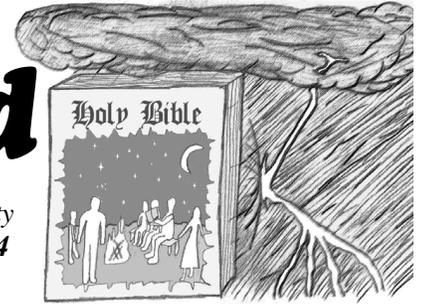


Shelter in the Word

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty
You are my refuge and shield: I have put my hope in your Word. —Psalm 91:1; 119:114



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Helping you become self-sufficient in the Word—for a lasting relationship with the Almighty

Sept/Oct 1999

Stop Hurting Yourself!

Overcome Repeated Unwanted Behavior

By Norman Edwards

At one time or another, most of us find ourselves doing *something* that we know is **not good for us**, but we do it anyway. That *something* could be a severe addiction or just a bad habit. It may be different for each one of us. At best, that *something* can rob the love and joy that Christ promised for living in obedience to Him (John 15:9-11). At worst, that *something* can completely ruin our lives.

Can we admit that this happens to us and still be a Christian? Notice what the apostle Paul said:

Rom 7:18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

19 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

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21 So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law;

23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

25 Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! ...

If the apostle Paul can repeatedly struggle with problems and still be a Christian, so can you. So can I. But we cannot live our lives in joy or be a good example to others if we continue in these repeating, hard-to-get-out-of problems:

Matt 5:48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Col 1:27 To them [believers] God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles [nations] the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

Recognize the Problem

This article will probably be useful to nearly everyone, since almost all of us have some behavior that we repeatedly do, but wish we did not. We will start with the extreme cases because they are easiest to recognize. Then we will proceed to the common.

Some people have clear addictions to drugs, alcohol, tobacco or other substances. In these situations, the problem is usually clearly understood. The person temporarily feels better while they are taking the sub-

stance, but some time afterward, they feel worse—maybe totally depressed, so they want the substance again. During this “low feeling”, their desire to feel better and take the “quick fix” exceeds their ability to try to stop the addiction. At other times, the person recognizes the addiction for what it is and wishes they could stop—maybe even throws out all of their drugs, alcohol or cigarettes—only to find themselves desperately buying more when they are again feeling “low”. A discouraged person with an addiction will often find that addiction growing worse and worse.

Probably the most frequently-abused substances are found everywhere and are totally legal: food and drinks. The variations on this are endless, but the pattern is similar to the above: A person feels bad or upset, so they reach for something to eat or drink. They feel temporarily better, but it does not last and the cycle repeats. The substance could be coffee, chocolate, soft drinks or any number of hundreds of snack foods. The difficulties associated vary from overweight to bad teeth to all kinds of health problems. Some of these problems are made worse by a lack of exercise. In other cases people eat too little (anorexia) and/or exercise too much (yes, people actually die from this).

There are other addictions that do not involve substances, but are psychological in nature. Compulsive gambling is one example. Gamblers are usually ashamed of all the money they have lost in the past and wished they had never done it, but they feel that they must do it “just one more time” in order to win back what they lost.

Sexual addictions are another example. Most Christians realize that they would be happiest if they had a loving relationship with one person—their spouse (Prov 5:18). However, some are still single and others have a marriage that has not turned out as they had hoped. But rather than changing themselves to be ready to marry or to make their marriage better, they

have developed a sex-related addiction which makes it even more difficult to solve the real problems. For some, it is finding a series of partners that will “go all the way”. For others it is using pornography or some sex-related entertainment. And for a few, it is to be sexually noticed—to dress and act in such a way to collect sexual comments, whistles, stares or even more subtle reactions from people of the opposite sex.

A person’s own work can become an addiction. The term “workaholic” has been coined for people who work to the exclusion of other important responsibilities. When a person is admired at their job, but is having trouble with their family or social life, it is easy to find things that “must be done” at work and ignore the other. After all, work produces money—right?

A close relative of the “workaholic” problem is the “do-good-aholic” problem. Some people can become so involved in service or church projects that they neglect their important responsibilities. How many children have gotten into serious trouble when they needed parental guidance, but parents were too busy working or “doing good” to take time with them? It is not because the parents don’t love their children, but because it is easier to stay at the job or service project where people are clearly recognized for their work, than it is to deal with family difficulties.

Most abusive behavior is “repeated, unwanted behavior”. People who yell at their spouses or children, or who make continual degrading remarks, or who physically abuse them usually do not want to do these things. But when difficulty arises, they do them. Then they are sorry that they did them and promise to “never do it again”. Then something happens that upsets them and the cycle repeats.

Thrill-seeking can also become an addictive behavior. Some people (more often men) just “have to” feel the “adrenaline rush” from driving fast, playing dangerous sports, threatening to fight others, etc.

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Completely opposite to this is “escapism” where people completely ignore whatever life situations or problems they should be facing by reading, watching TV, listening to music or some other form of entertainment. It is not that any of these things are bad in themselves—relaxation and entertainment are important parts of life. But when a person regularly uses them to shut out the real world when they should be attending to serious problems, they are as troublesome as an addiction.

Some people habitually stay up late watching TV or reading. They are totally ineffective the next day due to lack of sleep, they are depressed because their life is going so poorly, so they decide to spend a few minutes watching TV (or reading) to cheer themselves up—which turns into many minutes, then many hours—and the cycle repeats.

Even such mundane things as messiness or “junk collecting” can be the result of repeated, unwanted behavior. A person may know that they suffer from a messy home or work environment. They **know** that they should put away or throw away that gadget or piece of paper when they are through with it. But they always have something “more important to do” when they are finished, so the mess accumulates. And later, when they need something, they cannot find it because it is not where it belongs or because it is covered by a mess.

What Is Happening to You?

We could list many more problems that people typically have, but the most important question for you is “What is happening to you?” Secondarily, you may be able to help others close to you who are suffering. You and I can find these problems in our life by asking ourselves these questions:

1. What things do I repeatedly do that hurt me?
2. What things do I repeatedly do that hurt others?
3. What things do I want to stop doing?
4. What things do others wish I would stop doing?
5. What things have I tried to stop doing previously, but every time I tried to stop, the problem got worse?
6. What things do I do that Christ would not do, but really do not seem “all that bad”, especially if no one else knows about them?

These questions will help us identify the repeated, unwanted behaviors in our own lives. It is an important step if we already clearly know our problems. If it becomes too easy to forget that it is a problem, then it may be good to say it out loud, or even to write it down. Remember that Christ came to call sinners, not the right-

eous to repentance (Matt 9:13). He knows everything we think, say and do. We will not scare Him if we admit we have a serious problem. Indeed, He may not help us solve it until we admit it and confess it to Him:

1Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

The biggest danger with repeating problems is that we begin to accept them. We think it is impossible for us to overcome them and that we will simply have to “learn to live with them”. Indeed, this author knows of people who claim to be Christian, but believe that God has accepted their sin and go on committing it, ignoring the bad effects it has on others.

Christ came to forgive our sins—any sins, no matter how bad—but He did not come to keep us in our sins. We can all pray with David:

Ps 51:10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Ps 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Always remember that the purpose of personal growth is to become loving, effective people like our Creator wants us to be—not to begin thinking that we are better than others who have not overcome as much. We need to look for those areas of our life that can be better, recognize them, and make a plan to change them.

How to Overcome

Know exactly what the problem is. We already covered most of this in the previous section. But if you cannot clearly state what you want to overcome, it will be impossible to overcome it.

Realize that the Creator of the Universe wants you to overcome. It is often easy to believe that it really does not matter whether we overcome our problems or not. How can we make the universe any better or worse? But notice:

Heb 2:6 “What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?”

7 You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor

8 and put everything under his feet.” In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him.

Knowing that the Universe was made for us and that its Creator loves us and wants us to live forever with Him can often help in times of despair.

Realize that obstacles have solutions. It is easy to say: “I can’t afford the time or money to work on this problem”. But if we believe that God wants us to overcome, then we can believe that He will take care of us and supply those things that we need:

Phil 4:19 God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:19)

A workaholic may say that he has to keep working because his family needs the money. But if he were to go to his family and say: “I want to be home more, so help me figure out how we can live on less money,” I think they would help him find a solution.

A person who is so busy that they “don’t have time to work on their problem” must realize that their problem consumes some of their time, money, and/or health and that they will get the time back if they solve the problem.

Find out where good help is available. Using available physical resources is not a lack of faith. God will often help us in His mercy if we are ignorant of the solution we need, but He certainly does not command or want us to stay ignorant:

Prov 1:5 let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance .

This step will depend greatly on the nature of the difficulty you have. You may need to read a book about it, join a self-help group, or buy a product to help you. For example, some people have been able to quit smoking by seeking the power of God and through using nicotine patches which help them gradually reduce their dependence on the drug.

You may need to seek professional help of some kind. If you do, do not fall into the trap of letting them become a substitute for God. Never turn over responsibility to them to “solve your problem”. Unfortunately, many professionals encourage you to take that approach. Their actions seem to say: “Come to me, tell me your problem, I’ll tell you what to do, and you’ll get better—but if you don’t, its because there is nothing that medical science can do—and in either case, I

expect to be paid.” On the other hand, there are compassionate professionals who do their best to help each person who comes to them.

If you believe you need professional help, do as much as you can to find someone who is often successful. Friends, self-help organizations, and other professionals in related fields can often give good recommendations. People would not take their car to a service garage if, out of all the cars that came in, they fixed 15%, helped 15%, did very little for 40%, and made 30% worse. Yet people end up trusting themselves to health professionals with about the same record.

The most important thing is to solve the problem and stop the sin. The sinner and those around him will all benefit when the sin stops. If you are concerned about whether it is better to overcome a problem only by the power of God than it is to overcome it by physical knowledge, read the box on the next page.

Set a goal. After you understand the nature of your difficulty and how to change it, then set a clear goal. Planning to “gradually improve” sounds nice, but it rarely works.

For sins such as extra-marital sex, drug addiction, smoking, abuse, etc., the goal should be abstinence—to completely eradicate it from your life. With other problems, such as excessive work, entertainment, etc., a goal of moderation is probably better. A workaholic can set a goal to work no more than 50 hours per week for 10 weeks in a row. Someone who stays up too late can set a goal to be in bed by a certain time for an entire month.

For non-essential entertainment, such as playing video games, it may be easier to originally set a goal for abstinence—cut it out completely—then later work toward moderation.

Obviously, you will have to set your goal based on whatever difficulty you are overcoming. Whatever that goal is, it must be clear to you. If there is any chance that you will forget it, write it down.

