

JULY-AUGUST 2019

THE

RCG.ORG/REALTRUTH

REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



WHY MAN WANTS TO GO BACK

**Can Japan Achieve
Beautiful Harmony?**

**Record Floods and Tornadoes
Plague Central U.S.**

**Strait of Hormuz:
Center of Tensions**

**Get Your Prayers
Answered**

THE
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VOL. XVII | NO. 4 | JULY-AUGUST 2019

ARTICLES

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■ Japan's new Emperor Naruhito, accompanied by new Empress Masako, makes his first address after succeeding his father Akihito at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo (May 1, 2019).

PHOTO: JAPAN POOL VIA AP

Can Japan Achieve Beautiful Harmony?

With a newly crowned emperor, Japan has entered a new historical period. Hopes are high that it will mean peace and prosperity for the nation.

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FRONT COVER: Astronaut John Young, commander of the Apollo 16 lunar landing mission, leaps from the surface as he salutes the U.S. flag at the Descartes landing site on the moon (April 21, 1972). The lunar module Orion is on the left.

PHOTO: NASA

CREDITS: All photos from Getty Images unless otherwise noted. Photo illustration on page 22 by Jody E. Lydick/The Real Truth. Pages 5-9, 14-21 contain information from The Associated Press.

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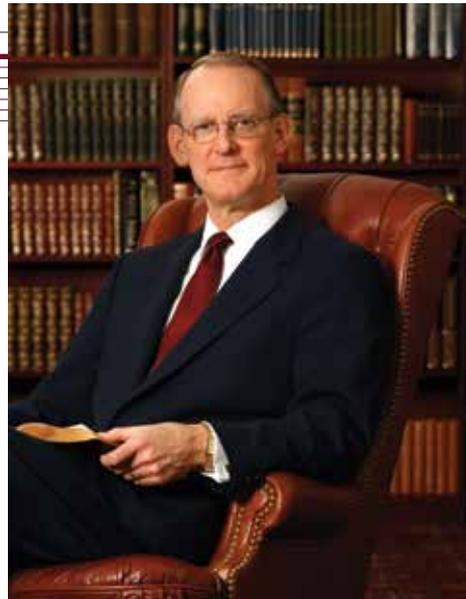
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Live the Abundant Life!

NEVER HAS THE world had so much, yet been so miserable. Depression, unhappiness, confusion, frustration, unfulfilled hopes and dreams, dissatisfaction, emptiness—and hopeless misery—describe humanity the world over.

The American Constitution guarantees its citizens the right to “pursuit of happiness.” The framers knew they could not guarantee reaching it. They could only guarantee one’s right to “pursue” it. Most *are* pursuing happiness, but in all the *wrong* places!—and they are not finding it.

Vast new frontiers of expanding scientific knowledge have not brought the happiness that leaders prophesied would accompany it. Neither have laborsaving devices, which were supposed to bring people more leisure time to “enjoy themselves.” Instead, mental illness, drug addiction, despair, suicide, alcoholism, self-pity and other forms of escapism—and *general discontent with life*—are everywhere.

Educators have failed to lead people to the abundant life. So have scientists. Religion has also failed terribly in teaching people what God intends they know about *real* abundant living.

Many religions have taught people to *feel guilty* if they enjoy themselves—if they are happy! So many believe God wants them to suppress joy and happiness—and that Christ *expects* this from His followers.

Millions view Christianity as a series of “Thou shalt *nots*,” rather than the path to enjoying a wonderful, happy life. These same millions often think of sin as the fun that will end if they obey God. They think accepting Jesus also means accepting a constrained life.

Be honest. Haven’t you seen Christianity primarily *this* way? Haven’t you thought that Christianity primarily means an *end* to fun, pleasure, excitement, thrills and an interesting life? Haven’t you also thought of most church services as solemn, sober, unemotional and devoid of real meaning—and *happiness*? Because of this, many attend emotional churches, seeking a *feeling* (always temporary) they equate with happiness in order to fill terrible emptiness inside.

Few equate Christianity with enjoying a true zest for life!

What Christ Said

Just before His crucifixion, Jesus taught His disciples many vital principles, saying, “These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy [Jesus’ own joy] might remain in you, and that your joy *might be full*” (John 15:11). Knowing the disciples would grieve at His death, He added, “Your sorrow shall be turned into joy...and your joy no man takes from you” (16:20, 22).

This is a powerful promise. Christians are to experience real joy and happiness *in this life*—if they are pleasing and obeying God. Most know nothing of this

extraordinary statement, or similar verses. Yet it has been God's purpose from the beginning that His servants enjoy life to the full—and with *His* joy.

Consider. The true God of the Bible is the happiest Being in the universe! David understood this and wrote: "In [God's] presence is *fullness of joy*" (Psa. 16:11). God lives life with "*fullness of joy*." All those in His presence can experience this. The apostle Jude added God wants "to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with *exceeding joy*" (vs. 24).

This is your ultimate destiny!

Why then would God expect His people to merely *endure* this life? This life is a time of lesson-learning, including trials and suffering. But it is also a forerunner, in a very small way, of what eternal life is intended to be. It would make no sense for God to expect life to consist of only suffering and pain *now* as preparation for perfect joy and happiness *later*.

What Christ Brought

Many years ago, I learned of one of the most incredible verses in the entire Bible. No one in the large, respected denomination of my youth ever mentioned it. Apparently, none ever *thought* about it either, because their lives did not reflect it. Notice: "I am come [Jesus said] that they might have life, and that they might have it more *abundantly*" (John 10:10).

Have *you* seen or *heard* of this verse? Probably not. Christ came bringing the *abundant* life—and said so plainly!

Yet so many believe Christianity is supposed to be *endured* instead of *enjoyed*. Why do they not understand that the radiant, abundant life can be theirs—if they will follow *God's* formula to achieve it?

God never instructs or commands His people to avoid anything unless it is for *their own good*. Many things *seem* like fun, but carry a delayed penalty, and price, afterward. God instructs what to avoid so we will not get hit later by an unexpected "boomerang"!

I have not met one person who actually *wanted* to be unhappy. All want to live life to the fullest, and feel happiness and joy. But most have simply not known *how* to do this—or whether God even *expected* it. He does—and tells you *how*!

Bible Formula

For every person, there is a different definition for what a Christian is. Can you turn to a verse that explains, removing all doubt? There *is* such a verse—and it is the only place to begin to learn how to live the happy, joyful, abundant life!

The apostle Paul said more about happiness than any other Bible writer. The verse that speaks most about this subject appears not to mention it. Let's read it: "You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, *he is none of His*" (Rom. 8:9).

This basic scripture leaves no room for misunderstanding. A Christian is *one who has the Spirit of God*. If not, "he is none of His." This includes you. Countless millions of merely professing Christians sincerely believe they are "Christ's," yet do not have God's Spirit and are, therefore, not Christians.

Keep this simple—as we move step-by-step. The beginning point of Christianity is that one must receive God's Spirit. But what does the Holy Spirit have to do with happiness, joy and the abundant life? Let's connect two big dots. First notice: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23).

This verse is all-important. When a newly converted Christian receives the Spirit of God, he gets a little of each of these qualities of God's character. Since God experiences fullness of joy, it is not strange then that His Holy Spirit—which is His "divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4)—includes joy.

The Christian starts out by practicing "love," the only fruit listed before joy. Love is the fulfilling of the Law of God (Rom. 13:10; I John 5:3). "Joy" is

listed second because it is the first and most immediate *byproduct* of practicing obedience to God's Law. Next comes "peace," which flows from being genuinely happy in life—and toward those around you.

It is not hard to see how this will yield real peace in your relationships with others. Without God's Spirit within one's mind—which produces the deep, inner peace Paul wrote must "rule in your hearts" (Col. 3:15)—it is impossible to be happy.

Each additional fruit of the Spirit will flow as a direct result of having God's Spirit, and *being* a real Christian. While millions may think they are Christians, and may think they have the Holy Spirit, they have not followed the biblical formula of Acts 2:38.

This means you. If God's Spirit is present within you, you can experience a joy and peace no one can take from you—even when persecuted. The Bible states, "*All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" (II Tim. 3:12). You will be persecuted for your beliefs, but this need not upset you and cause unhappiness.

God actually tells us to "rejoice, and be exceeding glad" (Matt. 5:11-12) when the very worst and most intense kinds of persecution and false accusation are thrown against us. This is because we will receive a "greater reward" at Christ's Return as a result!

Trials—a Part of Christianity

The same is true of trials, which are a part of every Christian's life. Jesus was not an exception regarding trials and suffering. We saw He experienced joy and left it with His disciples and His Church through His Spirit given on Pentecost (Acts 2). Yet Christ was also "a man of sorrows [pain], and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3).

How could it be both? How could Christ be full of joy *and* experience sorrows and grief? Overcoming and truly conquering sin is not easy. Jesus

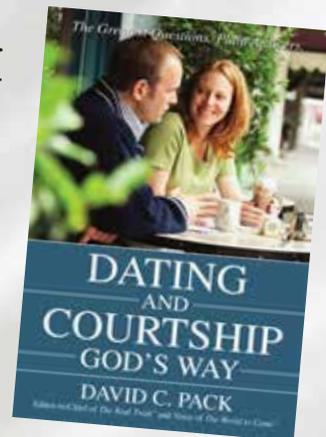
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How do I get to “I do”?

The path to getting married can be complicated. On average, a person will experience four disastrous dates, be in eight relationships, will have “fallen in love” twice, and will be heartbroken two times before settling down.

But this is not what God intended! Order your free copy of *Dating and Courtship – God’s Way* to learn straight from the Bible how to practice successful dating—free from heartbreak—and to prepare for a successful marriage.



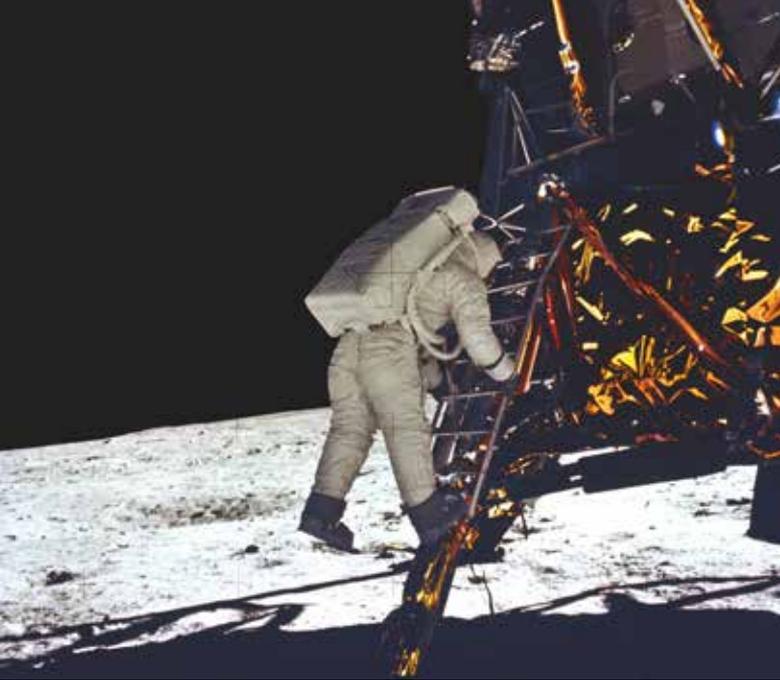
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WHY MAN WANTS TO GO BACK

It appears man's footprints will grace the lunar surface once more within the next five years—more than five decades after the first landing. What is motivating us to return?

