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DISCERN

A Magazine of Life Hope & Truth



**Modern-Day
Lessons From
Ancient Israel**

DISCERN

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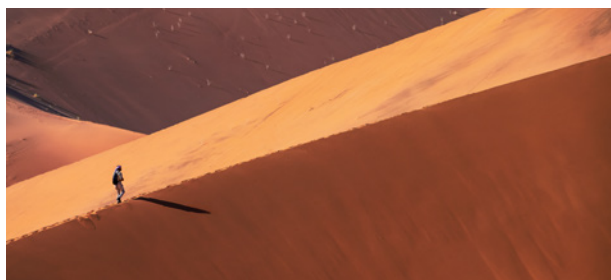
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So Simple a Child Can Understand

How do you explain to a child what is happening in our world today?

I asked that very question in this column exactly nine years ago, relating how, on a long road trip, one of my grandchildren had softly asked me, “What do you think about what all of you were talking about?”

I thought she had been asleep. But, no, she had been quietly listening to us adults bemoaning how our world was reeling from one crisis and tragedy to another—senseless, unpredictable mayhem that had everyone on edge. And, of course, we were opining about the complex underlying reasons.

Our conversation, sad to say, had been on events of just the previous month—police shootings of unarmed civilians, terrorists armed with bombs attacking an airport, another armed with nothing more than a big truck mowing down scores of people, including many children, in France, and another horrible mass shooting.

I immediately regretted she had heard all that—it’s too much for little ears to hear and young minds to comprehend.

I’m even more sorry about the world we are handing to the next generation.

Nine years later

That same grandchild is now a young adult, and I’m again sorrowful that just last week we stood together watching the news about the U.S. bombing the Iranian nuclear facilities and listening to analysts opine about whether this is the trigger, waiting to be pulled, that will drag other nations into deeper conflict and maybe world war.

Later I thought about what I wrote nine years ago: “How do you explain to children what is happening when we adults grapple with understanding it ourselves?”

“Clear, simple answers are difficult to come by, and a 10-second stroll into the restaurant hardly allows for substantive dialogue. So when drink and food choices quickly distracted her from the topic at hand, I was grateful for the reprieve. I needed a little more time to think this through, to recover from the lousy job I did in stumbling around for a simple and honest, yet reassuring, answer that a child could understand.



“She hasn’t brought the question up again, but it’s hardly left my mind. Children don’t need complicated analyses and answers to life’s big questions. But frankly, neither do adults. It’s time we adults stop acting so childishly, lift our eyes higher than the issues of religion, race and politics that are dividing and destroying us, and reduce life to its simplest principles.”

Everything will be okay

So, here’s my attempt to answer a child’s question. I think:

- We need to admit that we humans are utterly incapable of solving our own problems.
- We—every single one of us—need to take a long, honest look inside ourselves and humbly admit that

we are wrong in so many ways we think and live.

- We need to quit ignoring and turn to a higher authority than ourselves—God!
- We need to really listen to Him, repent and start doing what He says. Jesus’ message was clear and simple: “Repent and believe in the gospel!”
- We’d better start right now, because we’re digging a hole from which we won’t recover without disastrous consequences.
- Knowing history and human nature, most won’t really listen to

God, but some will. You can choose to.

- The Bible is right—the only viable solution for our world’s problems is for Jesus Christ to return as soon as possible.
- Ultimately, everything’s going to be okay because—and only because—He is going to return.
- And the best part is that this isn’t just what I think; it’s what God tells us.

Nine years later, I believe these things more than ever. And I think it’s what God has been trying to tell all of us, as His children, for a long time.

Clyde Kilough
Editor



4 Modern-Day Lessons From Ancient Israel



The record of Israel's past provides more than just helpful stories—it gives us vital lessons for our relationship with God.

By Jeremy Lallier

Roughly 3,500 years ago, some things happened to some people who have long since died and most of whose names we don't even know.

I'm here to tell you why you should care.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthian congregation, he pointed them toward the recorded history of ancient Israel, explaining that Israel's repeated failings "became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted" (1 Corinthians 10:6).

On their way out of Egypt, the Israelites worshipped false gods (verse 7), engaged in licentious sexual acts (verse 8), put God to the test (verse 9) and seemed to generally complain at the slightest provocation (verse 10).

It's not an accident that we know all this. Here's Paul again:

"Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come" (verse 11, English Standard Version).

For our instruction.

All of history has lessons to teach, but Israel's history is so important, so valuable in terms of the instruction it offers us, that God personally ensured those stories were preserved over the course of literal millennia.

For us.

If we aren't taking the time to learn from that history, we are missing out on the lessons God Himself wants to teach us. And that's the worst kind of past to repeat.

So what can we learn from the pages of Israel's ancient past? Plenty. Here are four of those vitally important lessons:

1. God plays the long game

If you became an ant, the things that seem small to you now would suddenly become giant. A coffee cup would become a cavern. A basketball would become a planet. A french fry would become a feast.

Except . . . the objects wouldn't really change at all, would they?

Just you—and the way you perceive them.

Time is kind of like that. With our life expectancy of 70-plus years, a century sounds like a huge chunk of time. Our long-term plans are measured in years or decades—but not God's.

The book of Exodus starts off with Israel in bondage to Egypt and crying out for God's deliverance. And

over the next several books of the Bible, we get to follow along with the fledgling nation on its way to Canaan—a destination often referred to as the Promised Land.

But promised to who?

For that, we need to flip backward to Genesis. That's where God promises Abraham, "Know this for certain: Your offspring will be resident aliens for four hundred years in a land that does not belong to them and will be enslaved and oppressed. However, I will judge the nation they serve, and afterward they will go out with many possessions. But you will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure" (Genesis 15:13-16, Christian Standard Bible).

God made a promise to Abraham that required Abraham to look far beyond the boundaries of his own life—400 years into the future, when the multitudinous descendants of his own as-yet nonexistent child would march out of crippling oppression and into a land of their own.

Abraham was just a man and still without an heir, but God was already looking ahead to the great nation that would one day trace its lineage back to him.

Humans don't naturally think on that scale. We're ants. God thinks about millennia. Eons. *Eternity*.

We couldn't comprehend that kind of scale if it bit us. But that's the brush God routinely paints with.

The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ's sacrifice was planned "from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8)—not an afterthought, not a course-correction, but the plan from the beginning.

God is patient. But eventually, we have to make a decision. Will we obey God or not?

This first lesson from ancient Israel's history—or, more accurately, from the history of how ancient Israel was *given* a history—reminds us that God works on a scale our limited human perspective can never fully grasp.

What does that mean?

It means we have to trust that He can see things we can't. He can plan for eventualities we haven't even begun to daydream about.

Sometimes, from our antlike perspective, the reasons for the decisions He makes might not seem clear to us—but we can always trust that there *is* a reason. More than that, we can trust that it's the *best* reason.

2. Remember why you're different

True to His word, four centuries after His promise to Abraham, God sent the nation of Israel to drive out the wicked nations of Canaan and claim the land as their promised inheritance.

Crucially, Israel was supposed to be different from the nations they were driving out. They were supposed to be an *example*, a proof of concept, showcasing what life looks like when people obey God's instructions. This would make them different from any other nation on the planet—a truly unique people defined by their obedience to God's laws.

At the border of Canaan, Moses reminded the Israelites: "So be sure to do them, because this will testify of your wise understanding to the people who will learn of all these statutes and say, 'Indeed, this great nation is a very wise people'" (Deuteronomy 4:6, NET Bible).

One of the things that made Israel different was the absence of a king. God gave them no human ruler

because *He* was to be their King. His presence was with them in the holy place of the tabernacle, and He conveyed His instructions through His messengers.

But being different is hard—and in time, Israel caved to the pressure. They demanded a king, "that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Samuel 8:19-20).

They didn't *want* to be different anymore. They weren't interested in being God's model nation; they were interested in being like the world around them. And the more they swept the things that made them different under the rug, the farther they got from the God who *made* them different.

If we're not careful, we can do the same.

Being different is hard, and living according to God's way of life invariably makes us *different*. We will never fit in with a world that rejects God—the more we try to align ourselves with His instructions, the more pressure we'll feel to give in and "be like all the nations."

But we're different because we've been given something precious. Something worth treasuring.

Moses continued by asking Israel, "For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life" (Deuteronomy 4:7-9).

God's Sabbaths, His holy days, His standards for

how to live our lives—these aren't just things we *do*, but things that define *who we are*.

Don't let the world pressure you into giving that up.

3. Clear out what God says to clear out

It's important to hold onto the things God gives us—but on the flip side of that same coin, it's also important to get rid of the things God says to get rid of.

Israel failed on that front repeatedly.

The nations that God had marked for destruction and expulsion from Canaan? Over and over, the Bible highlights that Israel failed to drive them out of the land (Joshua 13:13; 16:10; 17:13; Judges 1:21, 27-28, 32).

Those nations hung around within Israel's borders. Their corrupt practices (which included child sacrifice, see Deuteronomy 12:31) continued to bleed into and mingle with Israel's own culture, leaving God's people increasingly comfortable with pagan abominations.

God tasked Israel with destroying the “high places”—hot spots for pagan worship—of Canaan (Numbers 33:52). Instead, they incorporated the high places (and the pagan practices found there) into their own worship of God—and an increasing pantheon of idols.

God tells us to get rid of things for a reason. Holding onto them comes with long-lasting and far-reaching consequences. As Israel's history shows, keeping those influences around will change us—no matter how strong or impervious we think we are.

