

BEYOND TODAY

The British & European Supplement

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Casualties of a 24/7 society

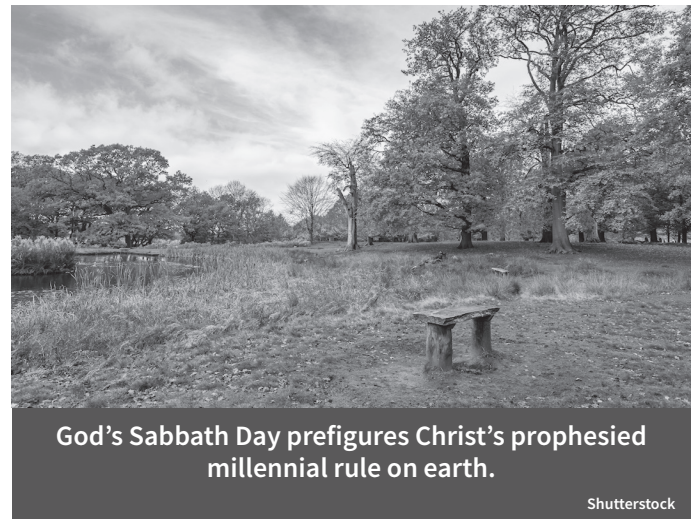
Overloading a vehicle is dangerous. Overloading the human body and mind can be even more hazardous.

Ancient societies were primarily agricultural. Although times were tough and the work hard, having a day of rest after six days of toil was very rejuvenating for the labourer. Nowadays life is much more hectic – 24/7. Many are stressed with no day of rest to recuperate, and we are less healthy as a consequence.

Where did this idea of a seventh-day rest come from? It has been a basic component of the Judeo-Christian religion for thousands of years. The Israelites at the time of the Exodus were instructed to keep the seventh day of the week holy – and this practice of resting on the Sabbath day was continued by the early Christians in New Testament times following Christ's example (Luke 4:16).

The origin of a rest day

The seventh-day Sabbath (our Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) actually had its origin at Creation. It was then that "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (Genesis 2:3). To sanctify something means to make it holy. Later, at the time of the Exodus, God re-emphasised the need to keep His Sabbath holy by engraving the instruction on stone as part of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 32:16). His people were to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested



God's Sabbath Day prefigures Christ's prophesied millennial rule on earth.

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the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8-11).

When listing His holy days, God placed the Sabbath first (Leviticus 23:1-3). Whether ancient or not, this rest day is beneficial to all who keep it, especially in this age of non-stop activities. The world at large tries hard to banish a weekly day of rest and reflection by overloading us all in every way possible.

Benefits of the Sabbath

Perhaps you have never thought of connecting keeping the Sabbath with a healthier life. Resting on the Sabbath certainly had health benefits for those doing hard manual agricultural work for six days. Even more so today when most of us lead very busy and sometimes

erratic lives during uncertain, and therefore stressful, times. It is even more important today that we have some time to chill out and slow down from the busy-ness of the remainder of the week. It is a time for restoration.

God's Sabbath also looks forward to a true rest, when Christ will reign on earth and the vagaries of mankind's rule will be gone. In that way it symbolises freedom from trouble and sorrow (Luke 13:10-16; 14:1-6). For the saints it also represents their change into spirit beings in God's family at the return of Christ. (Please study our booklet *Why Were You Born?* to learn more.)

Spiritual benefits of keeping the Sabbath include extra time to read God's Word and to reflect on what it teaches us. Working seven days a week prevents us from worshipping God on the day He designated for resting. Attending Sabbath services where possible gives us the opportunity to fellowship with others of like mind. Knowing we are keeping the very day that was created as holy time especially for us helps link us into God's mind. Overloading ourselves with continuous anxious concerns stresses us mentally and emotionally and leads to all kinds of physical and psychological illnesses such as afflict so many today.

God's holy day allows us time to contemplate His creative attributes as reflected in the beauty of nature. With the help of telescopes we can marvel at the work

of a divine Architect in our solar system – and beyond. Earth, unpolluted in its original state, is a beautiful planet that God provided for man to live out their “three-score-and-ten years” – and the Sabbath is given to revitalise all human beings throughout their physical lives without being overloaded with a 24/7 lifestyle.