BY DAVID J. LITAVSKY



DEALISM CAN seem to border on lunacy—particularly when one does not have the means to accomplish a goal.

One could have thought this when U.S. President John F. Kennedy made a commitment on May 25, 1961, to land a man on the moon and return him safely to Earth “before this decade is out.”

At the time those words were uttered, this goal sounded virtually impossible. “We didn’t have the tools or equipment—the rockets or the launchpads, the spacesuits or the computers or the micro-gravity food,” *Smithsonian* reported. “And it isn’t just that we didn’t have what we would need; we didn’t even know what we would need. We didn’t have a list; no one in the world had a list. Indeed, our unpreparedness for the task goes a level deeper: We didn’t even know how to fly to the Moon. We didn’t know what course to fly to get there from here. And...we didn’t know what we would find when we got there. Physicians worried that people wouldn’t be able to think in micro-gravity conditions. Mathematicians worried that we wouldn’t be able to calculate how to rendezvous two spacecraft in orbit—to bring them together in space and dock them in flight both perfectly and safely.”

Thousands of concerns were laid on the table: A Cornell astrophysicist warned that lunar dust that had been isolated from oxygen could combust when brought back into a lunar module’s cabin. He also speculated that a spacecraft might sink into the moon’s soil and bury its occupants alive.

NASA itself, only three years old, had no portable computers that could guide a spaceship. No way of talking to the astronauts as they were on the way. None of the metal alloys that would be used on the spacecraft were yet invented.

The president and his staff understood what the space program was up against. After making the proposition, Kennedy stated: “No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish.”

It was estimated that the costs for the Apollo program would reach \$40 billion—equivalent to \$331.31 billion in 2018. Even the International Space Station—the most expensive single item ever constructed—did not cost half this figure over its 20-year lifespan.

But it was not a lunatic idea. By the early 60s, Americans were itching to beat the USSR in *some way*. The Soviets were the first to launch a satellite into space with Sputnik in 1957 and in April 1961 put the first human being in space.

Through the next eight years, NASA had to solve thousands of problems to get human beings to the moon safely. “Every one of those challenges was tackled and mastered between May 1961 and July 1969,” *Smithsonian* continued.

Not all went smoothly. The first crewed mission of the Apollo program ended in disaster in 1967 when all three of its crew members were killed in a fire during a launch rehearsal test. And the Apollo 10 crew—who conducted the “dress rehearsal” months before the Apollo 11 moon landing—were seconds from blacking out and crashing on lunar soil after the spacecraft began spiraling out of control.

Yet the blood, sweat and tears expended by hundreds of thousands of scientists, engineers and factory workers fulfilled Kennedy’s prerogative. In that way, when Neil Armstrong made the small step to put the first human footprint on the lunar

■ Left, a photograph by Neil Armstrong of Buzz Aldrin standing next to the lunar module Eagle during the Apollo 11 mission (July 20, 1969). Top left, Buzz Aldrin takes his first step onto the surface of the moon. Top right, a close-up view of an astronaut’s boot print in the lunar soil during the Apollo 11 mission.

PHOTOS: NASA

surface during the Apollo 11 mission, it truly represented a GIANT leap for mankind.

It began decades of technological progress and unquestioned U.S. leadership in exploration and military prowess. In eight years, teams of scientists, engineers and test pilots managed to develop the technologies and processes needed to get a man to the moon and back.

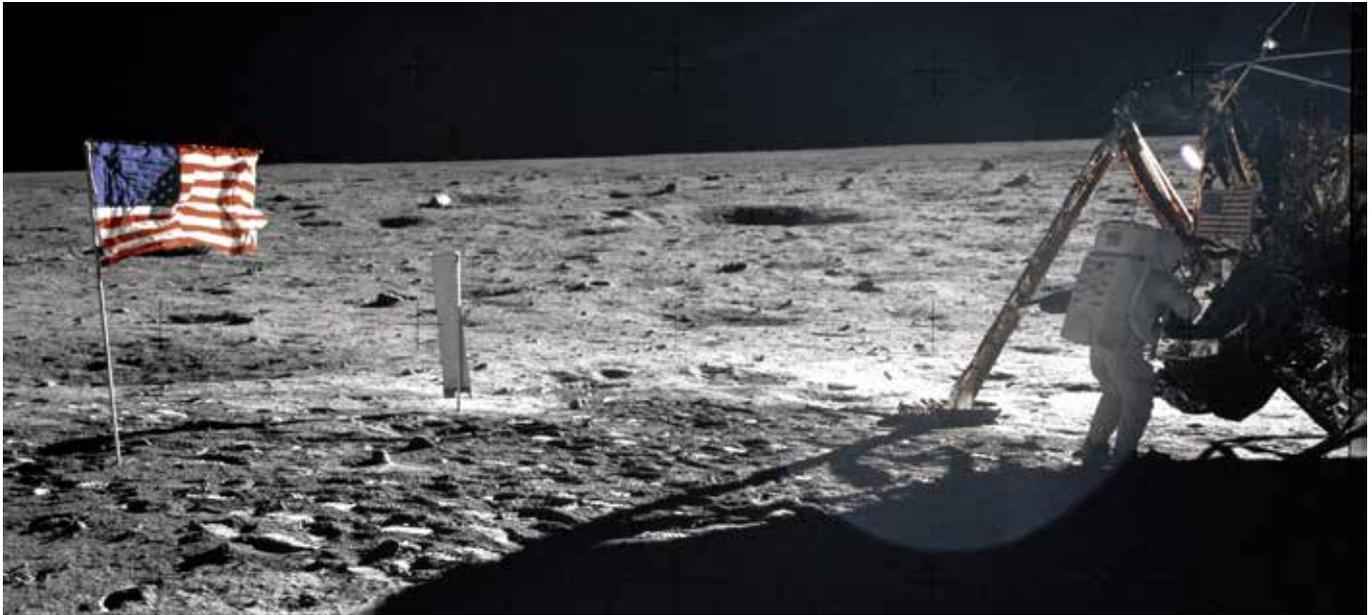
All this was amazingly done before the decade was out.

This time fascinated young minds into the decades that became known as the Space Age—complete with the space movie epic *Star Wars* and TV series *Star Trek*.

But what was accomplished in eight years reveals a fundamental drive for mankind to explore—and an incredible reason for it.

The All-time Moment

Fifty years ago this summer was a moment millions of now grown up Baby Boomers say defined their childhood: when they watched NASA's Apollo 11 make the first manned lunar landing. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin on the moon together. Michael Collins zipping along in orbit in the command module.



■ Top, Neil Armstrong, Apollo 11 mission commander, at the lunar module Eagle on the historic first extravehicular activity on the lunar surface (July 20, 1969). Left, Neil Armstrong and Edwin (Buzz) Aldrin participate in a lunar landing mission simulation (April 22, 1969). Right, a reproduction of the commemorative plaque that was attached to the leg of the lunar module Eagle that remains on the moon today. Opposite page, space shuttle Atlantis lifts off on the STS-132 mission (May 14, 2010).

PHOTOS: NASA (THIS PAGE); TOM GRAY AND TOM FARRAR/NASA (OPPOSITE PAGE)

But little did viewers back on terra firma understand the complexity of the mission. The descent was a near-miss. Armstrong flew the Eagle—the name given to the module that would land on the moon—manually to avoid a rocky area. They found a landing spot with only two seconds of fuel to spare before a mandatory abort.

When the Eagle touched ground, Armstrong and Aldrin were supposed to sleep for five hours before opening the hatch. But the two—one a hardened X-15 test pilot and the other an Air Force veteran—went ahead with preparations. Armstrong's heart rate exceeded 160 beats per minute at this time.

Next, Armstrong squeezed through the opening just large enough for his suited frame. He pulled a ring that activated the TV camera, and some 600 million people—one-fifth of the world population at the time—began watching the ghostly black-and-white images on live television. It was the

public's first moving-picture view of the surface of the moon. People came to a standstill as they watched, from Marines fighting in the jungles of Vietnam to children at Disneyland.

A plaque left on the ladder of Eagle states: "Here men from the planet Earth first set foot upon the Moon, July 1969, A.D. We came in peace for all mankind." It was signed by President Richard Nixon and the three astronauts.

Armstrong described the surface as "very fine-grained" and "almost like a powder." When he made the epic step, it became, as he described, "one giant leap for mankind."

Soon after, Aldrin joined his partner, and described what he saw as "magnificent desolation." The lunar pioneers then spent the next 2.5 hours picking up soil samples, taking photos, testing different methods of walking on the slippery surface and in one-sixth of Earth's gravity.

In the period from 1969 to 1972, 12 men were put on the moon through six Apollo missions. The last time human footprints graced the lunar surface was during the Apollo 17 mission.

Waning Interest

By the last Apollo mission, public interest in space exploration had been steadily declining. At that point, it was clear the U.S. had space superiority. Cold War tensions began easing—evidenced by joint space projects with the Soviets such as the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, which involved the docking together of the two superpowers' spacecraft in 1975. In addition, domestic issues were on the rise in the homeland. With inflation rising, the government was under pressure to reduce spending.

In 1973, 59 percent of those polled by Gallup said they favored cutting funding for space exploration.



“The Apollo project was a political project,” Sergei Khrushchev, the son of late Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev, explained in an interview with *Scientific American*. In other words, the moon landing made a bold statement, but there are many other important areas of space exploration.

And NASA’s programs have indeed flourished since, with the International Space Station, Mars rovers, the Hubble Space Telescope and automated exploration of the outer regions of the solar system such as New Horizons visiting Pluto in July 2015.

Yet the notion of putting human beings on another planetary body was never really extinguished.

Going Back

There is a new race to get to the moon. It has a lower profile than the one in the 60s. It involves private compa-

■ A European Space Agency astronaut conducts a test on an access lock for a future international lunar orbital station in Marseille, France (Feb. 22, 2019).

PHOTO: BORIS HORVAT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

nies, new countries and a NASA return mission to place astronauts back on the lunar surface by 2024.

While a \$30 million prize for private companies to send robotic probes to the moon went unclaimed last year, one of the competitors, from an Israeli private nonprofit, crashed last month as it tried to land.

China has landed a rover on the moon’s far side, and plans to send men to the uncharted “dark side.” SpaceX last year announced plans to send a Japanese businessman around the moon in 2023. And the Israeli nonprofit said it will give it a second shot.

Even Amazon tycoon Jeff Bezos said he is going to send a spaceship to the moon, joining a resurgence of lunar interest half a century after people first set foot there.

