Silver, {8} pierced, {9} executed among thieves, {10} and yet, though wounded, {11} he would suffer no broken bones.{12}

Peter Stoner, a California mathematics professor, calculated the chance probability of just eight of these 300 prophecies coming true in one person. Using conservative estimates, Stoner concluded that the probability is 1 in 10 to the 17th power that those eight could be fulfilled by a fluke.

He says 10^{17}silver dollars would cover the state of Texas two feet deep. Mark one coin with red fingernail polish. Stir the whole batch thoroughly. What chance would a blindfolded person have of picking the marked coin on the first try? One in 10^{17}, the same chance that just eight of the 300 prophecies "just happened" to come true in this man, Jesus. {13}

In his dying cry from the cross Jesus reminded His hearers that His life and death precisely fulfilled God's previously stated plan. According to the biblical perspective, at the moment of death Jesus experienced the equivalent of eternal separation from God in our place so that we might be forgiven and find new life.

He took the penalty due for all the crime, injustice, evil, sin, and shortcomings of the world-including yours and mine.

Though sinless Himself, He likely felt guilty and abandoned. Then-again in fulfillment of prophecy {14} and contrary to natural law-He came back to life. As somewhat of a skeptic I

investigated the evidence for Christ's resurrection and found it to be one of the best-attested facts in history. {15} To the seeker Jesus Christ offers true inner peace, forgiveness, purpose, and strength for contented living.

SO WHAT?

"OK, great," you might say, "but what hope does this give the crime or divorce victim, the hungry and bleeding refugee, the citizen paralyzed by a world gone bad?" Will Jesus prevent every crime, reconcile every troubled marriage, restore every refugee, stop every war? No. God has given us free will. Suffering—even unjust suffering—is a necessary consequence of sin.

Sometimes God does intervene to change circumstances. (I'm glad my assailant became nervous and left.) Other times God gives those who believe in Him strength to endure and confidence that He will see them through. In the process, believers mature.

Most significantly we can hope in what He has told us about the future. Seeing how God has fulfilled prophecies in the past gives us confidence to believe those not yet fulfilled. Jesus promises eternal life to all who trust Him for it: "Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."{16}

He promised He would return to rescue people from this dying planet.{17}

He will judge all evil.{18}

Finally justice will prevail. Those who have chosen to place their faith in Him will know true joy: "He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain."{19}

Does God intend that we ignore temporal evil and mentally float off into unrealistic ethereal bliss? Nor at all. God is in the business of working through people to turn hearts to Him, resolve conflicts, make peace. After my assailant went to prison, I felt motivated to tell him that I forgave him because of Christ. He apologized, saying he, too, has now come to believe in Jesus.

But through every trial, every injustice you suffer, you can know that God is your friend and that one day He will set things right. You can know that He is still on the throne of the universe and that He cares for you. You can know this because His Son was born (Christmas is, of course, a celebration of His birth), lived, died, and came back to life in fulfillment of prophecy. Because of Jesus, if you personally receive His free gift of forgiveness, you can have hope!

Will you trust Him?

Notes

1. Matthew 27:46.
2. Psalm 22.
3. Matthew 27:35-44; John 20:25.
4. Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1.
5. Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18, 24-25; Luke 1:26-35.
6. Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:1-2.
7. Zechariah 9:9; John 12:15; Matthew 21: 1-9.
8. Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:15.
9. Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34, 37.
10. Isaiah 53:12.
11. Matthew 27:38; Isaiah 53:5; Zechariah 13:6; Matthew 27:26.
12. Psalm 34:20; John 19:33, 36.
13. Peter Stoner, Science Speaks, pp. 99-112.
14. Psalm 6:10; Acts 2:31-32.
15. Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, pp. 185-273.

16. John 5:24.
17. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.
18. Revelation 20:10-15.
19. Revelation 21:4 NAS.

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How to Be Successful and Satisfied

How belief in Jesus Christ can help you realize your potential and help you find real satisfaction.

This article is also available in Spanish.

Success is:_____. How would you fill in the blank?

"That's easy," you might say. "Success is … for an athlete, winning the Super Bowl, the World Series, or a gold medal: for an entertainer, winning an Oscar, a Grammy, or an Emmy; for a businessperson, being a top executive with one of the Fortune 500 companies: for a university student, being elected to Phi Beta Kappa or student government." But is it always so easy to define?

Several years ago Ranier, a German friend, spent three months with me in the U. S. Once, while he was watching his first baseball game on TV, the batter hit the ball out of the park for a home run. The fans went wild! Ranier turned to me with a puzzled look and asked, "Why are they cheering? They've lost the ball?" To the hometown fans the batter was a great success. To someone from another culture, the home run was a

mystery.