Make a plan. This is not the same as setting a goal. A goal is the result you hope to achieve. A plan is how you intend to achieve it. The plan may be very simple: “Put the TV in storage for a month.” In other cases, it may involve several steps. A pornography user might set these goals:

1. Discontinue all current pornography subscriptions.
2. Stop going to places that sell it (Shop at places that don’t have it).
3. Carry a New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs all the time and read from it whenever feeling tempted.

People with more complex problems will probably have to make more complex plans. Their plans may involve several stages. The first stage may be to find books or professionals that can help. The next stage may be to consult them. The third stage may be taking action to solve the problem.

Pray through it all. Even though there are many things that we do, we must not forget that our Father in Heaven is the reason we overcome and the

How Is It Best to Overcome? By Faith or Physical Knowledge?

There are many opinions about the answers to these questions. Some people will say that faith in God is always better than anything we do, therefore we do not even need to try to do anything of our own accord. Others will rely on their own knowledge to solve problems, asking for help from God only when "all else fails".

Relax! You do not have to go to either extreme!

If you are cold, you could pray to God to keep you warm, you could put on a coat or you could do both. If you are wasting too much time at home playing video games, you could ask God to help you stop, you could put your games in a suitcase and leave the keys at work, or you could do both. As you can see, praying to God and taking action are not exclusive of each other. Having faith in God is often trusting that He will lead us to know how to physically work out the details to solve our problems, even though we may not know them when we pray for help.

Through faith and a miracle of God, Noah was able to save his family and all of the animals on the Ark. But his family had to build the Ark themselves, board by board.

If we are to reign with Christ for 1000 years (Rev 20:6), we need to learn how both His spiritual and physical universes work. When a young couple I know moved into their first house, they were shocked to find that it was terribly infested with roaches. They were expecting their first child and did not want to use powerful poisonous spray. They fervently prayed that God would take them away. He did not supernaturally remove them instantly, but He did cause a fellow-believer to tell them about Roach-Prufe, a boric acid powder that kills roaches but produces no toxic fumes. The couple also cleaned and caulked the house. In a few days, the roaches were gone!

God could have supernaturally removed the roaches the minute they prayed. But maybe He wanted to teach the couple how to take care of a house and the importance of keeping it clean. God teaches people different lessons at different times. He usually lets people grow or buy food for themselves—as the disciples of Jesus did (John 4:8). But when hearing His message was more important than normal daily work, Jesus supernaturally created food (Matt 14:19-21; 15:36-38).

We must ask God for His will and guidance in every situation, and be willing to accept what He does for us and what he expects for us to do. We should not judge others if He works differently with them.

strength whereby we overcome:

1 Thes 5:16 Be joyful always;

17 **pray continually;**

18 give thanks in all circumstances,
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

We need to pray regularly every day, as well as pray for deliverance when we are doing the wrong thing. Many feel "too low" to pray to God when they are having trouble with a problem that they are not overcoming. They can be encouraged that they are concerned that they are sinning—so many people in the world know they are sinning and do not care. While God does not like sin, He is not overwhelmed by the magnitude of our sin.

Is 1:18 "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Any parent would rather have their children come to them and tell them about what they are doing wrong, than have them sneak around hoping that the parent will not find out about their problems. God is a super-parent, and He always finds out what we are doing! We might as well learn to go to Him, even though we are having trouble at the moment!

Also, be willing to accept the Eternal's help even if it comes in a way that you do not expect. Some people with depression or addiction problems have prayed for help and suddenly found themselves with a life-threatening disease or in a natural disaster or even a war. After months of fighting for their life, they realized that their other problem got completely lost along the way. Sometimes, God simply reminds us of what is truly important.

Help others. How does helping others solve your problem? It gives you a goal that is bigger than yourself. Christ said that His disciples would be known by their love for one another (John 13:34-35). We do not first perfect ourselves, and then begin to love others. We are to love others as we grow ourselves.

If your repeating problem is taking up hours of your time or if you spend many hours feeling sorry for yourself, begin a project to help others. Do not try to help others where you are weak, help them where you are strong.

What Happens if it Does Not Work?

Some may say, "I have tried all of those things and they just don't work" or "they worked for a while,

but they don't any more". That may or may not be true, but there is still more you can do.

Evaluate what you have done. Don't count your previous experience worthless. Think about what you tried to do, what worked and what did not. If you were making progress, but just not satisfied at the speed of the progress, keep on going and make some improvements. If what you were doing was working, then keep it up.

On the other hand, if efforts to stop a problem have only made the problem worse, then a different approach may be needed. For example, a person who eats to satisfy depression or anxiety may become so depressed by their failed attempt to lose weight that they are driven to eat even more.

Evaluation of what has happened should neither be self-justification nor an effort to prove that your situation is "hopeless". It is time to pray, to ask God what you should do differently, to read the Bible, and to review the points in the previous section. The rest of the points in this section will also help.

Set an attainable, intermediate goal. While this may sound too simple, it is easily overlooked. For example, someone who has a cigarette or coffee habit may try to go without it for just one day per week. If that is too hard, then just pick out a portion of the day. One could be negative and say, "they still have the habit 6 out of 7 days per week, what kind of solution is that?" It is not a solution, but it is steady progress. Once the one-day-per week freedom from the habit has been achieved, it is easier to expand to more days. Some people find that once they gain a certain amount of clear control over their habits, the rest comes without much difficulty.

The main thing to do is to avoid despising a minor accomplishment. To some, it may sound silly for an alcoholic woman to say, "I've managed to quit drinking between 5 PM and midnight every Friday". But to someone who has been a slave to alcoholism, it can be an enormous accomplishment.

Ask Another Believer for Help. While it may be embarrassing and difficult, explaining your shortcomings to another believer and asking for their prayers can work wonders.

Jms 5:15 ...If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore **confess your sins to each other and pray for each other** so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Pray for wisdom and discernment in whom you tell about personal problems that most people would

not know about. Telling them to those who are new or weak in the faith may discourage them or cause them to avoid you. But talking to another compassionate but wise person can help you see the problem for what it is, help you see a solution, and give you someone to "be accountable to". We are all accountable to God, but in our human weakness, it sometimes helps to be accountable to a person who will ask us every so often, "How are you doing?"

Don't give up. Sometimes, a person has worked very hard in the past to successfully overcome difficulties. They reap great rewards. They feel like they have "made it", that they can relax a while and reap the fruit of their labors. This is, to some degree, true. But when a new trial comes along, they must realize that they have to work as hard as they did years ago, maybe harder.

Also, we must realize that we are fighting a spiritual war. Could any general expect to win a war if he lost a few battles and then just got discouraged and quit? If he wants to win, he has to fight the enemy at every turn, in big battles and small—retreating only when it is for the purpose of fighting more strongly at another time or place.

Eph 6:11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

All that we do to overcome is definitely worth it. Read the words of Christ to one of the seven letters to the churches:

Rev 3:5 He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.

Heb 13:5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

6 So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" 

Walk in the Spirit

by Toli Bohonik

In good times we don't often think about peace. We enjoy the good times and when they pass we remember the laughter, the joy, the peace as pleasant memories. But seasons of trials inevitably follow and they can last quite a long time.

Life can be hard at those times. Peace can be a most illusive and precious commodity. Yet Christians don't need to worry. We have been promised peace in troubled times.

That sure sounds good, the promise of peace when troubles abound!

Jesus promises not only peace, He also promises Christians love, joy, patience, and other very special spiritual qualities of mind. These are the fruits of the Holy Spirit. They are listed in Galatians 5:

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

These fruits are an absolute promise. They are among the most wondrous benefits of Christianity, the benefits that come from being followers of Jesus Christ. Those who don't follow Christ don't have these miraculous fruits. When they have trials, when they are in seasons of testing, those in the world are on their own to fight them. They are on their own to overcome the troubles if they can.

Christians have the Holy Spirit to help them.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus promised that He would send us the Holy Spirit. It is through the Holy Spirit that we have access to the very mind of God, we can share God's peace. The Holy Spirit is a comforter that comes to those who love Jesus Christ and who keep His commandments.

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—

The Holy Spirit comes to us and it dwells in us.

It is not available to those in the world. They can't receive any of its comfort or benefits.

John 14:17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

The Holy Spirit is a gift that comes with repentance and baptism. It is a priceless gift that gives Christians peace in a world that knows very little peace. Notice Peter's words in the book of Acts:

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit gives a peace that passes human understanding. It actually guards our minds and our hearts. It keeps them safe. It protects them. The Holy Spirit does this for us because we follow Jesus Christ.

Phil 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

A washing occurs, there is cleansing of our minds, there is a renewing of our minds that comes from the Holy Spirit. When we lived in this world, apart from God and apart from Jesus Christ, we were filled with wrong thoughts and wrong motives. We harbored envy, hate, and malice.

Titus 3:3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Then Jesus came into our lives, and whether we were young or old, Jesus mercifully saved us. It was a pure act of mercy that resulted in peace.

Titus 3:4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,

5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

God is a God of peace. He shares His peace of mind with us through the Holy Spirit. But we must walk in the Spirit to have that peace.

WE MUST WALK IN THE SPIRIT

But how do we receive the fruits of the Holy Spirit? How does the Holy Spirit give us the love, joy, peace, and all the things we read about in Galatians 5:22-23?

We must walk in the path the Holy Spirit leads us. We have to walk a certain path, a particular direction. It is a path of righteousness and obedience to God.

In times of trouble the Holy Spirit will initiate good thoughts and it will settle our minds. The Holy Spirit will show us the way to peace. It will be a path that obeys God's commandments.

Gal 5:16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Walking is always a choice. In times of trouble the Holy Spirit will show us the things that make for peace, we must choose to follow the Spirit.

Rom 14:18 because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

Our own sinful nature brings heartache and trauma. The Holy Spirit will lead us away from such things as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and hatred.

Gal 5:19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions.

The Holy Spirit will lead us away from envying, drunkenness, and wild parties. If we want peace we have to walk this way of peace that comes from keeping the commandments of God. In times of trial the Holy Spirit will give us clear choices so that we can see the path we need to take.

Gal 5:21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

If we follow the Holy Spirit, if we will live in the Spirit, if we will walk in the Spirit, we will avail ourselves of the comfort that comes to those who serve Jesus Christ.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

So when trials come, lift up your hands, straighten your feeble knees, make straight paths for your feet, and follow peace and holiness.

Heb 12:12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.

