Depression

Jerry Solomon offers a compassionate, holistic examination of depression from a Christian perspective, with helpful suggestions for those who long to help.

One Person's Story

Depression—a word that is used frequently in our time. Does it apply to you, someone you love, or someone you know? Since 17 percent of the population suffers from major depression at some point in their lives,{1} it is probable you have been touched by it in some way. Perhaps the following account will "ring true" in light of your experiences. (This story really happened, but the name of the character has been changed.)

For many years Stan, an evangelical Christian, struggled with varying degrees of depression. These bouts were incapacitating on occasion, irritating or highly frustrating sometimes, but always persistent in their visits. Eventually the struggle came to a crisis point. He was not able to respond to any emotional stimulus that was offered; he had totally isolated himself from family, friends, and work. In retrospect he realized this isolation was done purposefully. The true causes of his struggle had never been addressed, and he was tired of pulling himself out of one depressed state only to find another staring him in the face. So he refused to repeat the pattern that had plagued him for so many years. It was time to find the root causes, instead of repeatedly dodging them.

After talking with a good friend who was a counselor, he decided he should consider admitting himself to a psychiatric hospital. He immediately contacted such a place and entered the "first phase," or initial analysis prior to admittance. This analysis indicated he should become a patient. The next day he became part of an extraordinary program of discovery that was to last more than three weeks. In fact, those weeks

were so extraordinary, he will tell you they provided the impetus for dramatic, positive change in his life and thought.

During those days of concentration, Stan dealt with several important issues that subsequently have led to a more stable life. First, he faced the trauma of abuse he had experienced. Second, through the ministry of a compassionate chaplain and a counselor, he realized he was weary of learning about God, without at the same time knowing God in the personal way the Bible frequently indicates. He was hungry to couple Biblical precepts with personal experience. Third, the sense of community among those in the hospital with him led him to consider the social "games" he had been playing in his evangelical Christian setting outside the hospital. Even though many of the patients were not Christians, that did not deter them from intimacy, trust, and truth. There were no hidden agendas, no political posturing, no hypocritical fronts. They listened to one another, cried together, encouraged one another, challenged one another, laughed together, and even disciplined one another. Fourth, Stan was challenged to consider whether he should take medication in light of his trust in God's healing power. He was put on medication that is still part of his life after eight years. Fifth, he was led to consider his thought life, especially as it applied to expectations he had of himself.

Unfortunately, there are many Christians who continue to wrestle with what Winston Churchill called the "black dog" of depression. They struggle without finding help. This essay is offered with the hope that it will encourage those who need help, and that it will prompt many to respond with patience and love to those who are depressed.

Who Suffers with Depression?

Some have said depression is "the common cold of emotional disorders, and it appears to be on the rise. People of both genders get depressed, although women are twice as likely as

men to suffer from major depressive disorders."{2} Who are these people? As we will see, they are both famous and infamous people; they are normal people; they are even people we know from the Bible.

Depression can be described as "a condition of general emotional dejection and withdrawal; sadness greater and more prolonged than that warranted by any objective reason."{3} Dejection, withdrawal, sadness, and other similar terms are familiar to many. Vincent Van Gogh, Abraham Lincoln, Edgar Allen Poe, Marilyn Monroe, Rod Steiger, Mike Wallace, and many other notable people have struggled with depression. In 1972 Senator Thomas Eagleton acknowledged his depression, and the Democrats dropped him as the Vice Presidential candidate. In 1995 Alma Powell, the wife of General Colin Powell, revealed her history of depression, and her husband urged others to get help.{4} Martin Luther and Charles Spurgeon, two great men in the history of the church, frequently lived with the dark shadow of despondency.

Even some great biblical characters wrestled with depression. At one point in his life, Moses wanted to die (Exodus 32:32). While struggling with his suffering, Job "cursed the day of his birth" (3:1). He said, "I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul" (7:11). In addition, he cried, "My spirit is broken, my days are extinguished, the grave is ready for me" (17:1). Elijah was incapacitated with depression soon after he had been an integral player in one of the great demonstrations of God's power (I Kings 19). After Jonah witnessed the astounding grace of God among the wicked Ninevites, he angrily said, "Death is better to me than life" (Jonah 4:3). The great prophet Jeremiah declared, "Why did I ever come forth from the womb to look on trouble and sorrow?" (Jeremiah 20:18)

The amazing prophecy of Isaiah 53:3 states that the Suffering Servant, the Lord Jesus, was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." *Sorrows* and *grief* can refer to both physical and

mental pain, which could include depression.{5} Consider the thoughts of Lydia Child, the 19th century abolitionist, in light of Isaiah 53:

Whatever is highest and holiest is tinged with melancholy. The eye of genius has always a plaintive expression, and its natural language is pathos. A prophet is sadder than other men; and He who was greater than all the prophets was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."{6}

A well-known spiritual says, "No one knows the trouble I've seen," a sentiment that is understood by those who are depressed. J.B. Phillips, author of the classic *Your God is Too Small*, dealt with depression all his life. In one of his many letters, he offered these comments to one who also was struggling: "As far as you can, and God knows how difficult this is, try to relax in and upon Him. As far as my experience goes, to get even a breath of God's peace in the midst of pain is infinitely worth having."{7}

We have seen that depression has been experienced since ancient times. No one is immune, but, praise God, those in His family are not alone. The Lord Himself is with us.

Depression: Symptoms and Explanations

- *I feel so tired!*
- *I feel weak; my arms are heavy.*
- *I feel so agitated!*
- *I feel anxious about everything, it seems.*
- *I feel so fearful—of death, of tomorrow, of people.*
- *I can't concentrate!*
- *I can't remember things I used to remember.*
- *I can't face people; I want to be alone.*
- *I'm not interested in sex anymore.*
- *I can't sleep!*
- *I sleep to escape!*
- *I only eat because I have to.{8}* • *I hate myself!*

- *I feel angry all the time!*
- *Everything and everyone is stupid!*

Such comments are familiar to those who are dealing with depression. Usually these phrases are not descriptive of what is objectively true, but they are descriptive of how a depressed person is responding to his predicament. One who hears them can be tempted to dismiss the one who made the statements with well-meaning but trite responses that betray a lack of understanding. It often is difficult for someone who has not wrestled with depression to understand.

So how can we understand? Why does a person get depressed? There is no simple answer to this question, contrary to what some people think. As Dr. John White has written, "Depression has many faces. It cannot be relieved on the basis of one simple formula, arising as it does by numerous and complex mechanisms, and plummeting sometimes to depths where its victims are beyond the reach of verbal communication. There are mysteries about it which remain unsolved. No one theoretical framework is adequate to describe it."{9} It is meaningful for a Christian to understand this. Sometimes a response to the depressed can focus on a principle without regard for the person. For example, the 17th century English bishop Jeremy Taylor wrote: "It is impossible for that man to despair who remembers that his Helper is omnipotent."{10} This assumes that remembering something will automatically change one's thoughts and feelings. The person who is depressed doesn't necessarily make that connection. Mentally healthy people have reasonable thought processes, but they are not the norm in a depressed person's clouded life. "Mental health is like physical health. We are all vulnerable to its loss."{11} A truly depressed person is not mentally healthy.

As we have stated, there is no one all-encompassing answer to the "Why?" of depression. But there are a number of models that suggest answers.