Given time, a stream can carve through the hardest stone. Allowing the wrong attitudes, influences and activities into our lives will inevitably do the same to us.

4. Unwavering faithfulness doesn't mean unlimited time

God is patient.

Incredibly patient. Patient in ways we can't fathom and don't deserve.

He always leaves repentance on the table as an option for us (1 John 1:9). When we come to Him looking for forgiveness for our sins, with a desire to bring our lives into alignment with His commandments, we will always find the forgiveness and assistance we need.

More than that, He extends this patience to the entire world, “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). In this life or the next, everyone who has ever lived will have the opportunity to understand what he or she needs to do to be part of the incredible future God has in store for us.

(For more on this, read “[Are Most People Eternally Lost?](#)”)

But there's a limit to that patience.

God spent centuries sending messenger after messenger to urge His people back onto the right track, but Israel ultimately refused to listen (Jeremiah 7:25; 32:33; etc.). Instead, they doubled down on their disobedience.

God lamented, “They enthroned kings without my consent! They appointed princes without my approval! They made idols out of their silver and gold, but they will be destroyed!” (Hosea 8:4, NET Bible).

Their hearts were set on disobeying God. And so the nation of ancient Israel—a nation called by God's name, a nation that was supposed to show the whole world the blessings that come from obedience to God—was ultimately delivered by God into captivity and destruction.

God is patient. But eventually, we have to make a decision. Will we obey God or not? Are we serious about His way of life, or are we unwilling to commit?

God gives us every opportunity to succeed—but He won't wait forever.

Hope for Israel and a choice for us

Ultimately, there's still hope for ancient Israel. They didn't have access to God's Spirit the way His people do today. They had a “heart of stone” (Ezekiel 36:26) that made it difficult for them to truly embrace what God was showing them. The whole chapter of Ezekiel 37 talks about a time when they will be restored to life and given the opportunity to understand and repent.

But for those of us who follow God today—who can have God's Spirit placed within us (Ezekiel 36:26-27) through the process of repentance and baptism—we have a choice to make.

Or rather, a choice to *continue* to make.

About 3,500 years ago, some things happened to some people who have long since died and most of whose names we don't even know. If we want, we can ignore the lessons they've left behind and pay the steep price of that ignorance—or we can listen up and learn.

God knows where all this is going. If we're willing to embrace being different and reject the things He warns us about, refusing to play games with His incredible mercy, we are well on our way to a future where “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

Let's learn from the past on our journey toward that future.

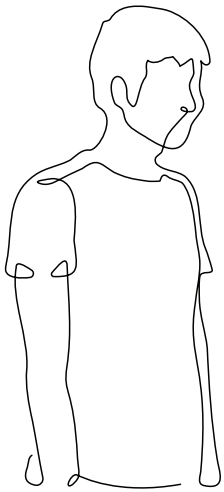
Read more in our booklet [God's Purpose for You](#). 📖

An Ancient Remedy for

God's holy days—largely discarded and forgotten by the modern world—provide a powerful antidote to the loneliness and lack of belonging many feel today.

By David Treybig

Isolation and



Loneliness

Modern technology is astounding. With the Internet, we can work from home, choose flexible hours and accomplish an astonishing range of tasks—from banking and shopping to entertainment and communication—all without leaving the house.

Need to deposit a check? Pay a bill? Buy a car or even a house? It can all be done online. The convenience is unparalleled.

But there's a downside.

Despite our hyperconnectivity, people are lonelier than ever. Many suffer from a deep sense of disconnection and isolation. Many hunger for relationships and don't have a sense of belonging.

Ironically, even the social media tools designed to connect us have contributed to our growing detachment from one another.

The growing epidemic of loneliness

The trend toward isolation has been building in the United States for decades. In 2000, Robert Putnam noted in his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* that almost all forms of in-person social interaction were diminishing.

The author's example of bowling alone came from his finding that while the number of people who bowled in the previous 20 years had increased, fewer were doing so in leagues. This mirrored the loss of membership in many civic organizations, churches, parent-teacher associations and labor unions.

Since then, this trend has only worsened.

In a 2023 report titled "Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation," the U.S. surgeon general noted, "In recent years, about one-in-two adults in America reported experiencing loneliness. And that was before the COVID-19 pandemic cut off so many of us from friends, loved ones, and support systems, exacerbating loneliness and isolation."

Loneliness is lethal for both the individual and society. Loneliness puts individuals at

greater risk for multiple health problems, including cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety and premature death. In fact, the health impact of loneliness is said to be comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. It's ranked as more harmful than obesity or physical inactivity.

On a societal level, isolation leads to fragmentation and polarization. If we fail to increase our social connections, the surgeon general warned, "we will continue to splinter and divide until we can no longer stand as a community or a country. Instead of coming together to take on the great challenges before us, we will further retreat to our corners—angry, sick, and alone."

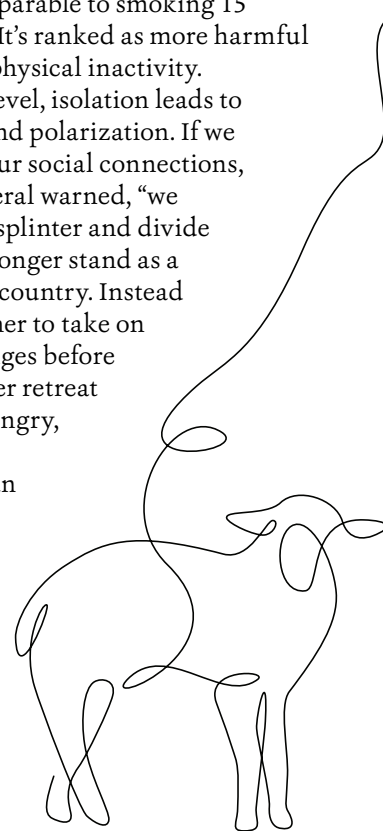
This isn't just an American problem. It's one that exists worldwide.

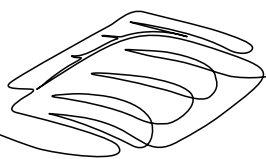
A 2021 Statista survey found that Brazil had the highest percentage of people in the world who said they are often lonely. Following Brazil was Turkey, India, Saudi Arabia and Italy. Canada was 16th and the U.S. 17th.

A biblical solution for belonging

The Bible offers powerful solutions to this growing problem. For example, God gave the ancient Israelites a series of festivals designed to foster community, worship and belonging.

When God gave these special days to ancient Israel, He explained that these holy days were to be proclaimed "holy convocations" (Leviticus 23:2, 4). The Hebrew word translated "convocations" is *miqra*, meaning a sacred assembly.





These assemblies occurred on the weekly seventh-day Sabbath and on annual holy days throughout the year. On these days the Israelites were to abstain from their customary work (verses 3, 7, 8, 21, 25, 28, 35, 36) and gather together to worship God.

Great emphasis was placed upon everyone participating. For example, if someone was unable to observe the Passover because he had touched a human corpse and had therefore become ceremonially unclean, that person could observe it a month later (Numbers 9:9-11). However, anyone who could keep the Passover but refused was to be “cut off from among his people” because of “his sin” (verse 13).

The Day of Atonement was to be observed by fasting (abstaining from food and drink for 24 hours). As such, this day was the one people would be most inclined to skip. But it was not simply an optional observance for those who were willing to endure the hardship. Any Israelite who didn’t fast on this day was to be “cut off from his people” (Leviticus 23:29).

The culmination of God’s annual festivals came after the fall harvest had been gathered. For these holy days, people traveled to the place God had selected for their observance. During the times of the kings, this was Jerusalem.

The fall festivals were particularly joyous—the highlight of the year. People saved up a tenth of their incomes to enjoy the festivals, allowing them to assemble, worship and rejoice before the LORD for the blessings they had received (Deuteronomy 14:22-26).

Again, there was an emphasis on the entire community observing these days and rejoicing together. The Levites, the strangers, the widows and orphans were to be financially provided for so everyone could rejoice together (verse 29).

These assemblies reminded the Israelites of their special relationship with God, His blessings

and their shared identity as His people, united in worship and faith.

A spiritual legacy

When the Israelites observed these commanded assemblies, God wanted them to remember His



involvement in creation and in their nation’s history.

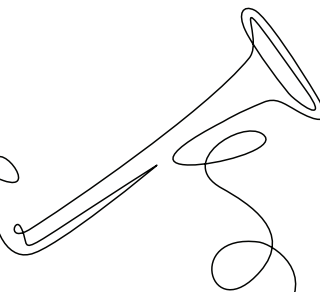
In connection with not working on the weekly Sabbath, they were to remember that “in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day” (Exodus 20:11). Resting on the seventh day would imitate what the Creator did.

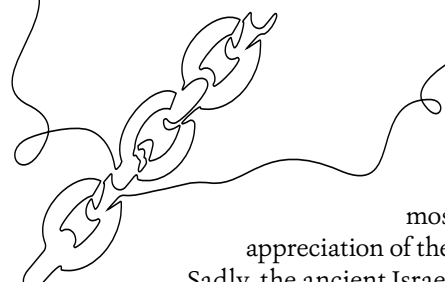
Deuteronomy 5 also adds that in observing this day, the Israelites were to “remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day” (verse 15).

This astounding miracle of deliverance from slavery—under which they most likely did not have a day of rest—was also connected with the observance of the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 16:12; Leviticus 23:42-43).