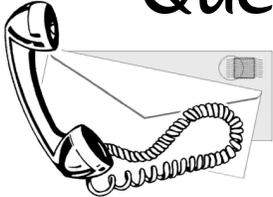
13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Walk in the Spirit and you shall have the peace and comfort of God in times of trouble. 

Questions & Comments

from Our Readers



November 1, 1999

Dear Norm & Marleen,

I called the Sharp Company and asked if my VCR was Y2K compliant—they asked for the model # and said yes it was. I'm inclined not to believe it, as I bought it several years ago. Now it seems to me that your first Y2K article said it could be set for 1974 and then in *Shelter in the Word* article, I think it said 1972. Which is right or are both all right?

[personal paragraph deleted].

—CM, California

Dear CM,

We are sorry for the mistake. Setting a device to **1972** will usually allow it to work properly for 28 years. The major exception to this is devices that will not allow themselves to be set to a year prior to the one in which they were made. For example, a VCR made in 1988 may not allow its date to be set to 1987 or any previous year. The person who designed these kinds of devices probably assumed that anyone trying to set such a year was making a mistake. They never thought past the year 2000. Nevertheless, many devices do not check for years that are too small and will work just fine if you set them to 1972. You will always have to remember to add 28 to the year that they display. If you want to record a program in 2001, you will have to set it to 1973.

If a device will not let you set its year to 1972, then set it to 1996 or 1992. The days of the week will not be right, but at least it will keep the date right. Do not pick a year like 1990—the date will be wrong as soon as we reach February 29 this year.

You can easily test a VCR to see if it is Y2K compliant by setting its current time to 12:00 AM, January 1, 2000, and then programming it to record a program at 12:10 AM, January 1, 2000. If it starts recording in ten minutes, then it will probably work. If it will not even let you set its year to 2000, then you will probably have to set it to a prior date. To be absolutely sure that a VCR is completely compliant, you would need to test all of the kinds of functions for which you use it. For something as un-critical as watching TV, I would worry about those things as they happen.

If your VCR is out of warranty, I see no reason for the manufacturer to lie about its compliance. It would be better to admit it and offer you a small rebate on a new VCR. Many computer chips have been Y2K-compliant for years. The problem is that before 1997

almost nobody listed Y2K compliance as a product specification, so products included whatever some engineer thought to put in at the time.

The Y2K problem today is **not** that we have “millions of pieces of known-to-be-defective hardware and software that needs replacing”, it is that we have “billions of pieces of hardware and software that we are not sure about”.

—Norman Edwards

September 29, 1999

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

I just wanted to tell you “thank you” for the “God I've Got A Problem” booklet. You will never know how many times I refer to it, in my spiritual walk. It covers every aspect of many diverse problems that we as Christians cannot hide from. I get help, encouragement, courage, hope and faith to get up again from each fall, when I get the booklet out and dig for “food”.

Also I've shared it with two friends, who also requested their own copies! May God bless you all, as you help us.

—Terri Ford, Michigan

Dear Terri,

We are glad that *God I've Got a Problem* was helpful to you. It is a simple, humble booklet that is not “professionally perfect”, but it has helped a great many people. It has been distributed freely by many people in different ways. It has not made anybody rich, but then, what did Jesus say?

Matt 6:19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

We hope you will continue to share this booklet with others. You may copy it yourself or ask us for more copies. Just use the contact information on the back of this publication.

—Norman Edwards

November 19, 1999

Dear Mr. Norman Edwards,

I have just finished your article "Will Christians be Judged" in the Mar/Apr 1999 issue of Shelter in the Word. I found this article to be very enlightening and of a great deal of interest to me since this has been my main Spiritual concern for some time now. I would like to ask an additional question concerning the topic discussed in the article.

Are there any sins that a believer could commit that would never be forgiven even if the believer repented? I know that in the Old Testament there were different sin offerings for different types (or levels) of sin. Some sins were so terrible that the guilty party was killed immediately. Is this the same with believers and Christ's sacrifice or is this the wrong analogy?

Sincerely,
Jeff Castle, via the Internet

Dear Jeff,

There are three main scriptures that tell us about the narrow category of sin which God will not forgive:

Matt 12:31 And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Heb 6:4 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit,

5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age,

6 if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

Heb 10:26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,

27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

All three of these scriptures say essentially the same thing. People who understand the plan of God and who have received the Holy Spirit, but then deliberately sin with no desire for repentance, cannot be

forgiven. This is **not** talking about someone sinning at a time of weakness—**nor** is it talking about someone with an addiction or some other repeating sinful habit that they are trying to overcome. It is **not** about someone who is deceived and does not really understand what God expects of them. This is talking about people who know what Christ has done and can do for them, and do not want it. What else can Christ do?

The issue is essentially one of choice. If God made us without individual free will, then He could simply make evil people obey Him. But if that is the case, why bother giving anyone free will? It would be easier to make everyone obey Him from the day that they were born. But God, in His great wisdom, has put us on a physical earth to see what decisions each of us will make before He gives any one of us eternal life (Rom 3:23). Should God take people who utterly refuse to cooperate with Him and give them Eternal life so they can fight Him forever? I think not! That is why He has a "second death"—for those who do not want His way (Rev 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8).

The biggest worry that most people seem to have about this topic is this: "Have I committed a sin that God will not forgive?" The very fact that they are concerned about what God thinks of their life almost certainly means that they have not committed an "unforgivable" sin. God is capable of forgiving much. He forgave the apostle Paul (formerly Saul) for his violent acts against the Church (Acts 9:1-2; 1Tim 1:13). King Manasseh of Israel was evil for nearly all of his 55 years, but repented at the end and God accepted him (1Chr 33:1-20).

The most important thing to realize is that there is no value whatever to knowing whether we have committed an "unforgivable" sin or not. If God miraculously appeared to a person and told him that he had committed an "unforgivable sin", how would he live his life differently? Would he go about sinning as much as possible? Would he try to rival Hitler or Stalin for a place in the history books? Would he be better off knowing he was free to sin because he had no chance for eternal life?

This makes sense only if you believe that sinners have all the fun and God's way is the most miserable. If living God's way produces happiness, then everyone should strive to live that way, whether they have committed an "unforgivable" sin or not.

In my years of experience with religions, I have seen two kinds of evils associated with "unforgivable" sins. One is by individuals who conclude that they probably committed an "unforgivable" sin, so they use it as an excuse to stop trying to follow God. They are using this excuse to separate themselves from the very thing they need—God. The other evil is religious organizations that somehow twist the scriptures to con-

vince their members that disobeying their human leadership or leaving their organization could be committing an “unforgivable” sin.

God is a God of mercy. Hundreds of scriptures talk about His mercy. Mercy is the removal of a punishment that is not desired. When King David sinned, he was given three options for a punishment. He asked the Eternal to administer the punishment because He is merciful—and He was (2Sam 24:13-16). God is not out to “get us” but to help us:

Luke 11:9 “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

11 “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?

12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

—Norman Edwards

We received the following e-mail letter. Different people have added things to the front of it and it is hard to figure out. But probably millions of copies of the various versions of this have been sent to many people and it is worth understanding.

October 21, 1999

I didn't know this, and you probably didn't either.

My friend sent this to me. Her 38-yr old sister (Tammy) had a mastectomy 1/98, with chemo through 6/98. She now has two larger lumps in the other breast, which stunned the docs because they were so sure they got it all. It's interesting and food for thought.

Ladies, I've been using an all natural deodorant for approximately 1 year and have not had any problems. Tammy's doctor told her to use baby powder. I urge all of you to re-think what you use and please read below.

To all women friends: I think this is important to know...share with your friends too..... To all men friends: I think this will help to pass on this message to your women friends in case they don't know....because you care....

I just got information from a health seminar that I would like to share. The leading cause of breast cancer is the use of anti-perspirant.

What? Yes, ANTI-PERSPIRANT. Most of the products out there are an anti-perspirant/deodorant combination

so go home and check your labels. Deodorant is fine, anti-perspirant is not.

Here's why: The human body has a few areas that it uses to purge toxins; behind the knees, behind the ears, groin area, and armpits.

The toxins are purged in the form of perspiration. Anti-perspirant, as the name clearly indicates, prevents you from perspiring, thereby inhibiting the body from purging toxins from below the armpits. These toxins do not just magically disappear. Instead, the body deposits them in the lymph nodes below the arms since it cannot sweat them out. This causes a high concentration of toxins and leads to cell mutations: aka CANCER. Nearly all breast cancer tumors occur in the upper outside quadrant of the breast area.

This is precisely where the lymph nodes are located. Additionally, men are less likely (but not completely exempt) to develop breast cancer prompted by anti-perspirant usage because most of the anti-perspirant product is caught in their hair and is not directly applied to the skin. Women who apply anti-perspirant right after shaving increase the risk further because shaving causes almost imperceptible nicks in the skin which give the chemicals entrance into the body from the armpit area.

PLEASE pass this along to anyone you care about. Breast cancer is becoming frighteningly common. This awareness may save lives. If you are skeptical about these findings, I urge you to do some research for yourself. You will arrive at the same conclusions, I assure you. Thank you.

—David M.

Dear David M.,

Thank you for writing. There are now dozens of Internet sites that contain this message—some with different names and addresses attached to it. Most claim it is a complete hoax. Is it?

We probably will never know. There may be a health seminar and some doctors that teach—even have evidence—that antiperspirants cause breast cancer. But if there is evidence for these claims, the writers of this post are keeping it a good secret. Since there are no names, organizations, or published written works mentioned in this message, the message is of little value in studying the issue. One is left to start from scratch researching antiperspirants, cancer, lymph nodes and the other things mentioned in the message.

It is not helpful for people to pass on messages to others that are so poorly documented.

Thirty years ago, when I was a teenager, I remember my parents telling me not to wear antiperspirants. Their viewpoint was largely that God said our bodies were “very good” (Gen 1:31), and that we should not try to stop the natural functions that he put in them. A few years later, some of my friends that were “into health food” told me that they had read about links between antiperspirants and breast cancer.

I was the sort of person who rarely felt the need to “do what everybody else is doing” so I never used antiperspirants. I never researched the issue, either. But the companies that make them have done a great job of convincing many people that they cannot be socially acceptable or loved by anyone unless they wear them. When I have mentioned the possible danger of antiperspirants to others, few have been interested in doing any more study. Most have been very upset at the suggestion that their “perfectly normal practice” (using antiperspirants) could be potentially causing so much danger. People who were already interested in “health food” and “natural healing” seemed willing to give them up without any further study.

So what is the truth of the matter? I searched the Internet for a couple of hours and could not find anything where someone actually studied the connection between breast cancer and antiperspirant use. I found several other writers who could not find any studies either. Standard medical sites all claimed that antiperspirant/cancer connection was nonsense, **but I did not find one that quoted any study to prove it.** Most who claimed that there might be a connection between antiperspirants and cancer were selling some kind of “natural deodorant”.