He said his space company Blue Origin will land a robotic ship the size of a small house, capable of carrying four rovers and using a newly designed rocket engine and souped-up rockets. It would be followed by a version that could bring people to the

moon along the same timeframe as NASA’s proposed 2024 return.

Mr. Bezos said, “This is an incredible vehicle and it’s going to the moon.” He added: “It’s time to go back to the moon. This time to stay.”

For its part as the only organization to have sent men to the moon, NASA’s chief said May 21 that the Trump administration’s proposed \$1.6 billion budget boost is a “good start” for getting astronauts back up there within five years.

During an hourlong town hall meeting from NASA headquarters in Washington, administrator Jim Bridenstine said \$1.6 billion is enough for 2020. But more money will be needed in the years ahead to land “the next man and the first woman” at the south pole of the moon by 2024.

The new program will be called Artemis, after the twin sister of Apollo in Greek mythology.

For the next go-around, the space agency wants its moonwalkers to reflect today’s more diverse astronaut

Please see **MOON**, page 21



Record Floods and Tornadoes Plague Central U.S.



IT HAS BEEN a spring like no other in the United States, with record floods and storms spawning more tornadoes than in previous years.

On May 28, the U.S. set a new record of 12 consecutive days with at least eight tornadoes, based on preliminary data from the National Weather Service. The previous record for consecutive days with that many tornadoes was an 11-day stretch that ended on June 7, 1980.

The weather service has received 934 tornado reports so far this year, up from the yearly average of 743 observed tornadoes. More than 500 of those reports came in the month of May.

The stream of heavy storms has contributed to what has been the wettest 12 months on record in the United States. The Arkansas, Mississippi and Missouri rivers have been consistently rising through the spring months, causing widespread flooding, destroying property, devastating crops and taking lives.

By mid-May, there were already 44 fatalities from flooding, according to the National Weather Service. Through the first five months of 2018, there were 19.

In Arkansas, Governor Asa Hutchinson said high water was costing the state economy \$23 million per day. Levees designed in the 1970s

were not able to withstand the surge of a multi-week flood, resulting in breaches of barriers as water pressure continued to build.

The seemingly endless deluge has left thousands of Midwestern farmers struggling to decide whether it is too late to plant this season, how much federal aid they might get if they do or whether to skip it altogether and opt for an insurance payment. Torrential rain and flooding have made planting impossible and killed off crops that were just starting to emerge.

In the 18 states that grow most of the nation's corn, only 58 percent of the crop had been planted as of late May—a far cry from the 90 percent that would ordinarily be planted by that point. In states that grow nearly all of the soybeans, less than half of the normal crop had been planted.

Agricultural economist Todd Hubbs at the University of Illinois said planting late will not work out for many farmers unless summer and fall weather conditions are nearly perfect—a scenario that he said seems hard to imagine, given that “storms just keep firing up and moving through.”

Despite the challenges, storm-weary residents across the country are, for the most part, bearing through it. “It’s a take what you can get and keep moving year,” Dr. Hubbs explained.

Homes are flooded on the Arkansas River in Tulsa, Oklahoma (May 24, 2019). Photo: Tom Gilbert/Tulsa World via AP



Residents clean up a tornado-damaged neighborhood in Dayton, Ohio (May 29, 2019). Photo: AP/John Minchillo





Floodwater recedes from around grain silos near Nemaha, Nebraska (March 23, 2019). Photo: Scott Olson/Getty Images



A hotel surrounded by floodwaters from the Arkansas River in Tulsa, Oklahoma (May 24, 2019). Photo: Tom Gilbert/Tulsa World via AP



Young corn grows in a flooded field near Shenandoah, Iowa (May 29, 2019). Photo: AP/Nati Harnik



Jeff Jorgenson, 44, looks over his flooded field he farms near Shenandoah, Iowa (May 29, 2019). Photo: AP/Nati Harnik

STRAIT OF HORMUZ

Center of Tensions

WHERE IS THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ?

The Strait of Hormuz is the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf. It is in the territorial waters of Iran and Oman, which at its narrowest point is just 21 miles wide. The width of the shipping lane in either direction is only two miles. It flows into the Gulf of Oman, where ships can then travel to the rest of the world. The strait is viewed as an international transit route.

SAUDI ARABIA

UAE

OMAN

IRAN

PERSIAN GULF

GULF OF OMAN

18.5 million barrels of oil pass through the strait per day. This is equivalent to 30 percent of oil traded by sea.

WHAT IS SAUDI ARABIA'S ROLE?

Saudi Arabia does not want war but will not hesitate to defend itself against Iran, a top Saudi diplomat said amid heightened tensions in the Persian Gulf.

The kingdom has blamed the pipeline attack on Iran, accusing Tehran of arming the rebel Houthis, with which a Saudi-led coalition has been at war in Yemen since 2015. Iran denies arming or training the rebels, who control much of northern Yemen, including the capital, Sanaa.

"We want peace and stability in the region, but we won't stand with our hands bound as the Iranians continuously attack. Iran has to understand that," Adel al-Jubeir, the Saudi minister of state for foreign affairs, said. "The ball is in Iran's court."

SINCE PRESIDENT Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and others in Tehran have reinvigorated a long-made threat that the Islamic Republic could close off the Strait of Hormuz.

Meanwhile, reports that oil pipelines have been hit by drones and a “sabotage” attack targeting oil tankers off the coast of Fujairah in the United

Arab Emirates have focused new attention on the region where many ships traveling through the strait stop.

Anything affecting oil shipments ripples through global energy markets, raising the price of crude oil. That then trickles down to consumers through what they pay for gasoline and other oil products.

Here is a look at the key waterway and why it is at the center of escalating drama.



FAST FACTS:

- One-third of all oil traded by sea passes through the strait.
- The U.S. Fifth Fleet located in Bahrain is responsible for protecting commercial ships in the area.
- The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia seek alternate routes to bypass the Strait by building more oil pipelines.

IRAN ON WATCH

Iran, which shares the strait with Oman, views the American naval presence akin to Iranian forces sailing into the Gulf of Mexico. Naval forces for Iran’s paramilitary Revolutionary Guard shadow American warships. They have also run snap missile launches, fired machine guns and flown drones over American carriers.

Tehran is being cautious to avoid starting war. A senior Iranian military commander was quoted as saying his country is not looking for a conflict.

Yet the U.S. is keeping a close watch as Iran has said it would resume enriching uranium at higher levels if a new nuclear deal is not reached by July 7. Given the tension, any incident between Iranian and U.S. forces could escalate the situation.

UNITED STATES NAVAL BUILDUP

U.S. forces routinely travel through the strait, despite sometimes-tense encounters with Iran’s Revolutionary Guard, a paramilitary force answerable only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Tensions have soared there recently as the White House deployed the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier and its strike group as well as B-52 Stratofortress bombers there amid unspecified threats from Iran.

Though the USS Lincoln had not gone through the strait, Rear Admiral John F.G. Wade, the commander of the carrier’s strike group, said that his forces could “conduct my mission wherever and whenever needed.”

He said Iran had presented “credible threats” to the region. “They do impose a threat to our operations, but also to the safety and security of commerce and trade going through the Strait of Hormuz and that’s why we are here.”

With a newly crowned emperor, Japan has entered a new historical period. Hopes are high that it will mean peace and prosperity for the nation.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

THERE IS AN air of mystery each time a Japanese emperor takes the throne. First, there are the sacred treasures known as the Three Imperial Regalia: a sword representing valor, a mirror for wisdom and a jewel for benevolence. Only emperors and a few priests have seen these legendary items.

Emperor Naruhito received the sword and jewel, the mirror was safe at another site, at the ceremony when he formally acceded to the Chrysanthemum Throne at midnight after his father Akihito abdicated on May 1.

For Naruhito, the first modern emperor to have studied abroad and the first born after Japan's defeat in World War II, another mystery is what type of ruler he will be.

Naruhito gave the first clues in his first public address: "When I think about the important responsibility I have assumed, I am filled with a sense of solemnity."

While noting his father's devotion to praying for peace, Naruhito said he will "reflect deeply" on the path trodden by Akihito and past emperors. He promised to abide by the constitution that stripped emperors of political power, and to fulfill his responsibility as a national symbol while "always

■ Japan's national emblem next to the emperor's emblem and the Japanese characters "Reiwa."

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: THE REAL TRUTH/SARAH O. VIDAL

turning my thoughts to the people and standing with them."

"I sincerely pray for the happiness of the people and the further development of the nation as well as the peace of the world," he said.

This brings up one more mystery: What impact will Naruhito's reign have on Japan and the surrounding region?

Of course, the future is uncertain, but we can know what people *hope* will happen. Akihito's abdication after reigning for 30 years starting January 8, 1989, means the start of a new era for the nation. Naruhito's era is named Reiwa, which means "beautiful harmony." While Japan officially has entered a new historical period, the new emperor is continuing the work of his father whose era was named Heisei, which means "peace everywhere."

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe congratulated Naruhito on his ascension, pledging to create a "bright future" during the new era that is peaceful and full of hope.

Naruhito also received congratulations from abroad. President Donald Trump's message said America and Japan will renew the bonds of friendship in the new era. Chinese President Xi Jinping was quoted by state media as saying China and Japan should work together to promote peace and development and bilateral ties.

New eras of any sort offer the opportunity to hit reset, to revise expectations, to try something new. In a time when China is exerting more and more regional power, North Korea has leapt headlong back into

nuclear and missile testing, and Japan is battling a stagnant economy and population, something new *is* what is needed to truly achieve "beautiful harmony."

And what is needed does not have to be a mystery.

High Hopes

Naruhito is considered a new breed of royal, his outlook forged by the tradition-defying choices of



Can Japan
Beautiful
Harmony

his parents. Emperor Emeritus Akihito devoted his three-decade career to making amends for a war fought in his father's name while bringing the aloof monarchy closer to the people.

Naruhito, 59, is the nation's 126th emperor, according to a palace count that historians say likely included mythical figures until around the 5th century.

Michiko, Naruhito's mother, was born a commoner and was Catholic educated.

With Akihito,

she reached out to the people, especially those who faced disability, discrimination and natural disasters.

Akihito during his reign embraced an identity as peacemaker and often made reconciliatory missions and carefully scripted expressions of regret on the war. His immersion in that role leaves Naruhito largely free of the burden of the wartime legacy, allowing him to carve his own path.

Palace watchers say the new emperor might focus on global issues, including disaster prevention, water conservation and climate change, which could appeal to younger Japanese, while also emulating his father's focus on peace.

"I hope the new emperor will be like the Heisei emperor [Akihito], who cherishes peace," said Takayori Kobayakawa, a 71-year-old retiree from Shizuoka, central Japan.

Naruhito has also demonstrated that he is an independent thinker and is cosmopolitan, said Jeff Kingston, Asian studies director at Temple University's Japan campus.

"I think that we are going to see an interesting emperor, and I have high hopes for him," he said.

Like Father, Like Son

To understand how the hopes for Naruhito may play out, it helps to look back on his father's reign.