- Aggression turned inward, or unexpressed anger.
- Object loss, as in the loss of a parent.
- Loss of self-esteem.
- Incorrect thinking.
- Learned helplessness, or inability to respond to unpleasant experiences.
- Loss of reinforcement, as in lack of sympathy.
- Loss of role status, as in loss of power or prestige.
- Loss of meaning of existence.
- Impairment of brain chemistry, as in neurotransmitters.
- Neurophysiological malfunction of brain cells.{12}

When we ponder these models in the light of a Christian worldview, we find that none of them can stand alone. Each one taken separately reduces us to only one element, whereas a Christian worldview sees man holistically. Man is not to be seen solely as a product of his past, his thought life, his societal conditioning, or his biology. The one who is depressed should be approached as Christ would: as a whole person made in God's image.

Depression and the Whole Person

"What is man, that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" These memorable phrases from Psalm 8 pose crucial questions in regard to the subject of depression. The answers we give to such questions will provide a beginning point for responding to those who are depressed. As Leslie Stevenson has written, "The prescription for a problem depends on the diagnosis of the basic cause."{13} A Christian is challenged to consider a prescription for depression that sees both the material and immaterial aspects of a total person. Such considerations lead to concerns as to whether one should take medication, submit to some type of psychological analysis, or simply trust God to provide healing. Or, as a prominent Christian psychiatrist asks, "Is [depression] a disease of the mind or of the body?"{14} Is it both/and, or

either/or? These are issues that tend to stir controversy among Christians. Too frequently the controversy is focused on "clumsy clichés, …subtly damning exhortations, breezy banalities, and the latest idiocy in pop psychology. Or else…unnecessary pills."{15}

The history of the church demonstrates that one of the reasons for such a response is found in an ancient struggle between Greek and Hebrew influences. More often than not we tend to side with the Greeks and divide humans "into a less important physical part (body and brain) and a more important immaterial part (mind and soul)."{16} This unbiblical division creates problems, because "just as music is more than the orchestra that plays it, so I am more than my body."{17} I am also more than my mind and soul.

When this unity of human nature is ignored two extreme views can be found among Christians. "One is that we submit to all suffering, sickness, pain&mdashwhether mental or physical—as from God."{18} The other asserts that "through the exercise of faith and by the power of Jesus' name we can banish every sickness, every difficulty. Sickness, tragedy, pain must be resisted, for all come from Satan. Unhappiness is a sign of defeat and unbelief."{19} This means that seeking help from physicians, psychologists, or psychiatrists "is a tacit admission that the resources in Christ and the Scripture are inadequate."{20} Both of these views are too simplistic, but there are certainly elements of the truth in them. How can we reconcile them?

Quite simply and obviously, the one who is depressed should be treated as a whole person. Consider the statements of John White, a practicing Christian psychiatrist, author of a thought-provoking book on depression and suicide entitled *The Masks of Melancholy*, and many other books. He wrote:

> I will no more treat mind as distinct from body than body as distinct from mind. By the grace of God I will treat

> persons, not pathology, sinners rather than syndromes, and individuals rather than illnesses. And however primitive our weapons may be, there are effective weapons and we must use them.{21}

As one who has fought with depression, I have come to realize the wisdom of Dr. White's comments. The treatment I have received has come from family, friends, physicians, psychologists, and psychiatrists who understand how God has created us. Their compassionate, godly responses to my struggle have been instrumental in my recovery. To paraphrase the apostle Paul, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of [them]" (Philippians 1:3). They were the Lord's servants in my time of need.

Responding to Depression

Sarah's husband has been isolating himself from her for several weeks. He won't communicate with her. He doesn't eat much. He shows no emotion other than a sense of sadness and gloom. He sits in the dark for hours. He has called his office several days to report he is taking a sick day. He does none of the things he once did that gave him a sense of joy and accomplishment. He shows no interest in making love with her. He has disappeared for hours in his car and will not say where he has been. Sarah wonders if she has done something to upset him and is desperate to get him to talk with her so she can discover what is happening.

Perhaps this scenario is familiar to you or someone you know. How can we respond to such a crisis? How can we help the one who is depressed?

First, understand the difference between someone who is sad or disheartened and someone who is truly depressed. Sadness or a "blue mood" are experienced by most of us. Depression is much more debilitating and long-lasting. There are at least three levels of depression. One can be called *major depression*,

which “is manifested by a combination of symptoms that interfere with the ability to work, sleep, eat, and enjoy once pleasurable activities.” Another, called *dysthymia*, is less severe but keeps one “from functioning at ‘full steam’ or from feeling good.” The third level is called *manic-depressive*, or bipolar depression. This “involves cycles of depression and elation or mania.”{22}

Second, if you believe someone is struggling continually with depression, encourage him or her to seek help. Suggest that your friend see a trusted pastor, counselor, or physician. The earlier you can suggest this, the better.

Third, at the first sign of depression, encourage conversation and then listen carefully. The deeper a person sinks into a depressed state, the more difficult it is to talk with anyone, even those she loves most. Make yourself available and gently pursue communication as often as you can. But leave time for silence when you are with her.

Fourth, give emotional support that indicates you are taking the person seriously. “Do not accuse the depressed person of faking illness or of laziness, or expect him or her ‘to snap out of it’.”{23}

Fifth, be an encourager. Affirm the one who is depressed with statements of truth about his character and abilities, as well as your love for him.

Sixth, if he will let you, pray for him in his presence.

Seventh, if you hear remarks about suicide, take them seriously and seek advice from an expert.

Eighth, act as a “mental mirror.” She probably isn’t thinking reasonably and is in need of gentle reminders of a clearer image of the world and herself.

Ninth, don’t chastise him if he expresses anger, even anger at

God. Listen carefully to discover why he is angry and help him begin to think how he can best express that anger.

Tenth, on a larger scale, do what you can to develop an atmosphere in your church that allows one who is depressed to find trust, truth, and compassion.

These ten suggestions, as helpful as they can be, do not constitute the ultimate response to the depressed. We need to remember that ultimate healing rests in the hands of our loving God, who makes all things new.

Notes

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4. "Fighting the Stigma," *Newsweek* (20 May 1996), 22-23.
5. F. Duane Lindsey, *The Servant Songs* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 116.
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9. Ibid., 18.
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11. White, 25.
12. Ibid., 103-125.
13. Leslie Stevenson, *Seven Theories of Human Nature* (New York: Oxford, 1987), 6.
14. White, 53.

15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 41.
17. Ibid., 45.
18. Ibid., 47.
19. Ibid., 49.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 220.
22. National Institute of Mental Health, “Depression: What you need to know” (Indianapolis: Eli Lilly, n.d.), 1-3.
23. Ibid., 9.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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16. John 3:1-16.

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Pop Psychology Myths vs. A Biblical Point of View

Kerby Anderson compares some current myths with a Christian perspective informed by the timeless teaching of the Bible. These "pop psychology" ideas seem to make sense until one compares them with biblical insights from the creator of us all.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

Go into any bookstore and you will see shelves of self-help books, many of which promote a form of "pop psychology." Although these are bestsellers, they are filled with half-truths and myths. In this essay we are going to look at some of these pop psychology myths as exposed by Dr. Chris Thurman in his book *Self-Help or Self-Destruction*. If you would like more information or documentation for the issues we cover in these pages, I would recommend you obtain a copy of his book.

Myth 1: Human beings are basically good.

The first myth I would like to look at is the belief that people are basically good. Melody Beattie, author of the best-seller *Codependent No More*, says that we "suffer from that vague but penetrating affliction, low self-worth." She suggests we stop torturing ourselves and try to raise our view of ourselves. How do we do that? She says: "Right now, we can give ourselves a big emotional and mental hug. We are okay. It's wonderful to be who we are. Our thoughts are okay. Our feelings are appropriate. We're right where we're supposed to be today, this moment. There is nothing wrong with us. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with us."

In other words, Beattie is saying that we are basically good. There is nothing wrong with us. At least there is nothing

fundamentally wrong with us. There isn't any flaw that needs to be corrected.