Christ reaffirms the Sabbath Day

Jesus Himself tells us that “the Sabbath was made for man . . .” (Mark 2:27). It is for our benefit and looks to our future rest at His return. He also explains that He is Lord of the Sabbath (Luke 6:5). The Sabbath provides extra time to focus on spiritual matters, using God's Word, the Holy Bible, as the guidebook on how we should live.

A break from work and from worldly affairs allows mind and body to be reinvigorated to face another week of toil and challenges. Modern society imposes too much stress on us, with inevitable health consequences, because such a culture produces casualties. The Sabbath, when kept correctly, should mitigate these.

The biblical command to keep the Sabbath holy would prevent us from embracing a 24/7 lifestyle. That is good.

To learn more please request or download our booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*.

Gerhard Marx

Modern-day languages identify God's Sabbath

The Sabbath was created for man's well-being long before the time of Moses and the Exodus. It's not of Jewish origin. The Hebrew word for Sabbath is traceable in the vocabularies of the main languages in Europe. In Italy, for example, the word *Sabato* equates with the Hebrew word *Shabbath*. Both words indicate Saturday in their various languages. Two Roman writers used the Hebrew word for Sabbath, as referred to in *Cassel's Dictionary*. “Both Horatius Flaccus (Horace the Poet) c. 65-8 BC and Pliny the Elder c. 23-79 AD use the word *Sabbata* in their writing for Saturday.” This presumably was instead of *Dies Saturni* (Day of Saturn) which would be the usual Latin term and from where we derive the English word *Saturday*.

Although spelled slightly differently in each language: *Sabato*, *Sábado*, *Samedi*, *Samstag*, *Sabbato* (Σάββατο) in Italian, Spanish, French, German and Greek respectively, the word for Sabbath remains a part of the vocabulary of numerous nations. That shouldn't

be surprising, since the Sabbath was made for man at creation. So when we come to later times, we find nations which aren't keeping it as a sacred rest day anymore still retain the word in their respective vocabulary.

The Sabbath was originally set apart for weekly worship by all mankind – to rest, to reflect and to use for the act of worship. The fact that the Hebrew word for Sabbath is recognised as the word for Saturday in a number of European languages shows that God intended this rest day to be on Saturday, the seventh day of the week. The seventh day of the week has never been Sunday. Collective weekly worship on Sundays, was introduced by Catholic authorities in Rome during the early Middle Ages. This was not of God's doing. In the German language Wednesday is *Mittwoch*, literally mid-week. That indicates that Saturday is the true seventh day of the week, the day when we are commanded to rest and, even more essential, to prevent burnout in a 24/7 world!

Guard your thoughts

Over time the focus of a human mind tends to affect one's character. Scripture therefore warns us to be careful what we think about.

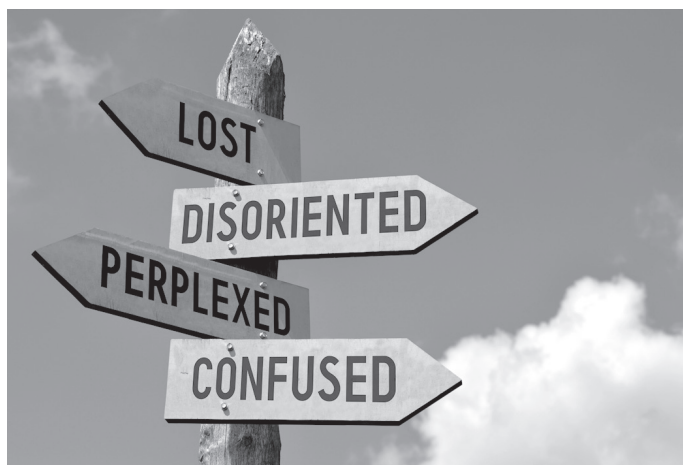
Our minds are what matter most to God. We are what we are deep down inside. The Bible has much to say about the human “heart,” a word that can be synonymous with “mind,” but which emphasises the functions of thought, attitude and emotion, personality and character.