The meaning of success also varies with individuals. One dictionary defines success as “the satisfactory accomplishment of a goal sought for.” To be successful, you must achieve the goal and be satisfied with the outcome. With this definition one wonders if “success” that does not include personal satisfaction—a sense of well-being—is really true success at all.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Several factors contribute to success. Consider a few:

1. **Positive Self-Concept.** Imagine that you wake up one morning and your roommate is waiting to tell you something. He or she says, “I’ve been wanting to tell you what an outstanding roommate you are. You’re so kind, so thoughtful; you always keep the room so neat. Just being around you motivates me to be the most positive person I can be.”

After you recover from your cardiac arrest, you head off toward your first class of the day. Whom should you run into but your date of the previous evening, who says, “Am I ever glad I ran into you! I’d been hoping I’d get a chance to tell you again what a terrific time I had yesterday. My friends are so jealous of me. They think that I’m the luckiest person in the world to go out with someone like you, and I agree! You’re so friendly, so intelligent. You have a great sense of humor and good looks to boot! Why, when I’m with you, I feel like I’m in a dream!”

Then you float into your first class. Your professor is about to return the midterm exams you took last week, but before he distributes them he says, “I have an announcement I’d like to make. I want everyone to know what an outstanding job this student has done on this test.” He points to you in the front row and says, “You are a breath of fresh air to me as a

professor. You always do your assignments on time. You often do even more than is expected of you. Why, if every student were like you, teaching would be a joy. I was even considering leaving teaching before you came along!"

Wouldn't that help you have a great attitude about yourself? And wouldn't it motivate you to be a better roommate, a better date, a better student? You'd say to yourself, "Why, I'm one sharp person. After all, my roommate, my date and my prof all think so … and they're no dummies!" You wouldn't argue with them for a minute! {1}

Of course, some people think so highly of themselves that their egos become problems. Nevertheless, many psychologists agree with Dr. Joyce Brothers when she says, " . . . a strong, positive self- image is the best possible preparation for success in life."{2}

2. **Clearly Defined Goals.** Aim at nothing and you'll surely hit it. Aim at a specific goal and, even if you don't hit it, chances are you'll be a lot farther along than if you'd never aimed at all.

The U. S. Space Program has produced many successes and, sadly, a few tragic failures. The successes of NASA help illustrate the importance of goal setting. Perhaps you've heard of the three electricians who were working on the Apollo spacecraft. A reporter asked each what he was doing. The first said, "I'm inserting transistors into circuits." The second answered, "I'm soldering these wires together." The third explained, "I'm helping to put a man on the moon."

Which one was more motivated and satisfied? Probably the one who saw how his activities fit into the overall goal.

Without a clear life's goal, daily duties can become drudgery. Knowing your life's goal can increase your motivation and satisfaction as you see how daily activities help accomplish that goal.

In the early 1960's, President John F. Kennedy set a goal of putting an American on the moon by the end of the decade. In 1969, Neil Armstrong took his "one small step." A specific goal helped NASA achieve a major milestone in history. Someone who desires success will set specific goals.

3. **Hard Work.** Any successful athlete knows that there would be no glory on the athletic field without hard work on the practice field. A true test of character is not just how well you perform in front of a crowd, but how hard you work when no one notices—in the office, in the library, in practice. President Calvin Coolidge believed "nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not … Genius will not … Education will not … Persistence, determination, and hard work make the difference." {3}

**"A true test of character is not just
how well you perform in front of a crowd,
but how hard you work when no one notices."**

"What is success?" asks British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. "I think it is a mixture of having a flair for the thing that you are doing … hard work and a certain sense of purpose…. I think I had a flair for … (my work), but natural feelings are never enough. You have got to marry those natural feelings with really hard work." {4}

The heavyweight-boxing champion of another era, James J. Corbett, often said, "You become the champion by fighting one more round. When things are tough, you fight one more round." {5}

Success requires hard work. Of course you can overdo it and become a workaholic. One workaholic businessman had a sign in his office that read, "Thank God It's Monday!" We all need to balance work and recreation, but hard work is essential to

success.

4. **A Willingness to Take Risks.** Theodore Roosevelt expressed the value of this asset in one of his most famous statements: “Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much because they live in the great twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat, ” {6}

Ingemar Stenmark, the great Olympic skier, says, “In order to win, you have to risk losing.” Consider this question: “What would you do if you knew you could not fail?” That question can expand your vision and enlarge your dreams. Maybe your desire is to be a great political leader, an entertainer, a top businessperson or academician, a star athlete. What would you do if you knew you couldn’t fail?

Now ask, “Am I willing to risk a few possible failures in order to achieve that goal?” Success often involves risks.

AN OBSTACLE TO SUCCESS AND SATISFACTION

A positive self-concept, clear goals, hard work, and a willingness to take risks … all contribute to success. But there is a major obstacle to experiencing success and satisfaction in life.

In 1923 a very important meeting was held at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Attending this meeting were seven of the world’s most successful financiers-people who had found the secret of making money.