Akihito was just 11 when he heard his father Hirohito's voice on the radio declaring Japan's surrender in World War II. Though he would not become emperor himself for another 44 years, Akihito spent much of his time on reconciliatory missions that began with Japan's return to the international community in the early 1950s.

Akihito is the first emperor in Japan's modern history to see his era end without ever having a war.

"It gives me deep comfort that the Heisei era is coming to an end, free of war in Japan," Akihito said in a December news conference, his voice trembling with emotion.

Throughout his reign, which began in January 1989 after his father's death, Akihito has enjoyed widespread respect as a politically neutral figurehead, as defined in Japan's U.S.-inspired postwar constitution that also outlaws war as a means to settle disputes. Yet in recent years many palace watchers have seen his frequent expressions of remorse for Japan's wartime past as a subtle message to politicians and nationalists seeking to expand the country's military role.

Marking his 30-year reign in February, Akihito thanked his people for their strong desire for peace, but called for more effort.

"Today, in this globalizing world, however, I believe that Japan needs to open up to the world further, establish its own place in that world with wisdom, and build relations with other countries with sincerity and good will," he said in a speech.

For much of the first half of the 20th century, Japan's ruling military regime invaded neighboring countries as part of its expansionist vision for an Asian empire. It used Akihito's father—worshipped in Japan as a living god—to drum up public support for the campaign, which eventually led to Japan's involvement in World War II.

With Japan's surrender came many changes, including an end of the modern era deification of emperors.

As Japan sought to normalize its post-war relations, Akihito as a 19-year-old crown prince embarked on a six-month trip in 1953 to the U.S., Canada and 13 European nations. He attended Queen Elizabeth's coronation in Britain on behalf of his father.

Only eight years after the end of World War II, Hirohito's own visit to those countries was considered too inflammatory.





During the trip, Akihito learned how the war affected Japanese immigrants in Canada, where he heard firsthand accounts from Japanese-Canadians put into internment camps. He was not always warmly welcomed, and in Britain he faced some protests, but historians say his debut helped rebuild Japan's foreign relations.

Akihito would visit 30 countries as crown prince and another 28 as emperor. He was almost always accompanied by his wife, Empress Michiko.

His travels as emperor started in Asia, a region his father never visited.

In 1992, a year after visiting Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, Akihito made a first imperial visit to China, an extremely sensitive destination because of Japan's wartime aggression. At the October 23 state banquet in Beijing, Akihito offered what was considered the strongest expression of regret over the war, though he stopped short of apologizing.

His speech warmed the atmosphere during the rest of his trip, historians

and former diplomats say. Days later in Shanghai, residents standing along the street waved at Akihito's motorcade, and the smiling emperor waved back, his car slowing down at his request.

Nevertheless, to this day Japan's relations with China remain frosty.

Akihito has met with at least nine U.S. presidents and hosted banquets for a number of them.

Akihito, who grew up as a teenager during U.S. occupation and had an American tutor, has expressed deep remorse for his country's wartime role and sorrow over the loss of many lives on both sides of the war.

He has also thanked the U.S. for its post-war support despite that the two countries fought as enemies.

Akihito has visited some of the harshest World War II battlefields in

the Pacific. He visited the U.S. territory of Saipan in 2005, the western Pacific nation of Palau in 2015 and the Philippines in 2016.

Squarely facing Japan's wartime history, including visits to the World War II battlefields, showed Akihito wanted to put his father's legacy in the past, said Makoto Inoue, a Nikkei senior writer specializing in the imperial family.

But others say Akihito's royal diplomacy never went far enough.

His trips to pray for the war dead were largely limited to the Pacific islands Japan badly lost in the final stages of the war, and did not include places that suffered imperial aggression earlier on, such as northern China and South Korea, said Takeshi Hara, a professor at Meiji Gakuin

■ Top left, Emperor Akihito attends the abdication ceremony at the Imperial Palace (April 30, 2019). Top right, Emperor Naruhito receives the Imperial regalia of sword and jewel (May 1, 2019). Opposite page left, Japan's new Emperor Naruhito, accompanied by new Empress Masako, makes his first address after succeeding his father Akihito at the Imperial Palace (May 1, 2019). Opposite page right, U.S. President Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy talk with Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko outside the Reagan's home in Los Angeles, California (June 21, 1994).

PHOTOS: HANDOUT/IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD AGENCY OF JAPAN VIA GETTY IMAGES (TOP LEFT); JAPAN POOL VIA AP (OPPOSITE PAGE LEFT); IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD AGENCY OF JAPAN VIA AP (TOP RIGHT); MIKE NELSON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (OPPOSITE PAGE RIGHT).



University and an expert on Japan's monarchy.

"I'm afraid his role may be over-rated, and could mislead the public's view of wartime history," he said.

While some accomplishments were made, atoning for all of the hurt from such a traumatic war ended up being an impossible mission for Akihito. His son must now take up the mantle.

Living Up to a Name

When unveiling the name of the new era, Prime Minister Abe said the two characters in Reiwa were taken from a poem about plum blossoms in the "Manyoshu," a 7th century poetry collection, and mean that "culture is born and nurtured as the people's hearts are beautifully drawn together." He said "Manyoshu" is Japan's oldest collection of poetry written by both royals and ordinary people, and it was appropriate to choose the name from a book symbolizing Japan's rich culture and tradition.

Mr. Abe said the government selected the name "with hopes of

making Japan a nation where every person can achieve dreams, like the plum flowers that bloom beautifully after a severe winter to signal the start of spring."

The first character of the era name, "rei," also means "good" or "beautiful," while the second, "wa," could mean "peace," "harmony" or "mild" as in the introduction to a Manyoshu section with poems about plum flowers. "It is now the good month in early spring, the air is fresh and wind is soft. The plums blossoms are like the white powder of a beauty before a mirror, the fragrance like that which follows the sachet of a noble lady," it says, describing a scene at a party where people open their hearts.

While all have high hopes for Reiwa and Naruhito's reign, the current geopolitical climate points to a tough road ahead.

This is the forever conundrum for world leaders. All say they want peace, prosperity—BEAUTIFUL HARMONY—yet it always lies just out of reach. How to achieve it remains an utter mystery.

Of course, we cannot give in to defeat and think, "World peace has never been achieved, therefore it never will." Such pessimism is unproductive and would hurtle the globe to even worse lows.

But take an honest look at history. Our approaches have not worked and are not currently working. What are we missing? How can we achieve what all profess to desire?

Mystery of the Ages

A Shinto prayer, Japan's largest religion, adds to these questions: "Although the people living across the ocean surrounding us, I believe, are all our brothers and sisters, why are there constant troubles in this world?"

"Why do winds and waves rise in the ocean surrounding us?"

"I only earnestly wish that the wind will soon puff away all the clouds which are hanging over the tops of the mountains."

What this text says poetically can be summarized as, "Why can't we all get along? I hope some outside force will come and fix all our problems."



Every religion of the world has a similar prayer—crying out to supreme beings or the universe for peace on Earth. Yet to no avail.

The sad fact is that religions of men are often the cause of conflict in the world.

This gets back to the new approach needed to achieve true and lasting peace. While it has remained a mystery throughout millennia—it does not have to remain one for you.

Religions for centuries have used the Bible as a justification for war. Its central message, however, is how world peace will finally come.

Realize that the Bible is a book of mysteries. Ones that few understand. Notice the God who inspired this text: “The *secret things* belong unto the LORD our God...” (Deut. 29:29).

These secret things do not stay hidden to those who obey God. Read the rest of verse 29: “But those things

which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

These mysteries do not remain mysteries! Colossians 1:26 speaks of “the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints”—to those who obey Him.

The greatest mystery of the ages is this: That God’s Kingdom will come and usher in true and lasting peace. Matthew 13:11 and Luke 8:10 calls this the “mysteries of the Kingdom of God.”

Other places call this the gospel of the Kingdom. It is also referred to as the “GOSPEL OF PEACE” (Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15).

You now know *what* the answer is to the great mystery of the ages. But you can also know *how*. To learn more about God’s soon-coming Kingdom, read *How World Peace Will Come!* at rcg.org/hwpwc. □

■ Top Left, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko posing for their wedding at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo (April 10, 1959). Top right, Akihito and Michiko tour the Great Wall of China (Oct. 24, 1994). Left, Japan’s Emperor Hirohito (Dec. 8, 1942).

PHOTOS: JIJI PRESS/ (TOP LEFT); MIKE FIALA/ (TOP RIGHT); STAFF/ (LEFT); GETTY IMAGES

MOON

Continued from page 8

corps, thus the name of Apollo's sister. Artemis was goddess of the hunt as well as the moon.

In March, Vice President Mike Pence urged NASA to accelerate its moon-landing program, moving it up from 2028 to 2024.

NASA has flip-flopped between the moon and Mars, a victim of changing presidential administrations. More recently, President Barack Obama targeted Mars as astronauts' next big destination, while President Donald Trump has favored the moon.

The desire to put man back on Earth's nearest neighbor may seem pure nostalgia. But there is a fascinating point to man's inherent need to explore.

What's Out There?

Think of all the reasons man is driven to explore outer space.

For one, it pushes us to progress in ways we now mostly take for granted.

In 60 years we went from being bound to the Earth to visiting every planet in the solar system. With satellite coverage, we are never alone on the planet—we can talk on cellular phones and drive with GPS. Technologies for industry, transportation and medicine, as well as our understanding of human health, have advanced because of space travel. Also, the photographic and video images of places never seen before have aroused imaginations and inspired generations to continue the quest of understanding humanity's place in the universe.

But, ultimately, space exploration missions answer fundamental but profound questions mankind has asked for millennia. Questions NASA listed: "What is the nature of the Universe? Is the destiny of humankind bound to Earth? Are we and our planet unique? Is there life elsewhere in the Universe?"

These same questions have motivated humans to devote their lives to

searching the great unknowns: Cortez and Columbus claiming land in the "New World," crews racing to be the first to reach the South Pole in Antarctica, Theodore Roosevelt charting the River of Doubt in the Amazon, and the ongoing effort to reach greater depths in the oceans trenches.

Human beings have an insatiable need to find anything and everything that is beyond their line of sight. David Scott, an astronaut who set foot on the moon during the first rover mission in Apollo 15, summarized this: "As I stand out here in the wonders of the unknown at Hadley, I sort of realize there's a fundamental truth to our nature. Man must explore. And this is exploration at its greatest."

Eyes to the Sky

There is one source that can explain our passion to understand the unknown: the Being who created everything.

Note: "Thus says God the LORD, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out..." (Isa. 42:5). "I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded" (45:12). "It is He that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretches out the heavens as a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in" (40:22).

The heavens glisten with fingerprints of a Creator. It is no wonder Buzz Aldrin quoted on the last night of his mission before splashdown: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained: What is man, that You are mindful of him?" (Psa. 8:3-4).

Mr. Aldrin was quoting a man who lived 3,000 years ago—David who slayed Goliath and was king of ancient Israel.

Both Aldrin and King David, as well as anyone who has seen the vastness of the universe, realized how tiny and insignificant they were.