The real issue is the ninth of the Ten Commandments: **“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor”** (Ex 20:16). Much of the medical research done today is financed by drug companies or other major corporations. There is a great tendency for the research they sponsor to come up with conclusions that are “good for business”. Recent lawsuits have shown that tobacco companies knew about the health risks of their products long before they were

commonly reported among the medical community and general public. On the other hand, many who sell “natural” products seem to be quite happy to promote them by using unproven ideas as evidence. Spreading a lie to promote business is a sin—let us hope that more people begin to realize that.

We can look at the practices of generations past—such as women greatly constricting their waists by wearing corsets—and say: “How silly they were for doing such a thing! Couldn’t they see that women who wore them lost the ability to digest food or give birth normally?” We can look at other cultures that bind the feet of small children so they stay small and stylish, and say: “Is it any wonder that they have foot trouble?”

Is it possible that future generations will shake their heads at today’s practice of women regularly shaving the hair from under their arms and spraying on aluminum chlorhydrate (the most common antiperspirant active ingredient)?

It is unlikely that this question will be answered any time soon. We do know that we are to serve God with all of our heart and mind (Matt 22:26-27), not some glamorous image that some advertisers have set up for us. Our bodies should be the temple of God’s Holy Spirit (1Cor 6:19). Do we need to try to change the way that temple works? Or should we just try to take better care of what God has made? On the other hand, it is wrong to scare others or judge others based on unproven theory. In matters of controversy, we need to be careful not to offend others, and to practice those things that we are personally convinced are true (Rom 14).

—Norman Edwards 

Lady, Are You Rich?

They huddled inside the store—two children in ragged, outgrown coats.

“Do you have any old papers, Lady?”

I was very busy and wanted to say no until I looked down at their feet—little sandals, sopped with sleet. “Come in and I’ll make you a cup of cocoa.” There was no conversation. Their soggy sandals left marks on the clean hearthstone.

Cocoa and cake would fortify against the chill outside. After serving them, I went back to the kitchen and started on my household budget as they sat enjoying the warmth.

After a few minutes, the silence in the front room struck through to me. I looked in. The girl held her empty cup in her hand, looking at it. The boy asked in a flat voice: “Lady, are you rich?”

“Am I rich? Mercy no!” I looked at my shabby slippers.

The girl put her cup back in its saucer carefully. “Your cups match your saucers.” Her voice was old with a hunger that was not of the stomach.

They left then, holding their bundles of papers against the wind. They hadn’t said thank you. They didn’t need to. They had done more than that. Plain blue pottery cups and saucers—but they matched. I tested the potatoes and stirred the gravy. Potatoes and brown gravy, a roof over our heads, my husband with a good steady job—these things matched, too.

I moved the chairs back from the fire and tidied the living room. The muddy prints of small sandals were still wet upon my hearth. I let them be. I want them there in case I ever forget how very rich I am.

—Author Unknown

Submitted by D. Hartley, Missouri 

God I'm Depressed

by Morris C. Kerry, Jr.

Most Christians face the same problems non-Christians face. However, many Christians are unaware that God has provided principles in his Word to help handle life's pressures and problems.

You have to understand and examine some of man's basic problems in the light of God's Word. I am aware that simplistic answers do not solve the sticky problems of everyday life. I am also aware that there are some scriptural principles that deal effectively with problems of all kinds.

No single problem stands alone. Usually it is interrelated with others.

Taking time to think about the many human problems, I started with: "I'm Depressed".

Webster defines depression as being pressed down, gloomy, dejected, sad, to have low spirits. It also says, "Psychological depression is an emotional condition characterized by discouragement and the feeling of inadequacy".

Some symptoms of depression are a collapse of self-esteem, the feeling about others that no one loves or cares, a dwindling of interest in others, and an intense absorption in self. Also the person suffers from self-deprecation: "I just can't seem to do anything right". Some depression is physical, which can be caused by physical exhaustion or an imbalance in one's physiological system.

Depression may be caused by disappointment and the inability to live up to one's expectations. Didn't Peter stoutly maintain he would remain faithful to the Lord, though all others denied Him? When the pressure mounted, Peter denied the Lord, and when the rooster reminded him of his failure, he went out and wept bitterly. According to some, crying is a symptom of depression, especially in men.

Depression can also be caused by success. Someone once said, "There is nothing more disillusioning than having arrived!" Some think that success is a shield against depression, but it often turns out to be the doorway to anxiety and sadness. The moment we become successful, we are vulnerable.

Depression is devastating because it cripples a person's life and draws them into their own tiny world. Remember what our Lord said, "But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first" (Matt 19:30).

The tiny world I spoke of is the world of introspection. Such people become wrapped in a cloak of

Get the Whole Booklet

This article is chapter one from the booklet, *God, I've Got a Problem*. Other topics covered include temptation, guilt, worry, loneliness, fear, boredom, disappointment, bitterness, doubt, pride and death. See the back page for how to contact *Shelter in the Word* to obtain a free copy of *God, I've Got a Problem*.

self-pity and are useless to themselves, God and society. Self-pity can become very intense to where people take their lives.

Depression is demoralizing, it's essential that we know how to deal with it. The old home remedies are not effective. It's useless to whistle in the dark, smile and think it will go away by itself, it won't.

Oversimplification is what some Christians try to use in a direction of what they call "Faith Only". Being a Christian will not automatically solve all our problems, because Christians also suffer from depression. Further, if depression is the result of a physical ailment, you might need treatment of some kind. And if it isn't physical, it may be deep enough to require the help of a professional.

But as Christians we have something going for us. We have a new insight about ourselves and experiencing the love of our God, our Heavenly Father. God makes it realistic to deal with our depression.

Perhaps the greatest example of depression in the Bible is the story of Elijah. He had been God's spokesman for over three years, faithfully calling the nation back to God. In a dramatic battle with four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, Elijah proved conclusively that he was God's servant. God also affirmed Elijah by answering his prayers to send rain to break the drought. But as he returned to Jezreel before Ahab's chariot, Jezebel sent a sharp message to Elijah. "By tomorrow at this time, you will be dead. I will personally guarantee it." Frightened, forgetting everything God had done for him, Elijah ran eighty-five miles into the wilderness (from Jezreel to Beersheba).

Chapter 19 of 1Kings describes Elijah's dejection as he sat under a juniper bush in the wilderness. "It is enough! Now, O Lord, take my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (1Kngs 19:4). Elijah is at the depth of depression.

Four Things to Defeat Depression

As we examine Elijah's situation, we discover four things to help us defeat depression.

1. Get Away for a Rest

First: Get away for a rest (1Kings 19:5-8) This is what Elijah did. After doing a mighty work for God

and running a hundred and ten miles, he was physically exhausted. He had been so busy caring for the spiritual needs of the nation, that he neglected his own. Exhausted, he fell asleep under the juniper bush and had to be awakened by an angel to eat. After a good rest and food, he got up and had enough strength to travel forty days and nights to Mount Horeb.

Things really haven't changed much since Elijah's day. Many still get weary from well-doing. What begins as a fun or joyful ministry often becomes a wearying grind. Like Elijah, we sometimes need to get away for that rest.

2. Off Your Chest

Second: Get your frustrations off your chest. (1Kings 19:9-10) After Elijah traveled the additional forty days he came to the cave in Horeb. There the Lord came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" In effect, God was saying, "Elijah, tell me what's bothering you".

And Elijah took this opportunity to pour out his frustrations. "Lord", he said, "they didn't appreciate a thing I did. Even when the drought was broken, they went against me. In fact, they are looking for me now to kill me. Furthermore, I am the only one left who is Your servant and it looks like I'm wasting my life. It's no use living any more. I may as well die and get it over with." In one exasperated moment, Elijah poured out the venom that was poisoning his soul. And without realizing it, he bequeathed us a workable pattern—get your frustrations out in the open and tell God what's eating you!

God is interested in the things that bother us. He understands our problems and, rather than condemn us, He wants to help us overcome our infirmities.

If however, you think it strange to tell God your problems, then tell an interested friend. Many find speaking their problems helps them discover the problem is not nearly as big as they thought it was. God knew this and encouraged Elijah to get his frustrations out in the open.

3. Presence of God

Third: Get a fresh awareness of the personal presence of God. (1Kings 19:12) Elijah felt forsaken by God as well as the nation and all his friends. He began doubting the power and personal presence of God. As Elijah stood at the entrance of the cave, a tremendous wind came up, so strong it split rocks; but "the Lord was not in the earthquake". After that, a raging fire, and "He wasn't in the fire". In a few moments, Elijah had seen mighty demonstrations of the power of God, but God was not in them. When these awesome manifestations ended, the Scriptures say, "and after the fire,

a sound of gentle blowing". After everything quieted down, Elijah became aware that God was in the gentle stillness. "And it came about, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle..." He knew God was present, he wasn't alone; God had not forsaken him. In a moment, Elijah received a fresh awareness of the personal presence and power of God.

When we are depressed, we too, need a fresh awareness of the personal presence and power of God in our lives. When we are rejected by friends, loved ones or anyone else, it's easy to fall into depths of depression and insulate ourselves from God in our blanket of self-pity. We want God to demonstrate His mighty power so we can be aware of His presence. Instead, we need to seek God's presence in solitude and quietness because it is here that the Lord will meet us with a fresh awareness of His personal presence.

4. Get Back to Work

Fourth: Get back to work. (1Kings 19:13-16) Elijah had been the instrument of God to begin a mighty revival in Israel on Mt. Carmel. But he gave it up and sat around moping about how badly he had been treated. God again came to Elijah and asked, "What are you doing here Elijah?" And even after his first rest, and new awareness of God's presence, Elijah still complained about how mistreated he had been.

At this point God tells Elijah two important things. The first is to get up and get back to work! "Elijah, you were commissioned to be a prophet, so get off your self-pity and be a prophet! Go and anoint three men. One of the three, Elisha, is to be your successor. As long as you sit here, you will continue to nurse your self-pity". A return to an active ministry was necessary to get his mind off himself.

Then God tells Elijah, "You are not alone in the work of God. There are an additional 7,000 who remain faithful to Me!"

When Elijah learned he was not alone in serving God and that others were actively working along with him, he overcame his depression and went back to work, back on the road to do the job God called him to do.

Like Elijah, once we have rested and had a fresh awareness of the presence of God, we must get up off our self-pity and get back to work. Idle hands and minds provide fuel for depression but resumption of activities takes our mind off our personal problems and makes us useful and productive again.