Assembling together to observe God’s holy days enabled the ancient Israelites to remember their history—

remember how God had delivered them—thus giving them a strong basis for their identity, a sense of belonging and,





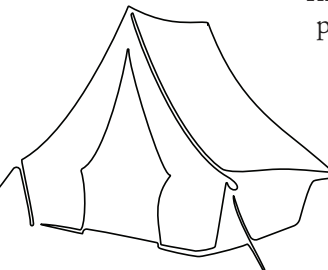
most importantly, grateful appreciation of their God.

Sadly, the ancient Israelites largely forgot these instructions. They created their own forms of worship, which included the adoption of pagan practices. Rejection of the seventh-day Sabbath led most of the 12 tribes of Israel to lose their identity and their relationship with God.

Only the tribe of Judah, whose people continued to observe the Sabbath, retained its identity.

Similar benefits of community, with even greater spiritual meaning, are offered to New Testament Christians who observe God's Sabbath and holy days.

- The **Day of Atonement** symbolizes the binding of Satan so humans will no longer be deceived by him and the demons (Revelation 20:1-3).
- The **Feast of Tabernacles** foreshadows Christ's reign on earth, with the assistance of the saints, for 1,000 years (verse 4).
- The **Eighth Day** pictures the time of



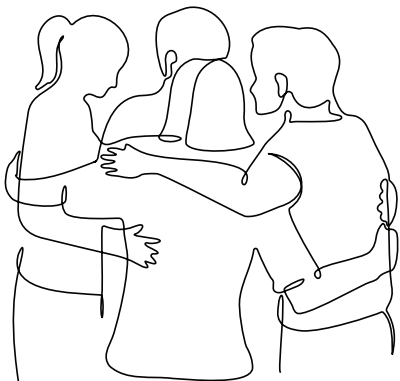
The Christian connection to God's holy days

Many people mistakenly assume that the festivals God gave ancient Israel were merely ceremonial observances unique to that nation. But the biblical record shows that Jesus, the apostles and the first-century Church continued to observe them—now with added spiritual meaning. For example:

- The observance of **Passover** is linked with Jesus' giving His life for the forgiveness of our sins (1 Corinthians 5:7).
- The **Days of Unleavened Bread** remind us to live godly lives (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).
- **Pentecost** commemorates the receiving of

the Holy Spirit by those called to form the New Testament Church of God (Acts 2:1-4).

- The **Feast of Trumpets** pictures Jesus Christ returning to rule the earth (Revelation 11:15).



judgment, when every human being who has not fully known God's commands will be given the opportunity to choose His way and receive eternal life (verses 11-12).


These festivals point toward a future when people will have the opportunity to live in godly communities based on love, harmony, righteous government, righteous living, opportunity and the sense of belonging to the greatest community of all.

The meanings of God's festivals reveal how He is bringing sons and daughters into His family as spirit beings who will live with Him for eternity. This is the ultimate reason Jesus came to earth—to die as payment for the sins of those who will repent of their sinful way of life so they can become part of this spiritual family.

As John noted: "But as many as received Him [Jesus], to them He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

Expounding upon this principle, Jesus taught that He was the bread of life and that those believing in Him could have eternal life (John 6:35-40).

Eternal community and purpose in the family of God is the ultimate solution to isolation and loneliness—both now and forever.

The Church of God continues to enjoy the benefits of these festivals today. For further study, see *From Holidays to Holy Days: God's Plan for You.* 

The Masculinity Crisis: What Are We Building and Who Are We Serving?

The masculinity crisis is real, but not all of the voices promising a solution are correct. Here's what some people miss—and why it matters.

By Kendrick Diaz

Richard Reeves leads an organization focused on men's problems. In his book *Of Boys and Men*, he takes us back to the 1970s to help explain some of the challenges confronting American men today.

One of his key observations is that deindustrialization—and the offshoring of factory jobs—marked the beginning of a decline in men's fortunes.

Why? For one simple reason: *physical strength became less valuable.*

That's not the whole story, of course. The modern male crisis is layered and complex. But Reeves puts his finger on something that feels instantly true to many men.

Scripture says, "The glory of young men is their *strength*" (Proverbs 20:29, emphasis added throughout). But what happens to the male psyche when that "glory" has nowhere to go? What happens when male strength is devalued or channeled into trivial pursuits or even demonized?



When the outlet disappears

Part of the reason Reeves' point strikes such a resonant chord is because we intuitively understand that *outlets matter*. At a basic level, human beings want an opportunity to contribute what they uniquely have to offer—and to be rewarded for it.

Having a meaningful outlet helps with that. It can reinforce identity. It can provide fulfillment and a sense of purpose. But strip those outlets away—from individuals or from an entire demographic—and watch their psychology slowly start to unravel.

So it makes sense that when society suddenly shifted to favor a different set of skills—ones where men, on average, are at a disadvantage—some men experienced a kind of vacuum.

A sense of displacement. A fumbling for meaning. Their outlet was gone.

So what's the solution? Should we just bring brawny jobs back to our shores and expect the manhood crisis to resolve itself?

There's more to it than that. If outlets matter—and they absolutely do—then the *kind* of outlets also matter. And what sometimes seems to be gaining a lot of traction on social media is a brand of masculinity glorifying the wrong outlets—and that's damaging.

How types of goals affect us

This brings us to a useful distinction: *instrumental good* versus *intrinsic good*.

An instrumental good is something that is valued not for what it is, but for what it helps us achieve. In other words, it's a behavior or goal that serves as a means to an end—things like lifting weights, earning money or having sex.

An intrinsic good, by contrast, is valued for its own sake. It's something that's good in itself—like taking care of the poor, providing for your family or loving your spouse. Ultimately, what is intrinsically good is defined by God.

This distinction matters because some of the messages aimed at men today get it completely backward. One version of masculinity that, unfortunately, gets taken seriously says, "Make instrumental goods the ultimate goal."

According to this model, masculinity essentially becomes the following:

Build your body. Pile up cash. Attract women.

But that's not real manhood—that's self-aggrandizement. It's ego.

The problem is, these goals fail to connect you to something deeper. You're not moving toward something that's bigger than yourself.

And that's when things start to go wrong. You can't find true fulfillment that way. No one can. Fulfillment doesn't come from serving only yourself. You need a greater mission to experience greater meaning.

Here's a better ideal:

Exercise *so that* you can be strong, healthy and present for the people who count on you. Earn money *so that* you can provide for your family and help those who are barely getting by. Have sex within a committed marriage *so that* you can build love and unity with your wife.

Notice how none of those items are inherently wrong. It comes down to the *aim*. The same actions take on a different weight when they're pointed in a different direction. Hitting the gym, making a high salary, having sex—all of these are *right* when they happen in the right context and when they serve a godly purpose.

When we use instrumental goods as a bridge to intrinsic goods, the whole pursuit changes—and so does the effect it has on us.

But when our outlets don't serve a higher aim, they're either *sin* or a cheap substitute for fulfillment.

The role of selflessness

That's not to say men aren't allowed to have hobbies. We *need* outlets for leisure, fun and creativity.

But we need to stay on guard against distorted ideas of masculinity that turn us *inward*—ideas that train us to think in terms of *What do I get out of this?* instead of *What am I building? Who am I serving?*

One line of questioning is rooted in selfishness and ultimately leads to emptiness; the other is rooted in *selflessness*—and can shape us into the kind of people God wants us to be.

Men, the goal isn't to resent our strength, drive and ambition. It's also not to waste them on things that are purely self-serving. The goal should be to redeem those qualities.

To aim them *outward*.

This is what the apostle Paul said to do: "Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself. Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, *but about the interests of others as well*" (Philippians 2:3-4, NET Bible).



That's a command for both men and women, no doubt. But as men, God has entrusted us with particular strengths—strengths He intentionally designed and equipped us with. What should we do with those strengths? *Surrender* them to a bigger purpose. Use them as tools for *service*.

For *intrinsic goods*.

Paul says again, “Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor” (1 Corinthians 10:24, English Standard Version).

It's a theme that runs throughout Scripture—and one that can't be left out of any honest discussion about masculinity.

What am I building? Who am I serving? If these questions sit at the center of our decision-making, we're charting a course for being the kind of men God is proud of.

Because true masculinity doesn't exist to serve itself. It exists to serve others.

The perfect model

A lot of men in the Bible stepped up to serve when they needed to and are remembered for that choice. One clear example is Moses, who walked away from the prospect of a comfortable and self-indulgent life in Egypt in order to ultimately lead and serve his people (Hebrews 11:24-26).

But no one embodied that calling perfectly as Jesus Christ did.

There wasn't a point in Jesus' life where He had to shift His focus to be more others-centered.

Jesus was committed to a spiritual purpose that benefited others—and He spent Himself completely on it.

The disciples heard Him say plainly, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). And on another occasion, Jesus made it clear that His mission had nothing

to do with personal interests: “I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me” (John 5:30).

If we're looking for a model of true masculinity—the kind that sets aside *self* in pursuit of a goal that seeks the good of others—then Jesus is the One we should look to.

An outlook that works

The general state of a lot of men today is fraught with challenges. And there is no *single* cause. We can look at decades of societal changes—cultural shifts away from biblical gender roles, the absence of fathers, economic shake-ups—and see how they all played a part in getting us here.

But the piece of the puzzle that sometimes gets overlooked is modern culture's relentless pressure on men to turn inward. To care only about things that benefit us first and foremost. To search for outlets that feed shallow passions instead of connecting us to something deeper.