Consider what had happened to these men 25 years later. The president of the largest independent steel company, Charles Schwab, died in bankruptcy and lived on borrowed money for five years before his death. The president of the greatest utility company, Samuel Insull, died a fugitive from justice and broke in a foreign land. The president of the New York

Stock Exchange, Richard Whitney, spent time in Sing Sing Penitentiary. A member of the President's cabinet, Albert Fall, was pardoned so he could die at home. The greatest "bear" on Wall Street, Jesse Livermore, died a suicide. The head of the greatest monopoly, Ivan Krueger, died a suicide. The president of the Bank of International Settlements, Leon Fraser, died a suicide. All these had learned well, the art of success in making a living, but apparently they all struggled with learning how to live successfully. {7}

Pollster and social commentator Daniel Yankelovich quotes a $100,000/ year full partner in a public relations firm: "I have achieved success by the definition of others but am not fulfilled. I appear successful … I have published, lectured, exceeded my income goals, achieved ownership and a lot of people depend on me. So, I've adequately achieved the external goals but they are empty."{8}

Dustin Hoffman is an extremely successful movie actor. His film career seems almost dazzling and includes an Oscar for his performance in "Kramer vs. Kramer." Yet consider what he says about happiness and satisfaction: "I don't know what happiness is …. life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? I'd strike out happiness …. Walk down the street and look at the faces. When you demand happiness, aren't you asking for something unrealistic?"{9}

Success in one area does not guarantee satisfaction in life. You can reach all your goals and still not be at peace with yourself. How can you both achieve your goals and be satisfied? And even if you feel a degree of satisfaction, could there be something more?

"You can reach all your goals,
and still not be at peace with yourself."

SUCCESSFUL AND SATISFIED

More and more psychologists and psychiatrists are seeing the need to develop the total person physically, psychologically, and spiritually—to produce real satisfaction. Often in our struggle for success, we focus on physical and psychological development at the expense of the spiritual.

Not long ago a group of counselors spent quite a bit of time in New York City interviewing some of the nation's most successful executives. They interacted with editors of newspapers and magazines, executives with advertising agencies, banks, the TV networks, seeking to understand these leaders' ideas about success.

One question these counselors asked involved the spiritual area: "What place do faith and spiritual values have in your fife?" In response, 75% conveyed that spiritual values were "important" or "very important" to both personal and professional development. Remarked one, "If they could be strengthened, a lot of these other things would fall into place." Yet, surprisingly few of these leaders had clearly defined convictions in the spiritual area. As one radio broadcaster noted with a smile, "I am inspirable, but I can't find anyone to inspire me!" {10}

Then these executives were told about someone who could inspire them, one of history's most influential personalities, a person who stressed the importance of spiritual development as well as the physical and psychological. The life and teachings of this influential and very successful leader have made quite a positive impact on my own life, as well. Perhaps a bit of background will put my discovery in perspective.

In high school I looked for success through athletics, academics and student government. And I found it. I lettered

in basketball and track … our track team was undefeated. I ranked in the top of my class academically, was involved in student government, and was attending one of the nation's leading prep schools. John F. Kennedy and Adlai Stevenson were graduates as were playwright Edward Albee and actor Michael Douglas.

I mention these details not to boast but to draw a contrast. Success in these areas had not brought the personal satisfaction I'd wanted. I was still an introvert, sometimes afraid to introduce myself to a stranger or ask a young woman for a date. My attitudes were often inconsistent with my behavior. Outwardly I could appear very positive and loving, while inwardly I might be negative and resentful of someone I didn't like. Guilt, anxiety and a poor self-image often hindered me from taking risks or from being vulnerable in relationships.

Later, in college, I was still wrestling with these areas. Then I ran into a group of students who had something special about them, a love, joy, and enthusiasm I found very attractive. I especially appreciated the fact that they accepted me just the way I was. I didn't have to try to impress them with a list of accomplishments, though they were sharp, attractive, and successful. Even in dating I didn't feel the normal pressure to display a macho image. They seemed to like themselves and they accepted me, too.

These were Christian students and I knew that I wanted what they had. They told me they had found a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I couldn't accept all that right away, yet I kept going back to their meetings because I was curious and because it was a good place to get a date. Especially because it was a good place to get a date!

AN OPEN DOOR

The more I spent time around them, the more I saw how their

faith affected their lives and relationships. They told me that God loved me unconditionally, but that I was separated from Him by a condition of alienation called sin. They said that He had sent His unique Son, Jesus, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins and rise from the grave to offer new life. When I placed my faith in Him, they explained, He would enter my life, forgive me of my sin, and begin to produce the fulfillment I'd been looking for.

Finally, through a simple, silent attitude of my heart, I said, "Jesus Christ, I need you. Thanks for dying and rising again for me. I want to accept your free gift of forgiveness. I open the door of my heart and invite you in. Give me the fulfilling life you promised." There was no thunder and lightning. Angels didn't rise in the background singing the "Hallelujah Chorus" and I didn't become perfect. But gradually, I began to see change. I had a new inner peace that didn't fluctuate with circumstances. I found a freedom from guilt and a new purpose for living. I saw my self-image improve and felt freer to take risks, to love others less conditionally.