God didn't design us to be crippled by depression. You can beat it if you will follow our Father's way. Feel down, gloomy, dejected, and worthless? Try these steps and see if they will change your life. 

Y2K—the First Worldwide “Secret” Disaster

by Norman Edwards

When hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes or other natural disasters hit a large area of the globe, the people involved usually want their story to be told. They want emergency assistance to save lives and property. They want long-term help in rebuilding. Unless people are very religious, they often do not feel responsible for such disasters—they see them as part of the course of nature.

Government and business leaders rarely lose their jobs **because** a natural disaster occurred (though they may lose them for failing to properly handle the situation afterward). When leaders make visible efforts to help people after a natural disaster, it often increases their popularity and unites people who previously squabbled over less important things. There may be many ideas about who should run a government or a business, but nearly everyone can work together against hurricanes, earthquakes and other disasters.

But is the Y2K problem similar to a natural disaster? Absolutely not! It is bigger in scope than almost any natural disaster because it will affect nearly all the modern world at once. Yet it is not something that people will openly talk about because the Y2K problem is **at least partly the fault of people who own computers, but failed to make them compliant on time**. Humans do not like to be blamed for faults—especially lack of foresight.

Recently, laws have been passed to limit the liability of companies that make “Y2K disclosures” in good faith. Those in the computer industry encouraged these laws back in 1996 and 1997 so that companies would be able to talk about their Y2K problems without threat of lawsuit. (Without some kind of protection law, anything they said could be used against them.) Unfortunately, the laws were passed so late that no significant amount of truth-telling will occur. With many government agencies and large corporations claiming “full compliance”, no entity wants to say that it is “not ready”.

Why? **Because people and businesses stop buying from businesses that are not Y2K compliant.** The biggest “unknown” in almost every business Y2K plan is: “Are all of the suppliers that we need to run our business Y2K compliant?” A business that admits it “might have” Y2K problems is asking for all of its customers to **quickly** find another vendor to replace them. Customers do not want to be trying to establish contacts in the Year 2000 when there is a shortage of the items they are trying to buy. So if a business announces it may

have Y2K problems and most of its customers begin to buy elsewhere, it will certainly go broke. Y2K problems are mostly “maybes”—very few businesses are sure that they will be “done in” by Y2K. **Therefore, they all say they are “Y2K compliant”, they keep their customers for now, and they hope for the best.**

An excellent example of this is the Hershey company—the famous maker of chocolate. According to *USA Today*, their 1999 third quarter income was down 19% due to problems with their new computer system. Shipments to customers were frequently in error. They had hoped to implement the new system three months earlier, but were still having major difficulties during the Halloween season—the greatest candy-selling time of the year. The Hershey announcement said nothing about Y2K, but in all my years of experience with large computer systems, I have never heard of a company tolerating a system that caused such a great loss in income. They would re-implement the old system until the bugs were worked out of the new system. The most likely reason to keep using such a flawed new system would be that the older system had a worse flaw—like it would not work at all in the year 2000. There are other industry examples, but this one should illustrate the point.

Similarly, **government leaders** do not want to admit non-compliance lest people panic, riot or remove them from office. If a government leader has to say, “We never gave our computer systems the budget they needed, and we expect some vital services (power, water, sewer, health-care, etc) to be out for a few weeks”, he would be the most unpopular guy in his city, county, state or country. He would be so swamped with complaints that he could get nothing else done. But if a government leader waits until the problem occurs, he can claim that he knew nothing about it and blame his computer department, his consulting firm, or maybe even Y2K cyber-terrorists (see page 22).

And when Y2K computer problems do occur, what will government and business leaders do? **They will try to keep them a secret!** If that fails, they will find someone to blame.

Is This Evaluation Overly Negative?

To many people, this evaluation may seem overly negative. How could leaders be so concerned about their careers at the expense of the people? Yet when we consider what has happened in the recent past, it should be fairly obvious.

John Koskinen, head of the President's Council on the Year 2000 Conversion, has repeatedly made statements about not "hoarding", and treating Y2K like a three-day winter storm. State and local governments have made similar statements. Public utilities, banks and other businesses have assured us that everything is just fine. Yet these same organizations are making "contingency plans" to a level not seen since World War II. These "contingency plans" are **not** plans for a three-day winter storm, but plans for a major disaster. If our governments and businesses are spending untold millions on these plans, why are they telling the public that there is no need for them to prepare?

Why do they say it is O.K. for a utility to "stockpile" a few extra month's supply of coal as "sound

preparation", but wrong for an individual to "hoard" an few extra month's supply of heating oil or food?

The truth is, everyone should prepare. But the reality of big business and government is that it is much easier to get cooperation in a disaster than it is to admit failure beforehand. (And they certainly wouldn't want to create a disaster by having people demand their removal).

Yet it seems that most Y2K news still seems to be good—we're ready. What is missing?

1. Nearly all Y2K compliance statistics are based on "self-assessment". Very few organizations have had their claims independently verified.
2. Even for organizations that claim independent verification, virtually no public documentation exists (see box at right).
3. Nearly all compliance statistics refer to "mission critical systems". There are no standards for determining which systems are "mission critical". One power plant executive privately acknowledged that the climate control (heating and air conditioning) of his plant was not considered a "mission critical" system so it had not been tested for Y2K compliance. However, no one had ever tried to run the plant with climate control not working.
4. Businesses are gearing up for the failure of others. From corner stores to international banks, numerous companies have sometimes publicly, but more often unofficially acknowledged that they expect their competitors to suffer Y2K failures—and they hope to pick up their competitors' "market share". There is no reason for them to reveal the companies they believe will fail now—it would just create a shouting match that nobody could prove. The profit will be made by being in the right place when the failure occurs.

There is no doubt that a realistic portrayal of Y2K dangers could cause a certain amount of panic among the general population. If everyone tried to withdraw a large amount of money from banks, get out of the stock market and stock up on food all at once, it would certainly throw western civilization into a mess. There is some truth to the idea that the panic could be worse than the actual Y2K disaster. But we will never know. Because of so many rosy government announcements, a pre-Y2K panic is not likely to occur. We will simply have the chance to see what Y2K does to a largely unprepared populace.

It will probably become obvious that those who prepared fared better and were far more able to help others. Hopefully, Y2K will provide valuable lessons to

Secret Compliance

You may remember the Federal Aviation Administration announcing "Y2K Compliance" in July of this year. A casual reading of their press release left the impression that they were 100% finished with the changes they needed to make for Y2K. They even claimed that their work was audited by an independent corporation, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC). This was very good news for an agency that seemed like it had a long way to go only a year earlier.

The details of the method of achievement of this technical marvel would certainly be too complex to print in the average newspaper. But it would be comforting to know that such details were available to other technical people who could read them and agree that the FAA had indeed made our skies safe for air travel into the new millennium. The Y2Knewswire tried to get a copy of some documentation showing what kinds of Y2K compliance test had been performed and verified. (The entire story is available at WWW.Y2Knewswire.com.) Their search started by calling the FAA who referred them to the SAIC, the auditing company. Over 100 phone calls later, Y2Knewswire had very little information and the SAIC retreated to the point of saying "they could not confirm or deny whether they had actually done any work at all for the FAA".

The strangest thing was this: Both the FAA and the SAIC claimed that nobody else asked to see FAA Y2K-compliance documentation. Should not have some of the news media—or even organizations of people who fly a lot—have insisted on seeing the evidence that the FAA is really ready for Y2K?

Unfortunately, this seems to be what has happened in all too many industries and government agencies: compliance is claimed, but the proof, if it exists, is a secret!

many people who have too much interest in entertainment and leave many of the details of their very lives to governments and corporations which are often looking out only for themselves. It is the hope of this writer that Y2K will cause many people to think about what God wants for their lives, and to realize how far western society has drifted from the values of the Bible.

What Will Probably Happen and What Can We All Do to Help?

Buy supplies within reason. We have gone into this in great detail in previous issues. As the end of the year approaches, there will be shortages of some food, medical, energy and other supplies as people begin to make last-minute purchases. If you already have enough supplies and there is a shortage in your area, do not make it worse by buying more. On the other hand, as long as plenty is available, each item you buy now encourages suppliers to bring more to market.

If you have not prepared at all, **now** is the time to withdraw a little cash and buy a little extra food, batteries, a portable heater and some fuel. Begin now to keep your gas tank mostly full. If half the people try to fill their gas tanks on December 31, nearly all gas stations will be completely emptied. Gas stations may refuse to sell gas to “hoarders”—people wanting to put it into containers. It is much more sensible to fill your tank now and try to keep it nearly full.

Avoid a “panic mentality” when you buy—especially when some product is “completely gone”. Think about sensible alternatives rather than trying to fight others for the easy and obvious items. Trust God and pray “give us this day our daily bread.” It is not worth fighting and getting injured to buy the last gallon of water at the grocery store.

Stay out of New Year’s events. This may seem obvious, but opinion polls still show that many people plan to travel and attend a great variety of New Year’s Eve and New Year’s events. During a Y2K disaster, it would be much better to be at home with your supplies than among a crowd of unfamiliar, possibly panicky people.

Be ready for a gasoline shortage. There will probably be a shortage beginning in January or February due to failures in computerized oil production, refining and shipping. No one knows how bad it will be or long it will continue—this author has read estimates of 10% to 30% decrease in worldwide production. Some oil companies claim to be completely ready, but other international firms are not. In the 1970’s, a 7% decrease caused lines at millions of gas stations. But then, no one is sure how much oil and gas Y2K-savvy companies have stored to sell at higher prices—which

will reduce the shortage. Also, no one is sure what demand will be like in 2000. Curtailed industrial output and entertainment may reduce the demand—use of portable power generators could increase it. We just don’t know. Making arrangements for carpools and other gasoline-saving plans would be a good idea.

Have a plan “to stay” and a plan “to leave”. It is certain that there will be *some* local failures of power, gas, water or sewer from December 31 through January 3. We just don’t know where or how much. Widespread power outages are possible. Even if all utilities remain operational in your area, production and distribution of some products may break down. Everyone needs a plan to stay where they are for a few days with a way to stay warm, drink water, dispose of waste, and hopefully fix a hot meal. If you can stay for weeks, great—you will not be a burden on anyone else. Those who cannot stay that long should make arrangements to live with a friend who is prepared. A

Secret Y2K Plans

Numerous utilities are writing their customers about their great state of preparation. They are sending their public relations people everywhere they can to assure others that there is no need to worry. They tell us to treat this like a three-day winter storm—that they will have extra crews available in case anything does happen. What they may not have told you is that some utilities are requiring nearly all of their technical employees to report to hotels or other command centers on December 31 so they will know exactly where they are if they are needed. That was not done for the last three-day winter storm. In many cases, more preparation is being made for Y2K than any other anticipated problem in a utility’s history. If they **really know** that nothing will happen, why the unprecedented preparation?