Our culture teaches us that *you* are what matters most—exactly what Paul warned Timothy would happen in the last days: “Men will become utterly self-centred” (2 Timothy 3:2, J.B. Phillips New Testament).

And when that's the message, it's no surprise that the noble call to serve and live for something greater than ourselves gets pushed aside.

Men don't benefit from that. We suffer.

God has a different vision for what men should focus on. It's laid out in the examples of Jesus Christ and the other heroes in the Bible who chose selflessness over selfishness. If we imitate them, it will foster meaning, fulfillment and lasting joy.

We can get there when we start asking: *What am I building? Who am I serving?*

For further study, see “[What Happened to Masculinity?](#)” and related posts on [LifeHopeandTruth.com](#). 

The story of a people wandering in the desert holds meaningful lessons for many who feel lost and aimless today.

By Jason Hyde

ARE YOU WANDERING?

Are you one of the many people who feel adrift today? Could the dusty wanderings of an ancient people have bearing on your life?

The Israelites spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness. But it didn't have to be that way!

Let's examine these ancient wanderers and consider the modern lessons for us.

A people enslaved

The story of ancient Israel is epic and moving. Israel, the name God gave to Jacob (Genesis 32:22-28), had 12 sons. One son, Joseph, was sold into bondage, landing as a slave in Egypt. Through a series of incredible events, Joseph rose to be second in command of Egypt, just under Pharaoh (Genesis chapters 39-41).

At Joseph's urging, the extended family of Israel relocated to an area in Egypt called Goshen during a time of protracted famine (Genesis chapters 42-46). Their descendants prospered for a time and

"increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty" (Exodus 1:7).

But then "there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph" (verse 8). This Pharaoh felt threatened by the potential military power of the Israelites. Pharaoh's solution to this potential threat was to enslave them (verses 9-14).

Deliverance

God orchestrated a series of miracles to deliver the Israelites from slavery. (See our online article "[A Deeper Look at the 10 Plagues](#)" for more about this.)

God systematically reduced the religious, social and economic structures of Egypt to ruin. As a result, "the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste" (Exodus 12:33).

BRING?

As they left, “Moses said to the people, ‘Remember this day, in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this place’” (Exodus 13:3).

More than freedom

God had great plans for these freed slaves.

God told Moses, “I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8).

God’s intent was twofold:

1. To give them deliverance.
2. To bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey.

There was a purpose behind deliverance. God’s purpose was to lead them to the Promised Land.

God planned to lead them personally. “And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night

in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people” (Exodus 13:21-22).

God’s plan to settle them in a bountiful land where they could live as examples of God’s way of life should have shaped the Israelites’ journey. This purpose offered meaning to the day-to-day challenges and realities of a desert migration.

The loss of purpose

Sadly, as history reveals, most Israelites lost sight of God’s purpose. Daily life—with its repetitive responsibilities, frustrations and perceived drudgery—began to eclipse their vision of God’s purpose.

The purpose was quickly overshadowed by their physical circumstances.

A mere 30 days after leaving slavery behind, “the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, ‘Oh, that we had died by the hand

of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger” (Exodus 16:2-3).

Their lives as slaves had been “bitter with hard bondage” (Exodus 1:14). One month after being freed, the Israelites were complaining, bemoaning and lamenting their lot in life.

They began to fantasize about their former life as slaves, convincing themselves it hadn’t been that bad.

Complaints about hunger were followed by complaints about water and leadership and God Himself. Complaining became a way of life.

Many forgot the purpose of the journey—to inherit the Promised Land—and began to look back to slavery.

The wandering begins

So diminished was their appreciation of God’s purpose, the Israelites balked when they finally reached the Promised Land. They wouldn’t go in. Astonishingly, they demanded to return to Egypt.

“And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, ‘If only we had died in

the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?’ So they said to one another, ‘Let us select a leader and return to Egypt’” (Numbers 14:2-4).

Imagine! They were eager to return to slavery.

So God said, “Because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it” (verses 22-23).

The Israelites instead spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness until the generation that lost sight of God’s purpose died (verses 27-30).

Paul summarized the tragic errors of those who perished in the wilderness: “All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness” (1 Corinthians 10:3-5).

As the Israelites became more disconnected from God’s purpose, they began to wander off after other activities to fill the void. Paul mentions their lust for evil things, idolatry, sexual immorality and tendency to complain (verses 6-10).

Modern relevance

While the Israelites’ story is tragic and interesting, is it relevant to you?

Paul used the Israelites’ desert wandering as a metaphor for the

Christian life (verses 1-12). He emphasized the importance of their history for Christians. Note his words:

- *These things became our examples* (verse 6).
- *To the intent that we . . .* (verse 6).
- *All these things happened to them as examples* (verse 11).
- *They were written for our admonition* (verse 11).

The modern human family has much in common with those ancient travelers. We, too, are prone to wandering. There is much we need to learn from this story.

A purpose for you

In the same way that He had a purpose for the Israelites, God has a purpose for each of us. He reveals that purpose in the Bible.

God has a tremendous future in store for humanity—far greater in scope and impact than the physical Promised Land offered to the Israelites.

God’s purpose is to bring those who respond to His calling into the Kingdom of God.

Incredibly, at creation, God stated that He created the human family in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). God created humans with the potential to join His family, and He is actively “bringing many sons and daughters to glory” (Hebrews 2:10, New International Version).

To explore more about this incredible purpose, download our booklet [*God’s Purpose for You*](#).

A plan to lead

God has set in motion an incredible plan of deliverance to bring His purpose about.

God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for the sins of mankind (Romans 5:8-11; 1 Corinthians 5:7). Jesus’ sacrifice offers us deliverance from slavery to sin.

But deliverance is only part of the plan. To accomplish His full purpose—bringing sons and daughters into His family—God offers to take those who repent on a lifetime journey of spiritual growth that leads to the Kingdom of God (Romans 8:5, 14; 1 Peter 1:6-9).

This amazing plan is outlined in God’s annual festival cycle. For more information, download our booklet [*From Holidays to Holy Days: God’s Plan for You*](#).

Stop wandering

Humans seek after all kinds of things. Across the world, people pursue fame, fortune, prestige, acclaim, notoriety, influence—wandering from pursuit to pursuit in a desperate search for meaning.

Those pursuits have proved to be inadequate to quench our desire for purpose.

Do you find yourself wandering in this life—searching for meaning, purpose or direction?

Are you tired, overwhelmed or exhausted from competing endlessly for money, promotion, status, etc.?

Those God calls can stop wandering now (John 6:44; Hebrews 9:15). If this sounds appealing, embrace God’s purpose for you and begin following Him. Examine, study and apply what the Bible teaches.

To stop wandering and pursue real purpose, study the biblical process explained in our online booklet [*Change Your Life*](#). ⑥



A NEW POPE

and the Enduring Power of the Papacy

The papacy is one of the world's oldest and most influential institutions, with a profound impact on history. Discover its surprising role in Bible prophecy.

By Isaac Khalil

When a new pope is elected, the world watches intently. The smoke from the Sistine Chapel captures global attention: black smoke means no consensus among the cardinals; white smoke signals that a new pope has been chosen.

This dramatic tradition unfolded once again in Vatican City in early May, as the world awaited the successor to Pope Francis I and the new leader of the world's largest Christian denomination.

No other religious office or institution captures the world's attention like the Roman Catholic Church does when a new pope is elected.

After two days of deliberation, white smoke billowed into the sky, and the world turned its eyes to the balcony, awaiting the cardinal who would step forward to the crowd's jubilant cry: "*Viva il papa!*"—long live the pope.

An American pope

Following the announcement, it quickly became clear that this new pope marked a historic first: he was an American.

Many were surprised by the selection of Cardinal Robert Prevost, who chose the name Pope Leo XIV. Born in Chicago in 1955 to parents of Spanish and Franco-Italian descent, he served as an altar boy and was ordained in 1982, later serving in Peru for two decades.

When a new pope selects a name, it reflects the legacy he intends to uphold. By choosing the name Leo—Latin for "lion"—he aligned himself with Pope Leo XIII, who led the church during the social upheavals of the Industrial Revolution, a period of rapid and significant change.

Many view this selection as a significant milestone—especially in light of the ongoing turmoil within the Catholic Church and the broader global unrest. Political and religious divisions continue to cause deep rifts, and the new pope steps into his role amid many challenges, including the aftermath of a contentious U.S. election and a shifting and increasingly dangerous global landscape.

Some see this papal election as a pivotal moment for Western civilization—one that could help steer the world back from the brink. Given his American roots and close ties to the United States, the new pope was soon invited to visit his home country.

Leo, a history of great upheavals

Pope Leo XIV assumes leadership at a time of significant upheaval in the Catholic Church. The church is deeply divided—caught between traditionalists and those advocating for a more modern, inclusive approach. It also faces ongoing scandals, including sexual abuse, financial misconduct and issues within the Vatican bank.

Beyond internal challenges, the church must navigate serious global crises: the European migrant situation, wars in Ukraine and Gaza, strained relations with

Historically, those who upheld biblical teachings in opposition to the Roman Church were persecuted as heretics and declared anathema.

the United States, growing political polarization and the rapidly evolving impact of artificial intelligence.

The name Leo is steeped in papal history and is associated with leaders who guided the Catholic Church through times of great turmoil and change.