Peter McWilliams, in his best-seller *Life 101*, actually addresses this issue head on. This is what he says in the brief section entitled, "Are human beings fundamentally good or fundamentally evil?"

> My answer: good. My proof? I could quote philosophers, psychologists, and poets, but then those who believe humans are fundamentally evil can quote just as many philosophers, psychologists, and poets. My proof, such as it is, is a simple one. It returns to the source of human life: an infant. When you look into the eyes of an infant, what do you see? I've looked into a few, and I have yet to see fundamental evil radiating from a baby's eyes. There seems to be purity, joy, brightness, splendor, sparkle, marvel, happiness—you know: good.
>
> Before we see what the Bible says about the human condition, let me make one comment about Peter McWilliams's proof. While an infant may seem innocent to our eyes, any parent would admit that a baby is an example of the ultimate in selfishness. A baby comes into the world totally centered on his own needs and oblivious to any others.

When we look to the Bible, we get a picture radically different from that espoused by pop psychologists. Adam and Eve committed the first sin, and the human race has been born morally corrupt ever since. According to the Bible, even a seemingly innocent infant is born with a sin nature. David says in Psalm 51:5 "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." The newborn baby already has a sin nature and begins to demonstrate that sin nature early in life. Romans 3:23 tells us that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We are not good as the pop psychologists teach, and we are not gods as the new age theologians teach. We are sinful and cut off from God.

Myth 2: We need more self-esteem and self-worth.

The next myth to examine is the one that claims what we really need is more self-esteem and self-worth. In the book entitled *Self-Esteem*, Matthew McKay and Patrick Fanning state, "Self-esteem is essential for psychological survival." They believe that we need to quit judging ourselves and learn to accept ourselves as we are.

They provide a series of affirmations we need to tell ourselves in order to enhance our self-esteem. First, "I am worthwhile because I breathe and feel and am aware." Well, shouldn't that also apply to animals? And do I lose my self-esteem if I stop breathing? In a sense, this affirmation is a take off on Rene Descartes's statement, "I think, therefore I am." They seem to be saying "I am, therefore I am worthwhile."

Second they say, "I am basically all right as I am." But is that true? Is it true for Charles Manson? Don't some of us, in fact all of us, need some changing? A third affirmation is "It's all right to meet my needs as I see fit." Really? What if I meet my needs in a way that harms you? Couldn't I justify all sorts of evil in order to meet my needs?

Well, you can see the problem with pop psychology's discussion of self-esteem. Rarely is it defined, and when it is defined, it can easily lead to evil and all kinds of sin.

It should probably be as no surprise that the Bible doesn't teach anything about self-esteem. In fact, it doesn't even define the word. What about the term *self-worth*? Is it synonymous with self-esteem. No, there is an important distinction between the terms *self-esteem* and *self-worth.*

William James, often considered the father of American psychology, defined *self-esteem* as "the sum of your successes and pretensions." In other words, your self-esteem is a

reflection of how you are actually performing compared to how you think you should be performing. So your self-esteem could actually fluctuate from day to day.

Self-worth, however, is different. Our worth as human beings has to do with the fact that we are created in God's image. Our worth never fluctuates because it is anchored in the fact that the Creator made us. We are spiritual as well as physical beings who have a conscience, emotions, and a will. Psalm 8 says: "You have made him [mankind] a little lower than the angels, and you have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands, you have put all things under his feet."

So the good news is that we bear God's image, but the bad news is that all of these characteristics have been tainted by sin. Our worth should not be tied up in what we do, but in who God made us to be and what He has done for us.

Myth 3: You can't love others until you love yourself.

Now I would like to look at the myth that you can't love others until you love yourself. Remember the Whitney Houston song "The Greatest Love of All?" It says, "Learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all."

Peter McWilliams, author of *Life 101*, promotes this idea in his book *Love 101* which carries the subtitle "To Love Oneself Is the Beginning of a Lifelong Romance." He asks, "Who else is more qualified to love you than you? Who else knows what you want, precisely when you want it, and is always around to supply it?" He believes that the answer to those questions is you.

He continues by saying, "If, on the other hand, you have been gradually coming to the seemingly forbidden conclusion that before we can truly love another, or allow another to properly

love us, we must first learn to love ourselves—then this book is for you." Notice that he not only is saying that you cannot love others until you love yourself, but that you can't love you *until you learn* to love yourself.

Melody Beattie, author of *CoDependent No More*, believes the same thing. One of the chapters in her book is entitled, "Have a Love Affair With Yourself." Jackie Schwartz, in her book *Letting Go of Stress*, even suggests that you write a love letter and "tell yourself all the attributes you cherish about yourself, the things that really please, comfort, and excite you."

Does the Bible teach self-love? No, it does not. If anything, the Bible warns us against such a love affair with self. Consider Paul's admonition to Timothy: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

The Bible discourages love of self and actually begins with the assumption we already love ourselves too much and must learn to show sacrificial love (agape love) to others. It also teaches that love is an act of the will. We can choose to love someone whether the feelings are there or not.

We read in 1 John 4, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." The biblical pattern is this: God loves us, and we receive God's love and are able to love

others.

Myth 4: You shouldn’t judge anyone.

Let’s discuss the myth that you shouldn’t judge anyone. No doubt you have heard people say, “You’re just being judgmental” or “Who are you to judge me?” You may have even said something like this.

Many pop psychologists certainly believe that you shouldn’t judge anyone. In their book entitled *Self-Esteem*, Matthew McKay and Patrick Fanning argue that moral judgments about people are unacceptable. They write: “Hard as it sounds, you must give up moral opinions about the actions of others. Cultivate instead the attitude that they have made the best choice available, given their awareness and needs at the time. Be clear that while their behavior may not feel or be good for you, it is not bad.”

So moral judgments are not allowed. You cannot judge another person’s actions, even if you feel that it is wrong. McKay and Fanning go on to say why: “What does it mean that people choose the highest good? It means that you are doing the best you can at any given time. It means that people always act according to their prevailing awareness, needs, and values. Even the terrorist planting bombs to hurt the innocent is making a decision based on his or her highest good. It means you cannot blame people for what they do. Nor can you blame yourself. No matter how distorted or mistaken a person’s awareness is, he or she is innocent and blameless.”

As with many of these pop psychology myths, there is a kernel of truth. True we should be very careful to avoid a judgmental spirit or quickly criticize an individual’s actions when we do not possess all the facts. But the Bible does allow and even encourages us to make judgments and be discerning. In fact, the Bible should be our ultimate standard of right and wrong. If the Bible says murder is wrong, it is wrong. God’s

objective standards as revealed in the Scriptures are our standard of behavior.

How do we apply these standards? Very humbly. We are warned in the gospels “Judge not, that you be not judged.” Jesus was warning us of a self-righteous attitude that could develop from pride and a hypocritical spirit. Jesus also admonished us to “take the plank out of [our] own eye” so that we would be able to “remove the speck from [our] brother’s eye” (Matt. 7:1-5).

Finally, we should acknowledge that Jesus judged people’s actions all the time, yet He never sinned. He offered moral opinions wherever He went. He said, “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me” (John 5:30). Judging is not wrong, but we should be careful to do it humbly and from a biblical perspective.

Myth 5: All guilt is bad.

Finally, I would like to look at the myth that all guilt is bad. In his best-seller, *Your Erroneous Zones*, Wayne Dyer tackles what he believes are two useless emotions: guilt and worry. Now it is true that worry is probably a useless emotion, but it is another story with guilt. Let’s begin by understanding why he calls guilt “the most useless of all erroneous zone behaviors.”