The same Being who created the stars also made human beings, and designed us to feel this way. Notice: "He has set the world [eternity] in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end" (Ecc. 3:11).

God is eternal—He is infinite! But because human beings are finite, "a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labor to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it" (8:17).

The desire to understand all of God's Creation and our place in it was put in our hearts, so we yearn and search. Space exploration programs are a modern fulfillment of this. But God promised that we would not be able to figure out eternity. Therefore, we continue to wonder and explore.

This can sound defeating—until you realize the real, MIND-BOGGLING purpose for every human being who has ever lived.

Again, the answer is contained within God's Word. Read what comes after the verses Mr. Aldrin quoted from Psalms: "You made [man] to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet" (8:6).

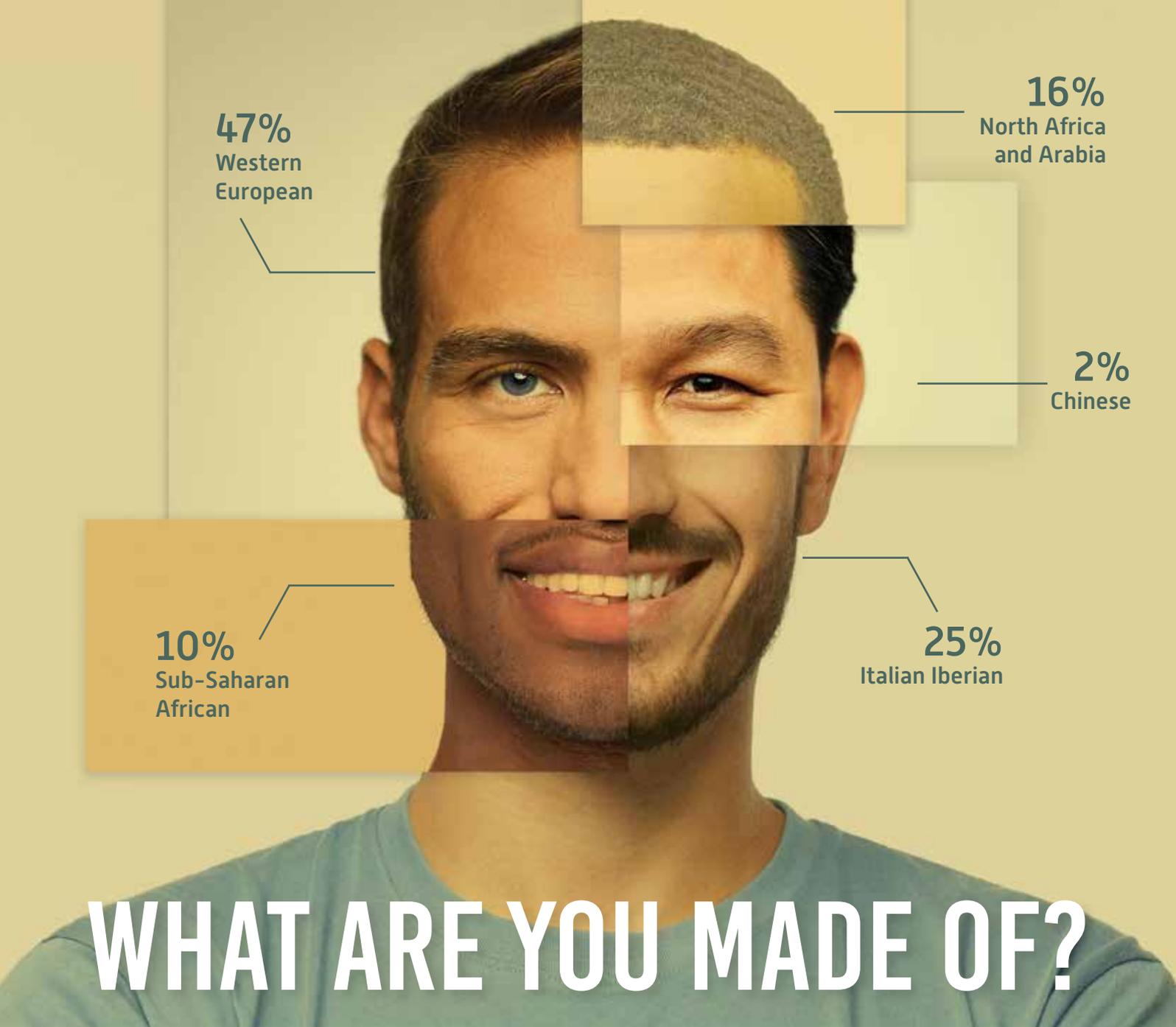
What is being explained has ENORMOUS implications: Man was made to have control over everything God made—which is *everything!*

Your incredible potential exceeds what even thousands of scientists could accomplish by getting man to Earth's nearest neighbor—as far as the galaxies and the edges of the Universe are from Earth.

Read *The Awesome Potential of Man* to grasp the crucial purpose for your life. □



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WHAT ARE YOU MADE OF?

DNA tests have become increasingly popular.
Can they really reveal your genetic heritage?

KIM STANDS IN front of a large, white door, the white buttons of her blue blouse a striking contrast. She says something many have felt: “I wanted to know who I am and where I came from.” She took a DNA test and was shocked when her results revealed 26 percent Native American heritage.

Another commercial shows Kyle, a middle-age man with perfectly combed salt-and-pepper hair standing next to a table with a pair of beer steins.

“Growing up we were German,” he states emphatically. The next scene shows him dancing in his lederhosen. His pie chart then comes on the screen showing he is 52 percent Irish, Welsh

and Scottish. He trades his lederhosen for a kilt.

These advertisements are everywhere and come with a myriad of promises. Here are a few more...

■ One claims: “Imagine a DNA test could reveal as much about your future as your past...Because knowing where you came from is one thing, but knowing where you could go, that’s power.”

■ Another shows an unnamed every-woman sitting at a comfortable, old-fashioned home. The voice-over states: “When you’re a mother, you don’t have the luxury of ignoring important things.” The health results she received allowed her to know what precautionary steps she could take to ensure she remained there for her family.

■ Yet another encourages viewers to “go beyond your vital signs and monitor the vitality of your cells.”

People want to know where they came from and what diseases or disorders they may have or may pass down. DNA tests promise to deliver this information yet come with a bevy of problems. How can you know *for sure* what is your heritage?

The Great Promise

About 30 companies offer direct-to-consumer DNA tests in North America, China, Europe, East Asia, the Middle East and South America.

The desire to know where we came from is especially prevalent in America, which is referred to as “the melting pot” because so many people came from all over the world and intermarried. In addition, many people who came to the U.S. were illiterate or running away from something. They left their history behind and so many Americans do not really know from where—or whom—they come.

This is driving more to turn to DNA tests. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology estimated that by the beginning of 2016 about 2.6 million home DNA tests had been purchased in the United States. That number nearly doubled to 4.5 million by the start of 2017 and to 10.7 million by 2018. A large marketing push in the fall of 2018 grew the total number to an estimated 26.5 million tests by the beginning of 2019. Analysts expect the trend to continue to over 100 million tests by 2021.

Commercials encourage people to “uncover the lost chapters” of their history. During the high tension of the U.S.-Mexico border wall debate, one airline even ran commercials advertising discounts based on the results.

Some DNA testing companies will also let you search for relatives you may have not known about. If someone was an orphan, an adoptee, abandoned, a child refugee, or lost contact with their family for any other reason, such services can reconnect them even generations later. Companies that combine a person’s DNA results with a researched family genealogy can even specify from what region of a country a person comes.

But wait, *there is more!* These services offer more than just your racial and ancestral genetic profile. Genetic markers can show whether you will hate cilantro, smell asparagus, drink more caffeine than others, have wet or dry earwax, lose your hair, be more attractive to mosquitos, be intolerant to gluten and have a unibrow. They can reveal whether you could develop serious diseases like diabetes, cancer, nerve and heart damage. You can learn if you carry the genes that may pass diseases on to children or grandchildren even if you never develop them yourself.

DNA testing is also instrumental in catching criminals. In 2018, police uploaded a DNA sample from the so-called Golden State Killer to one of the largest sites. The investigators found around 15 distant relatives and were able from that to build a family tree to their great-great-great grandparents. Through standard police work, they reduced the list of suspects to only two, and finally matched the sample with another DNA sample from trash outside the second suspect’s home.

In April of 2018 police arrested the man, a former police officer, believed to be responsible for at least 12 murders and possibly 45 rapes between 1974 and 1986.

The DNA work allowed for further discoveries: During the following 5 months, another 30 murderers, rapists and victims’ bodies were identified.

The Great Limitation

Sampling DNA seems to have great potential to help individuals and organizations. But due to its limitations it cannot be an answer-all solution.

For one, all humans have remarkably similar DNA. The 1000 Genomes Project sequenced the DNA of 1,000 people from 26 different populations and found that people only differ in 4.1 to 5 million different sites that affect 20 million base pairs. While this sounds like a large number, it represents only 0.6 percent of the human genome, and that is the high end of estimates. Most estimates put human differences at only 0.1 to 0.4 percent.

Identical twins come from a single fertilized egg and should have nearly identical DNA. If a set of identical twins sent their DNA samples to a genetic testing company, then the results coming back should also be nearly identical. In January of 2019, the host of a *Canadian Broadcast Company* television show and her identical twin sister sent their DNA samples to five different direct-to-consumer genetic testing companies to test the theory.

The twins expected to see very close results from each company. Instead, they received 10 distinctly different profiles, differing by as much as 19 percent from the same company!

Each testing company has its own proprietary methods for sampling the DNA and what markers they look for, which is why the results varied so widely.

When testing companies process a DNA sample, they can only test a certain amount. One of the largest companies will process a sample 40 times to test 600,000 variations—which is only 14 percent of the possible variations discovered by the 1000 Genomes Project—and report the average as a person’s definitive makeup. Perhaps this explains the differences the twins found.

Companies also draw the regions they claim people come from differently. Combine this with a relatively small population sample to draw from and the results can be haphazard. Greater clarity may only come as more populations in source regions are sequenced, but even that presents problems. People have been migrating for a very, very long time. When

a group comes into an area and settles, do they become indigenous or are they always foreigners? If they intermarry, whose genetic line takes precedence?

In addition, DNA testing services can only provide limited health screening. Only two to three of the over 1,000 potential genetic variations that lead to breast cancer are looked at. Two out of every 100 people with one of these variations has a 45-80 percent chance of a breast cancer diagnosis—if they are of Ashkenazi Jew descent. If they are not, then the likelihood is less than 12 percent for the 1 out of 1,000 with the mutation. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approves these tests for general use, but that does not mean these tests are clinically useful.

All this information about a person comes with a significant warning. If you can find the people to whom you are related, then your relatives can find you too. A study published in the November 9, 2018, edition of the journal *Nature* estimated that every American has on average around 850 relatives that share a common great-great grandparent. The study also projected that 60 percent of DNA searches of all Americans of European descent would result in a third cousin match or closer. These searches when coupled with demographic data such as approximate age and home address would mean that a search like this could implicate nearly any person in the U.S. of European descent.