There are many examples of Christians who are both successful and satisfied: Roger Staubach, former quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys; Julius Erving, star professional basketball player; J. C. Penney, founder of the department store chain; Dr. Charles Malik, past president of the UN General Assembly: Mark Hatfield, U. S. Senator from Oregon; Janet Lynn, a figure skater; Jerome Hines, Amy Grant, Pat Boone and Debby Boone as entertainers: and many more. Being a Christian doesn't guarantee supreme success. Christians have their failures, too. But a relationship with God can enhance your self-concept, help clarify your goals, strengthen your determination and help you improve whatever you do. The personal satisfaction Christ provides can make a positive difference, too.

**“What a tragedy to … climb the ladder
of success, only to reach the top
and find the ladder leaning against the wrong wall.”**

Here’s how: Remember the earlier illustration about your roommate, date and professor showering praise on you? Unfortunately, that doesn’t happen every day. But God thinks you are very special, so special that He sent His only Son to die in your place. When you come to know Christ personally and realize the magnitude of His love for you, you can find strength to accept yourself and greater freedom to take prudent risks. You can face rejection with the security that even if everyone else turns on you, God still loves you. Knowing He wants the best for you can increase your determination to work hard for worthwhile goals.

What about you? Does your definition of success include personal satisfaction? Have you found success? Will your success be enough to sustain you through any rough times that may lie ahead? Have you found personal satisfaction?

What a tragedy it would be to spend an entire lifetime climbing the ladder of success only to reach the top and find the ladder was leaning against the wrong wall. Are you willing to consider how Jesus Christ can make a difference in your life?

Notes

1. Illustration adapted from Zig Ziglar, *See You at the Top* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Co., 1979), p. 46.

2. Ibid., p. 49.

3. Ibid, p. 319.

4. Prince Michael of Greece, “I Am Fantastically Lucky,” *Parade* Magazine, July 13, 1986, p. 4.

5. Ziglar, op. cit.

6. Hugh Sidey, To Dare Mighty Things,” *Time,* June 9, 1980, p. 15.

7. Adapted from Bill Bright, *“The Uniqueness of Jesus”* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1968) pp. 14-15.

8. Daniel Yankelovich, *New, Rules,*p-69.

9. Gerald Clarke. “A Father Finds His Son,” *“Time,”* December 3, 1979, p. 79.

10. Patty Burgin, “A View From the Top,” *Collegiate Challenge,* 1980, p. ii.

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A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the End

Hundreds of cases have been recorded of people who returned from the brink of death to report on “the other side.” But are out-of-body experiences really encounters with the afterlife … or something more deceptive?

A man is dying.

As he lies on the operating table of a large hospital, he hears his doctor pronounce him dead. A loud, harsh buzzing reverberates in his head. At the same time, he senses himself moving quickly through a long, dark tunnel. Then, suddenly, he

finds he is outside of his own physical body. Like a spectator, he watches the doctor's desperate attempts to revive his corpse. Soon, he sees the spirits of relatives and friends who have already died. He encounters a "being of light." This being shows him an instant replay of his life and has him evaluate his past deeds. Finally, the man learns that his time to die has not yet come and that he must return to his body. He resists, for he has found his afterlife experience to be quite pleasant. Yet, somehow, he is reunited with his physical body and lives. {1}

You may be one of the many who have read this account of a near- death experience in the best-selling book, *Life After Life,* by Dr. Raymond A. Moody, Jr. Dr. Moody is a psychiatrist who pieced together this picture from the reports of numerous patients he had studied. He notes that not all dying patients have these "out-of-body experiences" (OBE's) and stresses that this is a *composite account* from some who have. Not every element appears in every experience, but the picture is fairly representative, he says.

The last few years have seen a flurry of books and articles on these OBE's as an increasing number of doctors report similar findings. My own curiosity led me to several fascinating interviews with surviving patients.

One interview was with a woman in Kansas, who developed complications after major surgery. She told me that she sensed herself rising out of her body, soaring through space and hearing heavenly voices before she returned to her body.

A man in Arizona was in a coma for five months following a severe motorcycle accident. He said that during that time he saw his deceased father, who spoke to him.

Interpreting the OBE's

How should we interpret these out-of-body experiences? Are

they genuine previews of the afterlife? Hallucinations caused by traumatic events? Or something else?

Let's evaluate.

First, the people who have death-related OBE's fall into different categories. Some have been pronounced clinically dead and later are resuscitated. Others have had close calls with death, but were never really thought dead (such as survivors of automobile accidents). Still others did die—permanently—but described what they saw before they expired.