Wayne Dyer believes that guilt originates from two sources: childhood memories and current misbehavior. He says, “Thus you can look at all of your guilt either as reactions to leftover imposed standards in which you are still trying to please an absent authority figure, or as the result of trying to live up to self- imposed standards which you really don’t buy, but for some reason pay lip service to. In either case, it is stupid, and more important, useless behavior.”

He goes on to say that “guilt is not natural behavior” and that our “guilt zones” must be “exterminated, spray-cleaned and sterilized forever.” So how do you exterminate your “guilt zones”? He proposed that you “do something you know is bound to result in feelings of guilt” and then fight those feelings off.

Dyer believes that guilt is “a convenient tool for manipulation” and a “futile waste of time.” And while that is often true, he paints with too large of a brush. Some guilt can be helpful and productive. Some kinds of guilt can be a significant agent of change.

The Bible makes a distinction between two kinds of guilt: true guilt and false guilt. Notice in 2 Corinthians 7:10 that the Apostle Paul says, “Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

Worldly sorrow (often called false guilt) causes us to focus on ourselves, while godly sorrow (true guilt) leads us to focus on the person or persons we have offended. Worldly sorrow (or false guilt) causes us to focus on what we have done in the past, whereas godly sorrow (or true guilt) causes us to focus on what we can do in the present to correct what we’ve done. Corrective actions that come out of worldly sorrow are motivated by the desire to stop feeling bad. Actions that come out of godly sorrow are motivated by the desire to help the offended person or to please God or to promote personal growth. Finally, the results of worldly and godly sorrow differ. Worldly sorrow results in temporary change. Godly sorrow results in true change and growth.

Pop psychology books are half right. False guilt (or worldly sorrow) is not a productive emotion, but true guilt (or godly sorrow) is an emotion God can use to bring about positive change in our lives as we recognize our guilt, ask for forgiveness, and begin to change.

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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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Broken Homes, Broken Hearts — A Christian Perspective on Sex Outside of Marriage

Kerby Anderson examines the impact of teen pregnancies on our society from a Christian, biblical worldview perspective. He suggests steps we must take if Christians are to combat this problem of our American society.

As the family goes, so goes society.

Families are the bedrock of society. When families fall apart, society falls into social and cultural decline. Ultimately the breakdown of the American family is at the root of nearly every other social problem and pathology.

Just a few decades ago, most children in America grew up in intact, two-parent families. Today, children who do so are a

minority. Illegitimacy, divorce, and other lifestyle choices have radically altered the American family, and thus have altered the social landscape.

Karl Zinsmeister of the American Enterprise Institute has said, “There is a mountain of scientific evidence showing that when families disintegrate, children often end up with intellectual, physical and emotional scars that persist for life.” He continues, “We talk about the drug crisis, the education crisis, and the problem of teen pregnancy and juvenile crime. But all these ills trace back predominantly to one source: broken families.”

Broken homes and broken hearts are not only the reason for so many social problems. They are also the reason for the incumbent economic difficulties we face as a culture. The moral foundation of society erodes as children learn the savage values of the street rather than the civilized values of culture. And government inevitably expands to intervene in family and social crises brought about by the breakdown of the family. Sociologist Daniel Yankelovich puts it this way:

> *Americans suspect that the nation’s economic difficulties are rooted not in technical economic forces (for example, exchange rates or capital formation) but in fundamental moral causes. There exists a deeply intuitive sense that the success of a market-based economy depends on a highly developed social morality—trustworthiness, honesty, concern for future generations, an ethic of service to others, a humane society that takes care of those in need, frugality instead of greed, high standards of quality and concern for community. These economically desirable social values, in turn, are seen as rooted in family values. Thus the link in public thinking between a healthy family and a robust economy, though indirect, is clear and firm.*

Illegitimacy is our most important social problem.

One of the most significant factors contributing to the breakdown of the family has been the steady rise of unwed births. Since 1960, illegitimate births have increased more than 400 percent. In 1960, 5 percent of all births were out of wedlock. Thirty years later nearly 30 percent of all births were illegitimate. Among blacks two out of every three births are illegitimate.

To put this astonishing increase in illegitimate births in perspective, compare 1961 with 1991. Roughly the same number of babies were born in both years (about 4 million). But in 1991, five times as many of these babies were born out of wedlock.

Social commentator Charles Murray believes that **"illegitimacy is the single most important social problem of our time—more important than crime, drugs, poverty, illiteracy, welfare or homelessness because it drives everything else."** The public costs of illegitimacy are very high. "Children born out of wedlock tend to have high infant mortality, low birth weight (with attendant morbidities), and high probabilities of being poor, not completing school, and staying on welfare themselves. As a matter of public policy, if not of morality, it pays for society to approve of marriage as the best setting for children, and to discourage having children out of wedlock."

In her famous article in *Atlantic Monthly* entitled "Dan Quayle Was Right," Barbara Dafoe Whitehead warned Americans of the cost of ignoring the breakdown of the family:

> *If we fail to come to terms with the relationship between family structure and declining child well-being, then it will be increasingly difficult to improve children's life prospects, no matter how many new programs the federal*

> *government funds. Nor will we be able to make progress in bettering school performance or reducing crime or improving the quality of the nation's future work force—all domestic problems closely connected to family breakup. Worse, we may contribute to the problem by pursuing policies that actually increase family instability and breakup.*

While speaking of Dan Quayle, it might be wise to remind ourselves of what the former Vice-President said that brought such a firestorm from his critics. While speaking to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, Vice President Quayle argued that "It doesn't help matters when prime time TV has Murphy Brown—a character who supposedly epitomized today's intelligent, highly paid, professional woman—mocking the importance of fathers by bearing a child alone, and calling it just another lifestyle choice."

At the time, one would have thought the Vice-President had uttered the greatest blasphemy of our time. Yes, he was using a fictional character to make a point. Yes, he was challenging the tolerant, politically-correct conventions of the time. But he was addressing an important issue neglected by so many.

Fortunately, a year later *Atlantic Monthly* magazine devoted the cover of its April 1993 issue to the story: "Dan Quayle Was Right. After decades of public dispute about so-called family diversity, the evidence from social-science research is coming in: The dissolution of two-parent families, though it may benefit the adults involved, is harmful to many children, and dramatically undermines our society."

The conclusion should not be startling, yet in a society that no longer operates from a Christian world and life view, it has nearly become front page news. For decades, the United States has engaged in a dangerous social experiment. Two parents are no longer seen as necessary. Stable, intact families are no longer seen as important. We are trying to

reinvent the family and are finding out the devastating consequences of illegitimacy, divorce, and other lifestyle choices. As a society, we must return to the values of abstinence, chastity, fidelity, and commitment. Our desire to reject Christian family values has inevitably lead to the decline of Western civilization. It is time to find the road back to home.

The flood of teenage pregnancies is destroying our social fabric.

One of the most significant factors contributing to the breakdown of the family has been the steady rise of unwed births. Since 1960, illegitimate births have increased more than 400 percent. In 1960, 5 percent of all births were out of wedlock. Thirty years later nearly 30 percent of all births were illegitimate. Among blacks two out of every three births are illegitimate.

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One of the driving forces of illegitimacy is births to unmarried teenagers. Every 64 seconds, a baby is born to a teenage mother, and every five minutes a baby is born to a teenager who already has a child. More than two thirds of these births are to teen girls who are not married.

Becoming a teenage parent significantly decreases the chance that the young mother will be able to complete high school, attend college, and successfully compete for a job. She is much more likely to rear the child in poverty than girls who do not become mothers as teenagers. “When teenagers have

babies both mothers and children tend to have problems—health, social, psychological, and economic. Teens who have children out of wedlock are more likely to end up at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder."