The four largest DNA testing companies all stated they would not let police search their databases without a warrant. The smallest of the four, however, quietly changed its terms of service to allow the FBI to upload DNA from crime scenes and search for near relatives. Everyone who uses these services is subject to these changes without notification.

The Great Truth

If we cannot trust DNA samples to prove beyond a doubt who we are, what or whom can we trust?

Nations are families grown large. The Bible shows how all of the Earth's nations came from one family.

Adam and Eve, Bible readers may say?

This is true, but there is more to the story. All modern peoples would have come from Noah and his three sons—who along with their wives were the only ones left to repopulate the Earth after the Flood (Gen. 7).

Noah and his family began to repopulate the planet after they left the ark. Genesis 10 describes how

“Noah and his family began to repopulate the planet after they left the ark. Genesis 10 describes how these families would become the nations and peoples alive today.”

these families would become the nations and peoples alive today.

As cities thrived, people began to rebel against God, which led to the Flood that earlier destroyed the entire globe save Noah. Instead of spreading across the Earth as God instructed after the Flood (Gen. 9:1), the people said, “let us make us a name [a position or mark of individuality], lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (11:4).

Verse 1 tells the people at the time were “of one language, and of one speech” during the early post-Flood world. They gathered their resources

and congregated in one place so they could build a tower that would reach the clouds.

Displeased with their rebellion, God caused people to speak in different languages. He understood that with a single language, “nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do” (vs. 6)—and those imaginations tend to be evil (8:21).

When the languages changed, people congregated with those they could understand and moved together into different regions of the Earth.

The families that descended from Noah's son Ham spread to the south into Africa and parts of the Middle East. The families of Japheth went to the east and north into Asia, Oceania and the Americas (note Genesis 10:5 says the sons of Japheth took many islands and coasts, implying they sailed to those regions).

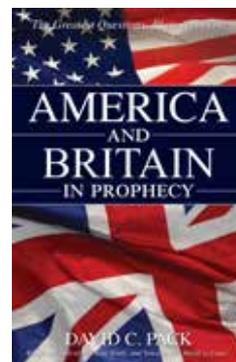
The families of Shem stayed in the Mesopotamian plain or spread north into western Asia and Europe.

The patriarch Abraham, one of Shem's descendants, was promised to “be a father of many nations” (17:4). In Genesis 48, Abraham's grandson Jacob had 12 sons who each became one of the 12 tribes of Israel. At the end of his life, Jacob blessed two of his own grandsons with an amazing birthright promise (vs. 16).

His blessing was that these two children would become a nation and a company of nations. The single nation would be the greatest nation ever and the company of nations would be even greater.

God's Word clearly identifies who these peoples are today, as well as all of Abraham's descendants. It also shows what God has in store for them in the coming years.

To learn more about this amazing story—and where you TRULY come from—read *America and Britain in Prophecy*. □



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Get Your Prayers Answered.

People pray with the goal of getting what they want. Achieving this requires knowing exactly how to approach God.

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

“**T**EACH US to pray.” This may sound like a naive request considering people had been praying for thousands of years by the time this question was asked. Yet the man decided to ask Jesus Christ anyway (Luke 11:1).

People typically do not ask others how to pray. They try to figure it out on their own, usually mimicking what they see: Bow your head, get on your knees, and speak out loud or in your head—inquiring an unseen Being. That may seem straightforward.

Many people spend a good portion of their lives in prayer—more than you may think. According to a Pew Research poll, 77 percent of adults pray, half of them doing it at least once a day. That is surprisingly high

for a world increasingly seen as non-religious.

Daily prayers cross several religious groups. Ninety percent of Jehovah’s Witnesses pray daily, followed by 85 percent of Mormons. Black Protestants and Evangelicals come in at 80 percent and 79 percent respectively. And it is not just the religious willing to make supplication. Twenty percent of “nones”—those unaffiliated with religion—pray at least once per day.

Most faiths do not have a class teaching people how to pray, begging the question: How do we know whether we are doing it right?

The copycat method is how most manage. Some learn through their childhoods watching family members. Others by attending a church service for the first time and watching the faithful go through the motions. People even develop practices from devout characters on television shows or in movies.

The rest simply do their best, hoping that their requests will be granted.

However, what if you learned there was a *right* way to pray? The man talking to Christ thought so, prompting him to ask.

If there is a right way, knowing how would be life-changing—since people make requests to a deity with the intent to have them *answered*. And since answered prayer comes from praying the right way, it can explain that there are *wrong* ways to go about it that do not bring answers.

Answered prayer was at the heart of the man’s request to Christ. He wanted to know how he could ensure his requests were granted.

When it comes to prayer, you are not forced to just hope for the best with hit-or-miss results. You can approach the authority on the subject and learn exactly how to ensure your prayers are answered.

What Is Prayer?

To have our prayers answered, we must first believe we are speaking to a living God and have faith that He hears and wants to answer us. Praying consistently—at least once per day—is also important.

At its essence, prayer is having dialogue with God. It is a personal, private, one-on-one conversation between a person and his Creator.

Simply knowing *what* prayer is represents an important first step to doing it the right way. Yet knowing *how* to pray in a way that is pleasing to God is the next.

Many people who understand this misuse prayer as a self-serving tool. When people are not taught any better, they reduce God to a divine genie waiting to grant them their every wish. Few understand that prayer is more than just asking for personal goodies.

Take a moment to consider the way you currently pray, including the words you choose. With this in mind, ask yourself how well your prayers resemble the following.

In Matthew 6, after being asked by a disciple, Christ detailed exactly how people should pray. (Notice He did not balk at the request.)

Christ began: “When you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward” (vs. 5).

Here Jesus used examples of people praying the *wrong* way as a foundation for how to do it properly. Even 2,000 years ago people, like today, picked up many bad habits when it came to talking to God.

Christ continued: “But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly” (vs. 6).

Prayer is a private affair. Though there are times for public prayer, such as with family before a meal, personal prayers should generally not be done

in public for all to see and hear. The purpose of prayer is not to “be seen of men” as a pious, religious person. If we try to make others view us as close to God based on our public, demonstrative prayers, then we receive rewards from men and not God.

Ask yourself: Am I praying or telling people of my prayer habits to gain their admiration? If so, take a different approach and focus on being seen by God.

Resuming in verses 7-8, Christ said: “When you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not you therefore like unto them: for your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask Him.”

God, who said that even the “heathen” pray, said men should not continually repeat themselves when talking to Him. This stands in stark contrast to what *billions* in mainstream religion do—memorizing and constantly repeating themselves when invoking God!

Remember, prayer is a personal conversation with our Creator. Imagine someone fully capable of having a coherent conversation with you choosing instead to stutter and repeat himself constantly. You would become fed up or offended by such behavior.

A conversation with God would be no different. A person choosing to repeat themselves over and over is not pleasant for Him.

Matthew 6:9-15 gives a general outline of personal prayer. It is a *model* we are to personalize and expand based on our specific circumstances or issues in our lives. Reciting this model word-for-word would violate the very principle of avoiding “vain repetition” Christ warned against.

Just as the Bible is a rich and diverse text that should be seen as God talking to us, we should be equally rich and diverse in our conversations with Him.

Prayer should be performed in private and in a position of submission. This follows the pattern of those human beings who have been in the presence of God. Psalm 95:6 says “let

us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD...”

In I Kings 8:54, Solomon knelt before God “with his hands spread up to heaven.” And many times, men are described as prostrating or lying face down before God in prayer the way Abraham did in Genesis 17:1 or Moses and Aaron did in Numbers 20:6.

However, there are also times you may want or need to talk to God while you are going about your day. These are times when kneeling or lying on your face are not an option as they would draw too much attention. The Bible is filled with examples of people speaking to God without assuming a specific pose.

Regardless of your position, know that you are coming before God’s presence and boldly making your requests known to Him (Heb. 4:16). These requests should not only be for yourself, they should also be for others. We have our own desires and perspectives for how things should turn out, but ultimately we are to pray that God’s will be done—not our own. This is because God can see far more than we can. As an all-wise Being, He knows what is best.

Does God Answer All Prayers?

Should you expect all your prayers to be answered? On its face, Matthew 7:7-8 leaves little room for doubt. Jesus stated, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.”

This says everyone gets what they ask for. But is it really that easy? Not quite—there are other verses that must be considered, particularly those that lay down parameters for God to heed our requests.

For instance, the prophet Isaiah wrote, “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (59:2). Iniquity is sin or breaking God’s Law.

How could God possibly answer the prayers of those whose sins hide God’s face?

The apostle John wrote: “Now we know that God *hears not* sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and does His will, him He *hears*” (9:31).

This verse is saying the prayers of sinners are not heard.

Because all have sinned (Rom. 3:23)—making themselves candidates to be cut off from God—this question of whether God hears the prayers of sinners is an important one.

The Bible says everyone who asks receives. But it also says all have sinned, meaning they are cut off from God. These appear incompatible.

Put simply, God does not fellowship with those walking in darkness (II Cor. 6:14)! One may claim otherwise, but, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him [God], and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (I John 1:6).

Walking in darkness demonstrates sin as a way of life. It illustrates a person choosing to habitually transgress God’s laws.

However, walking in the light, where God is, means we are willing to change and turn away from our bad ways. Isaiah wrote, “Seek you [all people—including sinners willing to change] the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (55:6-7).

God clearly desires to answer our prayers. He is willing to give us what we want, but with conditions. We must be willing to obey Him.

Summed up, the condition for answered prayer is we must obey God’s Word. Does this surprise you? Many wrongly assume God is so generous, so magnanimous, that He will do what we want regardless of how we feel about or treat Him. But this is not the God of the Bible! While we cannot earn His kindness nor do we deserve His generosity, it is unreasonable to expect Him to do our bidding with absolutely no conditions.

God, as our divine Father, wants what is best for us. He incentivizes us to do the right things by laying out a standard and rewarding us when we adhere to it. His approach is summarized in His declaration to Israel, a people with which He chose to work: “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live” (Deut. 30:19).

Choosing life leads to God’s willingness to reward the decision, including answering our prayers.

This “I will do this if you do that” approach explains the principle of those who ask will receive seen in Matthew 7:7—as long as those doing the asking are in a position to receive. I John 3:22 confirms it by saying, “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, *because we keep His commandments*, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” We do not receive something for nothing.

Answered Prayer

We must always approach God on His terms, not our own, when seeking answers from Him in prayer. As a willing Father, God makes these requirements attainable with His help.

James, the half-brother of Christ, wrote: “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (5:16). This verse lays out two requirements to ensure our prayers are answered. One is obedience.

We saw earlier in I John 3:22 that receiving what we ask of God is based on *commandment keeping*—which is pleasing in His sight. The excuse that people use to not keep the commandments—that Christ nailed them to the cross—does not work, because John wrote about keeping the commandments *years* after Christ’s death and sacrifice for mankind!

God, who does not change, blesses obedient children and chastises disobedient ones. This should not surprise anyone with children or who had decent parents.