When the utilities talk about “contingency plans” in case there are outages what does that mean? Does it mean that they have emergency methods of quickly providing extra power, gas and water? In a very few cases, “yes”, but **the main purpose of “contingency plans” is to answer questions like these when utility shortages occur:** Who will get service? How much service will they get? When? Have your utility companies or their regulating agencies told you their plans for such contingencies? Do you know anyone who has asked? In a few cases the plans have been revealed, but in many other cases they have not. Some citizen groups have actually sued to find out these plans. A lower court in the State of Maine actually ruled that a public utility company did not have to reveal its plans. Most suits and appeals will not be heard before Y2K is here.

But rather than join a fight to make sure you are fairly served in a shortage, it might make more sense to prepare to take care of yourself—whether there actually turns out to be a shortage or not!

vehicle with a tank of gas is essential. Chemical or nuclear spills are possible (see article on page 21). For this reason, all of us need a plan “to leave”—to live with someone else many miles from our home.

Test your emergency plans now! If you plan to use a stove, generator, or some other appliance that you have not actually put into practice, **test** it as soon as possible. You may need extra parts. They are probably available now—they may not be later. Many people who have generators do not have a way to hook them up. Either they need to be safely connected into a house wiring system, or you need a lot of big extension cords. If you go the extension cord route, make sure that you have a way to hook up your heating system to it. Many heater blowers and pumps are wired directly in to the house wiring system—you will need to have it connected to a plug so it can be *either* plugged into your house wiring *or* plugged into a generator.

Be ready for telephone outages. Poor or no telephone service is quite likely in January. This is more likely to be caused simply from too many people trying to use the telephone than it is from failures. This writer well remembers being in a southern California earthquake and thinking that the quake had damaged the phones. There was no significant damage—too many people were simply trying to call friends to “see if they are O.K.”. Don’t make calls unless they are essential. Leave the phone lines to those who need them. If you “look after” elderly or infirm friends and relatives, it might be better for you to have them stay with you for a few days (if possible) rather than rely on the phones to check on them. Consider using CB radios for emergency communication with nearby neighbors. Everyone should have a battery-operated radio for local news.

If you have a computer, sending several short e-mails at once puts much less strain on the phone system than making several calls. Several e-mails have circulated warnings to computer users that their compliant computer could become corrupt if they accessed the Internet in the year 2000. Don’t be afraid to use the Internet in January of 2000. It is extremely unlikely that receiving e-mail or “cookies” from Internet sites will corrupt your computer.

Save and carefully examine your monthly bills in November, December and January. Some computers may already fail in December when they try to calculate January 2000 due dates. Obviously, you want to avoid paying bills that are too high. On the other hand, if your public utilities or some other vital service stops billing you, it would probably be better to send in a payment than just ignore it. The “cut off service for non-payment” portion of their system may still be working, even though the bills are not going out. Also, suppose that a utility’s billing system is so

messed up that they cannot send any bills for several weeks. If their customers send in nothing, they could be unable to pay their own fuel bills and might have to shut down. Everybody would lose!

Y2K Is Here to Stay

While the most dramatic problems will probably occur at the beginning of the new year, other long-term problems will be with us for months to come. Some products that are made only in a few places may be in short supply or disappear entirely from store shelves. This may be caused by failures in the computers of companies that make those products, or by failures in companies that supply parts to the manufacturers. The manufacture of complex equipment such as aircraft, vehicles, manufacturing systems, etc., may be slowed

Y2K, the Movie

This made-for-TV movie aired on November 21, 1999. While its main focus was on averting a nuclear disaster and its technical accuracy left a lot to be desired, the overall Y2K picture painted by the movie was good. The movie showed that most equipment tested “compliant” in advance, but a few tests failed for unexplained reasons. When Y2K came, most things worked, but a few failed for reasons that were not immediately evident. More problems occurred in international areas and expected trouble spots, but nothing was really predictable. They did a great job of graphically showing how midnight sweeps around the globe, hour by hour, and how some of the failures would follow it.

The movie showed rationing of various commodities and a certain amount of paranoia right before the event. Other people appeared totally ignorant or indifferent to the situation. People who successfully make movies have to have a good “feel” for how the general populace reacts to various situations—their portrayal is probably accurate.

The movie ended pretty rosy: The hero made a bomb to blast a hole to let cooling water flow into the runaway nuclear reactor. His partying, run-away daughter was reunited with the family. A mother delivered her baby normally after nearly being misdiagnosed due to Y2K-failing medical equipment. But the last scene of the movie is a telephone interview with the hero—and the power suddenly goes out in the TV studio that is interviewing him.

The movie made no effort to deal with the aftermath of most of the other problems it covered. How long until power and other utilities were restored? Did industry and business continue to function normally? When we do not know what will happen on January 1, 2000, it is even more difficult to predict how long it will take to recover. It does not pay to worry, but to pray and prepare for ourselves and others.

or stopped for some time simply because these companies rely on literally thousands of other suppliers, some of which may have significant computer failures.

We can expect service to be bad from some organizations and government agencies as software problems on mainframe and mini-computers overwhelm their staffs. The time-tested procedure for dealing with severe problems on these systems is to "temporarily reject the new software and go back to the previous

version that worked". **For year 2000 problems, there will be no usable "previous version" to "go back to"**. Businesses will have to rely on their computer departments to fix the problems or they will have to try to handle things manually. Computer errors often produce huge volumes of calls to ordinarily little-used customer service lines. Such a call that once took a few minutes to resolve may then take hours. A call that used to take hours might take days. In some cases, this will be a

Excerpts of Y2K Article from WorldNetDaily (November 29, 1999)

The entire article is from the Internet news site **WorldNetDaily.com**. [My comments are added in brackets —NSE]

President Clinton has already made plans to declare a national emergency because of expected disruptions caused by the Y2K computer problem, according to Federal Emergency Management Agency documents.

A final training session followed by a mock Y2K disaster exercise will include the actual disruptions and problems that Y2K emergency planners believe will take place during the change to the New Year.

Plans for the emergency declaration were made known to Federal Emergency Management Agency officials and other federal employees in preparation for use of the Information Coordination Center, set up by the President's Council on the Year 2000 conversion. The plans were also given to the Senate Committee on the Year 2000 Technology Problem.

The staff on hand at the Information Coordination Center have been told to expect a presidential declaration of a national emergency. FEMA staff who will run the regional emergency operation centers have also been told the same thing.

"Should it become necessary, a presidential 'emergency,' rather than a 'major disaster,' will be declared, and assistance will be focused on addressing threats to life, health, safety, and property," the Senate committee was told in a report from **Lacy E. Suiter** from the Response and Recovery Directorate of FEMA. [In an "emergency" the focus is on taking control of public and private resources to minimize damage. In a "disaster", the focus is on paying the cost of rebuilding. —NSE]

A national emergency will be declared because FEMA officials have concluded that there will be more than 50 simultaneous Y2K-related disruptions throughout the country, which will stretch the nation's local, state and national emergency resources to the limit.

Sen. Robert Bennett, R-Utah, told WorldNetDaily there is a very real fear that the enemies of the United States could conduct domestic terrorist attacks because they

will expect the country to be weakened due to the military's having to deal with Y2K disruptions. **He said there is also a possibility that cyber-terrorism attacks might even try to sabotage computers to create what appear to be Y2K computer failures**, in order to enhance opportunities for terrorists to conduct further attacks on U.S. cities.

FEMA officials who attended training in each of the 10 FEMA regions were told a major disaster declaration was ruled out because the Y2K problems will not "involve a natural disaster," according to the presentation materials used and provided to WorldNetDaily.

"A presidential 'emergency' rather than 'major disaster' declaration will be made if Y2K consequences exceed state/local response resources," FEMA staff and other federal agencies were told at the regional meetings.

Although Suiter claims "no one knows for sure what will happen following rollover to January 1," those who will staff the Information Coordination Center have been asked by Kind to submit a list of the most likely Y2K disruptions for use in the final Y2K disaster training and exercise.

Although emergency planners may be planning for the worst, their Y2K preparation materials provided to the public do not suggest that the general public take the same precautions. The Federal Emergency and Management Agency and Red Cross Y2K disaster planning guides recommend preparations that, in effect, advise the public to have a 72-hour kit similar to what would be needed for a winter storm.

The Information Coordination Center is scheduled to be staffed 24 hours a day beginning Dec. 28 and continuing at least until Jan. 7. Plans include an option to extend the date if the national emergency continues. Virtually all federal employees, including FBI and members of the military, have had vacation time canceled to enable them to be ready for action if needed. Civil agencies all across the country have issued similar re-

strictions for police, fire and other vital services to be on call or on duty.

"The emergency management community may be facing a potential disruption scenario that it has not dealt with before: simultaneous disruptions in all 50 States and six territories that may require federal emergency declarations. In addition, we may have numerous weather-related major disaster declarations to address during this time frame," explained Suiter.

John Koskinen, head of the President's Council on the Year 2000 Conversion, is concerned there may be problems caused inadvertently. He is warning people not to pick up the phone just after the start of the New Year and make a call "just to see if it works." He said too many attempts to make calls all at the same time would shut down the entire phone system.

He also warned that the public may be fooled by normal failures and think they are caused by the Y2K computer bug. ATM cash machines, phone service and electric services all have localized failures on a regular basis. One of those types of failures may happen right on Jan. 1 and create a mistaken belief that a Y2K failure has occurred when it really has not. [Does this mean if a dozen things fail on Jan. 1 that they are not Y2K failures until the government says they are? —NSE]

"The presumption is to blame all failures on Y2K that weekend," Koskinen said, and Bennett agreed. He said **the public must help to reduce the demand on the system at a difficult time.** [So why haven't you been telling the public to be prepared? —NSE]

He said hackers will be easily detected during the Y2K rollover period because there will be tighter security at that time. Koskinen asked "recreational hackers" to stay away during the date change rather than complicate what is anticipated to be a difficult time for government agencies. [Notice how Koskinen contradicts Robert Bennett, above. See page 22 on cyber-terrorists. —NSE] ☐

minor inconvenience, in other cases it could be a major disaster.