If the increase in teenage pregnancy isn't disturbing enough, there are other disturbing trends. A growing number of adults are having sex with teens. This is more than just Joey Buttafuoco and Amy Fisher or Woody Allen and Soon-Yi Previn. Social statistics show that adult males are fathers of two thirds of the babies born to teenage girls.

In some ways, this is not a new phenomenon. In 1920, for example, 93 percent of babies born to teenagers were fathered by adults. But the difference is that pregnant teens no longer marry the father. Today, 65 percent of teenage moms are unmarried. Many of these kids are destined to spend a lifetime in a cycle of poverty and welfare dependency.

Why teenage girls become sexually involved with adult males is sometimes difficult to discern. A desire for a mature male and teenage insecurity are significant reasons. Teenage girls from broken homes or abusive homes often are easy prey for adult men, which may explain why adult men seek out teenager girls. In many cases, teen sex is not consensual. Girls under the age of 18 are victims of approximately half the rapes each year.

Stemming the tide of teen pregnancy, and reforming the current welfare system that often encourages it, are important action points. But doing so must take into account that adult males are a significant reason why teenage girls are becoming pregnant.

Whether we look at the increase in illegitimate births in general or teenage pregnancy in particular, we can see a disturbing trend. In essence, Americans have been conducting a social experiment for the last three decades. And the evidence clearly points to major problems when children are reared in

families without two parents. Illegitimate births are part of the reason for the breakdown of the family; divorce is the other.

We must honor and promote sexual abstinence.

Thus far we have been talking about the problems. Now it's time to propose a solution. There are two parts to this approach. First, we must teach sexual abstinence. A fundamental reason for the increase in unwed births is teenage sexual promiscuity. Reduce teenage sexuality and you will reduce illegitimacy. Fortunately, the abstinence message seems to be gaining in popularity and getting the media attention it deserves.

or example, the front page of the Sunday *New York Times* Style section featured the surprising headline: "Proud to Be a Virgin: Nowadays, You Can be Respected Even if You Don't Do It." And the March 1994 issue of *Mademoiselle* featured an article proclaiming "The New Chastity." The article wondered if "saying no to sex might turn out to be the latest stage in the sexual revolution." *Mademoiselle* found that views on sexuality seem to be changing. Virgins, for example, are no longer seen as individuals who are fearful or socially inept. In fact, abstinence is now being equated with strength of will and character. Those once labeled "carefree" are now considered "careless" in light of the AIDS and STDs.

One of the most visible campaign for abstinence has come from the "True Love Waits" campaign by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) begun in the spring of 1993. Students pledge: "Believing that true love waits, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, those I date, my future mate, and my future children to be sexually pure until the day I enter a covenant marriage relationship."

A grassroots movement to promote abstinence through a variety

of programs has been spreading throughout the country. Crisis Pregnancy Centers provide speakers to address the issue of abstinence. Untold groups—with names like “Aim for Success” and “Best Friends” and “Athletes for Abstinence”—are spreading the positive message of abstinence to teens who need to hear an alternative to the safe sex message.

There are substantial personal benefits to abstinence. But the greatest benefit to society is a reduction in the illegitimate birth rate which drives nearly all of the social problems discussed in this book.

We must target teen pregnancy.

Now we must address the second part of the problem; that is, we must target teen pregnancy. The problem with teenage sex is not simply that teens are having sex. In approximately half the cases, adults are having sex with teenagers. State laws governing statutory rape are often called a “fictitious chastity belt” since law enforcement often ignore the laws.

The reasons for lax enforcement are varied, but they surely include the fallout from the sexual revolution and the children’s rights movement. As a society, we have come to accept the notion that even young teenagers are engaging in consensual sex. While there may be some tawdry publicity when a high profile entertainer like Woody Allen or Kelsey Grammar is accused of sex with a teenager, generally the issue is ignored.

But the issue cannot be ignored. “Welfare reform, sex education and teen pregnancy prevention programs and welfare reform are doomed to failure when they ignore the prevalence of adult-teen sex.” Education about the problem and enforcement of statutory rape laws would substantially reduce the number of unwed teens.

We must honor and promote strong marriages.

Now I would like to propose additional solutions to the problem of family breakdown. First, we must teach marriage principles. Marriages are falling apart and other marriages never begin as sexual partners choose to live together rather than get married. Churches and Christian organizations must teach marriage principles so that marriages will last. Once built on commitment, today's marriages are a contract: as long as love shall last. Sound, biblical education is necessary to put marriages back on a firm foundation.

Fortunately, a growing number of effective organizations are providing that needed education. Family Life Ministry holds weekend Family Life Conferences through out the country and the world to packed audiences eager to learn more about how to build strong marriages and families. The Marriage Encounter program has been providing the same important teaching in church and retreat settings. And lots and lots of books, tapes, videos, and other seminars are focusing needed attention on the principles that will build strong marriages and allow them to flourish.

We must honor and support fatherhood.

Second, we must emphasize fatherhood. As more and more children grow up in single-parent homes (which are primarily female-headed homes), fathers appear irrelevant and superfluous. Not only are they seen as expendable; they are often seen as part of the problem.

Yet the consequences of fatherless homes is devastating. "More than 70 percent of all juveniles in state reform institutions come from fatherless homes." Children who grow up without fathers are more likely to be involved in criminal behavior because they lack a positive male role model in their lives.

Fathers are not irrelevant. They may indeed spell the difference between success and failure for their children.

Often fatherless homes feed the cycle of illegitimacy itself. “Young white women who grow up without a father in the home are more than twice as likely to bear children out of wedlock. And boys living in a single-parent family are twice as likely to father a child out of wedlock as boys from intact homes.”

Fortunately, there are many ministries encouraging men to stand with their families. Gatherings like the Promise Keepers conferences nationwide are highly visible symbols of a much greater movement of men (individual churches or parachurch organizations) who have dedicated themselves to running their families on biblical principles. Groups like Mad Dads (Men Against Destruction Defending Against Drugs and Social disorder) have been organized to encourage fathers in high crime urban areas. Especially critical are young urban (often black) youths who do not have strong male role models to emulate. One organizer said, “They saw pimps and hustlers and dope dealers and gang bangers and hypersexual individuals who like to make babies but didn’t assume the responsibility of taking care of them—so why should the kids? And so our first goal was just to mobilize strong, black fathers who were drug-free, who were willing to stand up and be role models, giving our kids another group of men they could look at.”

Building strong families must include building families with fathers. Fatherlessness is one of the primary causes of social disintegration. Parenting cannot be left to mothers and grandmothers. Fathers are essential.

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Loneliness

Kerby Anderson discusses the pervasiveness of loneliness in our culture, particularly within marriage.

The baby boom generation is headed for a crisis of loneliness. The reasons are simple: demographics and social isolation. More boomers are living alone than in previous generations, and those living with another person will still feel the nagging pangs of loneliness.

In previous centuries where extended families dominated the social landscape, a sizable proportion of adults living alone was unthinkable. And even in this century, adults living alone have usually been found near the beginning (singles) and end (widows) of adult life. But these periods of living alone are now longer due to lifestyle choices on the front end and advances in modern medicine on the back end. Baby boomers are postponing marriage and thus extending the number of years of being single. Moreover, their parents are (and presumably they will be) living longer, thereby increasing the number of years one adult will be living alone. Yet the increase in the number of adults living alone originates from more than just changes at the beginning and end of adult life. Increasing numbers of boomers are living most or all of their adult lives alone.

In the 1950s, about one in every ten households had only one person in them. These were primarily widows. But today, due to the three D’s of social statistics (death, divorce, and deferred marriage), about one in every four households is a single person household. And if current trends continue, sociologists predict that ratio will increase to one in every three households by the twenty-first century.