Plain and simple, God hears the prayers of those who obey Him. We

must fear and obey Him, which brings wisdom and understanding: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do His commandments” (Psa. 111:10).

Resist any temptation to balk at the requirement to obey God. The Bible is blunt regarding the matter: “He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Prov. 28:9). Do not make it complicated: If you refuse to listen to God, He is unable to listen to you!

But the opposite is also true. God’s arms are open to help anyone willing to heed His instruction, regardless of his past. He is very forgiving and wants to bless and answer the prayers of those prepared to truly change their ways and obey Him.

Another important condition for answered prayer is sincerity. James used the word *fervent* to describe this.

Recall that Christ warned against using vain repetition. The Pharisees, whose conduct was criticized in Matthew 6, were known to give long prayers that sounded eloquent but had no depth or real meaning. Saying the same words and phrases over and over is a telltale sign of insincerity. God expects us to pour our hearts into our prayers; any meaningful relationship would require the same.

The fervor or enthusiasm we put into our requests is not meant for others to see but for our Father in heaven to see. This means our prayers do not have to be perfect. If they are sincere and follow the model given in Matthew 6, then they are noteworthy to God.

To learn more in-depth about how to give proper, effective prayers, read our article “The Keys to Dynamic Prayer,” which is available for free at rcg.org/tktdp.

Also, many people wonder whether they can make an impact by praying for others, or even whether they should. Our *Real Truth* article “‘Please Pray for Me’ – Should You Ask the Public for Prayers?” available at rcg.org/realtruth, answers this question and many others. □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

did this, so He understood. He knew the whole world lives in sin and suffers terribly as a result. This brought Him great sorrow because it was never what He intended for mankind.

Jesus also understood the Christian way involves trials and difficulties throughout life. This is an inescapable fact for those in whom God is working. These are essential to the character-building process, and are good for us. Trials and tests can make us temporarily sorrowful, but bring great joy when we understand their *purpose*.

The apostle Peter wrote, “Think it not *strange* concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ’s *sufferings*; that, when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy” (I Pet. 4:12-13).

No one likes to suffer. Certainly Christ did not look forward to pain and suffering. But He knew, as He endured these things, that He would soon be sitting at God’s right hand, restored to full glory. During trials we are to focus on the glorious reward awaiting us, if we “endure unto the end” (Matt. 24:13)—throughout this life!

Of course, most people *do* think trials are “strange”—that they are undesirable, painful and bad. They certainly are *inconvenient*. Most convince themselves that their trials are worse than everyone else’s, but this is not true. Christians have to train themselves to recognize that trials bring lessons—and lessons learned forge, temper and strengthen one’s character!

This is why the apostle James instructed, “Count it all joy when you fall into various *temptations* [trials]; knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience” (Jms. 1:2-3). Temptations are tests. And so are trials. God says to count these character-

building opportunities as times of “joy.” Again, why?

Because of the “exceeding joy” we are to have when Christ returns. And we will receive a greater reward because of more character built!

Peter also wrote, “Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

“No one likes to suffer. Certainly Christ did not look forward to pain and suffering. But He knew, as He endured these things, that He would soon be sitting at God’s right hand, restored to full glory.”

that the *trial* of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it [our character] be *tried with fire*, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 1:6-7).

Is this clear? Do you see the direct connection to trials *now* and greater reward *later*? No wonder God says we should be joyful during trials, temptations and persecutions.

You now know what to do when experiencing trials and difficulties. Do not become unhappy, wondering what is wrong—and moan, groan and complain as though something *bad* has

happened. Instead, realize it is something that is very good, IF received and used properly. Why would anyone complain or feel unhappy about building something “more precious than gold”?

Christianity Means Change

Becoming a Christian means a total change to a completely different way. It means a whole different manner of thinking and believing. Recognize that people do not automatically understand all God’s ways at the outset of conversion. All wrong ways, values and beliefs must be *unlearned*, and everything that is good, pure and right—all things of God—must be *learned*!

God says, “My thoughts are not *your thoughts*, neither are *your ways* My ways...For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9).

This scripture is far-reaching in meaning. It involves everything we think, say and do, including how we view joy, happiness and living the abundant life. It means recognizing this is what God wants. It means sweeping from your mind all previous false concepts of what you thought Christianity was supposed to be like.

If you are Christ’s, then your eyes are fixed on the Kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33). You understand that this is the biggest objective—the greatest GOAL—in your life! Never forget that *everything* in your life is subordinate to achieving salvation, and building character on the path to *that* end!

Pause and think. How many things could bring more peace and satisfaction than understanding why you were born and where your life is going? The excitement, joy, thrill and contentment that flow from this confident assurance will dwarf every trial, difficulty, hurdle, obstacle and problem you will ever face. If you truly grasp this, you have gone a long way toward seeing *why* Jesus said His Way represents a life more wonderful and *abundant* than most could ever imagine!

Serving God does not mean loss of fun and giving up pleasures, but rather understanding what *real* fun and *real* pleasures are—and enjoying them.

Putting God First

Look at Matthew 6:33: “Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all *these things* [material blessings] shall be *added* unto you.” And the apostle John wrote, “I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in *health*, even as your soul [life] prospers” (III John 2).

These verses express God’s will regarding receiving physical things—enjoying *prosperity*—in your life. In time, if you truly put God and His Kingdom *first*, you have His sure promise that He will add physical blessings to you. It is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18). When He makes a promise, He keeps it—and He has promised you that these things will flow into your life, if you put Him first! You can count on this!

Malachi 3:8-10 is an example of how this principle works in the mind of God—how He views faithful obedience. When we obey Him, good things happen—and sometimes *lots* of them!

But be careful you do not expect them right away. Also be careful you do not obey God simply because “there is something in it for you.” Many verses speak of being patient and waiting for answered prayers and blessings to come according to *God’s* timetable. Also, we must be pleasing God as a *regular* practice in our lives.

Let’s read an important verse tying obedience to confidence and answered prayer: “If our heart [mind or conscience] condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, *we receive* of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (I John 3:21-22). Savor this verse. Internalize and practice it—and then expect God will give you all the physical things you need.

Source of Enormous Power

Almost no one has any idea Christianity can bring them supreme happiness, beyond imagination. They have no concept that it represents fullness, richness, pleasures and overflowing with plenty, both physically and spiritually. They have no thought that boundless energy is available to them if they will tap it.

Paul wrote this to Timothy: “God has not given us the Spirit of fear; but of power, and of *love*, and of a *sound mind*” (II Tim. 1:7).

This is not about how to tap the better “inner you.” It is not about practicing “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” positive thinking derived from human strength. In the long run, these are not worth much.

On their own, people fall short, and ultimately fail in the most crucial aspects of life. They are powerless to defeat weaknesses and faults—and to triumph in the end.

Paul is speaking about drawing upon God’s Spirit within a converted mind, and using it as a source of strength—of real power! He also wrote, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of *His* might” (Eph. 6:10).

This can be you. Enormous inner strength and power will flow into and through you, if you take advantage of the access God offers you.

Jesus told His disciples about how God’s Spirit worked in them: “He that believes on Me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spoke He of the Spirit . . .)” (John 7:38-39).

Have you stood by a powerful river, watching the current? I have many times. A big river carries tremendous power and force—and Christ knew this. God’s Spirit flows like a river, and produces mightily in those who have it. It radiates out of one, and brings love, faith, joy and peace from its Source—God.

This Spirit will help you meet challenges, defeat enemies, conquer fear and reflect cheerfulness. It will bring wisdom, knowledge and understanding, and drive anger, bitterness

and anxiety away. It will replace discouragement with energy and hope. It will bring zeal to accomplish and remove confusion and indifference. It will take shattered dreams and shriveled feelings, and expand them to new horizons—and bring an *expectation* of success. It will take stress and turn it to productivity and fulfilling accomplishment.

In James 1:17, God says He gives “every good and perfect gift.” People cannot offer or bring you the truly good things of life, but God can—and He says He will if you come to Him and ask for help in time of need. His answers are satisfying, His strength is real—and it is life-changing.

How sad that the lives of so many are so completely empty—so utterly devoid of joy, happiness and abundance. Many try drugs, fall into immoral lifestyles, pursue the wrong kind of entertainment, commit crimes, and otherwise get into trouble, simply because they are *bored*. They do not know they can have lives filled with purpose. This lack of understanding is so unnecessary—so far from what God intended for *every* human being.

Notice: “*Everyone* that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isa. 55:1). You can come to God and “buy” His waters—His Holy Spirit—when you have no money. Isaiah continues, “[Why] do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?” (vs. 2). Yet billions do this daily.

This has been a critical principle I have had to learn. I lead a very active, busy life, and am generally able to work long hours, day after day, for long periods. But this was not possible (and would never be possible) until I learned to claim God’s promise and tap His strength for the physical energy needed on a daily basis. Take a moment to read all of Isaiah 40:28-31, and then claim God’s promise to renew the “weary,” the “faint” and those with “no might”—if they come to Him.

Wonderful Way of Life

The vitality and abundance—and pure joyful happiness—that can be yours is closer than you think. But you must recognize that God offers an entirely new and different way. It means living “by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4; Deut. 8:3). This means studying His Word and drinking in its meaning. It means praying daily and seeking God with your whole heart—and resisting Satan the devil.

This also means periodically accepting the Bible’s correction, which can sometimes cut deeply. But the converted mind seeks to grow at every opportunity. And receiving correction is also directly connected to happiness. Notice: “Happy is the man whom God corrects: therefore despise not you the chastening of the Almighty” (Job 5:17). Of course, no one naturally enjoys correction, but yielding to it produces a byproduct described as the “peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:9-11).

So, if even *correction* can bring happiness, just think of the joy that will come from practicing the many other aspects of true Christianity.

Practicing God’s Way will lead to concern for those around you. Self-interest will be replaced with an interest in others. You will want to humble yourself and value the lives of others, more than your *own* opinions—your own needs. You will feel goodwill and cheerfulness in your heart. You will want to smile, lead a life of vigor and reflect calm while standing in the eye of a storm. You will find courage to step out in full and complete faith, knowing God is with you—that you are not alone! You will understand you “can do *all things* through Christ who strengthens [you]” (Phil. 4:13) and “with God *all things* are possible” (Matt. 19:26).

Those around you will see these things. You will become an example—a light (Matt. 5:14)—in a world growing darker every day (John 3:19-21; 9:4). They will see you have found meaning and purpose in a con-

fused, disagreeing, unhappy world! And knowing you are doing this will bring its own happiness and satisfaction—because it is what God intends for His servants. Confidence will flow from this, but not *self*-confidence.

You will not find yourself constantly carping, griping, moaning and complaining about life’s endless “injustices.” You will not want to speak evil of others, but will want to lift them up, rather than pull or put them down. You will be able to conquer loneliness. And this will gen-

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erate a never-before-realized strength and boldness that will literally drive your life!

This may cause people to ask for help, encouragement or advice. They may see your life is “together,” while theirs is not! People are drawn to strength—confidence. If you exude these things, radiating a power greater than anything they have seen, they may seek your help.