What would happen if something “really big” got way behind on service—like the IRS? In a Reuters article (October 29, 1999 1:13 PM EDT), IRS Commissioner Charles Rossotti explained that the IRS still is not completely ready. He went on to explain that the IRS might have to issue refunds manually. The article stated that they “could produce up to 10,000 manual refunds daily and would be issued to taxpayers most in need. If manual refunds were issued, Rossotti said, they would go first to taxpayers with IRS-approved taxpayer assistance orders, then to people with gross incomes of \$10,000 or less, and then increasing in increments of \$5,000 depending on the ability to issue the manual refunds.” But since the IRS normally issues about 75,000,000 refunds a year, the manual system will take 20 years ($75,000,000 \div 10,000 \div 365$) to finish one year’s refunding. Obviously, this procedure cannot continue. It is quite possible that a “flat tax” or some kind of sales tax will be proposed to replace the IRS.

Other government agencies and corporations may also suffer major computer failures, attempt to work in a manual mode for a while, then gradually become unworkable. We will need to look for solutions as they become available.

Close to God—Ready for Anything

As we have so often emphasized, with all of the hiding of facts, we just do not know what will happen. But we should not be faint-hearted. When Jesus sent his disciples out to teach others, they did not know what would happen. Some were well received and well cared for; others were beaten and chased out of town. The apostle Paul summed it up like this:

Phil 4:11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

We may individually suffer a little or a lot due to Y2K problems. No matter what happens, it will be an opportunity to grow, and to learn to “love your neighbor as yourself”.

—Norman Edwards

If You Have A Personal Computer

Programs such as Norton 2000 are still available to help PC users prepare for year 2000. They will check hardware, software, and data files for potential problems. They will tell you which of your software programs are believed to be Y2K compliant, which are not and which are uncertain. If they find one major problem, they are easily worth the money.

Besides checking for basic compliance of software, some software requires the user to select certain options in order to work in the most user-friendly manner. Many Y2K-compliant software packages that use dates have an option to display either 2 or 4 digits of the year. **You probably want to set all of them to display four digits of the year so that you will be able to see if you or your computer programs are producing invalid dates.**

If a date in your computer is “1900” when it should be “2000”, you want to see that. You do **not** want to see only “00”. Similarly, if a date in your computer is “2099” when it should be “1999”, you want to see all four digits, not just “99”.

Many programs also allow you to enter only 2 digits of the year when you are typing in a year. Some programs let you set a dividing year. For example, everything over 30 is considered to be in the 1900s and everything less in the 2000s. Other software may just “assume the current century”. So if you input “12/31/99” in the year 2000, it will assume “12/31/2099”. Some software has an option that will **require** the user to enter all four digits of the date. This requires more work for entry, but may be best to help avoid errors during the transition.

You can probably find the options to control date display and entry by looking up “date” or “formats” in the “index” or “find” options of your software’s “Help” menu.

Those who use Microsoft Windows probably should set their “Windows Short Date” to display the full 4-digit year. E-mail messages have been circulating that a computer will not be compliant unless this is done. In general, that is false. Windows will work fine no matter how the year displays. However, it is possible that some other software that uses “Windows Short Dates” (and is poorly written) might fail if only 2 digit-years are used. And of course, you need to see what kind of dates your computer is storing. To display 4-digit years:

Click **Start**

Click **Settings**

Double click **Control Panel**

Double click **Regional Settings** (globe icon)

Click the **Date** tab

Look at **Short Date Sample** to see if it shows a 2-digit year. Microsoft made the 2-digit setting the default setting for Windows 95, Windows 98, and Windows NT.

Click the little “down arrow” at the far right of **Sort Date Style** and select a style with “yyyy” at the end.

Minor Mistakes Could Kill Many

by Norman Edwards

Why can't we be sure what will happen in Y2K? This flowchart will help you understand the fine line between "no problems" and likely disaster. If you have never seen a flow chart before, don't worry, they are a lot like some board games: you start at the beginning, read the question in the diamond box, select the path for the correct answer, and follow the instructions in the next box. It takes some work, but doing it will show how Y2K and seemingly insignificant events can sometimes bring a disaster.

This flowchart is an example of an emergency over-pressure program for a toxic chemical tank in a chemical plant. A much more complex program would control the tank pressure for normal industrial processing. This program would exist **only as an emergency safety** check in case the complex program fails to keep the tank pressure within safe limits. The people at the chemical factory hope that this program will **never ever** actually have to open the valve that vents the tank into the atmosphere.

Nevertheless, it is better to vent some of the poisonous contents of the tank into the atmosphere (which is bad) than to let the entire tank explode and release everything into the atmosphere. Your home hot water tank probably operates on a similar principle—it has a relief valve that may cause hot water to spray in your utility room rather than let your tank and plumbing explode. This is good, unless the relief valve fails and soaks your utility room when there is no danger. The same is true for our chemical plant—the tank vent is a good thing to prevent total tank failures, but we do not want it to vent the toxic chemical for no reason.

The flowchart at right uses the expression "date/time" because computers often calculate them together. If a computer schedules something to happen 37 minutes from now, it needs to work even if 37 minutes from now happens to be in a new day—or a new month—or a new year—or a new millennium. Nearly all computers were programmed and tested to handle the first three, it is the last one that produced the "Y2K bug".

We can see that if the tank pressure is not "at danger level", the "vent open" date/time is set to 24 hours in advance. This high value will replace any previous lower value and cause the vent not to open. That is much more "Y2K-compliant" than the formerly common practice of setting a date/time to its "highest possible value"—Dec 31, 1999, 11:59 PM—which is certain to fail in Y2K. Since this program runs many times every minute, setting the date/time to 24 hours (or even one hour) in advance should always prevent the vent from opening, even in the year 2000.

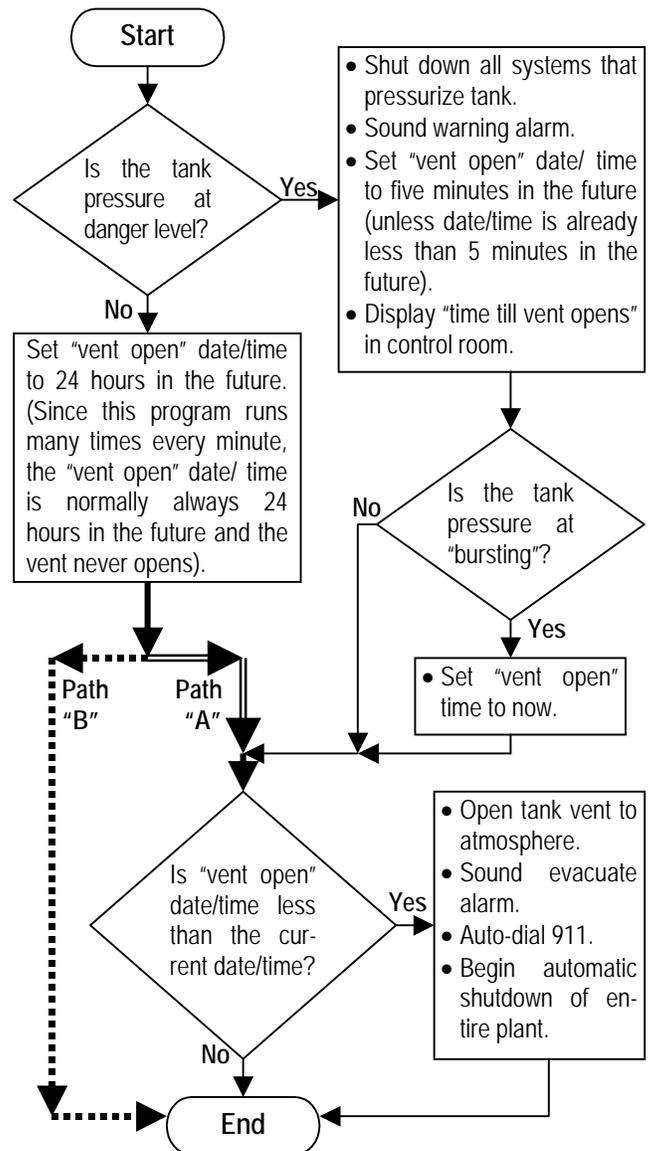
But if some other part of this computer's processing still uses only 2-digit years ("99" or "00"), this program will fail only on the last day of 1999. We have indicated two possible ways that this program could have been written. The path out of the big box at left could have been designed to follow either Path "A" or "B". Both would be easy to write with a programming language. If path "A" were used, to the lowest diamond box, the first time this program is run on December 31, 1999, it will calculate "00" as the year to open the vent—which will be less than the current year "99". The program is supposed to give a warning before venting into the atmosphere, but since that decision is based on high tank pressure (not on a date failure) the computer will never give the warning instructions. The lowest diamond box will go to the "yes" side and open the vent.

If the program were written very slightly differently—so that it followed path "B"—it would probably work just fine through Y2K. If the tank is not over-pressure, the date/time comparison

would **probably** never be made and the toxin not vented into the atmosphere. Even though this seems incredibly **complex**, it is the nature of the computer software we use. Suppose some other problem (Y2K related or not) caused the tank to temporarily be over-pressure on December 31, 1999. This would cause the program to take the first "Yes" path to the right, then the "No" to the left, then the "Yes" yes to the right—causing the vent to unexpectedly open.

Please realize that there are thousands of critical computer programs, nearly all more complex than this one. Many have been fixed to work through Y2K. Others will work even though they have not been fixed. Some will fail in December, others in January and a few others even later. Computer programs that "Y2K fix" other computer programs may not find problems like the ones below. Also, testing this kind of program is not easy. Nobody would over-pressurize a toxic chemical tank just to see if the program would vent it into the atmosphere. These programs are usually developed by writing another testing program that simulates the chemical plant—but there is a certain margin of error in all such testing.

Ultimately we must ask the question: "What will God do?" Will He quietly but miraculously cause people to find the hidden problems before they become disasters? Or will there be no protection for people who are mostly no longer interested in God? 



Will Cyber-Terrorists Attack in Y2K?

by Norman Edwards

Numerous news programs and articles about Y2K have mentioned that authorities believe cyber-terrorists might use Y2K as a time to launch attacks. The theory is that Y2K will be blamed for the problems and the "cyber-terrorists" will not be caught. My 20 years of computer experience indicates that the opposite is probably true: "cyber-terrorists" will be blamed for the problems and those responsible for poor Y2K preparation will not be caught. Why?

Let us consider the goals and operation mode of cyber-terrorists. They are nothing like the terrorist with a bomb strapped to his body, threatening to blow himself up along with a bus full of people unless his demands are met. Cyber-terrorists do not want confrontation. As the FBI and other authorities frequently acknowledge, they do not usually even know who the "cyber-terrorists" are. The main goal of any "computer hacker" (from the kid having fun to the serious cyber-terrorist) is to remain undetected.