God judges us largely by what is taking place in our hearts. “For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

Scripture instructs those who desire to follow God to be clear about what should be the focal point of their thinking. Taking on the mind of Christ involves His disciples bringing all thoughts into subjection to Him (Philippians 2:1-11, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5). No small task.

An age of muddled perspectives

In this time of confusion and chaos what should we be thinking about? We know from the Bible that the world will continue to become increasingly confusing and disorientating as we progress to the time of Christ's return. Scripture speaks of a time when we will have a great battle for our minds for what is right and good as opposed to what is wrong and evil. What does the Bible say about this as we prepare for the return of Christ and the establish-



Contrary to the muddled perspectives of the world, a Christian's thoughts are to be based on the truths Jesus taught.

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ment of the Kingdom of God?

Consider the apostle Paul's instructions to the Church in Philippi: “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8). This gives us much on which to reflect.

Whatever is true . . .

In John 17:17 Christ declared God's word to be truth. The basis of our truth should also be the Bible. Human

Taking on the mind of Christ involves His disciples bringing all thoughts into subjection to Him (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

opinions, ideas and world views that do not comply with the Bible will damage our minds.

A conversation recorded between Christ and the Roman governor Pontius Pilate culminates in the latter asking, “What is truth?” (John 18:37-38). Pilate showed he disbelieved the truth Christ spoke. Indeed, he seemed to doubt that truth even existed.

Today many think like Pilate that there is no absolute truth. Apart from the word of God, everyone's idea of truth is relative and different, and often shaded to try to cover up wrongdoing or to promote the speaker in the eyes of others. God's truth should be our way of life.

. . . noble (honest or honourable)

Paul outlines the attributes of an honest, venerable or honourable person as the word is translated in the King James Version. In 1 Timothy 3:8-9 he wrote: “Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.”

Although here applied to deacons, these verses identify what our conduct should be like – respectful, truthful without being manipulative, not habitually drinking too

much alcohol, and not grasping for money. We can ponder ways to become a believer with an honest heart and avoid unbelief, doubt and dishonourable behaviour.

... just

Someone considered equitable in character or actions is deemed to be “just.” As far as judgement is concerned, what counts is performance, not the awareness of this or that statute. Thus, the apostle Paul stated, “For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified” (Romans 2:13).

The doer of the law can be justified. This means Christ takes on the death penalty a repentant and now obedient sinner has incurred and instead pronounces him or her as being just. All our thoughts and actions should be considered to check they conform to God’s standards.

... pure

This means to be innocent, modest, and chaste, displaying the right conduct of a Christian life. We need to be careful in assessing our own actions and thoughts and not excuse wrongdoing in ourselves. Similarly, we should assess the actions of others with no partiality, or unnecessary severity, but also with no undue leniency so as not to partake in others’ sins.

We should be mindful of social media as it often seems to be judgemental or publicly shares matters that should be kept confidential. Carefully assess what we watch on television or video, what we listen to by way of musical entertainment, or search for on the Internet. Be

An inventory of our thoughts will ensure our delight in meditating and musing constantly on God’s teaching.

wary of what goes into our minds. Inappropriate memories have a habit of coming back to haunt us.

Keep one’s language clean, avoiding profane or obscene vocabulary (Ephesians 4:29). The last part of 1 Timothy 5:22 warns us not to share in other people’s sins and instead to keep ourselves pure.

... lovely

This carries the intent of being amiable and good-tempered towards what is required of us. Old Testament worshippers presented animal sacrifices to the LORD, but often had no inner change of heart or nature. Christian believers, instead of giving something outside themselves,

are to offer their own bodies to God as living, holy and acceptable sacrifices (Romans 12:1). This spiritual service involves all our thought processes. Due to the dedication required, Paul instructs believers, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).

... of good report

A poor reputation brings shame on the Christian. While others may not agree with our beliefs, they should be compelled to speak well of our conduct. Proverbs 3:3-4 records, “Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favour and high esteem in the sight of God and man.”