Pope Leo I, or Leo the Great, led the church through major theological challenges after his election in A.D. 440. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451, his letter affirming Christ's dual natures inspired the cry, "*Peter has spoken through Leo!*"—solidifying papal authority. He also met Attila the Hun and persuaded him to spare Rome from destruction.

Pope Leo III, elected in 795, famously crowned Charlemagne as emperor in 800, widely regarded as the birth of the Holy Roman Empire. In return, Charlemagne defended the church and reinforced its authority. Nicknamed the "[Father of Europe](#)," Charlemagne united much of Western Europe under the Roman Catholic Church, often through force—giving pagan peoples the choice to convert or die.

Pope Leo IX, who began his papacy in 1049, faced a major challenge to Roman authority from the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire. The patriarch of

Constantinople asserted that his authority was equal to the pope and independent from Rome. Tensions were worsened

by key liturgical and theological differences. These disputes led to the Great Schism of 1054, when papal representatives excommunicated the patriarch of

Constantinople, leading to the division between the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches.

Pope Leo X, elected in 1513, led the church during the Protestant Reformation, when Martin Luther denounced its corruption—especially indulgences and salvation by works. Luther's claim that salvation comes by faith alone sparked another schism, and his excommunication cemented the Catholic-Protestant divide that continues today.

The various Pope Leos throughout history have been renowned for asserting the authority of the papacy.

Leo XIII, reasserting the authority of the pope

Pope Leo's namesake predecessor, Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903), saw unrest caused by the Industrial Revolution. He is known for asserting the Catholic Church's absolute authority in both civil and ecclesiastic affairs.



Notice these quotes from his writings:

- “But the supreme teacher in the Church is the Roman Pontiff. Union of minds, therefore, requires, together with a perfect accord in the one faith, complete submission and obedience of will to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, as to God Himself” ([On Christians as Citizens, 1890, section 22](#)).
- “We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty” ([The Reunion of Christendom, 1894](#)).
- “‘We define’ (declare the Fathers of the Council of Florence) ‘that the Holy and Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff hold the primacy of the Church throughout the whole world: and that the same Roman Pontiff is the successor of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and the true Vicar of Christ, the head of the whole Church, and the father and teacher of all Christians; and that full power was given to him’” ([On the Unity of the Church, 1896, section 13](#)).

The Catholic Church has a long history of influencing civil affairs, shaping them to try to ensure that the church maintains greater control over people’s lives. Bible prophecy indicates that the church will again play a significant role just before Christ returns to this earth.

A revived Roman Empire

History has shown that the power of the Catholic

Church has waxed and waned over the centuries. Its peak of power and influence has historically occurred during revivals of the Roman Empire, the very empire that marked its ascent. This phenomenon is not well understood by many, but it is prophesied in the Bible.

The book of Daniel describes four major empires, represented by the gold, silver, bronze and iron in a statue (Daniel 2:32-44). These empires began with Babylon (verse 38), followed by the Medo-Persian Empire (Daniel 5:28; 6:28; 8:20), then the Greco-Macedonian Empire (Daniel 8:21) and finally the Roman Empire (Daniel 11:30).

The Roman Empire, represented by the iron legs of the statue, would continue in various forms until Christ returns (Daniel 2:42-44). (To learn more, read “[Daniel 2: Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream](#).”)

These four empires are also represented as four beasts: a winged lion, a bear with three ribs in its mouth, a four-headed leopard and a 10-horned beast (Daniel 7:4-7). The final beast is described as “different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns” (verse 7).

The Roman beast stands out from the other empires due to its 10 horns. Unlike the other empires, the Roman Empire would be revived 10 times after its downfall. With the fourth, the Catholic Church regained its political influence over the empire.

So far, the Roman Empire has experienced nine revivals related to:

1. The Vandals (429-533).
2. The Heruli (476-493).
3. The Ostrogoths (493-554).
4. Justinian (554).
5. Charlemagne (800).
6. Otto the Great (962).
7. Charles V (1520).
8. Napoleon (1804).
9. Garibaldi through Hitler and Mussolini (1870-1945).

Although the 10th revival hasn't yet made its mark on the world stage, it appears to be slowly taking shape in modern Europe today.

Another key difference between the Roman Empire and its predecessors is the rise of the little horn, described in Daniel 7:8 as having “eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.” This figure is further portrayed as making war against the saints, speaking blasphemies against the Most High, attempting to change times and law and relentlessly persecuting God's true Church (verses 21, 25).

All these actions describe a religious power that opposes God, His truth and His people. History reveals that before the Roman Empire collapsed, a new spiritual force emerged from within the empire: the Roman Catholic Church. (To learn more, read [“Daniel 7: Four Beasts and the Little Horn”](#) and [“Who Is the Beast?”](#))

The Catholic Church waged war “against the saints” through inquisitions aimed at eliminating biblical beliefs that opposed its doctrines. Many of its doctrines—such as transubstantiation, Eucharistic adoration, infant baptism, purgatory, praying to saints and the veneration of Mary—are patently unbiblical. Historically, those who upheld biblical teachings in opposition to the Roman Church were persecuted as heretics and declared anathema.

The Catholic Church “spoke pompous words” against God by making blasphemous claims to authority meant for God alone. It claims the power to forgive sins, speak infallibly, grant salvation or damnation, and exert authority over governments. It considers its traditions to carry divine weight. The pope claims to be the “Vicar of Christ” (one who acts *in place* of Christ) and claims titles that belong to God alone, such as “Holy Father” (Matthew 23:9).

The Catholic Church changed “times and law” by claiming the authority to change the day of worship from the biblical seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) to

Sunday, deriding God's true Sabbath as Jewish. It has also replaced the biblical Passover and God's other annual festivals with pagan festivals like Easter, Christmas and various saints' days.

This same religious power of the “little horn” is depicted as the “MOTHER OF HARLOTS” (Revelation 17:5), an unfaithful woman with harlot daughters—that is, other churches that teach similar false doctrines. She is described as the “great city which reigns over the kings of the earth” (verse 18), which is a clear reference to Rome.

A church of confusion

Pope Leo XIV steps onto the scene following a period of tension and debate under his predecessor, Pope Francis, who sought to modernize the Catholic Church by restricting the Latin Mass and adopting a more inclusive and progressive tone, particularly toward the LGBTQ+ community.

The Catholic Church is no stranger to confusion. In Revelation 17:5, the harlot is called “BABYLON THE GREAT”—a name that traces back to Babylon, meaning “confusion,” and the Tower of Babel, the original symbol of mankind's pride and division. Ironically, Pope Leo XIV [called on](#) the media covering the Roman Catholic Church to “lead the world out of such a Tower of Babel” by disarming hateful words and promoting unity.

Revelation 13:11 describes “another beast” with “two horns like a lamb [who] spoke like a dragon.” The comparison to a lamb suggests this beast appears to be like Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36; Revelation 12:11; 13:8; 17:14). However, instead of speaking Christ's actual words, it speaks words inspired by “the great dragon” (Revelation 12:9).

Jesus also warned of this deception: “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many” (Matthew 24:5).

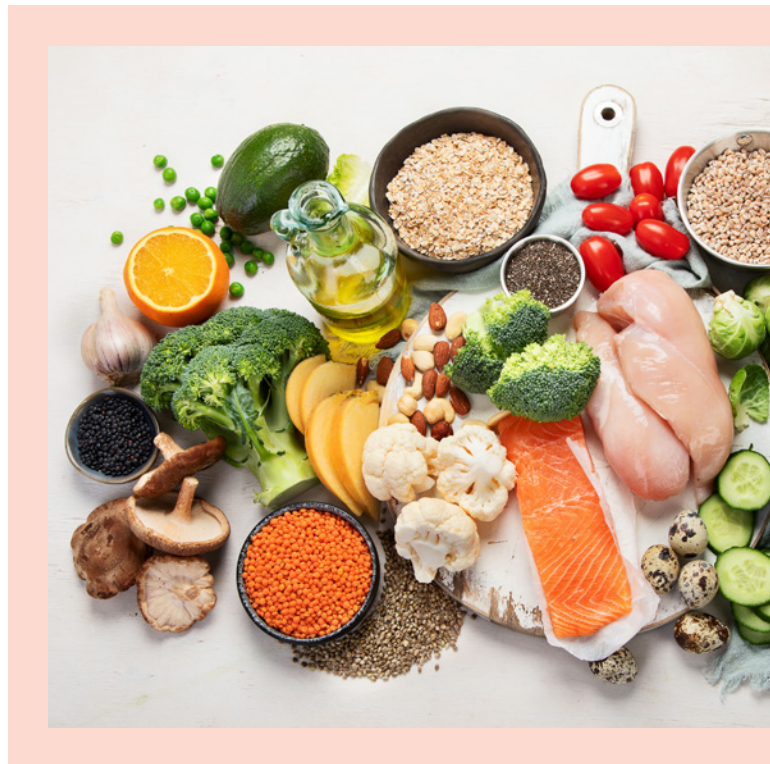
As Europe moves to reassert itself as a global power, we will witness the final revival of the Holy Roman Empire, with the Roman Catholic Church once again rising to prominence. Just as it has influenced past empires, the church will play a key role in this formation. Its opposition to God's truth will intensify, leading up to the return of Jesus Christ.

What role the new pope will play in these prophetic developments remains to be seen. Keep a close watch on events unfolding in Europe and the Vatican. **➤**

Biblical Health Laws: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Wellness

In a world overwhelmed by health challenges, could Scripture offer the clarity and healing we've been missing?