Beyond remaining undetected, there are three other goals of serious hackers:

1. **gaining confidential information** (e.g. military or business secrets)
2. **manipulating systems to do what the hacker wants** (e.g. to steal money or things)
3. **damaging an organization by destroying or corrupting its data.**

For points 1 and 2, "remaining undetected" must still be the prime goal. If a hacker is detected, he will lose all of the work he did and will be cut off from his source of information and/or wealth. Hackers are not as worried about prosecution in these cases, because the public is unaware of their activities and the organizations generally do not want the image that they "cannot keep their data safe", so they will not take the hacker to court. They will just increase their computer security.

If a hacker does damage a system (point 3, above), the public generally finds out and the victimized organization is eager to find and prosecute the hacker. Hackers generally don't want to go to jail to be martyrs for their cause. They want to stay free and keep hacking—so, again, remaining undetected is the primary goal.

Computer hacking (including cyber-terrorism) is often a process of many steps. A hacker must first find the computer that he wants to "break into", then gain access to it, then learn how it works inside, then learn to do what he wants to do—all without detection. A hacker does not fear a message that says, "Invalid password, access denied"—he can write a program to try a list of 10,000 commonly used passwords. What he does fear is a secret message going to a security administrator saying that more than 100 different passwords have been tried on a certain account, and that security administrator launching an investigation. Indeed,

hackers frequently are like little children "seeing what they can get away with". They find ways to operate anonymously on most networks, but if it looks like someone is trying to track them down, they will "lie low" for a while. If they discover that they can try a maximum of 99 passwords on an account each day without causing an investigation, then that is what they will do. It may take 100 days to break in, but that is better than being caught.

The most common way that skilled hackers are caught is by accident. For example, suppose a hacker breaks into a wholesale distributor's computer. He might create an order in their database to ship a pallet-load of his favorite products to a commercial warehouse in his city that the distributor occasionally uses. The shipping ticket instructs the warehouse that the items are to be picked up by John Smith from Smith's Market [both phony names]. This seems like a normal order for a small store to the shippers and truck drivers, so they think nothing of it. When a man who claims to be John Smith from Smith's market shows up at the warehouse to pick up the goods and obviously knows exactly what he is picking up, nobody at the warehouse asks for identification—they are busy. Our hacker drives home with the goods.

He creates an accounting record in the distributor's database which transfers the cost of this shipment to an "uninsured losses" account. This prevents their computer system from ever sending a bill for the goods, and the distributor never investigates losses *after* they have been classified "uninsured". All accounting records must have a "transaction date and time", so the hacker uses times during Friday afternoon when many transactions are made before the weekend. For many months, the hacker's transactions go unnoticed among tens of thousands of others. On one particular Friday, the entire accounting staff is away at a company outing. The next Monday, the boss receives his regular automated daily transaction summary report for Friday and notices just one transaction was made that day. If he decides to investigate it and discovers how odd it is, he has a chance of catching the hacker, or at least stopping future problems.

So how does this relate to Y2K?

It shows that Y2K is **not** a good time for cyber-terrorists to act. In order to check for Y2K problems, companies will probably be running numerous extra tests and cross checks of their computer systems. Anything the least bit unusual will be investigated. Companies will be very careful to "back up" their data (making extra copies) on December 30 and 31. They will probably be in the best position ever to recover from "destructive" cyber-terrorism. Some computers will probably have Y2K problems that will make it easier for cyber-terrorists to attack. On the other hand, emergency fixes made to computer systems to solve "Y2K bugs" may make things much more difficult for cyber-terrorists. **Hackers of all types, including cyber-terrorists, prefer stable computer systems that are not being watched too carefully. Y2K promises to be the opposite of that!** 

Where Is Your Trust?

By Tommy Willis

With the current world events that we have seen within the last few years, one thing is clear: Much is changing and crumbling.

Many put their trust in governments to bail them out when things get tough. We have programs such as Social Security, food stamps, and welfare that have helped many people and have done much good. But is Social Security really secure? Some leaders have been voicing their opinion that it will not stand in the future. Actually, no government in history has ever been able to support their elderly like we have come to expect in America. We look upon it as a birthright to live in comfortable leisure in our retirement.

There has been much speculation about the Y2K situation, that it will bring dramatic changes about the nation and the world. But even if Y2K doesn't happen to be as bad as many think it will be, it still looks as if we are nearing the end of the age. The scripture tells us the end of the age will bring dramatic changes upon the world and the Church.

On Our Own

As the secular world comes tumbling down, many will realize they are on their own. There will be no government funding to bail them out. Local grocery stores may close. Gangs may rule the streets. There may be no electricity, or food. It will come as a shock to realize they are on their own. People will have to learn to survive on their skills, and if they don't know how, they will be in trouble.

Many Christians will give up the faith as the fires of tribulation increase. But in the same process many shall be purified and made white.

Dan 11:35 Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.

The time of testing that is right before us will reveal the true Christian from the false. And many who are sitting on the fence will be blown off the fence into the world, as the winds of turmoil increase.

Lean on Him

Now is the time to prepare. We need to be preparing both spiritually and physically. The changes that we have seen in the churches and the secular world are **nothing compared to what is coming! Scripture makes that clear!**

At all cost, we must build up our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He is the only One who can keep us from falling with all that's coming.

No matter how good our minister or teacher seems to be, and no matter how sincere and well meaning he may be, Jesus Christ is our Savior and Leader. We need to learn to follow the lead of His Spirit and depend on Him, and not on some man or organization. This is the **only sure way not to be deceived**. If we make God the backbone of our trust, then He will not fail to lead and guide us.

Prov 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Let God Speak—Not Us

John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

All too often, we may think it is God leading us when instead, it is our own impressions. But the more we build up that personal relationship with Him, the more sensitive we'll become to hearing His voice.

With human reasoning it's so easy to mistake our own thought and feeling for the voice of God. I've watched many people in a variety of congregations do this—including myself. Some congregations tend to have this problem more than others do. Some believers are **too quick** to say things like, "The Lord told me this" and "the Lord told me that", when all too often, it's only their own impressions.

In no way am I trying to downplay how directly God's Spirit will lead us. I've had times when God directed my spirit to do specific things, and I knew it was God's voice talking to my spirit, because you can tell the difference when it's that strong. But there have been many times I thought it was God—I wanted it to be God, but it was only my own thought and feeling. So we need to be careful and **not rush to judgment** in these matters. This way we stay on safe ground.

Pray Diligently

Because of this tendency in human nature to speak for God, it's best to keep reminding one another to **make no decision without much prayer**. This will keep us out of a lot of trouble. The problem with the mentality that rushes to say "the Lord told me this" and "the Lord told me that" is that it usually avoids the dis-

cipline of a diligent prayer life.

If you think that God is always speaking to you, then there's no need to pray diligently. But reality is that God is **not** in the habit of giving us all the answers right away. God has nearly always led us step by step, and gives us a little at a time. He wants us to be dependent upon Him. It is very dangerous to have the mindset of "I am close to God so what I do must be God's will for my life." Human nature will take the easy road, and get caught up in the emotionalism of it all. But our religion should be basically one of a sound mind and not so much of the emotionalism that we see in so many churches.

Where is our trust? Is it in our paycheck? Is it in our minister or Church organization? Is it in social security or some other government program?

In the days ahead, the only thing that is going to pull us through these difficult times is our **personal contact with God.** Let's get our foundation down in Jesus Christ. As we do, then as the Church organizations and the secular world continue to crumble, we won't crumble with it because we have put our trust in God! 

Ask For Free Literature:

Have you ever wondered why Christmas commercialism is so far away from the humble teachings of Jesus? If so, ask for our free booklet, *The Reason for the Season.*

Also, We would be glad to send you *God, I've Got a Problem* (described on page 13) and a copy of our entire list of free literature. Just use the contact information, below:

Share Your Shelter

Our Savior never argued or tried to force someone to believe in Him. We should not do that either. But if *Shelter in the Word* has helped you, you can share it with others who might be interested in it or helped by it. One of these methods might work for you.

1. Talk to them about what you have learned and encourage them to study the Bible themselves.
2. Copy your *Shelter* and give it to them (almost any office or copy store will do this for \$1 to \$2).
3. Give them your *Shelter* (we will send you a replacement issue if you write or call).
4. Copy just this page or write down the address or phone so they can request their own subscription.

For subscriptions and other literature, write or phone:

Shelter in the Word

PO Box 107; Perry Michigan, 48872-0107

Tel: 517-625-7480; Fax: 517-625-7481

e-mail: Shelter@youall.com

One More Reason To Be Prepared

Officials at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in Washington DC announced November 10, 1999, that **the most damaging solar activity (on our sun) in modern times is likely to occur during this winter.** Not only is it the peak of the regular 11-year solar activity cycle, it also is the peak of other, much longer and larger cycles.

Two satellites, operated by NOAA, NASA and the Air Force, have been stationed in high orbit to provide warning information about energy bursts from our sun. They can give us warnings, but there is little they can do to stop it.

The sun can radiate three types of hazardous energy. A severe emission of such energy is referred to as a "storm" and rated with a five-level scale.

Geomagnetic energy is probably the most dangerous. Storms are rated from G1 (lowest) to G5. These consist of massive waves of magnetic particles which induce a flow of current into any wire which they cut across (ask any high school physics teacher about how this works). Unfortunately, they produce a large amount of direct current in power grid transformers, which burns them out. Canadian power companies spent millions of dollars over the last few years adding capacitors to their power grids to help prevent the severe power outages caused by previous geomagnetic storms. But most power grids are not similarly prepared. G5 storms can cause auroras ("northern lights") to be seen as far south as the equator.

Radiation storms are massive emissions of protons and neutrons. Storms are rated from S1 to S5. These can damage satellites, disrupt earth communications and even kill space-walking astronauts.

Radio storms are big bursts of radio signals from the sun. They are rated from R1 to R5 (the strongest). An R5 storm could disrupt many radio communications on the side of the earth facing the sun. Some telephone calls and pagers would be affected.

The destruction of power grids and communications are the greatest dangers from these storms. The exact damage that will be caused by them is still a matter of chance. The worst parts of the storms could miss the Earth entirely or be concentrated on the oceans where they do little damage. May God guide these storms to protect His little ones and to gain the attention of those that need to listen to Him!

—Norman Edwards 



We have moved! In order to prepare for Y2K, acquire a better place for our family to live and reduce costs in the long term, we have moved. Please begin using this address and phone number immediately.