The same book also notes, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favour rather than silver and gold” (Proverbs 22:1). To maintain a good reputation, we should even avoid any appearance of evildoing (1 Thessalonians 5:22). A lost reputation may be difficult, if not impossible, to restore (Proverbs 25:9-10).

... any virtue or worthy of praise

Virtue means valour or excellence. These are attributes we need to bring to bear on the walk required of a Christian. We should avoid anything less than excellence.

Praise should be reserved for what is truly commendable, with God at the centre of our praise for all He has done and is doing. It should be mingled with gratitude. We need to fix our hope on Christ’s return and always be in a prayerful and praiseworthy attitude: “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15).

The psalmist encourages us to avoid negative influences, no matter the source. “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:2). Meditate means to think deeply. An inventory of our thoughts will ensure our delight in meditating and musing constantly on God’s teaching. That will bring us closer to Him. Then we too shall become like a tree planted by the riverside with its roots in eternal realities, not in the transient, physical world of today.

Like Jesus, during the difficult times ahead of Him, we should fill our hearts and minds with the attributes Paul recommends. That way we can still experience joy as we wait patiently for our Saviour’s return from heaven.

Bryan Ellams

Lessons from a pencil

Many today may view a pencil as a little old-fashioned – an heirloom of bygone days, perhaps. But there are several ways a pencil can illustrate aspects of Christian growth.

Often relegated to the back of drawers, or the garden shed or workspace, pencils remain useful for sketching, making notes of measurements or other information that will be used later, maybe in a craft or DIY project, and for practising handwriting.

Christ extrapolated everyday activities into parables and I am not the first to look at the potential teaching value of a pencil.

Learning from others

A pencil that is blunt or broken cannot perform its allotted task. To remain useful, it will require sharpening many times. If a pencil could feel, it would be the subject of a painful existence, being cut at regular intervals by either a knife, or the blade of a pencil sharpener. In some ways the Christian walk can be likened to repeated sharpening.

This is what happens when we spend time studying the Bible or with God in prayer, or simply by being with others of like mind. We can sharpen ourselves, be sharpened by God, or by one another. Proverbs 27:17 states, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” (New International Version throughout). We can discuss and listen to one another with empathy and love in our hearts like our Father. When we pray to him He listens intently, and with mercy and grace gently molds or, depending on the need, sharpens us into the son or daughter He wants us to be.

I have personally been through many resharpener circumstances in my life and without my family, friends and congregation I might have failed to recover. Yet all these events were a blessing from God to help me grow.

Through these experiences which sometimes can be so painful, we grow little by little, so never lose your sharpness and zeal for God’s way of life. When Christ returns in glory all you have learned will prove useful!

Correcting errors

On the end of some pencils is an eraser which is used to correct any mistakes one has made. Our lives are filled with mistakes and sins, whether words, actions, or attitudes, but just like all those who have gone before us, if we repent and each day work on the things that we may be



An everyday item can illustrate biblical lessons.

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doing wrong, with God’s help and mercy we can correct them and overcome.

James, Christ’s half-brother, wrote “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4).

Our calling and experiences now are preparing us to be kings and priests under Christ during the Millennium, and then in the white throne judgement period when we shall be able to teach all those who never heard of Christ or who never understood His calling in this present age of mankind’s rule. You will be able to comfort and teach and help each person to see what life should really be without the blinding of the nations that Satan has caused.

Our destiny is to be literal spirit-born children of God. During this present physical lifetime God’s Spirit helps us overcome human nature and become more like Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:2-4). At His return and the first resurrection, we can help Him rebuild this broken world.

Leave a positive impression

Like a pencil we leave a trace wherever we go. We are always on public display and should leave a positive impression on everyone with whom we interact. We are to reflect our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ with our conduct and speech every day in our life. This can prove difficult.

To be able to teach the people who will rise in the resurrection of judgement we will need to understand how marks can hurt and stain a person and we will need the greatest power God has to give to help them: His love.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 reads, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

A soft centre

The most important part of any pencil is what is inside. Often referred to as the *lead*, pencils actually contain graphite. This naturally occurring form of crystalline carbon can also be manufactured from coal. It is extremely soft, and splits with light pressure, as when writing with a pencil on paper.