In the past, gender differences have been significant in determining the number of adults living alone. For example, young single households are more likely to be men, since women

marry younger. On the other hand, old single households are more likely to be women, because women live longer than men. While these trends still hold true, the gender distinctions are blurring as boomers of both sexes reject the traditional attitudes towards marriage. Compared with their parents, boomers are marrying less, marrying later, and staying married for shorter periods of time.

Marriage Patterns

The most marriageable generation in history has not made the trip to the altar in the same percentage as their parents. In 1946, the parents of the baby boom set an all-time record of 2,291,000 marriages. This record was not broken during the late 1960s and early 1970s, when millions of boomers entered the marriage-prone years. Finally, in 1979, the record that had lasted 33 years was finally broken when the children of the baby boom made 2,317,000 marriages.

Instead of marrying, many boomers chose merely to “live together.” When this generation entered the traditional years of marriageability, the number of unmarried couples living together in the United States doubled in just ten years to well over a million. The sharpest change was among cohabiting couples under 25, who increased ninefold after 1970. Demographers estimate that there have been as many as one-and-a-half to two million cohabiting couples in the U.S. Yet even high figures underestimate the lifestyle changes of boomers. These figures merely represent the number of couples living together at any one time. Cohabitation is a fluid state, so the total number living together or living alone is in the millions.

Not only is this generation marrying less; they are also marrying later. Until the baby boom generation arrived on the scene, the median age of marriage remained stable. But since the mid-fifties, the median age of first marriage has been edging up. Now both “men and women are marrying a full

eighteen months later than their counterparts a generation earlier.”

Another reason for a crisis in loneliness is marital stability. Not only is this generation marrying less and marrying later; they also stay married less than their parents. The baby boom generation has the highest divorce rate of any generation in history. But this is only part of the statistical picture. Not only do they divorce more often; they divorce earlier. When the divorce rate shot up in the sixties and seventies, the increase did not come from empty nesters finally filing for divorce after sending their children into the world.Instead, it came from young couples divorcing before they even had children. Demographer Tobert Michael of Stanford calculated that while men and women in their twenties comprised only about 20 percent of the population, they contributed 60 percent of the growth in the divorce rate in the sixties and early seventies.

Taken together, these statistics point to a coming crisis of loneliness for the boom generation. More and more middle-aged adults will find themselves living alone. Thomas Exter, writing in *American Demographics*, predicts that

> The most dramatic growth in single-person households should occur among those aged 45 to 64, as baby boomers become middle-aged.

These households are expected to increase by 42 percent, and it appears the number of men living alone is growing faster than the number of women.

The crisis of loneliness will affect more than just the increasing number of baby boomers living alone. While the increase in adults living alone is staggering and unprecedented, these numbers are fractional compared with the number of baby boomers in relationships that leave them feeling very much alone.

The “C” word (as it was often called in the 80s) is a significant issue. Commitment is a foreign concept to most of the million-plus cohabiting couples. These fluid and highly mobile situations form more often out of convenience and demonstrate little of the commitment necessary to make a relationship work. These relationships are transitory and form and dissolve with alarming frequency. Anyone looking for intimacy and commitment will not find them in these relationships.

Commitment is also a problem in marriages. Spawned in the streams of sexual freedom and multiple lifestyle options, boomers may be less committed to making marriage work than previous generations. Marriages, which are supposed to be the source of stability and intimacy, often produce uncertainty and isolation.

Living-Together Loneliness

Psychologist and best-selling author Dan Kiley has coined the term “living-together loneliness,” or LTL, to describe this phenomenon. He has estimated that 10 to 20 million people (primarily women) suffer from “living together loneliness.”

LTL is an affliction of the individual, not the relationship, though that may be troubled too. Instead, Dan Kiley believes LTL has more to do with two issues: the changing roles of men and women and the crisis of expectations. In the last few decades, especially following the rise of the modern feminist movement, expectations that men have of women and that women have of men have been significantly altered. When these expectations do not match reality, disappointment (and eventually loneliness) sets in. Dan Kiley first noted this phenomenon among his female patients in 1970. He began to realize that loneliness comes in two varieties. The first is the loneliness felt by single, shy people who have no friends. The second is more elusive because it involves the person in a relationship who nevertheless feels isolated and very much

alone.

According to Kiley, “There is nothing in any diagnostic or statistical manual about this. I found out about it by listening to people.” He has discovered that some men have similar feelings, but most tend to be women. The typical LTL sufferer is a woman between the ages of 33 and 46, married and living a comfortable life. She may have children. She blames her husband or live-in partner for her loneliness. Often he’s critical, demanding, uncommunicative. The typical LTL woman realizes she is becoming obsessed with her bitterness and is often in counseling for depression or anxiety. She is frequently isolated and feels some estrangement from other people, even close friends. Sometimes she will have a fantasy about her partner dying, believing that her loneliness will end if that man is out of her life.

To determine if a woman is a victim of LTL, Kiley employs a variation of an “uncoupled loneliness” scale devised by researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles. For example, an LTL woman would agree with the following propositions: (1) I can’t turn to him when I feel bad, (2) I feel left out of his life, (3) I feel isolated from him, even when he’s in the same room, (4) I am unhappy being shut off from him, (5) No one really knows me well.

Kiley also documents five identifiable stages of LTL which are likely to affect baby boom women. A typical LTL woman who marries at about age 22 will feel bewildered until she is 28. At that point, isolation sets in. At 34, she begins to feel agitated. This turns to depression between the ages of 43 and 50. After that, a woman faces absolute exhaustion.

Women may soon find that loneliness has become a part of their lives whether they are living alone or “in a relationship,” because loneliness is more a state of mind than it is a social situation. People who find themselves trapped in a relationship may be more lonely than a person living alone.

The fundamental issue is whether they reach out and develop strong relationship bonds.

Male Loneliness

In recent years, social psychologists have expressed concern about the friendless male. Many studies have concluded that women have better relational skills which help them to be more successful at making and keeping friends. Women, for example, are more likely than men to express their emotions and display empathy and compassion in response to the emotions of others. Men, on the other hand, are frequently more isolated and competitive and therefore have fewer (if any) close friends.

Men, in fact, may not even be conscious of their loneliness and isolation. In his book *The Hazards of Being Male: The Myth of Masculine Privilege*, Herb Goldberg asked adult men if they had any close friends. Most of them seemed surprised by the question and usually responded, “No, why? Should I?”

David Smith lists in his book *Men Without Friends* the following six characteristics of men which prove to be barriers to friendship. First, men show an aversion to showing emotions. Expressing feelings is generally taboo for males. At a young age, boys receive the cultural message that they are to be strong and stoic. As men, they shun emotions. Such an aversion makes deep relationships difficult, thus men find it difficult to make and keep friendships.

Second, men seemingly have an inherent inability to fellowship. In fact, men find it hard to accept the fact that they need fellowship. If someone suggests lunch, it is often followed by the response, “Sure, what’s up?” Men may get together for business, sports, or recreation (hunting and fishing), but they rarely do so just to enjoy each other’s company. Centering a meeting around an activity is not bad, it is just that the conversation often never moves beyond work or sports to deeper levels.

Third, men have inadequate role models. The male macho image prevents strong friendships since a mask of aggressiveness and strength keeps men from knowing themselves and others. A fourth barrier is male competition. Men are inordinately competitive. Men feel they must excel in what they do. Yet this competitive spirit is frequently a barrier to friendship.

Fifth is an inability to ask for help. Men rarely ask for help because they perceive it as a sign of weakness. Others simply don't want to burden their family or colleagues with their problems. In the end, male attempts at self-sufficiency rob them of fulfilling relationships.