Second, the determination of the point of death is a hotly debated issue. In the past, doctors relied merely on the ceasing of the heartbeat and respiration. More recently they have used the EEG or brainwave test. Some argue that death must be *an irreversible* loss of all vital signs and functions. These would say that patients who were resuscitated did not really die because they were resuscitated. But whatever one considers the point of death, most would agree that these folks have come much closer to it than the majority of people living today.

A number of possible explanations for the OBE's have been offered. Different ones may apply in different situations. Here are a few of the main theories:

The physiological explanations suggest that a "physical" condition may have caused some of the out-of-body experiences. For instance, cerebral anoxia (a shortage of oxygen in the brain) occurs when the heart stops. The brain can survive for a short while (usually only a few minutes) without receiving oxygen from the blood. Anoxia can produce abnormal mental states.{2} Thus, patients who recover from heart failure and report OBE's may be merely reporting details of an "altered state of consciousness," some say.{3}

The pharmacological explanations say that drugs or anesthetics

may induce some of the near-death experiences. Some primitive societies use drugs to induce OBE's in their religious ceremonies.{4}

LSD and marijuana sometimes generate similar sensations. {5} Even many medically accepted drugs have produced mental states akin to those reported by the dying. Ether, a gaseous anesthetic, can cause the patient to experience "sensations like that of being drawn down a dark tunnel."{6}

The drug ketamine is an anesthetic that is injected into the veins.{7} It is used widely and produces hallucinatory reactions 10% to 15% of the time." UCLA pharmacologists Siegel and Jarvik report the reactions of two subjects who took this drug:

"I'm moving through some kind of train tunnel. There are all sorts of lights and colors, mostly in the center, far, far away; way, far away, and little people and stuff running around the walks of the tube, like little cartoon nebbishes; they're pretty close."

"Everything's changing really fast, like pictures in a film, or television, just right in front of me. I am watching it happen right there."{9} The tunnel, lights, people and film scenes in these accounts bear some resemblance to the OBE images.

The psychological explanations suggest that the individual's mind may generate the unusual mental experience. Sigmund Freud, writing about the difficulty of coping with the thought of death, said it would be more comfortable in our minds to picture ourselves as detached observers.{10} Some modern psychiatrists, following this theme, theorize that the OBE is merely a defense mechanism against the anxiety of death. That is, since the thought of one's own death is so frightening, the patient's mind invents the OBE to make it seem as if only the body is dying while the soul or spirit lives on.

Dr. Russell Noyes, University of Iowa psychiatrist, has done extensive research into the experiences of people in life threatening situations. He says that the OBE is "an emergency mechanism . . . a reflex action, if you like." {11}

Noyes and his associate, Roy Kletti, write, "In the face of mortal danger we find individuals becoming observers of that which is taking place, effectively removing themselves from danger."{12}

Other psychologists wonder if the patient may be confusing his or her *interpretation* of the experience with what actually happened.{13} The conscious mind seems to need an explanation for an unusual vision; therefore, it interprets the event in familiar terms. Thus, say these psychologists, the resuscitated patient reports conversations with deceased relatives or religious figures common to his culture.

It is possible that an OBE could be completely spiritual and yet not be from God.

Spiritual Theories

The spiritual explanations grant the existence of the spiritual realm. They view many of the OBE's as real manifestations of this realm. Dr. Moody, while admitting his inability to prove his belief, feels that the OBE's represent genuine previews of the afterlife.{14} The famous Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, well-known writer on death and dying, says she became convinced of the afterlife through her study of OBE's and related phenomena.{15}

Many have noted that the experiences in Dr. Moody's first book, *Life After Life,* seem to contradict some of the

traditional Christian beliefs about the afterlife. All of the patients—Christian and non-Christian—report feelings of bliss and ecstasy with no mention of unpleasantness, hell or judgment.

However, Dr. Moody's first book was based on limited observation. Further research yielded new information that he presents in a second book, *Reflections on Life After Life,* which came out in 1977 (two years later).

He has now talked with numerous patients who refer to a "city of light" and describe scenes that are reminiscent of biblical material.{16} Some of his other patients report seeing "beings who seemed to be 'trapped' in an apparently most unfortunate state of existence."{17}

One woman who was supposedly "dead" for 15 minutes said she saw spirits who appeared confused. "They seemed to shuffle," she reports, "as someone would on a chain gang . . . not knowing where they were going. They all had the most woebegone expressions. It was quite depressing."{18}

Dr. Moody now states, "Nothing I have encountered precludes the possibility of a hell."{19} Some have felt that the OBE's are inconsistent with the biblical concept of a final judgment at the world's end. No one reports standing before God and being judged for eternity. Dr. Moody responds in his second book by pointing out that "the end of the world has not yet taken place, "so there is no inconsistency." There may well be a final judgment," he says. "Near-death experiences in no way imply the contrary."{20}

Life After Death?

How should one view the OBE's and their relationship to the issue of life after death? Scientific or experimental methods are currently unable to solve the riddle (as a number of scientists will admit).{21} Not only is it difficult to

provide controlled situations during medical emergencies; the scientist has no instruments to determine the *content* of events in the spiritual or mental realms.