Every time we pray or study the Bible we learn how better to emulate Christ. Every Sabbath day we are being molded into a more godly person through the verses read and explained from the Bible. Philippians 2:1-4 states, "Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

When Christ returns, we will need all these attributes to help right the wrongs in this world and teach the people who will have the opportunity to know God and Christ, and be taught, nurtured and saved by Christ. So, let us continue to sharpen ourselves and one another in love, repent of past mistakes and move forwards in grace and knowledge of God's love. Wherever we go and in all we do or say, let us leave a positive impression on others, reflecting God's love. Above all, let us mirror the shining example of our Saviour Jesus Christ and fully embrace His character. What we are in our hearts is what God sees.

Stuart Hull

Beneficial prayers

In our conversations with the Almighty, we should be willing to share that precious time by offering prayers for others as well as ourselves.

Many years ago, I remember hearing it said that no one who covetously lavishes all their financial resources on themselves would ever receive eternal life. The same principle can be applied to our prayers. In the model prayer, Christ set the example of using first-person-plural pronouns – *we, us, our* (Matthew 6:9-13). The intent being that we should not be praying just for ourselves.

It is certainly not wrong to pray for one's own needs, as in verse 11, "Give us this day our daily bread." However, if one is wrapped up in oneself the "us" and the "our" mentioned may quickly become "me" and "my." God wants us to be equally focussed on others when we pray. We are to love our neighbour as ourself (Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:31).

Also included should be prayers for the Gospel to have free course. The apostle Paul asked for the brethren in Thessalonica to pray for his ministry (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2).

Our Saviour encourages us to pray for more labourers to help with the work of the Church (Matthew 9:38 and Luke 10:2).

An important area of our prayers should include the sick and those going through trials and difficulties. While James 5:14-16 is sometimes seen as the remit of the ministry, we should all be praying for one another. James assures us that "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (verse 16). It is good practice to break down our prayers into fine detail, rather than mechanically going down a list and just mentioning an issue in passing. By showing God we are concerned about the sufferings of others we can "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

Our Heavenly Father loves a cheerful giver, and we should be generous in spending time for others in our prayers.

Philip Perry



Q Who should partake of the symbols of the Passover, the bread and the wine, and how often should we observe the Passover?

Reader from Gillingham

A As is well known, it was Jesus Christ who introduced these new symbols of the Passover and instructed His disciples to observe them when keeping the Passover (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). In verse 33 the apostle Paul is addressing the brethren, and not specifically fellow apostles. “When you come together to eat, wait for one another” in taking the Passover. Paul is addressing believers who have been baptised after repentance. The United Church of God teaches that all who are baptised (immersed) after having repented of their sins can partake of the symbols of the blood and broken body of Jesus Christ at the Passover. There is no distinction between the ministry and lay members, since upon baptism and the laying on of hands (1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6), God places His Holy Spirit in each one, to take up residence in them, regardless of rank.

On the question of how often we should keep the

Let the Bible Answer...

What does the Bible tell us about freedom?

Fear of death brings bondage: Hebrews 2:14-15.

Being slaves to sin brings bondage: Galatians 4:3-9.

Repentance and being a slave of Christ brings true freedom regardless of physical circumstances: Luke 4:18; John 8:31-36; Romans 6:16-22, 8:2; 1 Corinthians 7:22; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:1.

Obedience to God’s laws is liberty: James 1:25, 2:12.

Passover, we rely on the Old Testament where the children of Israel at the Exodus were commanded to keep it once a year. In Exodus 12:2 the Israelites were told that the Passover should be kept in “the beginning of months” – in the spring of the year. There is only one spring and one beginning of the year. Passover occurs once a year, thus the United Church of God keeps it once a year at the appointed time.

When we come to the New Testament Passover we see that Christ said, “This do in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19). God’s Church remembers that momentous event so essential to our salvation on the 14th day of Nisan in the Hebrew calendar. If unforeseen circumstances prevent us from keeping it at that time, it can be kept one month later to the day (Number 9:9-13). This shows us the importance of the Passover in God’s eyes: He sent His Son to die for the penitent so that we may have atonement for our sins. His life was of such value that it can cover the death penalty for the sins of all mankind. (John 3:16).