Of course, be sure they *ask* for it (and they may even *ask* why you are filled with hope and cheerfulness—I Peter 3:15). Be sure you do not go around pushing your beliefs on others. This will turn them off, drive them away and produce the opposite of what you are trying to achieve.

But if people see you always give others the benefit of the doubt, and are always willing to offer a help-

ing hand, they will recognize you as *different* from everyone else. While they may not appreciate your doctrinal beliefs, they will appreciate your radiant attitude.

Remembering the Supreme Goal

Finally, you will always remember why God put you on Earth—why He gave you life. You will want to seek salvation, with zeal, vigor, enthusiasm and drive—and led by hope and faith—as though final success depends on your conduct *every day*. You will not want to compromise God’s Way or His truth—and you will enjoy richness and fullness overflowing as a result of this determined approach. This will give you more strength to address your problems and overcome them.

My book, *The Awesome Potential of Man*, available at rcg.org/tapom, reveals the truth about why you were born. Whole new vistas of understanding will open to you—and they are all connected to achieving the abundant life.

The Bible says, “Rejoice evermore” (I Thes. 5:16). Only two Bible passages contain two words. This is a command from God to all those begotten of His Spirit. One thousand years before, the Psalmist approached each day saying, “This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psa. 118:24), and asked God to “send now *prosperity*” (vs. 25).

These are not vague, nebulous scriptures. They are clear, direct and *plain*—and vital instruction for you and me. The apostle John added, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ...that your joy may be full” (I John 1:3-4). *Your* joy can be full—beyond your wildest dreams—if you walk and fellowship with the true God and the true Jesus Christ as a constant way of life that overarches all you do. You can live the rich, radiant, full, happy, joyful, abundant life. All you must do is be willing to leave the old way behind. Go to the SOURCE—and begin! □

HEALTH ISSUES

High-fructose Corn Syrup Promotes Intestinal Tumors

Does sugar directly feed cancers? The answer seems to be yes, at least in mice according to a study led by researchers at Baylor College of Medicine and Weill Cornell Medicine.

Their study, published in *Science*, showed that consuming a daily modest amount of high-fructose corn syrup—the equivalent of drinking about 12 ounces of a sugar-sweetened beverage daily—accelerates the growth of intestinal tumors in mice, independent of obesity.

“An increasing number of observational studies have raised awareness of the association between consuming sugary drinks, obesity and the risk of colorectal cancer,” said co-corresponding author Dr. Jihye Yun, assistant pro-

fessor of molecular and human genetics at Baylor. “The current thought is that sugar is harmful to our health mainly because consuming too much can lead to obesity. We know that obesity increases the risk of many types of cancer including colorectal cancer; however, we were uncertain whether a direct and causal link existed between sugar consumption and cancer.”

Dr. Yun and her colleagues generated a mouse modeling early-stage colon cancer in which the APC gene is deleted. “APC is a gatekeeper in colorectal cancer,” Dr. Yun stated. “Deleting this protein is like removing the brakes of a car. Without it, normal intestinal cells neither stop growing nor die, forming early stage

tumors called polyps. More than 90 percent of colorectal cancer patients have this type of APC mutation.”

Using this mouse model, the team tested the effect of consuming sugar-sweetened water on tumor development. The sweetened water was 25 percent high-fructose corn syrup, which is the main sweetener of sugary drinks people consume. High-fructose corn syrup consists of glucose and fructose at a 45:55 ratio.

When the researchers provided the sugary drink for the mice to drink at their will, they rapidly gained weight in a month. To prevent the mice from being obese and mimic humans’ daily consumption of one can of soda, the researchers gave the mice a moderate amount of sugary water orally with a special syringe once a day. After two months, the mice receiving sugary water did not become obese, but developed tumors that were larger and of higher-grade than those in model mice treated with regular water.

“These results suggest that when the animals have early stage of tumors in the intestines—which can occur in many young adult humans by chance and without notice—con-

suming even modest amounts of high-fructose corn syrup in liquid form can boost tumor growth and progression independently of obesity,” Dr. Yun said. In humans, it usually takes 20 to 30 years for colorectal cancer to grow from early stage benign tumors to aggressive cancers.

“This observation in animal models might explain why increased consumption of sweet drinks and other foods with high sugar content over the past 30 years is correlating with an increase in colorectal cancers in 25- to 50-year-olds in the United States,” said Dr. Cantley, a co-corresponding author and director of the Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center at Weill Cornell Medicine. □

AMERICAS

Decades After Failed Invasion, Cuba Still Eyes Venezuela



■ A woman shows a publication of a local newspaper carrying the story of the 1967 Cuban guerrilla operation in Machurucuto, Venezuela (May 5, 2019). PHOTO: AP/RODRIGO ABD

Achurucuto, Venezuela (AP) — For all the talk about President Nicolas Maduro being a Cuban puppet, there was a time when Cuban troops really did try to take control of Venezuela—or at least a remote coconut-strewn tropical beach.

Fifty-two years ago from May, an expeditionary force of 12 guerrillas departed from the communist-run island and days later landed in this sleepy fishing village with the goal of spreading Fidel Castro's revolution to South America.

The incursion—condemned at the time as a Cuban “invasion”—was a resounding failure. Of the four Cuban guerrillas transporting the mission,

one drowned when their inflatable raft overturned while the others were captured by a military patrol tipped off about the landing by a CIA mole. Within a year, the insurgency, which included eight Venezuelans who evaded capture, was wiped out.

Fast-forward a half century and Venezuela's socialist government would welcome what past governments condemned as “invaders” with a red carpet—a fact not lost on the U.S., which has accused Cuba of being Mr. Maduro's main prop in power as the economy around him falls apart.

“No one has done more to support the corrupt Maduro regime than

Cuba,” Vice President Mike Pence said in a policy speech. “The people of Venezuela are essentially Cuba's hostage.”

The extraordinarily tight alliance between the two countries was forged when Castro counseled Hugo Chavez following a failed 2002 coup. Venezuela has since sent an estimated \$30 billion worth of oil to Cuba in exchange for Havana dispatching tens of thousands of medical workers and other government employees, including intelligence and military advisers, according to defectors.

While nobody doubts the strong ideological alliance, U.S. estimates of as many as 25,000 Cuban troops

on the ground have been denied by Cuba and seem wildly exaggerated even to some in the U.S. intelligence community.

“There are no troops,” Carlos Fernandez de Cossio, Cuba’s director general of U.S. affairs, said in a recent interview in Washington. “Cuba does not participate in military operations nor in security operations in Venezuela.”

What is not in doubt is Cuba’s strategic interest in Venezuela—something that traces its roots to the Machurucuto incident.

A straggling visitor to the depressed town of 500 would never know from the boarded-up beach kiosks and decaying fishing boats that it was briefly a flashpoint in the Cold War fight against communism.

It was chosen as a beachhead because of its proximity to a jungled mountain range stretching toward Caracas that was a major center of guerrilla activity.

Ana Morffe, one of the few elderly residents who remember the incident, said she did not even know what a guerrilla was at the time. But unbeknownst to her, one of the young fighters sneaked through an open window of her house while she was out washing clothes at the river and cooked himself a meal.

“I didn’t see him, but he surely saw me,” said the 75-year-old.

Hector Perez Marcano, one of the surviving members of the expedition, said Castro’s support stemmed from an overriding interest in Venezuela’s oil.

A little more than two weeks after Castro rode into Havana triumphantly in 1959, he flew to Caracas, where massive crowds lined highways to get a glimpse of the bearded revolutionary whose defeat of the U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista would inspire a new generation of Latin American leftists.

A few years later, Mr. Marcano and a few dozen Venezuelans traveled to Cuba for military training. He said the idea of deploying by sea came directly from Castro at a meeting on the top floor of the Habana Libre

hotel during the first Tricontinental Conference of revolutionaries from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Almost 18 months later, Castro was present when the rebels shipped out from Santiago de Cuba at 6 a.m., handing each member of the expedition a Rolex watch—the ultimate all-terrain aid for any revolutionary worth his salt, he told them. A year earlier, another landing squad with 15 Cuban guerrillas, including a highly decorated war hero who would go on to command Castro’s troops in Ethiopia and Angola, landed covertly in western Falcon state.

“Back then [for Castro] Venezuela was the crown jewel of Latin America,” said Mr. Marcano.

The impact of the clandestine intervention was immediately felt: an emergency meeting of regional diplomats was convened in Washington and Venezuela broke off diplomatic relations with Havana. It would take seven years for them to be restored.

Mr. Marcano, an opponent of Mr. Maduro, said Venezuela’s petro-diplomacy over the past decade has been at the service of Cuba’s interests.

“What Fidel was unable to accomplish in the 1960s through armed conflict he was able to do now using Chavez and Venezuela as a tool for hemispheric domination,” said Mr. Marcano.

William Izarra was a recent graduate of Venezuela’s air force academy when he was sent to Machurucuto and asked to interrogate one of the Cuban subversives, Antonio Briones, in a field tent set up on the beach.

Trained under the influence of U.S. national security doctrine to despise communists, he was instead amazed by the firmness of Briones’ revolutionary ideals, which contrasted with his soft green eyes and serene demeanor.

“I thought a communist was someone with horns and a tail,” said Mr. Izarra, who is now a member of Venezuela’s ruling socialist party and teaches courses on Marxism. “But it turned out the devil was actually an angel.”

When he showed up the next day, Briones was lying dead on the beach, his face ripped off. How he was killed remains a mystery.

But Mr. Izarra credits the brief encounter with the Cuban rebel for a political epiphany. Over the ensuing two decades, he would work clandestinely to spread leftist ideology inside the barracks, eventually joining forces with coup-plotters led by then-Lieutenant Chavez.

He disputes Mr. Marcano’s view that Cuba is pulling Mr. Maduro’s strings, and worries that as Venezuela’s political crisis attracts more international attention the U.S. is magnifying the role played by Cuba in something akin to the Cold War hysteria.

“There’s a real push to return to anti-communist ideology in which Cuba is identified as the source of all evil,” he said.

In Machurucuto, opinions about the Cubans vary. A plaque dedicated by Mr. Izarra and other government supporters in 2006 has since been stolen. Chavez, despite an almost encyclopedic knowledge and passion for history, never visited the town as president, reflecting some of the nationalist sensibilities that compete for support of socialism inside the ruling party.

Cuba’s government has been far more generous. There is a town in western Cuba named for Briones, as well as a military medal emblazoned with his image.

Meanwhile, for many town residents, their only contact with the onetime aggressors is at a hospital in a nearby city where Cuban doctors treat them for free—albeit with alarmingly scant medical supplies.

Ms. Morffe, despite surviving on a pension that is barely enough to afford a kilo of meat, still supports Mr. Maduro, blaming instead the people he has surrounded himself with for the country’s sorry state. She said Venezuelans need to learn from Cuba, which suffered severely following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of generous subsidies, as it struggles to confront its own hardships.

“They talk to you, they’re our friends,” said Ms. Morffe of the Cuban doctors. “The little we have is because of them.” □



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