By Monica Ebersole



Each day brings new headlines: outbreaks of foodborne illness, heated debates over diet trends, growing concerns about mysterious ingredients and much more.

These headlines reflect our culture's growing preoccupation with the food we eat and how it impacts our health and well-being. Today debates over food and health dominate social media feeds and political discourse like never before. The verdict is in: Americans are sick of being sick.

Unsurprisingly, consumer skepticism is on the rise as more people demand better for themselves and their families and challenge the status quo when it comes to food quality, ingredients and sourcing. In light of these growing frustrations, many have chosen to take matters into their own hands by embarking on a quest to transform their health and address the root cause of many chronic health issues.

Setting debates and politics aside, the desire to steward one's health is not only responsible—it's biblical. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:19 that our bodies are a temple and

that we are to treat them as such. But this isn't all the Bible has to say in regard to our health.

God's Word also contains an array of tried-and-true laws and principles concerning our physical, mental and spiritual health. These divine laws and principles allow us to take a proactive approach, preventing many health problems *before* they arise. And when our health does suffer, Scripture also reveals the true source of all healing.

This doesn't mean that there aren't solid health principles to be learned from research and sources outside the Bible. There certainly



are. However, the health guidance given in God's Word should be our foundation.

Though commonly overlooked and frequently dismissed, the Bible is truly an indispensable resource for those seeking to live happier, healthier lives. Keep reading to discover the valuable insights the Bible has to offer.

Biblical principles for healthy living: Clean and unclean meats

When it comes to improving our health, food is a crucial component. And while the

Internet offers a plethora of advice regarding which foods to eat and which to avoid, the Bible also has a great deal to say about which foods are suitable for consumption—and which are not.

For instance, Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 are dedicated to defining which meats God deems as clean (permissible for consumption) and which He deems as unclean (not intended for human consumption).

Though many of the animals listed are not commonly eaten in most cultures, there are a few that should catch our attention, such as pork and shellfish.

Interestingly, even though God does not provide a specific reason for deeming a particular animal unclean, science often helps fill in the gaps. As it turns out, pigs and shellfish share a common trait: both are scavengers that consume waste.

While these animals clearly play an important role within their respective ecosystems, they weren't designed to be consumed by humans.

What does the New Testament *really* say about clean and unclean meats?

While God's laws concerning clean and unclean meats are profound, they are often dismissed. In an effort to remove any obligation to keep this aspect of God's law, many twist various passages in the New Testament—or take them entirely out of context—to claim these laws were abolished.

But, upon closer examination, we find that this simply isn't true. God designed these laws for our benefit,

and He never intended for them to be removed.

The following articles from our Life, Hope & Truth website address some of the most commonly cited verses in support of this argument: [“Acts 10: Did Peter's Vision Abolish the Clean and Unclean Laws?”](#) [“Did Jesus Cleanse All Meats?”](#) and [“1 Timothy 4:1-5: Does It Abolish the Law of Clean and Unclean Meats?”](#)

Avoiding fat and blood

In addition to distinguishing between clean and unclean animals, the Bible also specifies which *parts* of an animal are permissible to eat, and which are not. Leviticus 3:17 and 7:22-27 clearly state that, although most of a clean animal can be eaten, the fat and the blood are strictly prohibited.

While this prohibition may seem a bit odd, research reveals potential health risks associated with each. For instance, consuming the blood of an animal puts us at risk for exposure to blood-borne pathogens, while eating fat increases our likelihood of developing cardiovascular disease over time.

Moderation

The Bible also underscores the importance of balance in food and drink.

For example, in the first-century world of uncertain water sources, Paul advised Timothy, “Use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities” (1 Timothy 5:23). However, the Bible also warns us numerous times about the dangers of drunkenness and alcohol abuse (Ephesians 5:18; Romans 13:13).

Sanitation laws

In our modern age, it's easy to overlook just how vital rules and regulations regarding sanitation and hygiene are in abating and preventing sickness. After all, many of us live in countries where these systems have been in place for our entire lives.

But this wasn't the case in the ancient world. The knowledge that God provided Israel through His law was ahead of its time and laid the groundwork for many modern sanitation practices, such as waste disposal (Deuteronomy 23:12-14), handwashing, quarantine and more (Leviticus chapters 11-15).

Movement and exercise

The Bible doesn't emphasize physical exercise extensively, likely because most people throughout history automatically got a lot of exercise through their work and daily chores (though this is no longer true in many nations today). However, the Bible does acknowledge its value in maintaining health and strength. For instance, 1 Timothy 4:8 highlights that, while godliness is paramount, physical training is also of value.

While the benefits of exercise are widely recognized, finding time for it in our busy schedules can be a real challenge. Additionally, long workouts and costly gym memberships aren't practical for many of us. But this shouldn't discourage us.

According to an article by the Mayo Clinic, "Physical activity doesn't need to be complicated. Something as simple as a daily brisk walk can help you live a healthier life."

The article goes on to list a number of health benefits we can glean simply from walking, such as improved cardiovascular fitness, stronger bones, improved muscle endurance, strengthened immune system and much more.

Mental and spiritual health

Thus far, we've focused on physical health. But this is only half the picture. In order to be truly healthy, we must attend to our mental and spiritual needs as well. Unfortunately, this is where society's recommendations come up short. Though there is a great deal of advice available regarding how to improve our mental health, most resources fail to mention the most important factor of all—our connection with our Creator.

In Proverbs 4:20-22, King Solomon shared wisdom he received from God: "Give attention to my words . . . for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh."

God's Word offers benefits that extend beyond the physical. When we are overwhelmed with the stresses of life or burdened with anxieties, delving into the Bible can grant us peace of mind (Isaiah 26:3), relief from anxiety (Psalm 94:19; Philippians 4:6-7) and encouragement (Psalm 119:50) in a way that nothing else can.

God our Healer

Spending time studying God's Word comes with an additional benefit—it reveals God's role as [our Healer](#) (Psalm 103:2-3; James 5:14-15).

We have a responsibility to follow God's laws to the best of our

ability, but even our best efforts won't guarantee us perfect health over the course of our lives. When we do inevitably encounter health challenges, we can be comforted by God's promise: "I am the LORD who heals you" (Exodus 15:26).

Health and healing in the Kingdom of God

For many, the pursuit of better health feels like an uphill battle, often overshadowed by the state of the world around us. After all, what's the point of striving to eat well when the quality of our food is so often compromised? How can we reclaim our health when the very environment we live in seems to be working against us?

These are valid concerns. Humanity is indeed facing the consequences of ignoring God's laws (Leviticus 26:14-16). But that doesn't mean that our efforts are in vain. There is hope.

When Jesus Christ returns, the whole world will experience God's miraculous healing (Isaiah 35:5-6). Even the land will be restored, equipping it to support human life the way God intended (Isaiah 51:3; Joel 2:22-24).

Fearfully and wonderfully made

By embracing the principles found in the Bible, we can take meaningful steps toward a happier, healthier and more fulfilling life. In doing so, we grow in our appreciation for the God who created us, cares for us and continually sustains us. Never forget that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14).

May the day come soon when the entire world can share in God's blessing of true, lasting health. 🕊

INDIA AND PAKISTAN: A PRELUDE TO THE BRINK?

Nuclear-armed India and Pakistan returned to active military conflict in April 2025. Many in the Western world seemed completely unaware. What's ahead?

By Jason Hyde

In April, separatists seen as aligned with Pakistan murdered civilians in the Indian-controlled part of Kashmir.

CBS News reported: “At least 26 people were killed and many others injured Tuesday [April 22, 2025], the vast majority of them tourists, when suspected militants opened fire on civilians in Indian-administered Kashmir.”

On May 7, India responded by launching missiles at locations in the Pakistani-administered part of Kashmir. *The Indian Express reported*, “Indian armed forces targeted and destroyed nine terror sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir including the headquarters of the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed”—militant groups whose objectives include merging all of Kashmir into Pakistan.

Over the next few days, the cross-border conflict escalated into drone and ballistic missile attacks on at least three Pakistani air bases and six Indian military sites, raising concerns that the conflict might spiral out of control.

On May 10, at the urging of international diplomats, India and Pakistan agreed to yet another ceasefire.

Regular readers of *Discern* know that we examine world events in the context of Bible prophecy. Does the conflict between India and Pakistan foreshadow any prophetic events? Let’s examine these recent skirmishes in the light of Scripture.

Rumors of war

Sadly, conflict is nothing new to the region—or the world.

Following independence from Britain and [partition](#) in 1947, India and Pakistan have gone to war four times. Historic grievances rooted in religious, social and territorial ambitions have plagued the Indian subcontinent for decades.

In addition to active warfare, the ongoing dispute over the territory of Kashmir has been a near constant challenge since 1947, often erupting with skirmishes, terror attacks and border incidents.

Following partition, Kashmir, a Muslim-majority area ruled by a Hindu, Maharaja Hari Singh, was briefly independent before acceding to India after a Pashtun invasion supported by Pakistan. The resulting conflict was devastating. In 1949, India and Pakistan agreed to an uneasy truce that divided control of Kashmir between the two countries.

The ongoing discontent and recurring violent clashes in Kashmir illustrate a truth observed by the prophet Isaiah: “The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; they have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace” (Isaiah 59:8).

Jesus foretold that this nearly ubiquitous condition would be amplified through time. Addressing questions about the timing and events surrounding His return, Jesus said, “And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places” (Matthew 24:6-7).