Personal testimony alone is insufficient as a test of truth in these cases. Subjective mental experiences can be deceptive and are susceptible to influence by injury, drugs, psychological trauma, etc., as stated previously. Also, what would we conclude when the experiences differ?

Another approach involves the spiritual realm. Presumably, a qualified spiritual authority could accurately inform us about the afterlife. But with so many differing authorities on today's spiritual scene, whom should we believe?

An increasing number of educated men and women are concluding that Jesus of Nazareth is a trustworthy spiritual leader. A major reason for this conclusion is that He successfully *predicted* His own out-of-body experience—that is, His own death and resurrection. Consider the evidence:{22}

Jesus was executed on the cross and declared dead. His body was wrapped like a mummy and then placed in a tomb. An extremely large stone was rolled against the entrance. A unit of superior Roman soldiers was placed out front to guard against grave robbers. On the third day, the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty, but the grave clothes were still in place. The Roman guards came out with the feeble story that the disciples had stolen the body while they were sleeping. But how could they know who had done it if they were asleep?

Meanwhile, hundreds of people were saying they saw Jesus alive and were believing in Him because His prediction had come true. Both the Romans *and* the Jews would have loved to have produced the body to squelch the movement. No one did. The tomb remained empty and Christianity spread like wildfire. Jesus' disciples were so convinced that He had risen that they

endured torture and even martyrdom for their faith.

Jesus Christ successfully predicted His own resurrection. This was not a mere resuscitation after His heart had stopped beating for a few minutes. It was a dramatic physical resurrection after several days in the grave.

Why is this incident so important? The resurrection shows that Jesus has power over death. It establishes Him as a spiritual authority. Because He remains consistent on statements we can test (such as His resurrection prediction), we seemingly have solid grounds for trusting Him on statements we *cannot* test (such as those He made about life after death).

One statement Jesus made was that all who believe in Him will have everlasting life, an eternity of joy. As one early Christian wrote: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him."

Jesus also explained that God loves us and desires our happiness both now and after we die.{24} However, we all initially exist in a condition of separation or alienation from God. This condition is called sin, and it prevents us from achieving maximum fulfillment in this life and from spending eternity with God.{25}

Jesus claimed to be the solution to our sin problem. By His death on the cross He paid the penalty for our sins so that we might be forgiven and live forever with God.{26} The Bible explains, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son (Jesus). He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life."{27} If we refuse this free gift in Jesus, we are choosing to exclude ourselves from God, opting instead for an eternity of suffering. {28}

OBE Interpretation

In light of the above, how should one interpret the OBE'S? Here are some guidelines I use.

Because I have concluded that historical evidence supports both the authority of Jesus and the accuracy of the biblical documents, accept them as a standard.

If a given OBE contradicts biblical statements or principles, I do not accept it as being completely from God. If the experience does not contradict biblical statements or principles, then it *could* be from God. (I say "could" because there is always a possibility of influence from one of the other factors—body, drug or mind.)

It is also possible that a given OBE could be completely spiritual and yet not be from God.

Jesus clearly taught the existence of an evil spiritual being, Satan.

We are told that Satan "disguises himself as an angel of light,"{30} but Jesus said that he is "a liar, and the father of lies."{31}

One of Satan's favorite deceptions is convincing people that they can achieve eternal life by doing good. That way, they don't see their need for receiving Christ's pardon.

Could this be the reason that sometimes the "being of light" in the OBE's tells the patient to go back and live a good life, but makes no mention of a commitment to Christ? (I'm not accusing everyone connected with OBE's of deliberately being in league with the devil. Rather, I'm offering a word of caution, a suggestion to consider satanic influence as one of

several possible alternatives in individual cases.)

Obviously death is a common denominator of the human race. Some seek to avoid the issue or to insulate themselves from it through possessions and pursuits, popularity or power. Many feel that whatever belief makes you comfortable is okay. Do any of these descriptions fit you?

In the spring of 1977, a nightclub near Cincinnati was packed to the brim. Suddenly, a busboy stepped onto the stage, interrupted the program and announced that the building was on fire. Perhaps because they saw no smoke, many of the guests remained seated. Maybe they thought it was a joke, a part of the program, and felt comfortable with that explanation. When they finally saw the smoke, it was too late. More than 150 people died as the nightclub burned.{32}

As you consider death, are you believing what you want to believe, or what the evidence shows is true? Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live, even if he dies."{33}

I encourage you to place your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior. Then you, too, will live, even if you die.