A final barrier is incorrect priorities. Men often have a distorted order of priorities in which physical things are more important than relationships. Success and status is determined by material wealth rather than by the number of close friends.

Men tend to limit their friendships and thus their own identity. H. Norman Wright warns:

> The more a man centers his identity in just one phase of his life—such as vocation, family, or career—the more vulnerable he is to threats against his identity and the more prone he is to experience a personal crisis. A man who has limited sources of identity is potentially the most fragile. Men need to broaden their basis for identity. They need to see themselves in several roles rather than just a teacher, just a salesman, just a handsome, strong male, just a husband.

Crowded Loneliness

Loneliness, it turns out, is not just a problem of the individual. Loneliness is endemic to our modern, urban society. In rural communities, although the farm houses are far apart, community is usually very strong. Yet in our urban and suburban communities today, people are physically very

close to each other but emotionally very distant from each other. Close proximity does not translate into close community.

Dr. Roberta Hestenes at Eastern College has referred to this as “crowded loneliness.” She says:

> Today we are seeing the breakdown of natural “community” network groups in neighborhoods like relatives, PTA, etc. At the same time, we have relationships with so many people. Twenty percent of the American population moves each year. If they think they are moving, they won’t put down roots. People don’t know how to reach out and touch people. This combination produces crowded loneliness.

Another reason for social isolation is the American desire for privacy. Though many boomers desire community and long for a greater intimacy with other members of their generation, they will choose privacy even if it means a nagging loneliness. Ralph Keyes, in his book *We the Lonely People*, says that above all else Americans value mobility, privacy, and convenience. These three values make developing a sense of community almost impossible. In his book *A Nation of Strangers*, Vance Packard argued that the mobility of American society contributed to social isolation and loneliness. He described five forms of uprooting that were creating greater distances between people.

First is the uprooting of people who move again and again. An old Carole King song asked the question, “Doesn’t anybody stay in one place any more?” At the time when Packard wrote the book, he estimated that the average American would move about 14 times in his lifetime. By contrast, he estimated that the average Japanese would move five times.

The second is the uprooting that occurs when communities undergo upheaval. The accelerated population growth during the baby boom along with urban renewal and flight to the suburbs have been disruptive to previously stable communities.

Third, there is the uprooting from housing changes within communities. The proliferation of multiple-dwelling units in urban areas crowd people together who frequently live side by side in anonymity.

Fourth is the increasing isolation due to work schedules. When continuous-operation plants and offices dominate an area's economy, neighbors remain strangers.

And fifth, there is the accelerating fragmentation of the family. The steady rise in the number of broken families and the segmentation of the older population from the younger heightens social isolation. In a very real sense, a crisis in relationships precipitates a crisis in loneliness.

Taken together, these various aspects of loneliness paint a chilling picture of the 1990s. But they also present a strategic opportunity for the church. Loneliness will be on the increase in this decade, and Christians have an opportunity to minister to people cut off from normal, healthy relationships.

The local church should provide opportunities for outreach and fellowship in their communities. Individual Christians must reach out to lonely people and become their friends. And ultimately we must help a lost, lonely world realize that their best friend of all is Jesus Christ.

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Time and Busyness

It has, perhaps, always been true that "time is money." But for the current generation, this maxim has a new twist. In the frenetic 90s, time has become even more scarce than money and

therefore more valuable. As with any commodity, the law of supply and demand determines value. In the last two decades, free time has grown scarce and hence has become a valuable possession.

The 1990s is the decade of the time famine. Leisure time, once plentiful and elastic, is now scarce and elusive. People seeking the good life are finding it increasingly difficult to enjoy it, even if they can afford it. What money was in the 1980s, time has become in the 1990s.

According to a Lou Harris survey, the amount of leisure time enjoyed by the average American has shrunk 37 percent since 1973. A major reason is an expanding workweek. Over this same period, the average workweek (including commuting) has increased from fewer than 41 hours to nearly 47 hours. And in many professions, such as medicine, law, and accounting, an 80-hour week is not uncommon. Harris therefore concludes that "time may have become the most precious commodity in the land."

The Technology of Time

Our current time crunch has caught most people off-guard. Optimistic futurists in the 1950s and 60s, with visions of utopia dancing in their heads, predicted Americans would enjoy ample hours of leisure by the turn of the century. Computers, satellites, and robotics would remove the menial aspects of labor and deliver abundant opportunities for rest and recreation.

The optimists were partly right: computers crunch data at unimaginable speeds, orbiting satellites cover the globe with a dizzying array of messages, and robots zap together everything from cars to computer chips at speeds far exceeding their human counterparts. Yet these and other technological feats have not freed Americans from their labors. Most people are busier than ever.

It wasn’t supposed to be this way. Testimony before a Senate subcommittee in 1967 predicted that “by 1985, people could be working just 22 hours a week or 27 weeks a year or could retire at 38.” The major challenge facing people in the 1990s should have been what to do with all the leisure time provided by our technological wizardry.

Instead, technology has been more of an enemy than an ally. “Technology is increasing the heartbeat,” says Manhattan architect James Trunzo, who designs automated environments. “We are inundated with information. The mind can’t handle it all. The pace is so fast now, I sometimes feel like a gunfighter dodging bullets.”

Actually, the problem isn’t so much technology as it is the heightened expectations engendered by it. The increased speed and efficiency of appliances, computers, and other machines have enabled us to accomplish much more than was possible in previous decades. But this efficiency has also fostered a desire to take on additional responsibilities and thereby squeeze even more activities into already crammed calendars.

As the pace of our lives has increased, over-commitment and busyness have been elevated to socially desirable standards. Being busy is chic and trendy. Pity the poor person who has an organized life and a livable schedule. Everyone, it seems, is running out of time.

Time-Controlling Devices

It is little wonder that most of the products now being developed are not so much time-savers as they are time-controllers. Most of the appliances developed in the 1950s—vacuum cleaners, dishwashers, mixers—were designed to save time and remove drudgery from housework. By comparison, most of the products developed in the 1980s—VCRs, answering machines, automatic tellers—were time- controllers. These devices do not save much time, but they do allow harried

consumers to use their time more effectively.

Technological efficiency has also increased competition. Labor- saving devices that are supposed to make life easier frequently force people to work harder. Baby boomers who are intensely competing with one another for jobs and prestigious promotions avidly employ the latest equipment to give them an edge. Faxes, LANs, car phones, and laptop computers are viewed as necessities if one is to remain competitive.

But technology isn't enough. So most professionals, especially those in service industries such as law, accounting, and advertising, work long hours in an effort to meet their clients' seemingly endless needs and demands. Other baby boomers feel trapped in the same rat race because economic pressures make it nearly impossible to support a family on one income.

The work ethic seems out of control. In the frenetic dash for success or just plain survival, leisure time becomes a scarce commodity. "My wife and I were sitting on the beach in Anguilla on one of our rare vacations," recalls architect James Trunzo, "and even there my staff was able to reach me. There are times when our lives are clearly leading us."

No Time to Talk

Everywhere, it seems, people are over-scheduled and over-committed. Workers are weary. Parents are preoccupied. And children and family relationships are often neglected.

A recent survey by Cynthia Langham at the University of Detroit found that parents and children spend only 14.5 minutes per day talking to each other. That is less time than a football quarter and certainly much less time than most people spend commuting to work.

She says that many people are shocked to hear the 14.5-minutes statistic. But once they take a stopwatch to their

conversations, they realize she is right.

But that 14.5 minute statistic is misleading, since most of that time is squandered on chitchat like “What’s for supper?” and “Have you finished your homework?” Truly meaningful communication between parent and child unfortunately occupies only about two minutes each day. Langham concludes, “Nothing indicates that parent-child communications are improving. If things are changing, it’s for the worse.”