The heightened tension and military clashes between Pakistan and India are another example of “wars and rumors of wars.” They provide sobering evidence that Jesus’ prophecy is true.





Nuclear powers

The recent hostilities between India and Pakistan highlight another prophetic condition that will exist prior to Christ's return.

Jesus, when describing the escalating conflicts near the end of this age, observed, "In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive" (Matthew 24:22, New Living Translation). Jesus anticipated a time when humans would have the capacity to destroy all life on the planet.

For much of history this was not convincingly possible. However, with the advent of the nuclear age, mankind achieved the ability to annihilate all life on earth. That capacity has existed now for decades, and the initial concern and sobriety generated by the first atomic weapons has dissipated. Many today express little awareness of the precarious conditions across the world.

This brings the India-Pakistan conflict into sharper

relief. Both countries have nuclear capabilities.

In his article "[India and Pakistan Don't Fight Wars Like Other Countries. Here's Why](#)," reporter Riazat Butt quotes security analyst Syed Mohammed Ali, based in Islamabad. He noted, "Pakistan and India have enough nuclear weapons to wipe the other side out several times over. Their nuclear weapons create a scenario for mutually assured destruction."

The drone and missile exchange between two nuclear powers reminds us that man, through our rebellion against God's way of peace, has the capability to destroy all human life. Mercifully, Jesus promised, "But for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:22).

Where is this heading?

The cycle of conflicts will culminate in a worldwide conflagration. Jesus said, "Then there will be great

tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21).

This prophesied time of great trouble will engulf the world in conflict and destruction. Bible prophecy reveals a conflict between large military powers referred to as kings of the North and the South (Daniel 11). Review our online article "[Daniel 11: The Most Detailed Prophecy in the Bible](#)" for more information on this conflagration.

The end-time king of the North, a revival of the Roman Empire, will "enter the Glorious Land"—a reference to the historic land of Israel and Judah (Daniel 11:41). This voracious empire will for a time exercise control over much of Europe and the Middle East. Its influence will be felt across the world.

News from the east

The king of the North will occupy Jerusalem and surrounding areas when "news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many" (verse 44).

This "news from the east and the north" seems to indicate Russia, China and a collection of other Asian nations. Could India or Pakistan play a role in this troubling news? It behooves readers to be alert to conflicts and national developments in all areas of the world.

The Bible also prophesies a time soon after that when a large military conglomeration from Asia will engage other world powers in a prelude to the return of Jesus Christ. John describes a 200 million-strong army from beyond the Euphrates (Revelation 9:13-17). Again, this prophecy seems to indicate Asia, possibly including the Indian subcontinent.

Historically, the Euphrates was often seen as the far edge of the Roman Empire. The "way of the kings from the east" (Revelation 16:12)—likely nations or confederations of countries in Asia—will be prepared in order to set the stage for a final conflict.

The King is coming

These dramatic events will reach a feverish peak at Armageddon (Revelation 16:16). The armies of the world—including those of the king of the North and those from the east—will be gathered near the hill or

mountain of Megiddo, approximately 80 miles (130 kilometers) north of Jerusalem.

They will be assembled, under the sway of the devil, to fight against the returning Christ outside Jerusalem.

Jesus prophesied, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:29-30).

Jesus will come with power and might (Revelation 19:11-16). The armies of the world will be no match for the returning King of Kings (verses 17-21).

Jesus' return will usher in a new age. It will be a time of peace, restoration and relief. For more insight into that wonderful future age, download [The World to Come: What It Will Be Like](#).

What about you?


What impact does this have on you? Should you be concerned about the turmoil in India, Pakistan or any other far-flung region of the world?

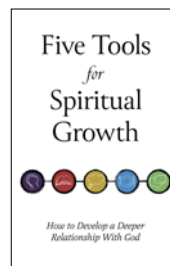
Bible prophecy gives us assurance that God is in control of the final outcome. He will intervene to prevent human annihilation (Matthew 24:22) and to eventually bring a kingdom of peace (Isaiah 2:2-4).

Those who follow Jesus Christ do not need to be troubled.

Prophecies in Scripture offer us insight into events that will surely come to pass. They remind us that God is in charge and that He will win in the end. They are offered to encourage us to be alert and prepared spiritually.

Jesus instructs us, "Therefore you also be ready" (Matthew 24:44). Luke's account of this prophecy adds, "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36).

As you see troubling events on the world stage, we encourage you to focus more intently on spiritual growth. For ideas on how to kick-start your spiritual growth, download our free book [Five Tools for Spiritual Growth](#). 



A Sticky Situation

Ever walked into a spider web?

It's not a pleasant experience for anyone involved (including the spider). But you've probably never walked into a spider web and thought, "Wow, the strength-to-density ratio of these strands must be off the charts!"

But it *is* off the charts. Ounce for ounce, spider silk has twice (some say five times!) the tensile strength of steel, stretching up to around 40 percent its original length without breaking. It's been calculated that if a spider could produce a strand the width of a pencil, it would be strong enough to suspend a Boeing 747.

Spiders manufacture their webs using complex organs called spinnerets, where microscopic spigots produce filaments of silk on demand, each of them fractions of a micron wide, weaving them together into a single strand thinner than a human hair.

The thread is impressive, and so is the construction of the web itself. The spider must tie together nonsticky threads as a frame, then begin weaving the sticky spiral pattern that will ultimately catch its prey (and, occasionally, panic the unsuspecting humans who walk into it).

Pictured: western spotted orb weaver (*Neoscona oaxacensis*)



Photography by James Capo

Text by James Capo and Jeremy Lallier

Jesus Feeds the 5,000

After Jesus allowed Himself a brief period of solitude, a great need arose. Jesus responded by performing a miracle. What can we learn from Jesus' feeding the 5,000?

By Erik Jones

Shortly after being rejected in Nazareth, Jesus learned that reports of His growing fame had reached Herod Antipas, the Roman tetrarch for Galilee and Peraea. What was worse, Herod had actually concocted the idea that Jesus was John the Baptist returned from the dead (Matthew 14:1-2).

Though Herod's belief that Jesus was John reincarnated was humorously absurd, it was still troubling given that Herod had ordered John's execution.

Herod had imprisoned John for rebuking him over his unlawful marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife. Though Herod was content to keep John imprisoned, he made a rash oath at a party, promising to grant any request made by Herodias' daughter. Prompted by her mother, she asked for John's execution.

As a result, John was beheaded—a tragic and violent end for the man Jesus called the *greatest of all God's prophets*.

Jesus seeks some solitude

When Jesus heard these things, He “departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself”

(Matthew 14:13). He also told His disciples to “come aside by yourselves” (Mark 6:31).

Perhaps Jesus desired some alone time to grieve and process the loss of His relative, and He also recognized that His disciples needed some physical rest (verses 30-32). They had been sent out in pairs to do the work in the surrounding areas and had been so busy “they did not even have time to eat” (verses 7-13, 31).

After this brief period of solitude, Jesus emerged to find a large crowd gathered in this secluded area. Upon seeing them, He “was moved with compassion for them” (verse 34) and “spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing” (Luke 9:11).

The dilemma of thousands of hungry people

This situation created a unique challenge: the large crowd had followed Him to a remote area, and there was no easy way to provide them with food.

Since it was evening and would soon be dark, the disciples urged Jesus to send the crowd on their way to the nearest villages so they could buy food before the vendors closed for the night (Matthew 14:15).





Jesus disagreed: “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat” (verse 16).

Essentially, Jesus was saying, “They came here because of Me—their care is *our* responsibility.”

Jesus constantly modeled perfect outgoing concern—the *give* way of life. But this also served as another lesson in faith for the disciples.

Their immediate response had been to doubt it was possible to feed more than 5,000 people in the middle of nowhere.

The disciples questioned Jesus, noting that even 200 denarii (perhaps what they had in their traveling treasury) wouldn’t buy enough to feed such a large crowd (Mark 6:37). And even if it had been, there was nowhere to buy food in the area.

Despite witnessing Jesus repeatedly do the impossible, the disciples still defaulted to the confines of the possible. By now, their instinct should have been to *expect* the impossible!

The lad’s bread and fish

Amid the back-and-forth on how to feed the crowd, Andrew, Peter’s brother, remarked, “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves

and two small fish, but what are they among so many?” (John 6:9).

But how did Andrew know the exact contents of the boy’s packed meal?

Perhaps the boy had overheard the conversation about the dilemma and, with childlike innocence, offered his food to Andrew to fill the need. What Andrew may have brushed off as a childish gesture, Jesus took very seriously.

Jesus then instructed the disciples to have the multitude sit down in the grass, organized in groups of hundreds and fifties (Mark 6:39-40). Everything Jesus did was done “decently and in order,” the way Paul also admonished the Church to do things (1 Corinthians 14:40).

What happened next became one of Jesus’ most well-known miracles:

“And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among them all” (Mark 6:41).

To grasp the full scale of this miracle, remember that the count of 5,000 referred only to the men; there were also women and children (Matthew 14:21). In all, Jesus likely fed 6,000 to 7,000 people with the boy’s food.

That Jesus fed thousands with just five loaves and two fish is astounding in itself, but even more remarkable is that 12 full baskets of leftovers remained (Mark 6:42-43).

Feeding the 4,000

This event was the first of two miracles in which Jesus fed a large crowd with a minuscule amount of food. The second occurred shortly after for a group of over 4,000 who had followed Jesus along the shores of the Sea of Galilee for three days.