Notes

1. Paraphrased from Raymond A. Moody, Jr., M. D., *Life After Life,* Bantam, New York, 1976 (first published by Mockingbird Books in 1975), pp. 21, 22.
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3. Daniel Goleman, "Back from the Brink," *Psychology Today,* April, 1977, p. 59.
4. Michael Grosso, "Some Varieties of Out-of-Body Experience," *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research,* April, 1976, pp. 185, 186.
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8. Louis Jolyon West, M.D., “A Clinical and Theoretical Overview of Hallucinatory Phenomena” in R. K. Siegel and L. J. West (eds.), *Hallucinations Behavior, Experience, and Theory,* John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1975, p. 292.
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11. Joan Kron,”The Out-of-Body Trip: What a Way to Go!” *New York Magazine,* December 27, 1976-January 3, 1977, p. 72.
12. Noyes and Kietti (1976), loc. cit.
13. Dr. Charles Tart in Robert A. Monroe, *Journeys Out of the Body,* Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1971, pp. 6, 7.
14. Moody, *Reflections on Life After Life*, p. 111.
15. James Pearre *Chicago Tribune*, “Ghost Story: How a long dead patient talked doctor into continuing work with the dying,” *San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle,* November 14, 1976, section B, p. 7.
16. Moody,*Reflections on Life After Life,* pp. 15-18.
17. Ibid, pp. 18-22.
18. Ibid., pp. 19-21.
19. Ibid., p. 36.
20. Ibid., pp. 36, 37.
21. Ibid., pp. 132-135; A. Susan Mennear,”Life After Death?”

Good Housekeeping, September, 1976, pp. 187,188; J. B. Rhine, Ph. D., "Parapsychology and Psvchology: The Shifting Relationship Today," *The Journal of Parapsychology,* June, 1976, pp. 131-133.
22. For a more thorough documentation of resurrection evidences, see Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict,* Campus Crusade for Christ International, 1972, pp. 185-273; see also pp. 15-79 for evidences for the reliability of the biblical documents.
23. 1 Corinthians 2: 9, NIV.
24. John 3: 16; John 10:10.
25. Romans 1:23; 6:23.
26. Luke 19:10; Mark 10:45; 1 Peter 2:24; John 3:16.
27. 1 John 5: 11,12.
28. John 3:36; Revelation 20:15.
29. McDowell, loc. cit.
30. 11 Corinthians 11:14.
31. John 8:44.
32. "They Didn't Believe It," *The New York Times,* May 30, 1977, p. 16; Hal Bruno, "The Fire Next Time," *Newsweek,* June 13, 1977, pp. 24, 27.
33. John 11:25.

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Anxious for Nothing (magazine article)

Why are we anxious, and what is the cure? Four possible causes and a glimpse at a solution.

This article is also available in Spanish. 

“Death is the only joy, and the only release.”

“Contrary to popular belief, there is no hope.”

What gloomy thoughts. The first came from the classified section of a college newspaper, the second from an anonymous inscription on a classroom blackboard. Both exhibit what psychologists call “existential anxiety”—frustration with a meaningless existence.

I was plagued by similar anxiety as a college freshman until some friends exposed me to the claims of Jesus Christ as found in the Bible. After accepting Him as Savior and Lord, I found that He freed me from slavery to anxiety. As a psychology major, I was fascinated, first to observe that many serious psychological disorders stem from smaller problems, and in turn to watch Jesus deal with these problems in my life.

Let’s consider two definitions and then examine four main causes of anxiety.

“Anxiety” represents a state of emotional turmoil characterized by fearfulness and apprehension.{1} It is not external stress, but an internal reaction to strenuous circumstances.{2} A “Christian” is an individual who has recognized his lack of fellowship with God and placed his complete trust in Jesus Christ as the only means of restoring that relationship.

Four causes of anxiety are guilt, fear, lack of interpersonal involvement and lack of meaning in life.

Guilt

Failure to achieve standards (internally or externally imposed) often results in guilt feelings. Often psychologists attribute these feelings to problems in the past or to following legalistic moral codes. Many persons do have these problems, but a more plausible explanation for guilt feelings

is that a person has them because he is guilty. If this is true, then therapy for a person experiencing guilt feelings would include admitting his guilt. This, however, can be rather difficult.

O. H. Mowrer, a psychologist at the University of Illinois, points out the dilemma:

> Here, too, we encounter difficulty, because human beings do not change radically until first they acknowledge their sins, but it is hard for one to make such an acknowledgement unless he has "already changed." In other words, the full realization of deep worthlessness is a severe ego "insult," and one must have a new source of strength to endure it.{3}

Jesus provides the strength needed to endure it. We must come to Him, admitting our sin and worthlessness, but the moment we accept Him as Savior, God forgives all our sins past, present and future. The Bible says that "He (Jesus) personally carried the load of our sins in His own body when He died on the cross . . . "{4}and ". . . paid the ransom to forgive our sins and set us free….{5} Each year we spend thousands of dollars in the hope that psychology and psychiatrists will solve our guilt problems. Yet the complete forgiveness—freedom from guilt—Jesus offers is free of charge.

Fear

Let's consider two types of fear: of death and of circumstances. Fear of death is perhaps man's greatest fear. When I was a sophomore in college, the student rooming next to me was struck by lightning and killed. His death shocked the men in my house, and they began to consider seriously the implications of death. Anxiety struck.