She points to two major reasons for this communication breakdown. First is a change in the workforce. A few decades ago the dinner table was a forum for family business and communication. But now, when dinner-time rolls around, Dad is still at work, Mom is headed for a business meeting, and sister has to eat and run to make it to her part-time job. Even when everyone is home, there are constant interruptions to meaningful communication.

The second reason for poor parent-child communication is the greatest interruption of all: television. Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell has reported a forty-year decline in the amount of time children spend with their parents, and much of the recent loss is due to television. TV sabotages much of the already-limited time families spend together. Meals are frequently eaten in front of the “electronic fireplace.” After dinner, talk-starved families gather to watch congenial television families with good communication skills, like the Huxtables on the Cosby show.

While some television shows deal with issues families might discuss (drugs, pregnancy, honesty), few families take advantage of these opportunities to talk about the dilemmas portrayed on the programs and provide moral instruction.

The greeting card business has developed a whole new product line for busy parents and children. More and more children are finding cards in their backpacks or under their pillows that

proclaim, “Have a good day at school,” or lament, “I wish I were there to tuck you in.”

The effect of time pressures on the family has been devastating. Yale psychology professor Edward Ziglar somberly warns that “as a society, we’re at the breaking point as far as family is concerned.”

Homemaking and child- rearing are full-time activities. When both husband and wife work, maintaining a home and raising a family becomes difficult. In the increasing numbers of single-parent households, the task becomes next to impossible.

Someone has to drive car pools, make lunches, do laundry, cope with sick kids and broken appliances, and pay the bills. In progressive homes, household tasks are shared as the traditional husband/wife division of labor breaks down. In others, super-Mom is expected to step into the gap and perform flawlessly.

Inevitably, children are forced to grow up quickly and take on responsibilities they should never have to shoulder. Some children are effectively abandoned—if not physically, at least emotionally- -and must grow up on their own. Others are latch-key kids who are forced to mature emotionally beyond their years. These demands take their toll and create what sociologist David Elkind has called the “hurried child” syndrome.

Time, or rather our lack of it, is severely hurting families. Nurturing suffers when families do not have time to communicate and parents do not have time to instruct their children. In the end, the lack of time takes its toll on the stability of our families.

Never Enough Time

A 1989 survey done by *Family Circle* documented the loss of time in families, especially for working mothers. The article,

entitled “Never Enough Time?” began: “Remember ‘quality time’? In the 1980’s that was what you sandwiched in for the children between the office and the housework. We all learned how valuable time was in the school of hard knocks. Life was what happened while we were busy making other plans, to paraphrase ex-Beatle John Lennon.” That was then.

A resounding 71 percent of those surveyed said their lives had gotten busier in the previous year. Nearly a third attributed this increase in busyness to expanding work loads at the office, the demands of a new job, or the pressures of starting a business or returning to work. Not only were the women working longer hours, but many were also working on weekends, and nearly a third often took work home.

Dual-income couples reported major difficulties finding time for each other. Negotiating schedules and calendar-juggling were daily activities. Three out of four women in the survey reported that finding enough time to be alone with their husbands was “often” or “sometimes” a major stress in their relationships. When asked, “In a time crunch, who gets put on the back burner?” half said friends, then husbands, and then other family members.

Those hit hardest by time pressures were single parents. One single mother with two teenagers in Illinois wrote: “I am responsible for a house and yard, work 40 hours a week, take college classes, run a local support group for divorced and widowed women and am involved with a retreat group through church. I have time because I *make* time.”

Often the first thing women will let slide is housekeeping. A full 82 percent said they had changed their standards of cleaning and organizing a house. When asked why, 49 percent said other things are more important, 42 percent said they were more relaxed about letting chores wait, 35 percent said they had one or more young children, and 23 percent said they had taken a paying job.

Organization expert Stephanie Winston says that the young generation of working women has reframed expectations about household responsibilities. She says, “Their sense of what is expected of them is really very different from what was expected 10 years ago, when women joining the work force had been raised on the old model—rearing the family, cooking, cleaning and the proverbial white-glove test.” But whether they were in the work force or full- time homemakers, more than half of the women surveyed were either “very” or “somewhat” dissatisfied with the amount of time they have alone. Only 30 percent try to set aside four or more hours a week just for themselves. Another 30 percent carve out two to three hours. But 19 percent say they give themselves an hour or less a week, and 20 percent do not allot themselves any leisure time at all.

The time pressure on women and families is significant. The time crunch is squeezing out meaningful communication and important time to think and reflect. The additional time will not come without changes in our lifestyles.

Redeeming the Time

Time, or the lack of it, will continue to dominate our thinking through the 1990s. All of us are in the midst of a time crunch—the solution is to recognize our priorities and apply them rigorously to our lives.

First, we must establish biblical priorities in our lives. Often our busyness is merely a symptom of a deeper problem, such as materialism. In Luke 12, Jesus illustrated this danger with the parable of the rich fool. He says, “The land of a certain rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, `What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ And he said, `This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods, laid up for many years to come;

take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.”‘ But God said to him, `You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'”

There are a number of applications we can derive from this passage. First, we should make sure that we are not so involved in the affairs of the world that we neglect the affairs of the spirit. To turn the familiar adage around, we can be so earthly-minded we are no heavenly good.

Second, we should ask ourselves if we are tearing down productive resources for a more luxurious lifestyle. If a three-bedroom house is sufficient, are we selling it merely to move up to a four- bedroom house? If the car we are currently driving is fine, are we nevertheless eager to trade it in on a newer or more expensive model? Often our indulgences constrain our time and financial resources.

This observation leads to our second biblical principle: fight materialism in our lives. Proverbs 28:20 says “He who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished.” Materialism brings with it a haste to get rich. Materialistic people are not patient people. They want what they want, when they want it, and they want it now.

Often our lack of time is tied to our haste to get rich, to feed our greed. We need to ask ourselves the fundamental question, How much do we really need? If we fight materialism in our lives and cut back on the lavishness of our lifestyle, we might be surprised how much time we will free up.

A third biblical principle is to redeem the time. Ephesians 5:15-16 says “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.” Colossians 4:5 says, “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, redeeming the time.”

Unlike many of the other resources God has given us, time is not renewable. We may lose money, but we can always earn more.

We may lose our possessions, but we can always acquire new ones. But time is a non-renewable commodity. If we squander our time, it is lost forever.

All of us, but especially Christians, must carefully manage the time that God has given us. It is a valuable resource, and we can either spend it on ourselves or redeem it as a spiritual investment. We can spend it only once, and how we spend it can have eternal consequences. Let us not waste the resources God has given us. Instead, let us redeem the time and use it for God's glory.

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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

1. Coleman, James C. *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*, 3rd edition, p.657.
2. McMillen S. I. *None of These Diseases*, p. 106.
3. Mowrer O. H. "Sin, the Lesser of Two Evils," quoted in Henry Brandt's *The Struggle for Peace.*
4. I Peter 2:24, Living Bible.
5. Colossians 1:14, Beck.
6. I John 5:11,12.
7. Matthew 6:31-33, paraphrased.
8. Psalms 36:5,6.
9. I John 4:19.
10. Romans 5:8.
11. II Corinthians 5:17.
12. Romans 8:38,39.
13. "A Scientific Report on What Hope Does for Man," (New York State Heart Assembly, 105 East 22 St, N.Y.), quoted in McMillen's *None of These Diseases*, p 110.
14. II Corinthians 5-20.
15. McMillen, p. 77.
16. Philippians 4:6,7.

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