This miracle was also driven by Jesus' compassionate concern for the well-being of people. Before the miracle, Jesus said: "I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way" (Matthew 15:32).

Again, Jesus constantly modeled care and concern for people. He didn't feed or heal people for notoriety or just to feel good about Himself—He did it because everything He did was driven by perfect love for others.

Jesus' demonstration of love was always exhibited through actions and works, not merely feelings or words. As John would later write, Jesus loved "in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

Lessons from Jesus' feeding the multitudes

Though we can't feed thousands with a few scraps of food, we can draw practical spiritual lessons from Jesus' example.

1. Be our brothers' keeper.

One of the Bible's most memorable quotes is Cain's response to God's question about his brother's well-being: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9).

While God didn't answer Cain directly, Jesus essentially answered through His example. When He saw that the multitudes were hungry, He didn't turn them away, callously reasoning, *They came out here uninvited. It's not My responsibility to feed them. I'm not these people's keeper.*

No, instead of taking Cain's approach, Jesus took responsibility for them and showed care and concern. Jesus showed, by His example, that He *was* His brother's keeper.

Jesus' concern was far beyond just providing their next meal. He was moved with compassion because they had no one to care for them, guide them and defend them (Mark 6:34).

He saw the need, had the ability to help and chose to act.

2. Go the "extra mile."

When we analyze the disciples' reaction to the situation, we see they weren't totally indifferent to the multitudes. Their suggestion was perfectly practical and reasonable—send the people away in time for them to reach the closest villages and buy food before nightfall (Matthew 14:15).

But Jesus showed them that the easiest option isn't always the best.

Jesus showed them their concern needed to go a step further—they needed to practice the "extra mile" principle He had already taught them (Matthew 5:41). In this situation, sending the crowd away to find food was the *first mile*; stepping up to meet their need directly was the *extra mile*.

Followers of Christ should strive to go beyond the bare minimum in meeting needs and serving others.

3. Don't give just to get.

Human nature is capable of kindness, but often with strings attached—recognition, loyalty or future favor. Jesus, in contrast, fed the crowds out of genuine care for their well-being.

The people He fed had nothing to offer Him in return. He didn't ask for pledges or commitments. He simply met their need—no strings attached.

In fact, there's no indication that most of those fed ever became committed disciples. While we often assume miracles would spark deep faith, the examples in the Bible indicate they often didn't lead to lasting conversion.

Jesus' compassion, selflessness and service show us what genuine love in action looks like. Though we can't feed thousands with a few loaves and fish, we can apply the lessons of the example behind this amazing miracle as we . . .

Walk as He walked. ⑤

Pompeii and Today

Arresting, mesmerizing, horrifying. I stared transfixed at the last moments of a man dying, frozen in time, in one of the most famous catastrophes of history. Who was he, this random Roman? Was he a wealthy noble making great plans, a working man going about his business, a slave obeying his master's orders? What was he thinking and doing that morning, not knowing it would be his last?

There had been a powerful and destructive earthquake at the base of the volcano 17 years earlier—some of the destruction had still not been repaired. Earthquakes were common along this part of the Italian coastline, so the population didn't worry when minor tremors began again just four days before the fatal event. They increased in frequency as the days passed, yet no one paid attention.

Sometime after Oct. 17, A.D. 79, the eruption of Vesuvius, on what is now called the Bay of Naples, began. It lasted two days. The morning of the first day began normally enough, but in the middle of the day an explosion projected a column high into the air, and ash and pumice began to fall on the cities of Pompeii, Herculaneum, Oplontis and Stabiae, among others.

Then, at some point during the night or early the next morning, pyroclastic surges swept down the mountainside. Like tsunamis, this superheated liquified gas, molten rock and ash belched down the slope at up to 290 miles per hour. The burning masses overwhelmed the cities at the base of the volcano.

No time to escape

There was no time to escape; the surge knocked men, women and children down before killing them.

Pompeii was buried. Bodies were consumed, but not before the flow hardened around the space where they had been. To date, archaeologists have discovered empty, body-shaped spaces representing 1,150 victims.

As archaeologists explored Pompeii in the 1860s, they began injecting plaster into these voids. The plaster took the shape of agonizing victims, and about 100 have been displayed. They give a snapshot of a city that died in a moment, nearly 2,000 years ago. When these thousands woke that fateful morning, they had no idea what lay ahead: the end of their world.

Shockingly unexpected end

Jesus said that His second coming to earth will also bring a shockingly unexpected end. He compared the time of His return to a cataclysm recorded early in the

Bible: "As it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:28-30).

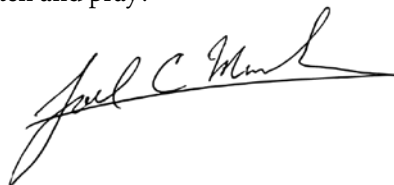
The people of Pompeii didn't know, that calamitous morning, that they were in a city about to die. As we scan the world today, we would do well to keep in mind that this is an age about to die, though we don't yet know the terminal day, and hardly anyone pays attention to this prophecy.

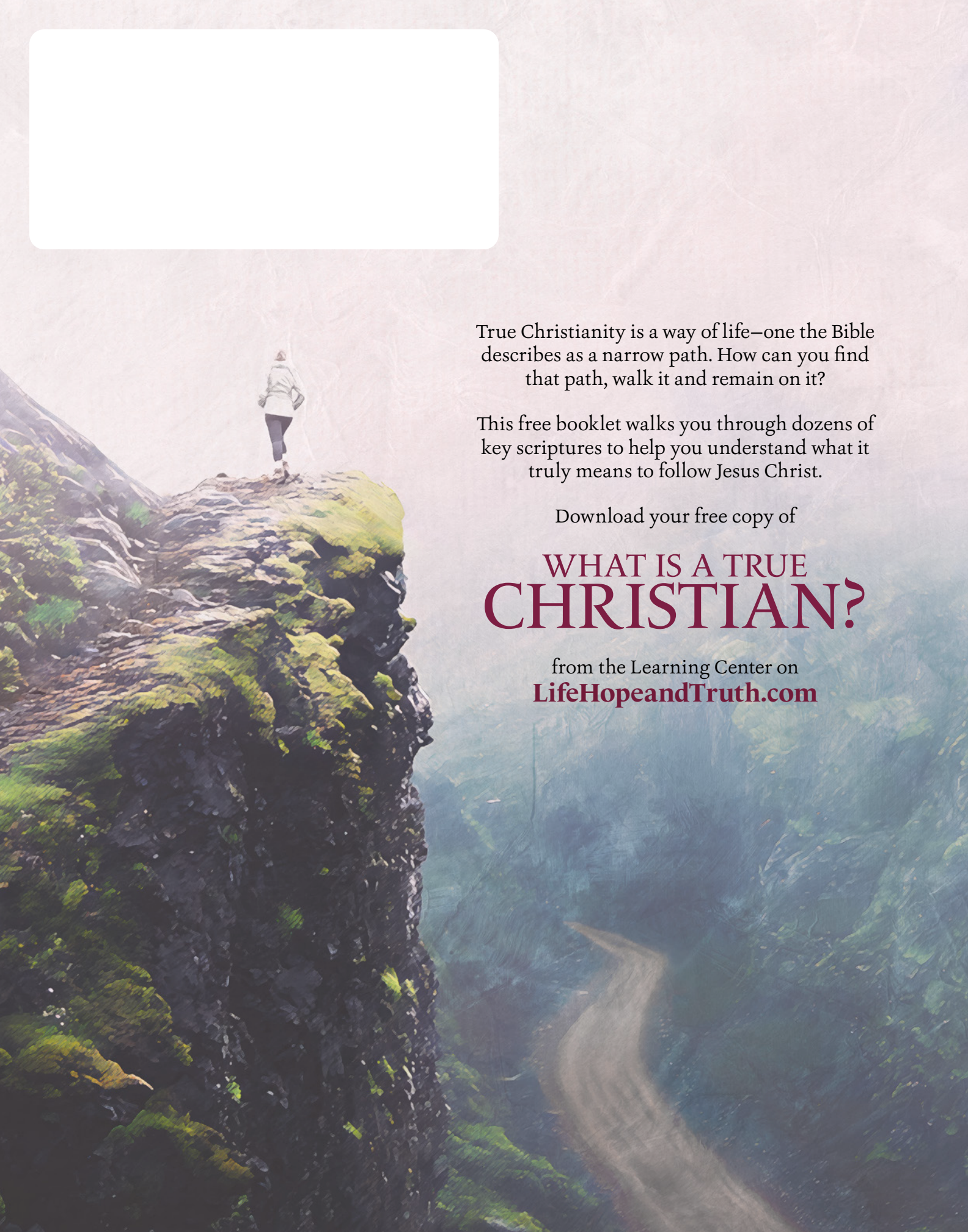
We must.

Jesus also told His disciples: "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36).

Jesus said the final eruption is coming. Will we walk blithely on, whistling past the graveyard, or will we watch and pray?

Joel Meeker




A person in a light-colored jacket and dark pants stands on the edge of a mossy, rocky cliff. They are looking out over a vast, misty valley. A winding dirt path leads through the valley floor. The scene is atmospheric and evokes a sense of journey and discovery.

True Christianity is a way of life—one the Bible describes as a narrow path. How can you find that path, walk it and remain on it?

This free booklet walks you through dozens of key scriptures to help you understand what it truly means to follow Jesus Christ.

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