The person who accepts Christ as his Savior has no problem with death. The moment he receives Christ, his eternal relationship with God begins. The apostle John writes to

Christians, ". . . God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life. . .{6} For the Christian, death loses its terror.

Fear of circumstances can also produce anxiety. Daily anxieties common to all of us include fear of inadequate finances, of social inadequacy, and fear for our personal safety and health.

All of these fears tend to occupy our minds and to keep us from enjoying the privilege of being alive. Enough worry and we soon find ourselves merely existing. But can we really be secure?

Financial security is tenuous, injury and danger are as near as the car whizzing by on the highway, and we can never be certain that everyone likes the way we act.

One summer I drove from Washington, D. C., to California with four girls. After that experience, I know the meaning of fear. Facing this responsibility, I became somewhat apprehensive. What would I do if a car broke down or one of the girls got sick? What if we had an accident? Also, the girls expected me to make all the decisions for the group.

At times, I became fearful, until I remembered what Jesus told His disciples: "Men, don't worry about what you are going to eat or drink or wear. Your Father in heaven loves you and knows what you need. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."{7} And it works.

Lack Of Involvement

William Glasser, a medical doctor, writes in his book, *Reality Therapy,* that every man experiences two basic needs—the need to feel a sense of worth to himself and to others, and the need to love and to be loved. He says that the best way to satisfy these needs is to develop a close friendship with

another person who will accept him as he is, but who will also honestly tell him when he acts irresponsibly.

Interpersonal relationships are important, but people are only human and do let us down and err in judgment. Wouldn't the ultimate therapy be to become involved with our creator? He is faithful and righteous,{8} never lets us down, and always has the best advice. Because He loves us, the Christian experiences freedom to love others.{9} We are worth much to Him: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."{10} A person forgiven values himself, because he is "a new creature."{11} He is secure in Christ. The apostle Paul writes: "I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,{12}

Lack Of Meaning

Another doctor conducted studies of 31,000 Allied soldiers who were imprisoned in Japan and Korea during the 1940's. He found that, although sufficient food was offered to them, more than 8,000 died.{13} He diagnosed the cause of many deaths as "despair."

Contrast this situation to that of thousands of Christians who have spent years in prison for their faith in Christ, only to be released to continue sharing God's love, especially to those who persecuted them.

The Savior's love sustains them and motivates them as "ambassadors for Christ."{14} What greater purpose could there be than serving as an ambassador for the King of kings?

A Common Question

Frequently it is suggested that Christianity could be merely a psychological “trick” or gimmick. After all, the reasoning goes, if someone thinks that the Bible is God’s Word, couldn’t he convince himself that what it says sounds true, and that through following the Bible he has found a groovy lifestyle?

After doing some research, I must conclude that Christianity could not be an illusion. There are three reasons for this.

The first concerns the object of the Christian’s faith—Jesus Christ. The evidence for His deity, His resurrection, the prophecies He fulfilled and the lives He has changed present an overwhelming case for the validity of His claims. Because the object of my faith is valid, I believe faith in that object to be valid as well.

The second reason has to do with the nature of human personality, which is composed of intellect, emotion and will. Psychologists feel that our will does not have complete control over our emotions.{15} Nor does it seem likely that our intellect can completely control them. Yet some like those who have been imprisoned find it possible to love those who tortured them. Such behavior seems impossible, apart from supernatural intervention.

The third reason concerns the book that presents Christ’s answers to our problems—psychological and otherwise. The Bible, although written over a period of 1,500 years, in three languages and by 40 different authors (most of whom never met), has proved itself to be thematically coherent, internally consistent and historically accurate. Completed more than 1,800 years ago, it contains the cure for the psychological problems experienced by countless thousands of people today. The Bible is a supernatural book!

As a college student, I was curious to see what a professional

psychologist would think of these views. Having written a term paper for my abnormal psychology course investigating how Jesus treats anxiety (this article contains some thoughts from that research), I sent a copy of my paper to the author of our textbook.

In his reply, he expressed an interest in the content. Several months later, I visited him personally, and he told me that he would like to have a personal relationship with Christ. After I shared with him the claims of Christ as contained in the "Four Spiritual Laws," he prayed inviting Jesus Christ to come into his life. The latest edition of his text includes a short statement about the fact that many people today are finding psychological help through Christ.

Men everywhere are searching for freedom from fear and guilt. They need to know that God loves them. If you have never asked Christ to be your personal Lord and Savior, I encourage you to do so today. If you have, tell others how they can know Him.

He frees us to "be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus"{16}

Notes

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5. Colossians 1:14, Beck.
6. I John 5:11,12.
7. Matthew 6:31-33, paraphrased.
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9. I John 4:19.
10. Romans 5:8.
11. II Corinthians 5:17.
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16. Philippians 4:6,7.

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