Q Who is the Morning Star mentioned in Revelation 22:16?

Reader from Hunstanton

Q Why is Christ called “the Lion of the Tribe of Judah” in Revelation 5:5?

Reader from Belfast

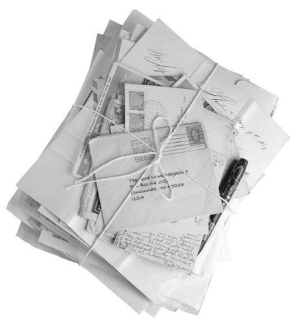
A These two related questions both refer to the lineage of Christ. Revelation 22:16 reads, “I Jesus have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches: I am the Root and Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

In Numbers 24:17, we read “. . . A Star shall come out of Jacob, a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel.” Here we see a reference to the Messiah-to-come, where Christ is metaphorically referred to as a Star and Sceptre. “Star” refers to His divine brilliance and “Sceptre” to His future role on Earth as King of kings and Lord of lords.

It also shows that the Saviour of all mankind is a descendant of Abraham, Jacob being the grandson of the patriarch. In Revelation 5:5 Jesus Christ as the Messiah is referred to as the “Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David.”

In Genesis 49 Jacob, also called Israel, blessed members of his family. When he prophetically blessed Judah, he referred to him as a lion in verse 9. To this day, the emblem of Jerusalem, the historic capital of Judah, is a lion. See also Luke 2:4 where Jesus is identified with the lineage of David, who was himself of the tribe of Judah.

Both titles reference Christ’s descent, firstly from Abraham and secondly from the specific tribe of Judah.



Letters From Our Readers

Moving forward

I'm very grateful for the knowledge you've given me in these free booklets. I would like to enquire about life's ultimate questions and the process of conversion.

Reader in Wakefield

Editor's comment: We have sent you our booklets Transforming Your Life and Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist? For further study you may be interested in Why Were You Born? and What You Need to Know About Baptism (previously titled: The Road to Eternal Life). A full list of our study aids can be found at <https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/booklets>.

Donations

Please can you tell me how to make a financial contribution to this work? I could not get anyone on the phone. Please also renew my subscription to *Beyond Today*.

Reader in Luton

Editor's comment: Our office is only staffed part-time. If you leave a phone message this would usually be followed up within a couple of working days. We have sent you the bank transfer information you requested. Thank you for your interest and support.

Search for truth

I so appreciate the wisdom of the Word of God which backs up your magazine.

Reader in Lytham St. Annes

Beyond Today is a very enjoyable read and informative. It makes me

question more things.

Reader in Ireland

I would like to continue my subscription to your magazine. I would like to add that I always look forward to each edition as there is always a teaching in truth.

Reader in Ireland

Good solid biblical truths which need to be heard in our nation today, as a lot of churches depart from the truth of God's Word.

Reader in Hinckley

Renewal requests

We are living in a terrible sinful world and we have to be more in touch with the word of God. *Beyond Today* is a great source of inspiration.

Reader in Croydon

Beyond Today is well written and well thought out, easy to follow and easy to understand. We can read the references in our own Bibles.

Reader in Abergele

I would be pleased to receive a further year of your very good magazine. Please keep up the good work.

Reader in Isle of Wight

Comment from Bible student

I am enjoying doing these Bible studies. My understanding of the scriptures is becoming more enlightened. Sometimes I initially find some questions difficult to answer but through repeated reading the answers become clear. Thank you for providing this spiritual nourishment.

Student in London

How this work is supported

The outreach work of the United Church of God in the British Isles, including the production of this Supplement to *Beyond Today* magazine, is carried out by a small team of part-time employees, together with the efforts of unpaid volunteers.

Distribution of *Beyond Today* magazine, this Supplement and other literature of the United Church of God is funded by the generosity of Church members, co-workers and readers. Jesus Christ instructed His disciples that as they had freely received they were to freely give (Matthew 10:8), so we supply our literature free of charge, making Christ's message available to all. Our gratitude goes to those who assist financially in this aspect of the Church's work.

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